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We love France just as it loves us

French-Serbian relations date back to the Middle Ages, to the time when Helen of Anjou married Stefan Uroš I and become the Serbian queen. Although her connection to the House of Anjou is disputed in modern historiography, in case this claim proves to be true, French-Serbian friendship and state relations have lasted for more than seven centuries.

Formally speaking, this year marks the 186th anniversary of the official diplomatic relations established between Serbia and France – in 1839, during Miloš Obrenović's reign, while Serbia was still a vassal principality. Immediately after the Congress of Berlin and Serbia's gaining independence, diplomatic relations between these two countries were established. However, even before the official establishment of diplomatic relations, the French influence in Serbia was quite strong. Karadžević's efforts to establish relations with France were recorded, while it was exactly under the influence of the French revolutionary climate that Dimitrije Davidović wrote Serbia's first modern constitutional

act – the Sretenje Constitution, which was enacted by the Great National Assembly in Kragujevac in 1835. Although due to the pressure of great powers it was legally in force for an extremely short period, the Sretenje Constitution left a deep trace in Serbian legal, political and social history, while the date of its enactment is celebrated today as Serbia's National Day.

The historical development of Serbian-French relations (or French-Serbian, let readers choose which of the two they prefer) has had its rises and falls. What is certain is that an indelible trace in Serbian history was made by the French-Serbian alliance during the First World War and intense struggle for liberty of the anti-fascist movements in the two countries during the Second World War, just as an unforgivable stain was made by France's participation in the NATO aggression against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, primarily Serbia, in 1999. Frenchmen would probably disapprove of Yugoslavia's support to Algerian independence, while Serbs would in turn disapprove of France's

recognition of the independence of the fake „State of Kosovo”. Nevertheless, Serbs also remember Mitterrand’s landing and unblocking of Sarajevo airport on St. Vitus Day in 1992, which not only opened the road for humanitarian aid reaching Sarajevo, but also prevented the NATO’s announced intervention. Because of that move, the French president was criticized by many in the European Community, first of all by all representatives of the German government, while Serbs objected to his recommendation that Robert Badinter should chair the Arbitration Commission of the Peace Conference on Yugoslavia. On that occasion, Badinter’s Commission expressed the opinion that the borders of the Yugoslav republics were unchangeable. Although at that time it harmed the unity of the Serbian national corpus, Serbia can now cite this opinion of the Commission chaired by the President of the Constitutional Council of France and Mitterrand’s close friend, regarding the separatism of Kosovo Albanians.

In the modern stage of interstate relations, France is one of seven countries which have signed the Strategic Partnership Agreement with Serbia. A special contribution to Its implementation and accelerated realization has been made by

two statesmen, President Vučić and President Macron. Their personal relationship, frequent communication and wish to develop relations in compliance with the traditional friendship between these two nations is a stake for the future successful development of the relations between the two countries. Unfortunately, we sometimes witness the fact that diplomacy is not always able to follow leaders, but it is an important rule that success is measured by leaders.

Because of all the above-mentioned reasons, but also those unmentioned reasons which go without saying, we dedicate this thematic issue to French-Serbian relations, wishing to bring them closer to Serbia’s academic public not only through history, but also nowadays, as well as to point to France’s position in the world, its internal political scene, and to recall great Frenchmen and Serbs who sealed the friendship between the two nations. *Liberty, equality, fraternity* are not only the guiding ideas of the French Bourgeois Revolution, but also the foundations of Serbian national identity. In our opinion, these three words reveal the reasons for the closeness of the two nations which has survived temptations and has always been re-affirmed.

Articles



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France in the European Union

Abstract: The French state is the founder and the foundation on which today's European Union lies. The European Union has survived the exit of Great Britain and it might also survive the exit of some other of its member-states, but it is almost certain that it could not exist without France in its ranks. The French constitutional concept and political system are specific in comparison to other EU member-states because of their Gaullist heritage – the intention of preserving national autonomy in the fields of foreign politics, defence, energy, healthcare, culture and education. However, Frenchmen have understood for a long time that they cannot enter a fair match with the powers such as the United States of America, China, Russia, as well as India in the near future. The autonomous European Union under French influence is the only entity that would have resources for something like that, and it is exactly the program and political idea France is trying to realize, currently with no success.

Keywords: France, Constitution, parliamentarism, presidential system, European Union

Introduction

With almost 68 million inhabitants, France is, after Germany, the second most populated nation of the European Union.^[2] By its economic power, with the share of 17% in the Union's gross domestic product, it also ranks the second, after Germany, and the seventh in the world. France is the strongest agricultur-

al power of the European Union, just as the leading tourist destination, thanks to its rich cultural and historical heritage. France realizes most of its trade exchange in the European internal market, with as many as eight of its ten most important economic partners coming from Europe.

France is currently the only member of the European Union with the permanent seat in the

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[2] https://france.representation.ec.europa.eu/qui-sommes-nous/la-france-dans-lue_fr (Accessed on 9 July 2024).

United Nations Security Council. In addition, it is also the strongest military power in the European Union, as well as on the European continent not counting the Russian Federation.^[3] The French army has 200,000 soldiers and 40,000 reservists, 290 nuclear heads that could be launched from nuclear submarines and “Rafale” combat-aircraft, and military bases on all five continents. The country has its own developed military industry, which means that it is able to produce independently all types of weapons. The French army has gained warfare experience from its engagement in the crisis situations in the African countries.

From the aforementioned, it can be derived that the French state is the founder and the foundation on which today’s European Union lies. The European Union has survived the exit of Great Britain, and it might even survive the exit of some of its other member-states, but it is almost certain that it would not exist without France in its ranks. The French constitutional concept and political system are specific in comparison to other EU member-states because of their Gaullist heritage – the intention of preserving national autonomy in the fields of foreign politics, defence, energy, healthcare, culture and education.

I. The constitutional concept of the Fifth Republic

The French Republic has relied on the parliamentary regime, the synonym for democratic freedoms,

ever since 1875 (Ardant, Mathieu, 2021, p. 233). The parliamentary regime, mother of all democracies, is a democratic regime of general practice, having in mind its widespread distribution, and in force in liberal democracies such as Great Britain, Germany, Italy, Spain, Japan, as well as in Scandinavian countries, while its principles are also embedded in the Constitution of Serbia. It cannot be claimed that this order is present everywhere where the parliament exists because it is only one of its prerequisites. The parliamentary regime is characteristic by the cooperation between executive and legislative power, where the former is independent, but also responsible to the latter. Therefore, in parliamentarism, the government is a politically responsible assembly.

Then why did General Charles de Gaulle, the founder of today’s French Fifth Republic, was against the parliamentary regime (Zečević, 2022, p. 66)? The causes of his opposition were searched for in the monarchist-nationalist political views of his family, but they happened to be much deeper. In the parliamentary Third Republic, and particularly in the Fourth Republic, characteristic for its proportional electoral system, the composition of the government as an executive body depended on the interparty agreement, which was often broken much faster than they were enacted. De Gaulle never forgot the words of the US President Franklin Roosevelt during the war: “I was interested in the French foreign politics in the 1930s, but I could not follow it. The presidents of the Government changed every now and then”.

[3] <https://www.radiofrance.fr/franceculture/podcasts/l-esprit-public/l-armee-francaise-a-t-elle-encore-les-moyens-de-faire-la-guerre-5495099> (Accessed on 9 July 2024).

De Gaulle was convinced that being defeated by Nazi Germany was the consequence of deformations of parliamentarism. The power completely belonging to the Assembly usurped national sovereignty, i.e., transferred it into the hands of the party leaders who were guided by petty political and material interests. He concluded that the Assembly must not have authorities to obstruct the work of executive power, as well as that it was necessary to introduce another council (the Senate) which



Charles de Gaulle, 1963.

Photo: Wikipedia

would examine the legislative work of the house of commons (Ardant, Mathieu, 2021, p. 418).

There were several reasons why France's political establishment supported the parliamentary regime. Frenchmen were under the influence of British democracy, older than their own, where the Parliament had entire political power. They labelled the presidential system as an American novelty organized for the new world, claiming that it did not suit Europe's democratic tradition. The only experience Frenchmen had previously had with the presidential system ended badly. Napoleon III was appointed the President of the Second Republic, but he soon introduced his personal regime after his self-appointment as the emperor.

De Gaulle's efforts at the end of 1950s and during the 1960s to introduce the presidential system caused an avalanche of accusations at his expense. His opponents were left-oriented and moderate-right wing parties of the Fourth Republic, as well as journalists, intellectuals and professors of constitutional law. François Mitterrand published a book in which he accused de Gaulle of being a man of *a permanent coup d'état* (Mitterrand, 1964, p. 85). Legal experts said that his system was *Bonaparte-like*, i.e., that it destroyed democratic achievements and would have no use value after the general's departure from power, because it was made to suit him.

In his speech delivered in Bayeux on 16 June 1946, De Gaulle already announced his concept of the constitutional order. He was focused on strengthening the role of the president of the Republic, thinking that he/she must have authorities worthy of the presidential function (Chevallier, Carcassonne, Duhamel, Benetti, 2017, p. 12). The

12 | president should direct key national policies, act as an arbiter, beyond political parties and their games, and have the right to dissolve the National Assembly. The causes of decadence that led to the collapse of the Third and Fourth Republics, according to Michel Debré, the author of the Constitution and the first President of the Government in the Fifth Republic, lay exactly in the weak presidential function. The increased scope of presidential authorities was supposed to rely on democratic legitimacy, drawn by the president directly from the people, which means that he would be chosen in elections with universal suffrage.

The president with substantial authorities, electoral legitimacy and a seven-year mandate and the unlimited possibility of re-election, became a type of a *republican monarch*. According to the constitutional provisions of the Fifth Republic, which are still in force today, the president is authorized to conduct foreign policy and to guarantee the application of international agreements, to command the army independently and to determine the directions of home affairs (Chevallier et al., 2017, p. 12). He is neither responsible to the Assembly nor submits reports to it, having in mind that he draws his legitimacy directly from the people. As a sovereign arbiter of political life, who takes care of the observance of the Constitution and good functioning of state bodies (Constitution of the French Republic, Article 5), he is entitled, in case he decides there is a political crisis in the country, to dissolve the Assembly and call a parliamentary election, except for the first year after the previous parliamentary election (Constitution of the French Republic, Article 12). In case of serious threats to the country's institutions, independence and territorial

integrity, the president is also entitled to make a decision about introducing the state of emergency, thus taking all power into his hands on a temporary basis, while the Assembly remains in charge of having regular sessions (Constitution of the French Republic, Article 16). The president is authorized to address the people and invite it to make sovereign decisions at referendums and, thus, referendum decision-making in the spheres determined by the Constitution has primacy over the enactment of legislative acts in the Assembly.

De Gaulle did not want to impose on Frenchmen an American-type constitution, according to which the president as the executive branch of power and his ministerial apparatus are supervised by the bicameral Congress. The concept of power execution in the Fifth Republic was based on the idea of the French president giving guidelines for political activities which are then realized by the Government. Therefore, this is a semi-presidential system in which the Government as the other branch of executive power is in charge of public administration, armed forces and of conducting national politics (Constitution of the French Republic, Article 20). The Government is given trust by the Assembly which supervises its work. Parliamentary elections in France are quite important, but there was a certain logic in that respect. After taking the function, the newly-appointed president would dissolve the Assembly and call parliamentary elections. Frenchmen would give majority trust to his part because it would not be reasonable to vote for the president who would have his hands tied by the Parliament and who could not achieve his political agenda. In any case, the two-round majority electoral system in itself would make it easier for

president's candidates for representatives, in a bout of enthusiasm after his victory, to win the voters' votes in electoral units, and even the absolute majority in the Assembly.

II. Two factions in France's foreign policy – Gaullist-Mitterrand and Atlanticist

In June 1940, after being exiled to London, where he founded the organization Free France, General de Gaulle faced the following challenge. Because of the humiliating military defeat in summer 1940, France was outclassed and marginalized in the eyes of the relevant factors in the United States of America and Great Britain. De Gaulle was shocked by the fact that France, formerly a great world power, could not keep up with the Anglo-Saxons and Russians, who successfully and bravely opposed fascism. US President Franklin Roosevelt believed that de Gaulle's organization had no political and military importance, and that was why Freshmen should not have an important role at the geopolitical scene of the world after the victory of the Allies. At that time, de Gaulle's fight already began to win respect and autonomy of his country within the alliance of the democratic countries led by the United States of America. Later on, de Gaulle admitted having fears that France's position in the post-war world could be like that of the Italian Republic. France would lose its freedom of action in international relations, becoming completely subordinated to the United States of America both in military and economic terms. Hence his wartime conflicts with Roosevelt and fierce arguments with

Winston Churchill, despite their relative closeness. These two did not respect French sovereignty over the colonies in Africa or over the islands in the vicinity of the Canadian coast, and they failed to inform de Gaulle in a timely manner about the forthcoming landing of the allied military troops in the French territory, in Normandy, in summer 1944. Considering these circumstances, de Gaulle achieved a huge diplomatic success by getting a seat of the permanent member in the United Nations Security Council.

In December 1944, de Gaulle was already trying to establish a certain balance in foreign policy, and that is why he visited Moscow as the president of the interim government (Laloy, 1982, p. 141). During one week of late-hour negotiations conducted with the Soviet leadership, de Gaulle asked Stalin for territorial concessions at the expense of Germany. Namely, this referred to the annexation of the Ruhr and Saarland regions into France, which had also been the request of Georges Clemenceau, President of the French Government during the First World War and in the post-war years. Clemenceau's request was refused by his war allies, US President Woodrow Wilson and British Prime Minister David Lloyd George. Similarly to Clemenceau, de Gaulle developed a thesis that, in case the above-mentioned regions remained within Germany, this country would keep its economic strength and, thus, continue to pose a geostrategic threat to the peace in Europe. Stalin was cautious and, although generally agreeing with de Gaulle, he drew his attention to depending on the consent of the United States of America and Great Britain. On 10 December 1944, de Gaulle signed an alliance agreement with the USSR. This was the conception



Photo: Shutterstock

of an embryo of something that will be subsequently labelled as a *Gaullist-Mitterrand* concept of France's foreign policy. Namely, this concept recognized the alliance with the United States of America as a key factor, while also advocating for

France's autonomy and strengthening influence in international relations.

After de Gaulle's departure from power in January 1946, in Quai d'Orsay^[4] another concept of France's foreign policy prevailed – the *Atlanticist*

[4] The part of Paris where the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs is located.

one.^[5] It was based on the idea that France should follow the US foreign policy, i.e., that it necessarily had to be a reliable ally of the USA, because for objective reasons, France could no longer have an independent role in the modern world. It is interesting that during the 1960s, François Mitterrand as an opposition politician was an advocate of *Atlanticist* foreign policy, while after coming to power in the 1980s, he conducted *Gaullist* foreign policy. Namely, Mitterrand believed that the end of the Cold War made NATO obsolete and that it was necessary to turn towards the construction of Europe's common defence.

The foundations of *Gaullist* foreign and defence policies were laid with de Gaulle's return to power in 1958 and the establishment of the Fifth Republic. This period was marked by the development of France's nuclear weapons in 1960 and the exit from the NATO's integrated command in 1966.^[6]

III. An attempt at recovering France's lost power through its alliance with Germany and European integrations

There is a thesis that the European Union was founded as an exponent of American interests, or globalism today. In that respect, it is necessary to take into account the historical context of the

post-war division of Europe into the capitalist *West* and the communist *East*. In 1947, through the program called *the Marshall Plan*, the Americans injected financial aid to the countries of West Europe in the amount of \$16.5 billion, an equivalent of today's amount of about \$173 billion (Mioche, 1997, p. 33, 34). The USA intended not only to recover economically its West European allies and to strengthen their position towards the members of the Soviet bloc, but also to ensure their participation in the world trade exchange, i.e., in the purchase of the US sophisticated products. That is the source of the US initiatives creating European organizations for regional economic cooperation through which the distribution of funds would be centralized and controlled.

An important contribution to the creation of today's European Union was made by the initiatives of Jean Monnet, a highly-positioned French official close to Americans. In the First World War, Monnet was involved in organizing supply of the British and French armies, while in the Second World War, apart from logistic tasks, he was also involved in mediating between different groups of the French Resistance movement. After the war, Monnet was at the head of the French Modernization and Re-equipment Commissariat. Jean Monnet concluded that the initiatives for founding the *European federal state*, no matter how essentially justified they were because of the

[5] Eloi Thiboud, *Du Gaullisme au néo-conservatisme, comment la diplomatie française est devenue atlantiste*. Available at: <https://www.lefigaro.fr/vox/monde/2017/06/02/31002-20170602ARTFIG00174-du-gaullisme-au-neo-conservatisme-comment-la-diplomatie-francaise-est-devenue-atlantiste.php> (Accessed on 21 July 2024).

[6] Thomas Wieder, *1966 : la France tourne le dos à l'OTAN*. Available at: https://www.lemonde.fr/international/article/2009/03/10/1966-la-france-tourne-le-dos-a-l-otan_1165992_3210.html (Accessed on 23 July 2024).

atrocious consequences of nationalism and etatism, had no probability of success both due to the differences existing among the European countries and nations, and due to the politicians' resistance towards giving up part of the state's sovereignty (Viansson-Ponté, 1993, p. 27). That is why Monnet proposed reaching the *European federation* via a shortcut, by establishing integrations in certain branches of economy. With time, economic merging would force European politicians to accept political unification. Monnet's ideas found fertile ground for the following reasons. As early as 1947, the USA, with the support of its British ally, advocated for the recovery of divided and occupied Germany. Namely, Americans believed that the occupation of Germany was irrational, particularly when the potential threat came from the East and the entry of the Soviet troops into West Europe. The recovered German state would pose a smaller burden on the allies' budget and would be a barrier towards the Soviet Union. The US initiative caused suspicion in France which had already had two grave war conflicts with Germany. Nevertheless, Frenchmen were aware that the development of Germany's military power relied on the heavy industry of the Ruhr and Saarland basins. In order to keep Germany's heavy industry under control, the French government accepted Jean Monnet's proposal for creating a common European market for coal and steel, which would be governed by supranational European bodies.

After General de Gaulle's departure from power in January 1946, France was ruled by moderate Christian democratic and socialist parties which advocated US initiatives for European integrations. Thanks to the French-German agreement, condi-

tions were created for Robert Schuman, French Minister of Foreign Affairs, to initiate the foundation of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) on 9 May 1950. In the declaration by the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, which is considered the starting point in the post-war unification of Europe, it is pointed out that concrete moves towards European integrations are necessary in order to keep pace on the continent and worldwide (Zečević, 2015, p. 30). The common production of coal and steel in Germany, France and those countries joining them under the authority of supranational *high power* of the Community would be the first step in establishing the European federal state. The declaration of the French government was accepted by Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg. Great Britain was also invited, but its government decided not to participate in the Community, not wanting to put Britain's heavy industry under the authority of supranational European bodies.

General de Gaulle believed that only nations were eternal and that the theses about conceding state sovereignty to European supranational authority were unrealistic. In 1953, the Gaullists prevented the foundation of the European defence as well as political union because they did not want the French army to be subordinated to European authority. In the beginning, de Gaulle had a negative position towards the foundation of the European Economic Community in 1957. He said unofficially that the moment he came to power he would tear up its foundation agreement and throw it away. That is why the advocates of the united Europe looked apprehensively at his return to power in 1958, within the Algerian crisis context.

The foundation of the European Communities in 1951 and 1957 coincided with the collapse of the French colonial empire. After being defeated in the Battle of Dien Bien Phu in 1954, France had to leave its colonies in Asia (French Indo-China), while at the same time the Algerian War of Independence began. In 1956, Frenchmen accepted the peaceful independence of Morocco and Tunisia.^[7]

The European integrations process was supposed to compensate for the loss of colonial territories and to serve France as a *multiplier* of economic development. In the early 1960s, President de Gaulle changed his position towards the European Communities, now seeing them as a potentially useful instrument. By enacting the Agreement on the European Economic Community, he wanted to impose French leadership on the European partners.^[8] De Gaulle's strategy was to use this European integrations process in order to achieve vigorous economic development; supervision over the recovered German state; turning the European Community into the *European Union* under French domination, with extended authorities in the sphere of foreign affairs and defence, which could rank equally with the United States of America and the Soviet Union (Zečević, 2015, p. 433).

However, with the entry of Great Britain into the Communities in 1973, the unification of Germany in 1989 and the accession of new member-states from East Europe in 2004, the French

political influence within the EU institutions became much weaker. Because of the increased number of ministers in the EU Council, the political weight of the French vote in this body became smaller and smaller. Furthermore, since 2004, great member-states have no longer proposed two members of the Commission, but one member instead (Zečević, 2018, p. 103). French credibility was also threatened by the failure in relation to the adoption of the European constitution. Namely, this country initiated and inspired the aforementioned project, having in mind that by the European Convention, which prepared the text of the Constitution, was led by Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, the former French president (Giscard d'Estaing, 2003, p. 11). However, in the 2005 referendum, French voters refused to ratify the international agreement establishing the European constitution. By doing so, France practically played out its European partners, particularly Germany, which has already ratified the proposed agreement in the Bundestag.

In the past decades, France has had slightly slower economic growth, and it has profiled itself as a number 2 geostrategic power in the European Union. Former goals of Gaullist France are far from being achieved. In the context of the globalized world and European neoliberal market, France has allowed the closure or resettlement of industrial facilities outside its territory. Political supervision

[7] *Chronologie de la décolonisation: ses enjeux géopolitique et son impact sur le processus de l'intégration européenne (1944/1975)*. Available at: https://www.cvce.eu/content/publication/2015/12/14/16fdo103-6844-47b7-9998-56c6e2433f6c/publishable_fr.pdf (Accessed on 27 July 2024).

[8] Pierre Velruse, *France/UE: le malaise, pourquoi?*. Available at: <https://www.diploweb.com/France-UE-le-malaise-pourquoi.html> (Accessed on 28 July 2024).

of increasingly stronger and unified Germany has remained an unfulfilled task. Moreover, France has not succeeded in convincing its European partners of the need for constructing independent European defence. The initial idea was to engage and develop France's military industry for the purpose of creating an independent European defence shield. It is in these terms that the statement by President Emmanuel Macron from November 2019 should be seen – that the NATO is *clinically dead*.^[9] Germany quickly let him know that there could be no convincing defence of the European Union outside the NATO, as well as that Germany itself was inclined towards US military protection and acquisition of US military equipment.

In some institutions of the European Union, France is represented in line with its demographic weight. The number of French representatives in the European Parliament is 81, which is the second largest number, after Germany. Just as other member-states, France also has a member in the European Commission, and one representative in the EU Council of Ministers and the Economic and Financial Affairs Council respectively. In those two bodies, the representative of France has the right of veto, primarily in the sphere of foreign affairs, defence and tax policy. However, it should not be forgotten that during the 1960s, in the name of protecting state sovereignty, General de Gaulle opposed the vote overriding in the Council of Ministers of the European Economic Community, i.e., deciding by the qualified majority. In January 1966, the Luxembourg Compromise was adopted, which

prohibits qualified majority voting in those cases when vital national interests of a member-state are threatened, but envisages negotiations until a solution acceptable to all was reached. In practice, the Luxembourg Compromise was not used on a large scale. Namely, the EU member-states respected the provisions of the founding agreement which call for decision-making by the qualified majority, but they never renounced the possibility of citing it extreme need.

Conclusion

The Gaullist idea of French exceptionalism, the national state striving towards the highest accomplishments in the fields of economy, military technology, energy, medicine, media, culture and education, still lives in French society. The foundations of the Gaullist Constitution, which was supposed to provide guarantees of political efficiency and independence in relation to the external impact are still in force. However, nothing is the same as it was before. In today's globalized world, the medium-power French state is under a strong US economic, political and media impact, and that is exactly what General de Gaulle tried to prevent.

France is affected by the weakening industry, lower rates of economic growth and mass migration from the Islamic world. To a certain extent, it is acquiring a syndrome of a society divided into autochthonous Europeans, members of the Judeo-Christian civilization, and Islamic newcomers

[9] *Pour Emmanuel Macron, l'OTAN est en état de mort cérébrale*. Available at: <https://www.lefigaro.fr/international/le-president-francais-emmanuel-macron-juge-l-otan-en-etat-de-mort-cerebrale-20191107> (Accessed on 1 August 2024).

from Africa. The welfare state has decreasing funds for persisting the mass influx of inhabitants unable to understand its history, way of life and rules of behaviour.

France's reputation in the European Union continues to exist thanks to its Gaullist heritage. France is the only member-state of the European Union with military and energy independence to a certain degree, primarily owing to its nuclear technology used for civilian and military purposes. France has developed social rights and the policy of protecting national culture. However, Frenchmen

have been long aware of the fact that they cannot enter independently a fair match with the powers such as the United States of America, China, Russia, as well as India in the near future. The politically and defence-wise independent European Union is the only entity which would have resources for something like that and it is exactly the program and the political idea France is aspiring to realize. Currently this is not feasible because France's partners within the European Union are too dependent on the United States of America in economic and security terms.

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The context and consequences of 2024 early parliamentary election in France: the rise of actors from the right and left spectrum of political action

Abstract: After the poor electoral result of his political option in the European Parliament elections, President of France Emmanuel Macron decided to call an early parliamentary election. This move is unusual in the functioning of the French political system because early parliamentary elections are quite rare in this country. The voters' dissatisfaction with various decisions of Macron during his two presidential mandates were used by the political options from the right and left spectrum of political action for increasing their own rating. However, owing to the electoral system and post-electoral calculations, the political movement led by Macron kept a sort of political power in the Parliament; namely, the opposition actors are not able to form the majority that would lead to cohabitation, which has not been recorded since 2000, when the shortening of the presidential mandate from seven to five years led to the merging of presidential and parliamentary elections in the same year. Such calling of early parliamentary elections, in case they are held at their regular time in the future, separates elections while increasing the possibility of cohabitation being established in the forthcoming period. This paper will analyze and explore the manner in which the French political system will function in that situation, as well as the direction in which further growth of political options on the right and left spectrum.

Keywords: political system of France, parliamentary elections in France, Emmanuel Macron, Rassemblement national, Marine Le Pen, Jean-Luc Mélenchon

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Introduction

The legal organization of the current Fifth Republic has defined the political system as semi-presidential, with the president as the dominant political figure who, therefore, is entitled to dissolve the Assembly and to call early parliamentary election (Knapp and Wright, 2006, pp. 88–89). The reasons for changes in the political and electoral systems should be sought in the fact that during the Fourth Republic the proportional electoral system was in force, which called for establishing coalition governments which were unsteady (Petrović, 2013, p. 96). In that period of the Fourth Republic, in 13 years (1945–1958) as many as 23 governments were changed (Vasović, 2008, p. 119). Early parliamentary elections were not a frequent characteristic of the Fifth Republic, and that option was particularly reduced to minimum after the adoption of the constitutional amendment in 2000, which shortened the presidential mandate from seven to five years, and this system led to the overlapping of presidential and parliamentary elections in the same year, within only several weeks. It suited the political option whose candidate won in the presidential election because, on the wave of such popularity, he managed to achieve a sufficiently good electoral result for his political option, thus reducing the probability of cohabitation to minimum, regardless of the two-cycle majority electoral system and depersonalized voting. However, after the European Parliament elections held on 9th June, the current President of France, Emmanuel Macron, because of the poor election results of his political option Renaissance, decided to call

an early parliamentary election. Macron was criticized because of this move because he was considered to introduce further instability in that way, having in mind that the election was called only several weeks before the beginning of the Olympic Games in Paris, when the whole social focus was on that event. The first cycle was held on 30th June and the second on 7th July. As it has already been said, the electoral system is two-cycle majority in one-mandate electoral units (577 in total), and, in case no candidate has won in the first cycle with the absolute majority, all candidates who had a share in the electorate larger than 12.5% pass to the second cycle. This is exactly one of the key specific features of the electoral system in France because it makes it possible for more than two candidates to pass to the second cycle in one electoral unit, and such a balance of power may lead to a certain type of cooperation between candidates, i.e., to candidates' inter-electoral positioning. That is why for all candidates passing to the second cycle it is important to what extent they will win the support of those who are out of the race, or who have minimal chances for a good electoral result in the second cycle (Orlović, 2011, p. 37). That is the reason why electoral success of a political option in the first cycle does not mean that it will be repeated in the second cycle and ensure a certain number of mandates won.

The 2024 early parliamentary election was held in the period when France, just as many other West European countries, was affected by the economic crisis and when there were two ongoing conflicts in the world: one in the territory of Ukraine, and the other in the Gaza Strip. Moreover, it should be kept

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The banners with candidates for elections legislative Versailles, France - June 26, 2024.

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in mind that, after winning the second presidential mandate, Macron conducted a pension reform by increasing the retirement age from 62 to 64 years, which caused huge dissatisfaction of some citizens and united political options on the left spectrum, but the whole situation, just as other crises, enabled Rassemblement national led by Marine Le Pen to position itself as a strong party of the right centre

and, through less stringent attitudes, to cover a larger range of the electorate. Due to the entire context of election and its importance, the voter turnout of 66% was recorded, which may be considered one of the highest turnouts at parliamentary elections in France. In comparison, at the previous parliamentary election in 2022, voter turnout was under 50% or, more precisely, about 47%.^[2] The change in the

[2] <https://data.ipu.org/parliament/FR/FR-LCo1/election/FR-LCo1-E20220612/> (Accessed on 16 August 2024)

balance of power on the French political scene was indicated by the European Parliament elections, when the greatest support was given to Rassemblement national, and then the United Left led by Jean-Luc Mélenchon. It was exactly the cause for the early parliamentary election in France.

Rise of the right spectrum – an opportunity for Rassemblement national

24 | Political options on the right spectrum of political action are characterized by their inclination towards traditional values such as nation, state, the ideal of order, and hierarchy (Ignazi, 2020, p. 12). In their discourse during their political communication, they often use populism, but it should be taken into account that such a manner of political communication with voters has become dominant for all ideological options. The dominance of populism has been present since 2016, when Donald Trump used that electoral strategy and became president of the United States of America (Anderson and Secor, 2022, p. 3). In the past few years, there has been evident growth of popularity of political actors from the right spectrum and in the places with traditionally different political orientations; the best illustration for it is Sweden, where Swedish Democrats (the right-wing political option) is the largest ruling political party in the current coalition. What suited the growth of the right wing are different forms of crises which emerged in the territory of Europe, starting from the economic crisis in 2008 through to the migration crisis to which Europe did not have a single

answer and which lasted from 2011 to 2015, when several open conflicts occurred in the territory of the Middle East, the most intense being the civil war in Syria. Later on, this was compounded by the COVID crisis and everything related to the beginning of the conflict in Ukraine. However, it is often said in public discourse that such political options are “extreme”, which is not fully true because most of these options belong to the “moderate right”. Further moderation of the attitudes among the political actors belonging to the right spectrum is evident when they become part of the ruling authorities; the best example is Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, who was promoted as “the successor of Mussolini’s politics”, while she continued the politics similar to her predecessors, insisting even more on the NATO integrations. A similar manner of acting of the right spectrum is also visible in Sweden, which has not ceased the process of Sweden’s joining the NATO.

The public in France acts in a similar manner, ascribing the attribute of the “extreme right” to Rassemblement national. That political option, at the time when it was founded by Jean-Marie Le Pen in 1972, really had extreme opinions about certain issues. It relied on the strong leader and promoted nationalism, which is reflected in the idea that the state should turn primarily towards domicile population (Mudde, 2007); namely, this party advocated the stigmatization of certain minority groups, marked as a threat to some traditional values, first of all migrant groups (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2013, p. 166). During the economic crisis affecting France in the 1980s, Rassemblement national used criticism and proposals of idea solutions to overcoming the situation for the first time gained the

status of a parliamentary party (Hubé and Baloge, 2021, p. 26). In that way, it was established in French political life, but never managed to achieve a serious electoral success. Most commonly it had about 15% share in the electorate, while the president of the party Jean-Marie Le Pen passed to the second cycle of the presidential election in 2002 (Perrineau, 2003, p. 27). His daughter Marine Le Pen succeeded him in the place of the president of the party in 2011 and since then the growth of popularity Rassemblement national has been recorded, but still with no electoral victory. Electoral failures motivated Marine Le Pen to alleviate her opinions before the 2022 presidential election, so that from the idea that France should leave the European Union, she came to the attitude that the European Union needs

a “sovereigntist reform”. The final change in this political option occurred before the early parliamentary election in 2024, when Bardella came to the position of the president of Rassemblement national and was their candidate for the French prime minister. During the campaign, he spoke about the necessity of France’s keeping integration with the NATO and of giving up the policy of withdrawing French soldiers from the NATO’s strategic military command (RSE, 2024). From this repositioning of Rassemblement national, it can be concluded that it is impossible to speak about the “extreme” option, but about the “moderate” option instead, particularly because the position of the “extreme right” has been taken by the political movement of Éric Zemmour.



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The replacement of the leader of *Rassemblement national* cannot be considered an essential change, but solely a symbolic change aimed at altering the party's image and winning the voters from the younger population. At the same time, it should not be forgotten that France will have the presidential election in 2027, when Marine Le Pen's candidacy will be expected once again, and she will be able to prepare for the campaign more easily if she reduces her party duties. All these should be recognized as the reasons why the changes occurred at the head of this political option.

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The united left – a potential threat to Macron

The left spectrum in political action is considered to have its roots exactly in France and to have developed during the French Revolution in the desire to ensure equality (Venizelos and Stavrakakis, 2023, p. 290). Later on, during the 20th century, different versions of the left wing developed, from those fully radical ones, such as communism and socialism, to more moderate options such as social-democracy (Ramiro, 2016, p. 2). Today's left spectrum is increasingly getting its form in ecological political parties, popularly called "green" parties.

France has a decades-long experience with political options of socialist orientation, which is perhaps best reflected in two presidential mandates of François Mitterrand from 1981 to 1995 (Milić, 2021). With the strengthening of other political forces, the left spectrum fell into a crisis and was divided into several different

parties, movements and organizations. It seems that Jean-Luc Mélenchon succeeded in uniting these forces within the party *La France Insoumise* before the presidential election in 2022, when he was the main rival of Marine Le Pen in passing to the second cycle. Owing to the pension reform conducted by Emmanuel Macron, after getting his second presidential mandate, Mélenchon became the leader of the left wing after a large number of protests organized throughout France because of Macron's reform-related decision. Another characteristic of Mélenchon's political communication is populism. Within the left spectrum, populism has roots in the action of different Latin American dictators, while Tsipras and his political movement *Syriza* can be considered the founder of populism in Europe (Jager and Borriello 2020, pp. 740–741). Spanish *Podemos* can be considered the "most successful" representative of left-oriented populism (Mazzolini and Borriello, 2022, p. 285). In professional literature, Jean-Luc Mélenchon is mentioned as an example of "left-oriented populism" in France (Marlière, 2019, p. 98). Having in mind the countries in which "left-oriented populism" has developed most, it can be said that it is dominant primarily in the Mediterranean countries. The main characteristic of populism promoted by the left spectrum is the argument about class struggle and criticism of the capitalist system which has grown into a neoliberal system, which in itself causes increasing class differences, i.e., the disappearance of the "middle class" (Venizelos and Stavrakakis, 2023, p. 291). That is why it reached its peak in the period of the 2008 economic crisis, but even today many politicians use this approach. Therefore, any populism seeks

“an enemy” and finds it in corporations and other individuals who encourage capitalism and neoliberalism (Bonansinga, 2022, p. 512). Populism also draws on the Marxist teaching, which may also be observed in Mélenchon’s public action because he used to say that he had “intellectually built himself on Marxism” (Chloé, Bristielle and Chazel, 2021, p. 936).

Jean-Luc Mélenchon is a French politician of long standing, who began his career in the Socialist party, while in 2012 he participated in the presidential election for the first time on behalf of the coalition Front de gauche, but with no great electoral success (Chloé, Bristielle and Chazel, 2021, p. 934). Currently he is probably one of the most successful politicians using “left populism”, while he describes Macron as “the president of the rich” because he was a successful economist and came from the neoliberal school. Moreover, most protests organized against Macron contained the economic component, for example, the “Yellow Vest” protests against the raised price of fuel, or the recent protests against the pension reform. Based on those events, Mélenchon’s La France Insoumise maximized the number of votes. That the left wing in France has stabilized is proved by a series of electoral cycles since 2022. Namely, it was the second-ranked political option after Rassemblement national in the European Parliament elections, while it also improved its rating in both electoral processes for the French Parliament. However, Mélenchon’s inability to position himself in relation to global phenomena and challenges probably cost him a better electoral result (Venizelos and Stavrakakis, 2023, p. 292) although in a relatively short period of time he

managed to become one of the leading political figures in France.

Electoral results – (im)possibility of cohabitation

The specific nature of the French political system is also reflected in the electoral system applied in parliamentary elections. It is the two-cycle majority electoral system with one-mandate electoral units. The specific feature is that all candidates with more than 12.5% votes in the first cycle will pass to the second cycle, and not only the two best-ranking candidates, which is most commonly the characteristic of the two-cycle majority electoral system. This electoral system suits big political parties, and mandates can be won only by those political options that have a developed infrastructure throughout the country. This electoral system has been applied in France since the foundation of the Fifth Republic in 1958, while previously, in the Fourth Republic (1945–1958), the proportional electoral system was applied (Orlović, 2011, p. 37). As the French political system is semi-presidential and the most important political figure is the president, parliamentary elections cannot be considered most important (Dupoirier and Sauger, 2010, p. 26). However, regardless of that fact, every French president’s interest is to minimize the possibility of cohabitation because it affects the efficiency of decision-making in the state and may produce unwanted crises. France has negative experiences with cohabitation, from the period of Mitterrand’s mandate, when first Chirac, and

then Balladur held the prime minister’s position, as well as during Chirac’s presidential mandate, when Jospin was the prime minister. As the main reason for cohabitation, the separation of the electoral process was listed, and that is why, after constitutional amendments in 2000, the presidential mandate was shortened from seven to five years, which made it possible to hold presidential and parliamentary elections in the same year, within only several weeks (Elgie, 2001, pp. 113–114). By calling the early parliamentary election, Macron increased the probability of

cohabitation. His unpopularity has grown since 2022, when he won his second presidential mandate, because of various moves which were not welcomed by citizens. However, Macron does not seem too concerned about it because he is aware of his constitutional authorities and the impossibility of activating a mechanism that would lead to his recall while, on the other hand, he is also aware of the fact that his political career in France will be over in 2027, with the end of his mandate, when he will continue his career within some of the international institutions.

NAME OF THE POLITICAL PARTY	PERCENTAGE OF VOTES WON
Rassemblement national – Marine Le Pen	33.2%
Left Front coalition – Jean-Luc Mélenchon	28%
Renaissance – Emmanuel Macron	20%
Republicans	6.6%
Far Right – Éric Zemmour	0.7%

Table 1. Overview of the results in the first cycle of the parliamentary election in France in 2024^[3]

The first cycle of the parliamentary election in France was held on 30th June. According to the data from Table 1, it can be concluded that Rassemblement national won the largest number of votes in the first cycle of the parliamentary election. The results were somewhat surprising because they were not

fully in compliance with the European Parliament elections held in France only three weeks earlier. That is when Le Pen’s Rassemblement national won 31,9%, Emmanuel Macron’s Renaissance 14.6%, and Mélenchon’s Left Front coalition 9,89%^[4]. A similar electoral result was achieved by Republicans who

[3] The results were downloaded from: <https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2024/07/01/french-election-results-winners-and-losers-in-paris> (Accessed on 14 August 2024)

[4] <https://results.elections.europa.eu/en/france/> (Accessed on 16 August 2024)

had 7.25%, while a much better result as compared to the June parliamentary election was achieved by Socialists – 13.83%^[5]. However, it should be kept in mind that the European Parliament elections have the status of “second-class# elections and voters do not feel such a degree of responsibility as when voting in republic elections (Samardžić, 2015, p. 11). Voter turnout was relatively high for parliamentary elections with as many as 67% registered voters. To what extent the electoral process was uncertain is corroborated by the fact that in 306 electoral units (which is almost half of the total number of electoral units) more than two candidates passed to the second cycle. This situation is believed to suit the political parties which won the greatest support in the first cycle of the parliamentary election. On the other hand, in 76 electoral units, the mandates were allotted after the first cycle, 38 of which went to Rassemblement national. In comparison to the 2022 election, it may be seen that during that electoral process, only five mandates were allotted in

the first cycle. This difference between the two electoral processes within only two years should be explained by the fact that the turnout in the 2024 election was much higher and that the voters clearly expressed their preferences for one of the three strongest political blocs (right, centre, and left). However, after the first cycle, public negotiations were conducted between Emmanuel Macron’s Renaissance and the leader of the left, Jean-Luc Mélenchon. French Prime Minister Attal, who comes from Macron’s party, said that in the second cycle “no one must give a single vote to Marine Le Pen”. It was fully in line with what Macron said at the end of the first cycle – that broad cooperation is necessary to stop the growth of Rassemblement national. Sharper rhetoric before the second cycle of the parliamentary election led to the cooperation between the candidates representing the political options of Macron and Mélenchon respectively in many electoral units.

NAME OF THE POLITICAL PARTY	PERCENTAGE OF VOTES WON	NUMBER OF MANDATES WON
Rassemblement national – Marine Le Pen	33.35%	143
Left Front coalition – Jean-Luc Mélenchon	28.28%	182
Renaissance – Emmanuel Macron	21.79%	168
Republicans	7.25%	60

Table 2. Overview of the results in the second cycle of the parliamentary election in France in 2024^[6]

[5] <https://results.elections.europa.eu/en/france/> (Accessed on 14 August 2024)

[6] The results were downloaded from: <https://www.france24.com/en/france/20240704-2024-french-legislative-elections-results-of-the-second-round> (Accessed on 14 August 2024)

In the second cycle, there was similar large voter turnout of over 66.5%, which is the largest turnout in the second cycle of parliamentary elections ever since 1997. In Table 2 it can be seen that there was no great percentage change in the results between three most popular political options in France. Nevertheless, there is a huge disproportion in *Rassemblement national* between the number of votes and the mandates won. It is one of the negative consequences of the majority electoral system because it is not enough to have the voters' large support; namely, such support needs to be distributed as evenly as possible within electoral units in order to maximize the number of votes (Nohlen, 1992, p. 89). The negative campaign against *Rassemblement national* produced results and, when complemented by various associations of other electoral participants, it led to the electoral defeat of this party. However, the problem arises as to the direction which the formation of the new government will take in the future. According to the current constellation of power, no one has the majority of its own, not even in a sort of coalition with smaller political parties. That is why Macron is prolonging the formation of the new government since there is no specific legal deadline. It is clear that new election will be avoided because many people expected that he would be defeated in this election as well, but he still survived "politically". However, instability in the political life France remained. First, in September 2024 (more than two months after the election), Michel Barnier was elected president of the government – in two mandates, he had been the European commissioner for regional politics and home market, and one of the main

negotiators on the occasion of Great Britain's exit from the European Union in 2016, while he also performed several different ministerial duties in the periods when major state functions were held by politicians such as François Mitterrand, Jacques Chirac and Nicolas Sarkozy. Barnier became prime minister as a member of the Republican Party and his political positioning can be characterized as moderately right-wing, which was used by many as an argument that Macron had made a certain concession to the right wing. The members of his political option often described him as "a disappointed Macronist" who had frequently criticized Macron in the previous years, but the public consensus was that, when it came to many key questions such as economy and perspectives of the functioning of the European Union, it was necessary align with Macron's solutions. The conflicts with Macron began in 2019, when Macron did not support him in becoming the president of the European Commission, and in 2020, when Macron's condition was that he had to leave the republicans in order to become the prime minister instead of Édouard Philippe.

However, this government was soon voted out of office on 4th December. As many as 351 MPs voted, which is a large and steady majority because the minimum majority is 289 MPs. The government was overthrown together by the political options from the left and right spectrum, while the trigger for such voting was the adoption of the Law on the Budget. Only several days later, Macron proposed a new candidate for the president of the government – it was François Bayrou, the leader of the centrist Democratic Movement, one of the minor political parties in France. Furthermore, he has a decades-

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French newspaper Le Monde, French map elections result, PARIS APR 24, 2017

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long political experience in different French governments and in the European Commission. The need for a longer-standing government is reflected in the fact that Bayrou appointed former prime ministers Élisabeth Borne and Manuel Valls for the members of his government. The government was elected thanks to the minority support, which means that at any moment the issue of voting the government out of office may easily be put on the agenda. In this way, Bayrou became the fourth French prime minister in the course of 2024, and the sixth during Macron's presidency, or since 2017. Exactly this matter of trust in the

government in the French parliament was raised at the beginning of February 2025. The parliament's agenda included the question of the budget which had not been adopted by the assembly in 2024, but the left-wing parties, led by La France Insoumise, managed to include voting for the trust in the government. A total of 128 MPs voted against the government, which was insufficient to "overthrow" this government. Bayrou kept his position as the prime minister thanks to the fact that Rassemblement national and the socialists did not support the proposal for voting the government out of office.

32 | Although the image is created in the public that with Bayrou the stability of political action has been established in France, it is clear that the government may collapse at any moment. In particular, increasing tensions between political actors are expected as the 2027 presidential election comes closer. That is why it would not be unexpected if by the end of Macron's mandate some more changes occurred at the head of the party. Yet another factor to be taken into account is the redistribution of political power at the geopolitical level with Donald Trump becoming president of the United States of America and his wish to limit the power of the European Union and the leading EU member-states, including France. That is why Macron is preoccupied with foreign policy topics, which could lead to neglecting the government's status, and experienced politicians such as Marine Le Pen and Jean-Luc Mélenchon will try to use. That is how De Gaulle's observation is fully proved – that it is difficult “to run the state that produces 246 different kinds of cheese” (Vasović, 2008, p. 534).

What might have the greatest and far-reaching consequences to the future functioning of France's political life is the separation of presidential and parliamentary elections. For more than 40 years, French experts have tried to find a solution as to how to merge electoral processes and to reduce the possibility of cohabitation. If France enters the regular electoral course, the separation of electoral processes may increase the probability of cohabitation in the oncoming period, which may affect the efficiency of deci-

sion-making and the positioning of France within the European Union, as well as decision-making about other major geopolitical topics, where France is expected to play a proactive role. At the same time, cohabitation may increase the level of the political crisis in France and lead to frequent changes of the government.

Final considerations

The early parliamentary election in France proved the existence of several trends in political processes. First of all, different social and political crises had left their trace in the functioning of the French political system and it was necessary to make a huge change. Macron's decision to call elections should be seen as courageous in the situation when he was defeated in the European Parliament elections and when these polls showed great likelihood of his facing defeat in the parliamentary election as well. Nevertheless, this decision to call the early parliamentary election should also be related to the fact that he has no political authority, so he could not solve the crisis in French society in any other way. The elections showed that the left spectrum had returned on a large scale to France, regardless of the evident crisis of that political option in many countries. With his populist discourse, Mélenchon managed to win a large number of votes. However, the direction of his political career depends chiefly on his future political positioning.

NAME OF THE POLITICAL PARTY	PERCENTAGE OF VOTES WON	NUMBER OF MANDATES WON
Rassemblement national – Marine Le Pen	17.3%	89
Left Front coalition – Jean-Luc Mélenchon	31.6%	131
Renaissance – Emmanuel Macron	38.57%	245
Republicans	7.29%	61

Table 3. Overview of the parliamentary election results in France in 2022^[7]

Another important element to be highlighted as the indicator of this election is that the right spectrum is on the rise in France as well as a trend throughout Europe. It can be best seen in Table 3, from which it is clear that support to Rassemblement national has almost doubled in only two years. It seems that such support would have affected the number of mandates even more if the votes had been evenly distributed and if there had been no inter-electoral cooperation of other political actors. What can be seen is a blatant decline in support to Emmanuel Macron who is in the “exiting” presidential mandate and such political rating clearly does not concern him. It is interesting that Mélenchon’s left spectrum won fewer votes in percentage terms in the 2024, but it used the electoral system to increase the number of mandates, and such maximization was at the expense of Rassemblement national for the above-listed reasons.

Once again, the thesis was repeated about the majority electoral system leading to a disproportionate number of mandates in relation to

the percentage of votes. It is clear that De Gaulle and legislators who created the current electoral system in France were guided by the desire to form single-party governments and to enlarge the political system (Duverger, 1964, p. 219). There is an impression that it did not contribute to more ef-



Photo: Shutterstock

cient functioning of the French political system, given the experience with coalition governments

[6] The results were downloaded from: <https://data.ipu.org/parliament/FR/FR-LC01/election/FR-LC01-E20220612/> (Accessed on 14 August 2024)

34 | in France, particularly in the past few years; for example, in the previous government, Republicans had to support Renaissance in order to get the majority, while the similar fate of the French political life could also be seen after the early parliamentary election in 2024. The positive trend is voter turnout which has substantially increased in comparison to the previous election in 2022. In various European elections, there is already a tendency of increasing electoral abstention because of mistrust and dissatisfaction with the political elites (Medel, 2024, p. 226). Nevertheless, the high level of political culture typical of France has decisively led to voters understanding the context of the electoral process and, thus, its importance, so that they participate in that activity, which is the main reason for the increase in voter turnout (Voinea, 2023, p. 2296).

Perhaps the most important effect of this electoral process is taking starting positions for the presidential election to be held in 2027. Since Macron cannot run for the position, there will be

a vacancy for a candidate on the centrist position, and Marine Le Pen and Jean-Luc Mélenchon have proved to be the most serious candidate so far. It seems that Attal, former French prime minister, who comes from Macron's political party, is a weak candidate and it is disputable whether he would ever pass to the second cycle. Therefore, Macron's further moves and turning towards more experienced politicians such as Barnier and Bayrou clearly indicate that one of them can become the presidential candidate in the 2027 election, who will be supported by Macron. Both politicians gravitate towards the centre in their political actions and have similar attitudes as Macron about major issues; these are the reasons why they can get Macron's full support, which may be an important factor of the campaign. Therefore, in the oncoming period France will certainly encounter numerous political and social challenges, and that is why the unity of the most relevant political actors is necessary regarding key issues – which does not seem achievable at the moment.

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France and Geopolitics: A Complicated Story Threatened by EU and NATO Memberships

Abstract: The author of this paper addresses French geopolitics, or today's position of France in the context of its membership in the European Union and the NATO. The starting assumption is that the membership in these two organizations limits the French position and opportunities for reviving French geopolitics which formerly put forward national interests and the sovereignty of the state. Having in mind that the EU and the NATO are a threat to France's true geopolitics, in the first part of the paper the author justifies his thesis, first in the context of France's position in the EU and the NATO, and the in relation to the ideology of positivist liberal internationalism. In the second part, the author analyzes the introduction of geopolitics in the French educational system and recognizes advantages and disadvantages in the system itself. Finally, the author offers a solution to the foundation of the French geopolitical thought which should be based on glorious history and a patriotic elite.

Keywords: France, geopolitics, education, positivism, history, European Union, NATO

Introduction

French geopolitics is becoming less visible and less centred on French interests and specific views of the world since the EU construction took a federalist turn after the Maastricht treaty and the emergence of a political elite (transcending political parties) around Emmanuel Macron, that put first the EU

against French interests; and French return into NATO. Added to this, the study of geopolitics in French curricula will less likely be a first emancipatory step against US-EU geopolitics and ideologies, but will support them as programs of geopolitics are ill-conceived and biased. After analysing the negative impact that NATO and the EU have on French geopolitics, this paper will investigate the

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evolution of mentalities and how the liberal turn makes it harder to think about the very idea of an autonomous French geopolitics. The paper will finally conclude by looking how the specificity of French history and geography can provide a solution to French challenges.

It is necessary to understand the meaning of geopolitics in the context of revival or birth of independent French geopolitical thought. Geopolitics is key to understanding international relations; it points to “how to rule” and how, in a certain context, to create foreign policy strategies aimed at preserving national integrity and state sovereignty. Therefore, struggling to develop French geopolitics implies a road towards a more sovereign and independent position of France, which is challenging in current circumstances, since France is a member of the NATO and the EU as supranational institutions which demand transferring part of sovereignty to the supranational level. The paper starts from the above-stated attitude and, through a critical review of the ideology of positivist liberal internationalism, tries to show the uniformity of the Euro-Atlantic perspective which prevents the establishment of French geopolitics.

EU and NATO as threats for “real French” geopolitics

Currently, French geopolitics and geopolitical thinking is under the threat of a dual mechanism: the security architecture in which France is part of: NATO and the EU; and the current dominating mindset, that constrain and uniformises political thinking.

What security context to choose: French security architecture or Americanized EU and NATO architectures?

Since the end of the Second World War, General de Gaulle had repeatedly defined the type of European union he intended to promote. To him, any EU project should be based on the principles of respect for national sovereignty of States, and complete independence (politically, economically and culturally) from the United States, through the establishment of what he called „European Europe”. For him, France in particular, and Europe more generally, should be completely autonomous in all aspects and should promote and act according to its own vision of the world and of world issues. This means rejecting both the tutelage (or vassalisation to take the words of Zbigniew Brzezinski in *The Grand Chess Board*) of the United States and federal integration, which depoliticizes States’ relations

The Élysée Treaty subsequently signed between France and Germany should have paved the way for a political partnership within a renewed European framework. But General de Gaulle was dealt a blow when, at the time of ratification, the Bundestag drafted and voted on a preamble which, in line with joint pressure from the Americans, Jean Monnet and his Action Committee for the United States of Europe, „reframed” the treaty in terms of a close link with NATO and reduced it to a single agreement on regular consultations. Germany’s refusal to revalue the Mark in the wake of the crisis that had just shaken France convinced (de Gaulle) that it had returned to a policy of power. That understanding proved to be a good analysis when one looks at Berlin’s power play within the



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EU, especially since Ursula van der Leyen has been appointed and the German attempts through the EU to attack French nuclear energy sector under the disguise of the “green energy” argument (this attack is even acknowledged by the EU Parliament!).^[2]

The continuing confrontation between Atlanticists and supranationalists on the one hand and

supporters of an inter-state „European Europe” on the other was therefore inevitable, and continues to be. De Gaulle was aware of the geopolitical permanency of the long term, which transcended immediate political circumstances. It is in this context that we need to understand his expression „Europe from the Atlantic to the Urals”, which looked to the

[2] https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2023-002175_EN.html (Accessed on 21 October 2024).

future after communism and rejected this ideology by marking its temporal limit. However, the advocates of the integration of the smaller Europe had only built this European identity within the borders between the two blocs, a short-sighted concept that would prove fatal in their dismay at the fall of the Berlin Wall and that of Soviet communism.

History is always full of surprises when it comes to the apparent logic of its sequencing. For example, General de Gaulle was adamantly opposed to Britain joining the Community on the grounds that it would be the United States' „Trojan horse” in Europe. Yet this same Britain defended the Gaullists' equal aversion to supranationality. In the same way, the Fouchet project proposed by the French was hastily rejected by their partners even though, according to its inspirers, it could have inaugurated a genuine European political union; these same partners being very attached to the accession of Great Britain, which was developing a conception of European organisation that was far removed from their own.

This question of what the European security context and framework should be came back to life starting from 2019 and Emmanuel Macron's words: “l'OTAN est en mort cérébrale”^[3] By this, the French president meant that NATO was no longer pertinent and lost its reason of existence. That was a right analysis. Instead, France supported the concept of “EU strategic compass” (a concept waiting to be clearly defined). These two concepts are, however, as problematic and dangerous for French geopolitics as is NATO. The idea in itself is a way forward

for Europe's true independence from the US as it means that European security should be guaranteed by European and not by actors outside the region (such analysis is similar to Chinese and Russian foreign policy discourses and objectives related to regional conflict resolutions, Grandpierron & Pomès, 2024). The issue with Emmanuel Macron's words is that by Europe he means the European Union. If he really meant Europe as a whole, then the new security architecture would be very much what De Gaulle had in mind and would include Russia, thus resuscitating the historical alliance between France and Russia, that very same alliance that was established against German domination attempts at the end of the 19th century (Cohrs, 2022). Only such security framework could guarantee stability in Europe and exclude outside powers (the US) from using Europe as “battleground” to contain what they perceive as threats to their world hegemony, to keep paraphrasing Brzezinski. In addition, such understanding, because it would include Russia and Serbia, two doors opened towards the future: the BRICS, would connect Europe to where world economy is shifting to. However, such understanding is not Emmanuel Macron's. By Europe, he means the European Union, and it is very different. Instead of an autonomous Europe in which States would maintain their own strategic agendas based on their interests, an EU developing a real foreign policy and security architecture would mean the end of States' national sovereignty. A latest expression of this, is the French President's declaration to use French nuclear weapons to protect the Baltic countries

[3] <https://www.lefigaro.fr/international/le-president-francais-emmanuel-macron-juge-l-otan-en-etat-de-mort-cerebrale-20191107> (Accessed on 22 October 2024).

against Russia. Engaging in the path of an EU as a unified security actor leads to the consequence that all EU members to view the world the same way: having the same understanding of threats and opportunities. This is simply not possible, unless it is argued and belied that that cultures and national histories and political philosophies are all the same.

Then came the Russian special military operation in Ukraine and all the emotional European and North American policies, called “sanctions” (a misleading word deprived from its true legal meaning), which brought Europe and France back to their status of US vassals. The word “sanction” is problematic, because, in its semantics refers to the idea of a judged thing, a judgement rendered by an impartial court and sanctions a social behaviour considered as unacceptable. The objective is therefore twofold, when used by a State: to punish an actor deemed to be deviant but also to limit the room for manoeuvre of a rival power wanting to change the rules of the international system. However, the use of the term ‘sanction’, in an indeterminate way to encompass all measures taken against a state, hides under a legal terminology, often improper, a will to impose its values and perpetuate the international order (Koskenniemi, 2004; Anghie, 2004; Chimni, 2017).

The use of the term ‘sanctions’ in political discourse requires a distinction to be made between sanctions adopted in a multilateral institutional framework (United Nations, etc.) and countermeasures decided by states. In both cases, they are coercive measures aimed at influencing the behaviour of a state deemed to be in violation of international rules. However, the term ‘sanctions’ should be reserved for coercive measures adopted by an organ of

an international organisation in accordance with its constitutive treaty. Far from defending a vision of a universally accepted international order, ‘sanctions’ participate in the imposition of an interpretation of the international order (Sur, 2018). International law is in fact mostly understood as the capacity of international law to regulate international relations, *i.e.* to constrain the behaviour of states. That goes without saying that most of the so-called sanctions taken by European countries are hurting their own vital interest (especially energetic).

Geopolitical thinking prevented by the spread of positivist liberal internationalism ideologies

France and, more generally, European countries are also the prisoner of a specific mindset that prevents them from developing their own geopolitics. This mindset is a sort of evolution of the mindset that dominated American and European politics in the years 1860-1914 and lead inexorably to the suicide of European civilization during the First World War. Political mindsets and communication took a clear racial turn to form a sort of “civilisational nationalism” that opposed Western powers (Britain, France, the US) against those judged underdeveloped (Colonial sphere, China) and those judged immoral and decadent (German and Austro-Hungary Empires). Political scientist Max Weber explained that, in this period, the elites of the “most advanced” powers also became obsessed with measuring global hierarchy, the “rise and fall” of nations and empires, and all form of progress. Thinking about progress became linked to social Darwinism to form a “civilizational Darwinism” thinking. The combination

of “civilizational nationalism” and of “civilizational Darwinism” made political elites cantered their discourses (implicitly or explicitly) on the idea that what nations and states were engaged in was essentially a struggle for the survival of the “fittest” civilization (Cohrs, 2022).

There are similarities between these elements and what we can observe in the US and Europe at the occasion for the 2024 elections, mostly European elections, French Parliamentary elections and upcoming US Presidential election. These elections are showing that political discourses are getting more and more ideologized. It is not the exact same ideology as in the years 1860-1914, but an evolved version of it that is based on the idea that the “West” has the best political systems and values as it “won the Cold War”. This ideology is combined by a new cult in science (positivism namely) to form a sort of “positivist liberal internationalism” that argues that development and peace in the world can only be guaranteed by the spread of Western political regimes and values against countries seen as rivals and threats (China, Russia, Iran, etc.).

Positivism grew out of a movement to establish a solid foundation for social science enquiry. Since Waltz and his 1959 book *Man, the State and War*, political science has enthusiastically taken the turn towards technicality and positivism. At last, political science was to become the equal of the hard sciences: analytical protocol, transformation of thought into quasi-mathematical thinking organised around dependent and independent variables. Finally, political science would be able to identify the general rules governing the behaviour of men and political phenomena: the causes of wars, electoral motivations, and so on. The perverse effect,

which underlies what has been studied over these two days, is that history has become a data-set. As soon as facts can be fitted into preconceived boxes, used to justify two opposing events, we arrive at preconceived thinking, automatic thinking, thinking transformed into an equation.

Positivism applied to political science research method contributed to put aside factors of human behaviour that were long identified by Thucydides (Hanink, 2019). As such, cultures, philosophies, perceptions and emotions were considered as not scientific and not worth of being a subject of research. When emotions were taken into account in analyses of international relations, they often tend to be studied from a utilitarian, or at least rationalist, point of view. Hans Morgenthau is to some extent responsible for this, no doubt in spite of himself, by including fear in the highly rationalist model of nuclear deterrence (Morgenthau, 1946).

This approach evacuates all subjectivity, social ties and emotions in social relations. Positivism makes us imagine the worst-case scenario: this is especially true in hardcore realism and liberalism. For many positivist security scholars, international actors are driven by external forces that push them in a particular direction. Future threats are deduced from past trends, as if the social world advances in a linear fashion. Finally, alarmism assumes rational, self-interested and strategic actors struggling for power and resources. In this competitive universe, there is no room for real cooperation, social ties, or anything that we can liken to an international society with “constitutional structures” or the development of a new regional order. This alarmism is rational insofar as the threatening actions are not attributed to actors driven by passion or revenge, but to cold

self-interest or historical forces. A current argument in West-European and North American literatures is what they call the “China threat” or the “Russian threat” (Lindemann, 2023). These countries are often presented as homogeneous actors that “rise” and appear to be intent on imposing its will on the world in a near future through a long-standing strategic plan.

Positivism denies any place for heterogeneity, creativity, and social connections between actors. First, with regard to the subject, positivist approaches have a mainly homogenizing and aggregative approach to subjects that denies individuality. While some categorization and typification are necessary for any science to “know” certain aspects of social reality, nomological positivism tends to reify these categories and, for example, personify aggregations with given interests and emotions, such as the desire of “China” to dominate. This unification can make actors appear particularly powerful and dangerous. If actors are perceived as unified, such as “Russia”, “China”, “North Korea” or “Iran”, it becomes easier to attribute a coherent will to them. It is often forgotten that foreign policy actions are more often the result of compromise than coordinated policy.

The positivist logic also leads to understand concepts only in their Euro-Atlantic understanding. As such, a “democracy” can only be a political construction matching with the Euro-Atlantic understanding. Any other model is not a “true” democracy, cannot be qualified as such and is in fact a manipulatory attempt by corrupted elites to pretend to be a democracy. The conclusion is, wrongly, to assume cultures, histories, civilizations are all equal.

In his book *Le Naufrage des Civilisations*, Amin Maalouf explains that globalisation, facilitated and supported by technological development, is forcing the different components of humanity closer together to such an extent that these different components are tending to become increasingly uniform. Yet there is a paradox: people adhere to doctrines and ideologies that glorify particularism. People are coming together more and more every day, and the clash of identities is becoming increasingly violent. But it cannot be said that we have not been warned. Zamyatin, Huxley and Orwell did. All three wanted to warn their contemporaries of the tyrannies to come and the totalitarian use that could be made of technological tools to wipe out all freedom and human dignity. In *Nous autres*, Zamyatin describes a world in which every aspect has been meticulously planned, timed and transcribed into mathematical formulae represented by the Table of Hours (personal hours, hours devoted to a particular activity, etc).

Are we heading for a world where Big Brother sees and hears everything? A world where language is so controlled and perverted that we can only express opinions that conform to official thinking? This is already happening in the European Union (right from its construction, Laughland, 1998) and the United States: suppression of media (Russian media – but Israelian remain allowed thus showing a biased vision, *CNews* etc.) and opinions that do not conform to the delirium-filled vision of COVID-19 and war in Ukraine. All these measures seriously undermine democracy. Indeed, the fundamental pillar on which democracy rests is transparency. Mearsheimer shows this very well in his latest book, *The Great Delusion* (2018). Transparency means

that everyone has access to the information they need to make decisions. War puts an end to this, under the guise of protecting the secrecy of operations (it would be a shame for the enemy to know about military plans). Information is policed, controlled and reconstructed. Under the guise of trying to intercept conversations between terrorists, we take advantage of the opportunity to listen in on the calls of economic competitors, identify political opponents, and so on.

44 | During the Cold War, Henry Kissinger distinguished between two types of foreign policy. Western foreign policies were structured around the use of rational, objective data, resulting in diplomatic cables that were easy to interpret and from which everyone could make a cost/benefit calculation; and on the other hand, Eastern foreign policies were built around opaque, internal, irrational and emotional factors. In conclusion, there was nothing new in the West, and when reference was made to irrational desires, these had to be translated into scientific, neutral and credible language. Now, it is the other way around: “Eastern” diplomacy is rational, engages with Realpolitik. The latest example is the key Chinese influence in the Saudi-Iranian rapprochement, while Western diplomacy becomes inaudible because it becomes too emotional: it is out of question to negotiate with Putin because Putin is made in public and official discourses the embodiment of Evil.

That was not always the case. During the Cold War, France was able to remain influential in the world because it had an autonomous foreign policy constructed around French interests. As such, France remained a respected actor and paved the way to major turning points, one of which was Gen-

eral De Gaulle’s visit to the USSR at the peak of the Cold War and recognition of the People’s Republic of China as the true China, years before Nixon and Kissinger.

Positivist liberal internationalism is based on the interpretation that the West “won” the Cold War. As such not only the West got prestige, but also the certitude that the Western model was the ultimate stage of human development. This is what Fukuyama wrote about (2020). This neo-Kantian position assumes that individual states with democratic political regimes constitute an ideal that the rest of the world will follow as it offers the best future for a peaceful world order: the more democracies there are, the more peaceful the world will be; the fewer democracies there are, the less peaceful the world will be (Russett, 1994). These ideas are now part of European and North American countries’ foreign policies and are known under the concepts of humanitarian interventions and responsibility to protect (Orford, 2013), and are strongly criticised by other countries, such as the BRICS (Sahakyan & Gärtner, 2022; Maalouf, 2023) and more generally by what the West calls with contempt: the Third World, constituting the basis of the “revolt against the West” (Buzan, 1977; Wight, 1977; Badie, 2013).

Such thinking brings back to life the colonial belief that the West was once again the centre of civilization. Liberal ideology makes it hard for liberal leaders to accept any contestation or power sharing, whether at home or on the international scene. Right from the beginning liberal thinkers wrote about the necessity to avoid losing power, especially to the people. How to keep power between people of good company is the whole point of Publius’s reflection in *The Federalist*. At the time, it was a question

of optimizing the political and electoral system, and from that point on, political thought developed, especially thanks to critical approaches. Gramsci (2001), Foucault (1995) and Steven Lukes (1974) all emphasised the power of ideology in shaping the masses. The state then becomes a safeguard in the service of the ruling class: it has to protect it against itself by introducing a few reforms from time to time designed to show the dominated classes that the capitalist system is indeed their only means of improving their conditions.

Resorting to positivism combined with international liberalism leads to the negation of history and of the particularism of nations, cultures and civilisations. They lead to uniformity and thus to the rejection of differences. The conclusion of this is that Europe is slowly losing its independence by adopting ways of thinking, views of the world that contradict with its long-lasting history. This is reflected in the current French high school curriculum, especially in the programs of history and of geopolitics.

Geopolitics in education programs in France:
a good idea wasted by the a liberal
mondialist “French” elite

Geopolitics made a comeback since 2019 in the high school syllabuses. Geopolitics, as part of the “history-geography, geopolitics, political science” collection of disciplines, is one of the three most popular specialty options for the baccalaureate exam. This resurgence in the teaching of geopolitics is certainly to be welcomed, but it does have a number of weaknesses and cognitive biases.

What place does the study of geopolitics have in France?

The enthusiasm for the discipline of geopolitics is in itself quite unique and French. It is also very French to make geopolitics a quasi-university discipline (it lacks a dedicated section on the Conseil National des Universités to become a university discipline in its own right). Indeed, no other teaching model gives geopolitics as much prominence as the French system.

The French attraction to geopolitics is undoubtedly historically linked to the influence and place of geography in French universities. For a long time, geographers vigorously opposed the emancipation of geopolitics from geography. During the 20th century, geographers sought to establish a scientific, ‘serious’ geography. This led to preference being given to physical geography because of its technical nature: it has its own complex vocabulary, its own methodology - everything needed to make it a science in a very positivist intellectual context. By setting aside the human and political aspects of geography, geographers at the beginning of the 20th century tried to forget the importance that Emmanuel de Martonne had for Clemenceau in the redrawing of borders in Europe from 1919 onwards. Emmanuel de Martonne also did his utmost to have his importance forgotten.

Today, the situation is very different. One might even say that we have gone from one extreme (rejection of geopolitics) to another (overabundance of geopolitics): the term ‘geopolitics’ is used indiscriminately by journalists and essayists. This renewed interest can perhaps be explained by the international political aspects of the history and

geography syllabuses in France. A more profound reason for this French attraction to geopolitics could be concern about France's loss of strategic initiative since the end of the Cold War, its return to NATO and recent developments in the European Union. The attraction for geopolitics would then be a manifestation of a kind of unconscious nostalgia for the time of France's rediscovered greatness during the presidency of General de Gaulle; a time when France acquired civil and military nuclear power, when Paris dealt with Washington as well as Moscow and recognised Mao's China as the 'real' China, well before the Americans and Nixon's trip to Beijing in 1972.

Indeed, teaching and practising geopolitics means first and foremost seeing oneself on the international stage, with one's own interests, and thinking about opportunities and threats independently. Other European countries have chosen to be strategically dependent on the United States (Central and Eastern Europe) and in so doing have accepted to see the world in the same way as their protector.

Geopolitics in curriculum: a biased and disorganized initiative

Since 2019, geopolitics has been taught as part of the reform of the Bac and the introduction of specialties. Geopolitics is not taught separately, but has been combined with other subjects to form the specialty of 'history-geography, geopolitics and political science'. While it is clear that the aim at lycée is mainly to provide an introduction, to 'rough out' the disciplines, the programme that has been put together raises a number of questions.

The definition of geopolitics given in the Ministry of Education's official guidelines is restrictive, as it „considers rivalries and power issues between territories in their historical depth, as well as the representations that accompany them”. But geopolitics is more than that. The syllabus appears to be more a juxtaposition of empirical situations than a programme for developing thought. This is evidenced by the absence of a chapter on concepts, thinkers and the methodology of geopolitical analysis. Without concepts, it is difficult to put things into perspective or to make comparisons.

Surprisingly, France is not really studied, except through the question of heritage. In *Elective Affinities*, Goethe states that it is wrong, from the point of view of pedagogical quality, to teach children about distant species before they are familiar with the flora and fauna of their own country. In fact, the programme focuses on the United States, India and China. It is also regrettable that the non-Western countries studied, such as China and India, are studied through a cognitive bias. Their foreign policies are analysed through the model of assertion on the international stage used by the European powers in the 19th century and by the United States after 1945, without taking into account their own systems of thought, histories and cultures. These cognitive biases create the trap of believing that non-Western countries are driven by the same appetite for world domination as Western countries, which is certainly a possibility, but not the most likely one.

Finally, certain themes, such as borders, are not well thought out. The theme of borders is based around an approach reduced to a simple internal/external or them/us dichotomy, thus implicitly allowing us to conceive of borders as a source of

danger and conflict, which they can be, but not always. It is also regrettable that borders are studied without making any reference to what they serve to distinguish: the State.

Embracing glorious history and the need for a patriotic elite as geopolitical solution to seize opportunities and navigate challenges

For the past two centuries, France has been plagued by the fear of decline. How could it be otherwise when France remembers that it was the hegemonic power in Europe at the time of Louis XIV and Napoleon I, that French was the language of diplomacy until the Treaty of Versailles, that it set the tone throughout the 18th century in terms of civilisation, good taste and refinement, that it was considered, at the time of the Revolution, as the birthplace of the modern ideas of human rights and national sovereignty; that it was seen as the 'great nation' in the 19th century, despite its demographic decline; that it was capable of the greatest sacrifices during the First World War to triumph over German imperialism?

Sweden, Spain and Austria were also dominant powers in their time, but they all agreed to fall into line once their decline became apparent. Not so France. France may be one of the countries most worried about its future, but the fear of decline has encouraged it not to give up its position. The desire to stave off decline can be explained by the French's habit of seeing their country as a power that must play a major role in the world. It expresses both the nostalgia of a nation capable of

influencing the destiny of the world and the need for renewal in order to maintain its position. This desire to remain influent in the world is fuelled by the imperative of greatness as solution to regain geopolitical influence.

After each of its failures, France has managed to adapt to regain its room for manoeuvre and overcome the new perils that threatened it. From 1958 onwards, France's image once again became that of an independent country, free of its debts and respected in international bodies. On his return to power, General de Gaulle asserted greater sovereignty over the US, notably by opposing the stationing of American medium-range rockets on French soil. In February 1960, France's first atomic bomb exploded in the Sahara. In 1966, France withdrew from NATO's integrated command and closed the American bases on French territory. The policy of greatness enabled France to become once again a nation that was listened to around the world, particularly by the Arab world and the Third World, a champion of independence, criticism of imperialism, openness towards the East and China, cooperation and development. National interests now take precedence over the constraints imposed by the bipolarisation of the world and the ideological confrontation between the two blocs. Its language is one of the five most widely spoken in the world, although it is losing ground in international organisations and the Americanisation of culture has led to a real retreat from French, including in Africa. Its diplomatic network is the third largest in the world, behind those of China and the United States. Its army is the only one in Europe able to project itself into the world. It has military bases in Africa, the Middle East and

the Indo-Pacific. On the economic front, it has a number of flagship companies, particularly in the aerospace (Airbus), arms (Dassault, Safran, Thalès), oil (Total) and luxury (LVMH) sectors. Its realisation that it is no longer just a middle power explains its determination to make Europe a power multiplier, even if successive enlargements have diluted its influence in an EU of 27.

In fact, nothing condemns France to oblivion, apart from a lack of will and/or failure to defend the French state, the French culture against the attacks of globalization through the US and the EU policies. This is the problem: France has for leaders the politicians who do not believe in the French way, nor do they appreciate nor respect the French culture and language. In this respect, Emmanuel Macron's presidency is a complete shame: declarations abroad that "there is no French culture"^[4], degrading the function of the President by all is ill-suited pictures^[5], denigrating French history during the 2024 Olympics opening ceremony^[6], selling pioneered French start-ups judged "vital" for the French defence industry to the US^[7], promoting the EU interests instead of French interests, and the political institutions are no longer respected nor trusted following the 2024 Parliamentary elections.

That is the major challenge: how is it possible to be heard abroad if the country is not seen first and foremost as a solid state at home? France appears to be a country of conflict, with a lack of social dialogue, trade unions that are generally unrepresentative, repeated strikes and a culture of protest. The „Gilets jaunes” movement of 2018-2019 was followed by demonstrations and strikes over pensions in the winter of 2022-2023, and then riots in the suburbs in June and July 2023. While the State monopolises 58% of the wealth it produces, the public service is deteriorating, as shown by the situation of hospitals during the COVID-19 crisis and the steady decline in the standard of education, as measured by the PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) ranking. In economic terms, France's weight has declined sharply over the last half-century.

More alarming than France's fall in the ranking of world powers based on GDP is the deterioration in its position in terms of GDP per capita. Now in twenty-sixth place, its GDP per capita, which was equivalent to that of Germany until 1989, is now almost 15% lower, raising fears of France's long-term impoverishment. Having failed to make the structural reforms that are essential for its economy, like its major neighbours, France is seeing its competitiveness falter and its trade deficit explode (156 billion

[4] <https://www.lefigaro.fr/vox/politique/2017/02/06/31001-20170206ARTFIG00209-emmanuel-macron-et-le-reniement-de-la-culture-francaise.php> (Accessed on 25 October 2024).

[5] <https://www.leparisien.fr/politique/photo-polemique-de-macron-aux-antilles-ce-geste-n-etait-pas-contre-le-president-01-10-2018-7908261.php> (Accessed on 26 October 2024)

[6] <https://www.lefigaro.fr/sports/jeux-olympiques/polemique-sur-la-ceremonie-d-ouverture-des-jo-patrick-boucheron-parle-de-cene-subliminale-20240730#:~:text=La%20s%C3%A9quence%20a%20choqu%C3%A9%20l,en%20%C3%A9motions%20et%20universellement%20salu%C3%A9s%C2%BB>. (Accessed on 29 October 2024).

[7] <https://www.lejdd.fr/economie/economie-bercy-donne-son-aval-au-rachat-de-131-entreprises-sensibles-par-letranger-en-2022-135583> (Accessed on 30 October 2024).

by 2022), whereas it was in surplus until 2003. The country is de-industrialising, investing less and innovating less. Public debt has soared from 20% to 112% of GDP since 1980. Despite a significant fall in the last three years, mass unemployment is still high (7.3% at the end of 2023), particularly among young people, and the middle classes are becoming increasingly impoverished.

Ultimately, France is finding it difficult to reconcile its universal international ambitions with its limited financial and human resources. The magic of words has its limits. And without economic power, proclamations of independence and a position free from subservience have little effect. Still deeply scarred by the traumas and setbacks of the last century, France is aware of its decline, without coming to terms with it, but without taking the measures that would enable it to halt it. While relative decline is normal when it results from the rise of large emerging countries, absolute decline is serious when it results from the loss of traditional assets such as industry, technology, culture and demography.

The solution implemented by the current leadership is to dissolve France in the EU integration progress and in NATO, under the argument that in contemporary times, solutions cannot be found alone. That is indeed true, but finding solutions in a multilateral architecture does not mean siding with those having anti-French agenda! History is full of lessons to learn and to madidate. It can

only be hoped that when a new leadership arrives, it will be the one proud of being French, willing to put forward the specificity of French culture and history, and to accept where the future lies: the “Orient”. In other words, France needs more than ever a patriotic elite that stops believing in positivist liberal internationalism to accept that the Orient is the new source of inspiration, and no longer the US.

France is blessed with a territory that makes it connected to every continent. As such, an ambitious geopolitical project would consist in using the over-seas territories to engage France in the new globalization and make France connected to the BRICS and South America, leaving being a declining Europe and a US caught in its internal contradictions. Over-seas territories are seen by the current elite as a liability. That is very degrading for these territories that are among the most patriotic and give provide for the most part of French military. Instead, such territories should be massively invested in and used to connect France to every regional economic initiative, such as the Chinese Belt and Road, the Indonesian Masterplan for Acceleration and Expansion of Indonesia’s Economic Development (MP3EI), Singapore Enterprise 2030 project, or even the project Kuwait Vision 2035.

In other words, the solution lies in coming back to the real definition of geopolitics: a politics of power based on the specificity of a country, of its population and of its history.

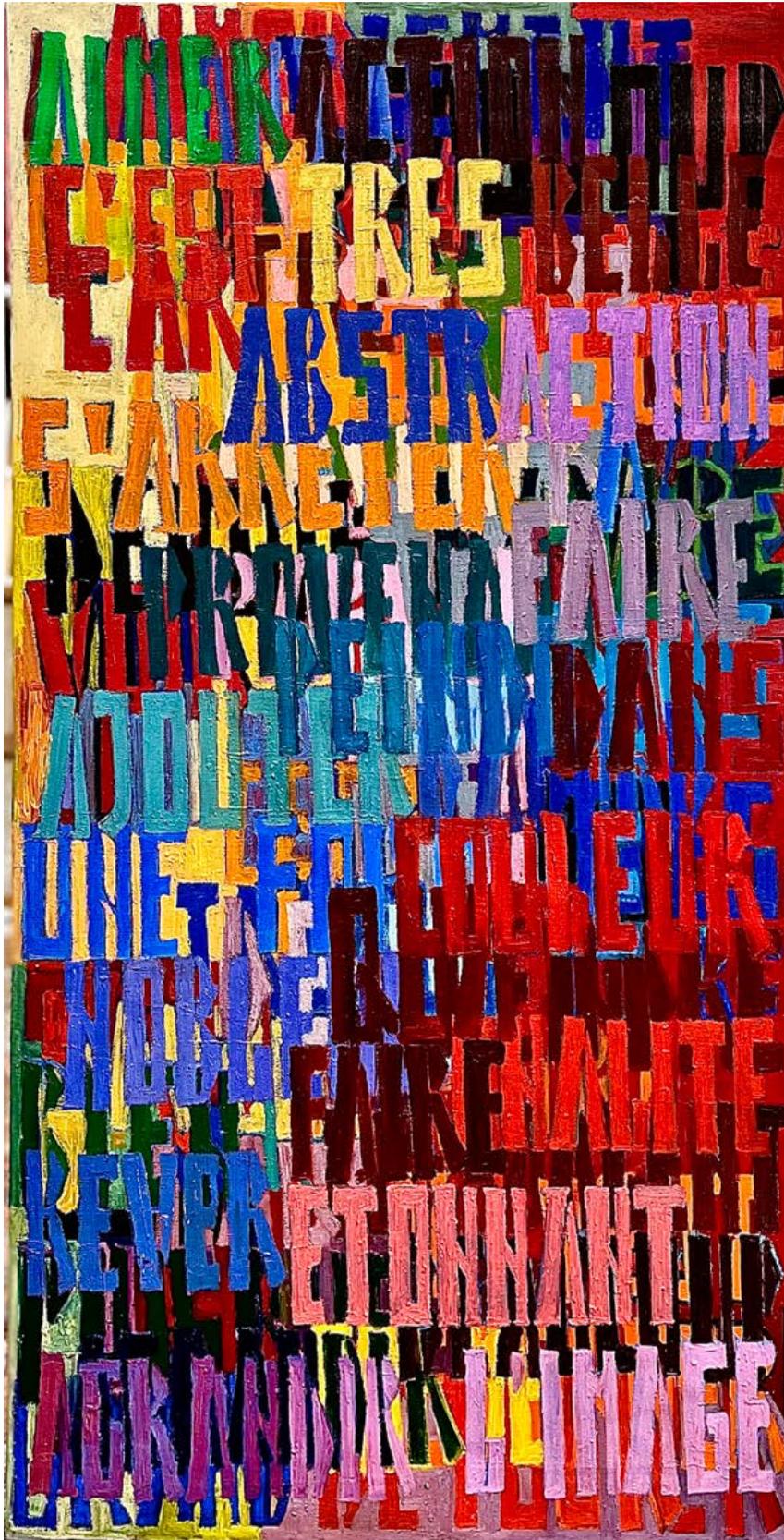
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Étonnant, 2008, the work of Serbian painter Mira Maoduš, who lived and created in France for almost half a century. Apart from Serbia, her works have been exhibited in Paris, Tokyo, Milan, Trebinje, and numerous other European cities.

Photo: Mira Maoduš



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Trade and investment relations between the Republic of Serbia and the Tropic French Republic – modern trends^[2]

Abstract: Trade and investment relations between Serbia and France are an important aspect of the overall bilateral cooperation between these two countries. Starting from the history of their economic relations since 1878 to date, the research conducted for the needs of this paper encompasses the analysis of modern trade and investments. The methodology includes the qualitative and descriptive analysis, based on the data of international and national institutions. The results show a stable and dynamic trade exchange with a significant increase in French foreign direct investment in Serbia. New aspects of this research include primarily the overall analysis of current trends and challenges in the analyzed spheres of bilateral cooperation. In conclusion, the paper highlights optimistic prospects for further development of bilateral economic relations between these two countries.

Keywords: Republic of Serbia, French Republic, foreign trade exchange, foreign direct investment, economic cooperation

Introduction

Trade and investment relations between Serbia and France are an important aspect of the bilateral cooperation between these two countries, which is deeply rooted in history and continues

its development in the modern context of global economy. France as one of the leading economic actors in the European Union (EU) and Serbia as the country aspiring to become a member of the EU have established stable and dynamic relations in the sphere of trade and investments. This paper

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analyzes different dimensions of these relations, with a focus on quantitative and qualitative aspects of trade exchange, foreign direct investments, as well as the key sectors contributing to stronger economic cooperation between these two republics. Understanding current trends and challenges in trade and investment relations between Serbia and France is of crucial importance for improving bilateral economic cooperation and defining future directions of development.

Providing first an insight into the history of economic relations between Serbia and France (necessary for understanding the modern context) from the moment of the establishment of diplomatic relations after the Congress of Berlin in 1878, in the context of the research subject, the author opts for analyzing the dynamics, scope and structure of bilateral economic relations between these two countries, mainly from the perspective of foreign trade (commodity) exchange and foreign direct investments (FDI). The research methodology is based on qualitative, and/or descriptive methods, with an attempt at perceiving this subject as completely as possible. Specifically, after the literature overview founded on the archive material dealing with the historical analysis of economic relations, the central chapters of this paper, dedicated to the analysis of the scope of trade and investments, applies the descriptive analysis of statistical data, i.e., modern data bases of relevant international and national financial and statistical institutes (such as the World Trade Organization [WTO], the International Monetary Fund [IMF], the World Bank, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development [UNCTAD], as well as the National Bank of Serbia [NBS], Statistical

Office of the Republic of Serbia [RZS], La Chambre de commerce et d'Industrie France–Serbie [CCIFS] and others). The final considerations are dedicated to the argumentation of optimism regarding the tendencies of further development of overall bilateral economic relations between Serbia and France.

A short overview of the history of economic relations between Serbia and France

Bilateral relations in general, including economic relations between Serbia and France, have a long and complex history shaped by joint geopolitical interests and events since the end of the 19th century to date. The turning point in these relations was the Congress of Berlin in 1878, when Serbia gained independence, which ensured the establishment of diplomatic relations with France at the level of authorized ministers plenipotentiary (Catsiapis, 2002). Economic relations, as a foundation for political cooperation, developed after 1878, particularly thanks to the construction of the railway financed by French capital, which enabled Serbia's recovery after its liberation wars against Turkey. The signing of the French-Serbian Convention in 1881 constituted an important step in establishing long-term economic relations, ensuring financial and technical aid in the construction of key infrastructural projects (Pavlović, 2015, pp. 26–37). The success of this cooperation enabled Serbia to avoid its full dependence on Austro-Hungary and Russia, which had great strategic significance at the time. France became an important ally of Serbia

not only in economic, but also in political terms, while its influence in the Balkans was important in the context of countering German expansionism (Troude, 2010, pp. 342–343). This cooperation was further strengthened during the First World War, when France, although informally, provided substantial military and humanitarian aid to Serbia, including loans for financing war ventures (Gnjatović, 1991).

The relations between the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, later Yugoslavia, and France reached their peak in the interwar period (Sretenović, 2009, p. 544), but they were not accompanied by strong economic relations. Although France had a great influence on Yugoslav foreign policy, economic cooperation remained at a low level due to restrictive measures in trade caused by the post-war economic crisis, the decline in the foreign currency value, as well as geographic distance. France preferred imports from its colonies while Yugoslavia, although interested in exporting agricultural products, had difficulty entering the French market. The problem caused by Yugoslav debts additionally compounded economic relations. France continued granting loans and aid to Yugoslavia, but insisted on its repaying pre-war and war debts. The signing of trade agreements (i.e., Convention on Trade and Navigation) from 1929 and subsequent attempts at economic cooperation did not succeed in overcoming these obstacles (Vinaver, 1985). German economic expansionism of the 1930s further weakened French-Yugoslav economic relations. Nevertheless, French enterprises participated in the post-war recovery of Yugoslavia, but their influence was limited. French capital was present in banking, mining and industry, but the

competition of other European countries limited its range (Cvetković, 2006). This misbalance between political and economic relations was crucial for subsequent political changes in the region. However, strong political ties between France and Yugoslavia did not succeed in maintaining economic cooperation at a satisfactory level, which finally led to the weakening of their relations and the strengthening of Yugoslavia's ties with other countries, in particular with Germany.

After the Second World War, economic relations between France and Yugoslavia were regulated primarily by the Agreement on Economic, Industrial and Technical Cooperation from 1969, according to which the Joint Cooperation Committee was established. In 1987, this Committee was replaced by the Yugoslav-French Economic Council (Popović-Petrović, 2000, pp. 416–417). After the war, France tried to increase its influence in Yugoslavia, which was motivated by the geostrategic interests during the Cold War. On the other hand, Yugoslavia was more open for cooperating with Western countries because of the lack of economic aid from the Soviet Union (Sotou, 2003). However, French property in Yugoslavia, which included concessions, banks and industrial enterprises, was subject to confiscation and nationalization. The dispute about the damages for the nationalized property was resolved by the 1951 Agreement which stipulated the payment of the damages to France in the amount of 15 million dinars within 10 years (Cvetković, 2006). This Agreement did not substantially affect French investments in Yugoslavia since they were limited by the socialist economic system. The Western countries, including France, saw

56 | Yugoslavia as a potential opportunity for trade and investment expansion because of its insufficiently used raw-material base and its less extreme form of communism. Yugoslavia became the first East European country to begin industrial cooperation with Western companies in 1967, but this cooperation was limited to the sectors such as industry, agriculture, tourism and scientific research (Milutinovich, Boseman, Vrbanovich, 1975). The scope of trade exchange between Yugoslavia and France did not change substantially in the first decades following the war. However, at the end of the 1980s, France became Yugoslavia's third biggest foreign trade partner, after Germany and Italy. France's share in Yugoslav exports reached almost 4% by 1990, and France became the first country by the growth rate of Yugoslavia's economic cooperation in comparison to other developed countries (Popović-Petrović, 2000, pp. 417–420). The upward tendency in economic relations ceased in 1991 due to political and economic changes in Yugoslavia.

During the war conflict in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) in the period 1991–1995, the French public opinion was divided regarding the necessity of the military intervention. At that time, as the medium-range power, France had to agree with the actions of the United States of America and the United Nations, directing its policy towards the proactive use of diplomatic, military and economic means of coercion (Wood, 1994, pp. 129–131). The strategy of the West included sanctions against Yugoslavia, which were in force from 1992 to 1994, and continued until 1996. This led to a decline in political cooperation

and economic relations between Yugoslavia and France. Cooperation agreements and the work of the Yugoslav-French Economic Council were postponed. Trade exchange was reduced and dropped by 33% in 1991 as compared to 1990. The decline continued, with France ranking in the eighth place as a foreign trade partner of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) since 1994 (Popović-Petrović, 2000, pp. 417–418). The war also affected other forms of cooperation between these two countries, such as joint investments and long-term production cooperation. Tourist cooperation stopped in 1991, while financial cooperation, including banks, was reduced because of the sanctions. The lifting of the sanctions in 1996 ensured Yugoslavia's re-inclusion in the world market, but political and economic challenges, including the Kosovo crisis in 1998/1999, worsened the prospects (Adamovich, 1997, pp. 309–311). The 21st century began with the low level of French-Yugoslav economic cooperation.

After the political changes in Serbia at the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century, economic relations experienced their new dynamics. After the changes of 5 October 2000, diplomatic relations were re-established between Serbia and France, while good political relations led to increasing economic cooperation. Only in 2001, Serbia's exports to France tripled in comparison to the previous year, while the value of imports from France to Serbia increased by almost seven times. In the following period, there was an increase in the scope of foreign trade commodity exchange, as well as the growth of the French

investment fund in Serbia (Rapaić & Matijević, 2022). Today's cooperation between Serbia and France encompasses a broad range of spheres, including industry, information technologies, agriculture, tourism and education, which contributes to the strengthening of economic stability and prosperity in both countries.

Today's foreign trade relations

As it has already been emphasized, 5 October 2000 initiated a series of structural political, as well as economic reforms in Serbia. The 2000s were marked by a period of high economic growth largely due to foreign trade opening, primarily the growth of trade exchange with the EU member-states (Rapaić, 2021, p. 148). The basis for improving economic relations with the EU in general, as well as with France, is the liberalization of relations between Serbia and the EU through the signing of the Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA). According to the latest data of the World Trade Organization for 2023, all Western Balkan economies, including Serbia, depend in the largest percentage on their trade with the EU: approximately 60–70% of the total imports and 70–80% of the total exports of these economies is related to the EU market. Speaking specifically about Serbia, the data show that 64.1% of Serbia's exports and 54.9% of Serbia's imports are

accounted for by the EU member-states (World Trade Organization [WTO], 2023). The data of the French-Serbian Chamber of Commerce and Industry prove that exchange between these two countries has tripled since 2010, when the interim trade agreement between the EU and Serbia came into force (CCIFS, 2023), while a great incentive to trade and economic relations in general was also the enactment of the Agreement on Strategic Partnership and Cooperation between the Government of the Republic of Serbia and the Government of the French Republic from 2011, with Article 4 stipulating special obligations of both sides with the aim of developing economic cooperation and trade exchange.

If we look at the period after the reforms in the sphere of foreign trade liberalization with the EU member-states (i.e., since 2009 to date), a significant increase can be seen in the scope of foreign trade commodity exchange between Serbia and France. During the observed period and according to the US dollar values, Serbia's exports increased by more than three times, from USD 249 million to USD 833 million, while at the same time its imports from France increased by 117%. As a small market, Serbia continues to record a foreign trade deficit with France but, nevertheless, it is important to point out that the given period is marked by an increase as high as 155% in the total scope of foreign trade commodity exchange.

Table 1. Serbian exports of commodities and imports from France in 2009–2023 (in USD million)

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Exports	249	277	309	283	351	418	409	413	494	530	526	534	716	877	833
Imports	522	482	537	516	604	575	534	585	626	721	785	731	884	1.126	1.135
Balance	-273	-205	-228	-233	-253	-157	-125	-172	-132	-191	-259	-197	-168	-249	-302
TOTAL EXCHANGE	771	759	845	799	955	993	943	998	1.120	1.251	1.311	1.265	1.600	2.003	1.968

Source: Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia [RZS], 2024a

Although Serbia's market can be characterized by its size and population as a small one, the comparative advantage of the placement in this market is reflected in the fact that Serbia is a signatory to the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA) from 2006, and it has also signed Free Trade Agreements with China and Turkey, as well as with the countries of the European Free Trade Zone (EFTA) and of the Eurasian Economic Union (Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan). In 2023, as Serbia's exports partner in the sphere of commodity exchange. France ranked the 14th in 2023, and the 9th as Serbia's partner in imports of commodities (RZS, 2024a). As for the structure of imports and exports of commodities by the production sectors, France's exports are diverse, dominated by the category of automotive industry products which records the greatest increase on a yearly basis; general-purpose machines and

equipment rank the second on the list, followed by pharmaceutical products; basic chemical products; nitrogen products; plastic material and synthetic rubber, various chemical products, as well as the products from the category "knives, tools, chains and various metal products" (CCIFS, 2023). Serbia's exports to France are also dominated by the automotive industry products (road vehicles, power machines and devices), but the most important individual sub-categories by their values in US dollars, even before the sub-categories of automotive industry products, are fruit and vegetables (USD 90.5 million) and rubber products (USD 105.2 million) (RZS, 2024b). More specifically, traditionally the largest items in Serbia's exports are the tyres produced by Pirot-based company Tigar Tyres, which is owned by French Michelin (Rapać & Matijević, 2022), one of the greatest French investors in Serbia (which will be discussed below).

Table 2: Serbian-French foreign trade commodity exchange by product structure (2023)

	Product	Value (in tons)	Value (in USD million)
Exports from Serbia by sectors	0 Food and livestock	41.232,7	121,4
	1 Beverages and tobacco	6.733,4	4,4
	2 Raw materials, inedible, except for fuel	5.215,9	6,2
	3 Mineral fuel, lubricants and related products	47,1	0,04
	4 Animal and plant oils, fats and waxes	273,5	0,2
	5 Chemical and similar products, not mentioned elsewhere	54.543,3	77,4
	6 Manufactured products categorized by material	74.088,1	251,7
	7 Machines and transportation devices	29.423	255,4
	8 Various finished products	15.424	116,7
	9 Miscellaneous	26,2	0,2
	TOTAL	227.007,2	833,8
Imports to Serbia by sectors	0 Food and livestock	36.157,3	91,2
	1 Beverages and tobacco	2.508,8	15,7
	2 Raw materials, inedible, except for fuel	10.817,4	36,8
	3 Mineral fuel, lubricants and related products	1.769,9	8,8
	4 Animal and plant oils, fats and waxes	122,5	0,03
	5 Chemical and similar products, not mentioned elsewhere	35.800,7	295,9
	6 Manufactured products categorized by material	19.728,1	78,4
	7 Machines and transportation devices	52.761,8	422,3
	8 Various finished products	3.123,9	52,2
	9 Miscellaneous	15.389,2	132,8
	TOTAL	178.179,6	1.134,7

Source: RZS, 2024b

Today's investment relations: French investments in the Serbian market

Just as with foreign trade, the data show that the European integration process has had a positive effect on the growth of FDI inflow in the countries

which are somehow involved in this process (Antevski, 2008, p. 72). Furthermore, economic reforms in Serbia from the beginning of the 21st century, together with trade liberalization and economy opening, also implied the application of the policy of FDI attraction. The initial momentum was given by the privatization of the state-owned enterprises,

while French companies were among the first to take part in these ventures, with the first large investment recorded as early as 2002, while the presence of the French companies in Serbia has increased on a larger scale since then.

The policy of FDI attraction as a catalyst of economic growth also aimed at reducing unemployment may be said to constitute the constant of Serbia's macro-economic policy in the 21st century. After 2010, when the privatization process of the largest state-owned production enterprises came to an end, Serbia resorted to new incentive measures with the aim of attracting foreign companies. Together with trade agreements and general preferential systems, bilateral agreements with certain countries (such as agreements on the avoidance of double taxation and agreements on mutual encouragement and protection of investments), as well as the possibility of operating in free zones with fiscal and customs benefits, the forms of relief for foreign companies in Serbia^[3] currently also include:

- Investment government incentives (granted by the criterion of the level of the municipality development – the final destination of the investment, the number of new employees, and the minimum amount of justified investment costs), and
- tax incentives (partial exemption of tax and contributions paid for net salaries, exemption from the obligatory tax on income, transfer of losses from earlier years into the tax balance in the following five years) (PKS, 2024).

Looking at nominal amounts, this policy shows excellent results: only in the period 2010–2020, according to the data of the National Bank of Serbia (NBS), approximately EUR 26 billion entered Serbia through FDIs, which is an extremely large amount for a country with the population of under seven million (Rapačić & Matijević, 2022), while French investors have a substantial share in this amount, which can also be seen from the review of nominal values of investment relations with France since 2010 to date (Table 3):

Table 3. Investment relations between Serbia and France (shown by the principle of assets and liabilities)
2010 - Q1 2024 (in EUR million)

	2010.	2011.	2012.	2013.	2014.	2015.	2016.	2017.	2018.	2019.	2020.	2021.	2022.	2023.	2024. (T1)
Assets	-0,6	-1,9	-0,8	1,2	-1,4	-3,2	-0,5	-1,2	-0,4	-3,6	16,7	-21,9	5,1	-10,3	0,5
Liabilities	107,7	179,7	131,4	99,3	51,5	76,5	72,4	85,0	716,3	-322,2	58,6	48,9	-36,6	26,8	-53,2
FDI, net (= assets – liabilities)	-108,3	-181,6	-132,2	-98,2	-52,9	-79,7	-72,9	-86,2	-716,8	318,7	-41,9	-70,7	41,7	-37,1	53,7

Source: NBS, 2024a; NBS, 2024b; International Monetary Fund [IMF], 2024a.^[4]

[3] It is important to mention that 10% ownership is the minimum to be invested in Serbia by a foreign investor in order to have its investments labelled as FDI and, on that basis, to be able to have certain relief for its operations (according to: Zakić & Živaljević, 2019, p. 17).

[4] On its official website, the National Bank of Serbia publishes data about FDI in line with the IMF methodology: “The International Investment Position of the Republic of Serbia (IIP) is prepared in accordance with the IMF Manual for preparing

Andrea D. Matijević

Trade and investment relations between
the Republic of Serbia and the Tropic French Republic
- modern trends



President of the Republic of Serbia Aleksandar Vučić and President of France Emmanuel Macron in front of the Élysée Palace during President Vučić's visit to France, April 2025.

Photo: Dimitrije Goll

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According to the most recently available data of the French-Serbian Chamber of Commerce, there are more than 130 French enterprises operating in Serbia and employing over 13,000 people. In 2018, France was the leading investor by the amount of inflow (EUR 716.8 million) thanks to the investment by Vinci Airports. During 2019, Company Veolia entered the concession for waste treatment in Vinča near Belgrade, but the same year saw the withdrawal of Société Générale bank

from Serbia, while in the period 2022–2023, another bank withdrew from Serbia – Crédit Agricole. The presence of French companies is in the largest part related to the car equipment sector, through two Hutchinson factories, extended presence of Michelin, Le Bélier and Novares, as well as the investment by Mecafor Company. The main French investors in Serbia are Michelin, Vinci, Veolia, Schneider Electric, Tarkett, Savencia and Lactalis (CCIFS, 2023).

the balance of payments and international investment position, sixth edition (Balance of Payments and International Investment Position Manual, Sixth Edition, BPM6, 2008), and with the IMF Manual for preparing external debt, as well as corresponding accompanying methodological documents. The IIP of the Republic of Serbia is prepared quarterly and represents the state at the end of the period, which is the result of realized balance of payments transactions, currency changes, price changes, and other changes, and represents the balance sheet of its external financial assets and liabilities” (NBS, n. d.). By a comparative analysis of the respective data bases of the NBS and the IMF, it has been established that these are almost identical data (differences are minor and appear probably due to number approximation). For the sake of authenticity, other data bases have been consulted, such as those of the World Bank and the UN Conference on Trade and Development, but also due to the difference in the applied methodology, these data cannot be mutually compared.

Table 4: French companies in Serbia and investment amounts (2002–2020)^[5]

	Investor	Year	Type of investment	Branch of economy	Investment amount in EUR
1	Michelin Tigar Tyres	2002.	Privatization	Automotive industry	132,000,000
2	Tarkett	2002.	Privatization	Wood and furniture industry	136,000,000
3	Lafarge	2002.	Privatization	Construction industry	163,000,000
4	Biospringer RS d. o. o. (Alltech Serbia)	2002.	Other	Food and agriculture	53,000,000
5	Le Belier / LBK Kikinda	2003.	Privatization	Automotive industry	35,000,000
6	Soufflet Group	2004.	Privatization	Food and agriculture	8,000,000
7	Bongrain SA	2004.	Other	Food and agriculture	25,000,000
8	Intermarche	2004.	Greenfield	Trade	44,000,000
9	Axereal Serbia	2004.	Brownfield	Food and agriculture	394,000
10	Sicoberry	2005.	Greenfield	Food and agriculture	2,000,000
11	Crédit Agricole Banka Srbija	2005.	Privatization	Finance	259,000,000
12	InterEX	2006.	Greenfield	Trade	6,000,000
13	Lohr	2008.	Privatization	Automotive industry	3,200,000
14	Schneider Electric DMS NS	2008.	Acquisition	ICT	61,900,000
15	Tigar Tyres Michelin Expansion	2010.	Greenfield	Automotive industry	16,000,000
16	Mecaplast	2011.	Greenfield	Automotive industry	10,000,000
17	Mekaplast/Novares	2011.	Greenfield	Automotive industry	15,000,000
18	BIG TIGAR	2011.	Greenfield	Automotive industry	215,000,000
19	Sagem Telecommunications Paris	2011.	Greenfield	ICT	5,000,000
20	Rai Swellen	2012.	Greenfield	Construction industry	no data available
21	Saint-Gobain	2012.	Other	Construction industry	no data available
22	Quivogne	2013.	Brownfield	Mechanical industry	1,000,000

[5] The table containing all these data has also been published in the co-authored paper of the author of this paper (see Rapaić & Matijević, 2022), also based on the request for access to the NALED data base. Since that paper was published in 2022, the author requested access to the NALED data base for the purpose of this author as well, while the data obtained after the more recent access are shown in this paper.

23	Luxury Tannery	2013.	Brownfield	Leather industry	10,000,000
24	Streit Nova	2014.	Greenfield	Automotive industry	6,000,000
25	Synechron SRB	2014.	Brownfield	ICT	no data available
26	FKL	2015.	Privatization	Mechanical industry	no data available
27	Hutchinson	2016.	Greenfield	Automotive industry	10,400,000
28	Société Générale	2016.	Greenfield	Finance	47,000,000
29	Somboled – Dukat, Lactalis group	2016.	Other	Food and agriculture	26,000,000
30	J & J Metalni proizvodi	2016	Greenfield	Metalworking industry	1,786,702
31	Mecafor	2016	Greenfield	Metalworking industry	4,000,000
32	Tigar Tyres	2018	Other	Automotive industry	15,600,000
33	Novares	2018	Brownfield	Automotive industry	5,200,000
34	Irelly	2018	Other	Automotive industry	26,000
35	Vinci Airports	2018	Other	Aerospace industry	500,000,000
36	Tigar Tyres doo	2020	Equipment and facilities	Industry	26,290,836
TO-TAL					1,842,797,538

Source: NALED, 2024

Having in mind that there is no available data base with the information about all French companies in Serbia, the amount and type of their investments, the author of this paper used the data base of the National Alliance for Local Economic Development (NALED), which has for years collected data about foreign investments in Serbia. This base contains data for a total of 36 French companies, whose cumulative investment amount (adding data about the values of investments where such data are available) for the period 2002–2020 is more than EUR 1.8 billion (EUR 1,842,797,538 EUR) (Table 4).

Instead of a conclusion: prospects of trade and investment relations between these two countries

Economic relations between Serbia and France, at least when it comes to nominal values of foreign trade commodity exchange and amounts of French FDIs in Serbia, are at their historical peak since 2010 to date. Given the trends so far, no substantial negative trends are expected in the domain of economic cooperation. It seems that after recent political changes, France has taken over prima-



President of the Republic of Serbia Aleksandar Vučić with President of France Emmanuel Macron during the wreath-laying ceremony at the Monument of Gratitude to France at Kalemegdan, Belgrade, July 2019

Photo: Dimitrije Goll

cy from Germany in its support to Serbia among other West European countries (Varga-Kocsicska, 2022, p. 9). Sanja Ivanić, General Director of the French-Serbian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, has emphasized that Serbia is “the main country for French investments in the Western Balkans” and, according to her, out of the total stock of French investments in the Western Balkans, over 70% have been made to Serbia (PKS, 2023).

Nevertheless, this does not mean that there is no room for further improvement of economic relations between these two countries. According to the official statements of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, its economic cooperation with France can be assessed as good, but “below real possibilities” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia [MSP], n.d.). Pierre Cochard, Ambassador of France to Serbia, points

out that French enterprises are increasingly present in Serbia, which indicates a substantial increase in the economic exchange between France and Serbia, but also that “not all potentials for further economic cooperation have been used” (Biznis.rs, 2023).

Thanks to the modern technologies brought by them, French companies can “support the road of the Western Balkans towards the EU, in the sphere of green and digital transformation”, said Mihailo Vesović, the Director of the Sector for Strategic Analyses, Services and Internationalization in the Chamber of Commerce of Serbia (PKS 2023). Agriculture is highlighted as a special sector of strategic importance for Serbia, in which French presence might increase in the future, since this is a sector in which good results can be achieved with the aid of foreign technologies and knowledge, thus constituting Serbia’s competitive advantage (Zakić & Živaljević, 2019, p. 38). Moreover, since Serbia has been assessed as one of the most attractive outsourcing destinations in East Europe, a great contribution to the improvement of economic cooperation might also be made by increasing French presence in information technologies industry as currently the fastest-growing sector in Serbia (CCIFS, 2023). That the interest of French companies in the Serbian market does not dwindle was also confirmed at the first France–Western Balkans Forum held on 13–14 June 2024, which gathered the representatives of more than 150 companies from France and the Western Balkan countries. A special emphasis within the Forum was placed on EXPO 2027 (CCIFS 2024), which shows the interest of French companies in continuing their participation in the infrastructural projects in Serbia.

It is also important to note that an important incentive to trade and investment relations is given by the improvement of political relations between Serbia and France. In that respect, the visit of French president Emmanuel Macron during 2019, on the 180th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations, 18 years after the last visit of French president Jacques Chirac to Serbia, was a clear political impulse with the effects of overflowing into the domain of economy. In addition to this visit marking the beginning of the works on the modernization of Belgrade’s airport (Image 1), the delegations of the two governments also signed about twenty agreements with different levels of obligation, aimed at improving economic cooperation (Miladinović, 2019).

French president’s visit in 2019 was of particular importance because of the future plans for the construction of Belgrade Metro as one of the currently most important infrastructural projects for the City of Belgrade and Serbia in general. The above-mentioned signed agreements include the Declaration of Intent on the construction of Belgrade metro system signed by the governments of France and Serbia and the City of Belgrade, which acknowledges France as a strategic partner in the implementation of this project (President of the Republic of Serbia, 2019). This additionally highlighted the role of the companies Alstom and Egis Rail, which had been brought into question due to subsequent agreements on conducting metro works concluded with Chinese companies. According to the results of the negotiations of Serbian, French and Chinese sides, electro-mechanical sub-systems and vehicles will be obtained from the French companies, while the Chinese partners

(PowerChina) will be responsible for implementing conducting construction works (Martinović, 2021).

Taking into account this paper's identified positive trajectories in the development of Serbian-French economic cooperation, as well as the importance of the French president's visits to Serbia

in 2019 and 2024, the relations between Serbia and France should be observed with justified optimism both from the perspective of the future trends of the development of trade, investments and economic relations between Serbia and France in general, and from the perspective of the overall bilateral cooperation of the two countries.

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Georges Clemenceau and Serbian National Issue^[2]

Abstract: This paper examines Georges Clemenceau, a distinguished French statesman, particularly his reflections on Serbia and the Serbian people during the first two decades of the 20th century, especially during the First World War. To provide a comprehensive understanding, we shed light on issues such as Clemenceau's Balkan policy, his relationship towards the Thessaloniki front, the Yugoslav idea and, consequently, the process that led to Yugoslavia's international recognition at Versailles. The research has been supported by archival sources and literature from Serbian and French historiographies

Keywords: Georges Clemenceau, Raymond Poincaré, Nikola Pašić, Annexation Crisis, First World War, Thessaloniki front, Versailles Peace Conference

The question about who Georges Clemenceau was can be immediately answered as follows: he is one of the most important political figures of the 20th century. With Marshal Charles André Joseph Marie de Gaulle, he is considered one of the founding fathers of the French nation (*Père de la patrie* or *Père de la Nation*). On 11 November 1941, in his speech on Radio London, de Gaulle cited Clemenceau's legacy and vowed that France would once again be free and victorious: "Au fond de votre tombe vendéenne, aujourd'hui 11 novembre, Clemenceau!

Vous ne dormez pas!" (Winock, 2018, p. 5). Every 11 November and 8 May, the two of them, as symbols of freedom in the First and the Second World Wars, ~~they~~ are granted honour and gratitude for winning freedom. To Europe and the rest of the world, Clemenceau is one of the creators of the new world order, the so-called Versailles Europe (Stojić, 2020a, pp. 235–236).

Georges Benjamin Clemenceau was born in Vendée on 28 September 1841. His family had long been known as republican, which was immediately

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an unusual circumstance, having in mind that Vendée had always been famous as a strong monarchist stronghold (Clemenceau, 1996, pp. 202–203). In his choice of profession, he followed in his father's footsteps and completed studies of medicine, although he never worked as a doctor. While still a student, he stood out by his fiery speeches against Napoleon III and the monarchy. After completing his studies in 1865, he moved to the USA mainly in order to learn about its republican system. After the outbreak of the French-Prussian war in 1870, he returned to France with no hesitation (Ninčić, 1933, p. 9). He stood out as one of the staunchest followers of Léon Gambetta. They were both openly against the secession of Alsace and Lorraine. The two of them were among 107 delegates who refused to accept armistice and secession of the two provinces (Minc, 1996, p. 79). Instead of the surrender, they advocated fighting to the last Frenchman. When the moderate faction took the lead and signed the Treaty of Frankfurt, which ended the war, they accepted defeat as reality, although they were "inconsolable in their sorrow" (Geffroy, 1938, p. 12; Clemenceau, 2020, p. 16). During the Paris Commune, from March to May 1871, Clemenceau performed his first public function – the mayor of the 18th arrondissement. His ambition

was to introduce some components of American republicanism and during his short mandate he won the favour of lower circles of the population, primarily workers and the poor. After the Commune was suppressed, together with Victor Hugo he advocated amnesty for the Commune's leaders and throughout his life he considered the *Semaine sanglante* (the bloody week), when the Commune was suppressed, one of the most tragic episodes in the history of France.

As the mayor of the 18th arrondissement, he was appointed the deputy to the first republican assembly, but in it he very soon turned against his former politically like-minded people, including Gambetta. He positioned himself on the left wing of the Republican Party.^[3] At the very beginning of his political career, Jules Ferry, the main representative of moderate republicanism, was his worst opponent. Clemenceau stood out by his speeches against the corpus of constitutional laws from 1875, which constituted the foundation of the Third Republic. He strived for the introduction of a more just social order (Winock, 2018, p. 4). At the beginning of the 1880s disappointed by the indifference of his political colleagues towards the profound social crisis of French society, he resigned from the Assembly and became one of

[3] In Serbian historiography, there is a belief that Clemenceau belonged to the extreme leftist faction (radicals) but Michel Winock, the author of one of many Clemenceau's biographies, denies this position. Winock places Clemenceau in the "republican left wing" which strived for social reforms, but within the framework of constitutionality and observance of order. Clemenceau did not hesitate to violently suppress workers' strikes with the help of the army and the police. Jean Jaurès, the leader of the extreme left wing, was Clemenceau's main opponent in the Assembly in the decade preceding 1914. He frequently accused him of betraying the working class. Clemenceau's resignation in July 1909 was welcomed by Jaurès's newspaper *L'Humanité* with the headline "The End of a Dictatorship" (*La fin d'une dictature*). The same newspaper, in the article on the occasion of Clemenceau's death in 1929, labelled him as "one of the staunchest enemies of the working class" and the "defender of capitalist interests" (Winock, 1997, p. 7, 448, 456).

the fiercest critics of the regime(s). He founded the daily newspaper *Le Justice* in which he sharply criticized his former like-minded people and friends. It is recorded that since then he insisted on his surname *Clemenceau* being written without the accented *é*. He was one of the first to attack Gambetta, accusing him of aspiring towards absolute power. In 1884, the target of Clemenceau's criticism was also the Senate because of not adopting the official Constitution of the Third Republic, but a corpus of constitutional acts which remained in force until the end of the Third Republic, in June 1940. In the following years, he built the reputation of the greatest opponent of all governments. He always emphasized that he spoke in the name of those from the bottom of the social ladder, while criticizing those from its top (Dawbarn, 1915, p. 61). He opposed France's imperialist policy which had gained momentum at the beginning of the 1880s. He advocated secularism in education and the separation of the church from the state (Mayeur, 1965). Throughout his political career, which lasted over forty years, he never gave up the attitudes he initially proclaimed. This unwavering and rigid attitude brought him many opponents as well as nicknames. During the 1880s and 1890s he was known as a destroyer of ministries (*tombreur de ministères*); for the greatest part of his political career he was known as *l'enfant terrible de la presse et du parlement* (Winock, 1997, p. 479), while he was given the nickname the *Tiger*, associated with him to date, by his personal friend, journalist of *L'Aurore*, Émil Buré in 1903. A little later, on the occasion of his visit to it was recorded that Clemenceau had really shot a tiger and thus deserved this nickname (Duroselle, 1994, p. 321).

Clemenceau's Balkan policy: the Annexation Crisis

Not only his political opponents, but also the like-minded people found Clemenceau extremely demanding and difficult to cooperate with. That is did not get his first public functions until the beginning of the 20th century. He was appointed senator in 1902, and he got the opportunity to form his first government as late as 1906. Apart from the function of the president of the government, he also kept the department of the Minister of Internal Affairs which he previously had in Ferdinand Sarrien's government. He proudly called himself "the first policeman of France" (Winock, 2007, p. 10, 425). This government stayed in power until July 1909 and is of exceptional significance for Serbia because it best reflected Clemenceau's attitude towards the Balkans, as well as towards France's ally Russia. It is crucial to emphasize that Clemenceau renounced the policy of revanchism pursued by his predecessors. The policy of revanchism implied that France patiently waited for the moment of its revenge to Germany. In the essence of this policy lay the belief that the German Empire was the greatest French enemy even two decades after the war. Unlike his predecessors, Clemenceau chose the path of reconciliation. He believed that France and Germany had much more common interests than reasons for conflict and confrontation. In the spirit of reconciliation and strengthening economy of the two countries, in 1907 he appointed Jules Cambon as Ambassador to Berlin – the man who, just like himself, advocated putting the past aside for the sake of building a new common French-German future (Carroll, 1931, p. 256).

72 | The epilogue of his first government was the failure of his reconciliatory policy towards Germany – it fell like a house of cards both because of the confrontation with Germany in Morocco and during the Annexation Crisis. Germany did not accept Clemenceau's extended hand. The Morocco issue had burdened French-German relations ever since the First Moroccan Crisis (1905) and the conference in Algésiras (1906). In September 1908, a new incident took place, when a group of six soldiers deserted from the French Foreign Legion. They found refuge and protection in the German embassy in Casablanca. Germany tried to use this event for a new diplomatic crisis, but Clemenceau remained reserved and hand this case to the arbitration of the Court of Peace in the Hague, which finally ruled in favour of France. The court decision was issued on 22 May 1909. The epilogue of this event was the demonstrative departure of the German ambassador, Prince Radolin,^[4] from Paris and the new French-German agreement about Morocco, which was verified at the end of February 1909. The Moroccan crisis coincided chronologically with the crisis caused by the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, further antagonizing the relations between Paris and Berlin. During the Annexation Crisis, Germany took the side of its ally Austro-Hungary and was ready to support it even in a military intervention against Serbia. On the other hand, Clemenceau denied diplomatic support to Russia.

In the case of the Annexation Crisis, he interpreted the text of the French-Russian alliance that, due to the allies' obligations and interests, excluded Alsace and Lorraine on the French side and the Balkans on the Russian side. Clemenceau believed that the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina did not threaten Russia's vital interests whatsoever, while he did not consider the consequences of the annexation for Russia's prestige among the Balkan Slavs (Stojić, 2017, pp. 30–32). In addition, Clemenceau believed that Russia was a "dangerous ally". He left aside his personal reservations towards the authoritarian nature of the imperial regime or the military incompetence of the Russian army, which became evident after its defeat in the war with Japan; however, the emperor's belligerent advisers most concerned him. Among them, he feared most Alexander Izvolsky (Iswolsky) who, after the fiasco in the Annexation Crisis, found refuge in the Russian embassy in Paris. Clemenceau subsequently objected to his main political opponent from the period of the First World War, Raymond Poincaré, because of his excessive openness towards Izvolsky, who constantly whispered into his ear about his belligerent plans and ideas – to which Poincaré eventually succumbed (Winock, 1997, p. 477; Stojić, 2017, pp. 71–72). Although he believed that the Annexation Crisis was not the moment for France being exposed in foreign policy, Clemenceau could not hide his deep disappointment in Austro-Hungary's politics and moves of Emperor Franz Joseph.

[4] There is an anecdote about Prince Radolin's departure. Namely, when he attempted to deliver his protest note and to threaten to leave France, Clemenceau replied that the prince had better hurry up because the train to Berlin was leaving in two hours. Later on, Clemenceau denied having said these words, emphasizing that such behaviour was below his level. Radolin's successor, Baron Wilhelm Eduard von Schoen, had much better relations with Clemenceau than his predecessor. He often described him as friendly (Winock, 1997, 452–453).



European Allied leaders in Paris Peace Conference, 1919. L-R: French Marshal Ferdinand Foch, French Premier Georges Clemenceau, British Prime Minister Lloyd George, Italian Premier Vittorio Orlando and Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sidney Sonnino.

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He expressed his disappointment personally, during their encounter in Carlsbad in August 1909, the spa they both liked visiting (Winock, 1997, pp. 463–464). In a private letter to his family friend, Clemenceau expressed concern that the annexation *was a spark that might blow up the powder keg (l'étincelle qui peut faire sauter le tonneau de poudre)* (Winock, 1997, p. 477).

In Serbian historiography, there is still a prevailing belief that Clemenceau's rigid attitude towards Russia and refusal to offer it ally support at the crucial moment had unforeseeable consequences for Serbia and its interests. It is commonly known that Milovan Milovanović, Minister of Foreign Affairs, in an attempt to mitigate the consequences of the annexation, visited European capitals dur-

ing October 1908, trying to get the consent of the signatory powers of the Berlin Treaty for Serbia's receiving adequate compensation in the territory of former Novi Pazar Sandžak (Stojić, Radović, 2022, pp. 191–199).

Before Milovanović's arrival in the French capital, Momčilo Ninčić, Jovan Skerlić and Grgur Jakšić had already been sent there to agitate, together with the Serbian delegation led by Milenko Vesnić, against the act of annexation recognition. Grgur Jakšić wrote down that Serbia had been unprepared for the act of annexation declaration, and that the sent delegation could not do anything to make France change its attitude. The delegates were warmly received and heard everywhere, but "they got no real promises from anyone". Raymond Poincaré, at the head of the Ministry of Justice at the time, asked them if there was an international treaty speaking against the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, while the Serbs cited the provisions of the Treaty of Berlin. Poincaré replied that the great powers as signatories to the Treaty of Berlin would together take a position about its potential violation and that France was unable "to do anything on its own". It was a clear message to Serbia, which was not a signatory to the Treaty of Berlin, had nothing to ask for in the case of the annexation of the two occupied provinces either. Jakšić further explained the failure of the diplomatic mission was by the negotiating incompetence of his friends, Ninčić and Skerlić, despite their good relations with the French intellectual and political circles. One of the leaders of the Catholic Party sharply reproached Ninčić for tactlessly referring to Catholic priests from Bosnia as Austrian mercenaries. On another occasion, in Jaurès's presence, Skerlić characterized

the assassination of King Aleksandar Obrenović and Queen Draga as "justified", not knowing that Jaurès had strongly condemned this event in the past. Namely, in the newspaper *L'Humanité*, Jaurès published "a terrible article on the occasion of the crowning of King Peter, entitled 'Bloody King' ('Le roi rouge')". Until the beginning of November, it was clear that any further propaganda work ~~agitation~~ was useless, and the members of the special mission were recalled to Serbia, while Jakšić stayed in Paris to "proceed with the task on his own" (NBS, P558/III/91).

In the further course of the crisis, Jakšić turned national propaganda in a different direction. He believed that it was useless to continue insisting on France's advocacy for Serbian interests. That his attitude was proper is corroborated by the statement of the French ambassador to Vienna, Philippe Crozier, to the Russian military attaché in Vienna: "It would be extremely complicated to explain to the French citizen that he should march for Bosnia and Herzegovina out there and not for Alsace and Lorraine" (Nintchitch, 1937, pp. 361–363; Stojić, 2017, p. 31.) Jakšić believed that it was necessary to emphasize other issues which would compromise Austro-Hungary further, and he thought that the most suitable for it was the Agram Trial Agram (High Treason) Trial initiated in October against Serbs in Croatia and Slavonia. The translation of the indictment and the circumstances of the trial itself were readily accepted and published by many French newspapers and journals, such as *Journal des Débats*, *Revue de Paris*, *La Courrier européen* etc. Jakšić managed to compromise Austro-Hungary at the Agram Trial and to reveal its repressive policy towards all Serbs, no matter where exactly they resided in the Monarchy.

In contrast to his reserved attitude about the annexation, on the occasion of the Agram Trial (also known as *Le Procès d'Agram*), Clemenceau sharply condemned the prosecution and reprisals of the Serbs (NBS, P558/III/91). Diverting France's attention from the annexation act itself to the Trial was also approved by Milovanović who, after the failure of his mission in European capitals generally placed his hopes in the diplomatic support of Great Britain and Germany than of France. Namely, he described France as "unreliable and showing an incomprehensible inclination towards Austro-Hungary" (Stojić, Radović, 2022, p. 198).

Clash of two Balkan policies: Clemenceau and Poincaré

Clemenceau's Balkan policy in the Annexation Crisis returned to him like a boomerang. The relations between Paris and St. Petersburg were shaken. The social crisis, accompanied by a number of strikes, became deeper, while there was increasing criticism about France's acting in the case of the legionnaires' revolt in Morocco. All these issues were exhausted eventually exhausted Clemenceau's already thin patience and at the end of July 1909, in the middle of the holiday season, he decided to resign and retire to the opposition once again. In 1913, he founded a new daily called *L'homme libre*, whose main target was Raymond Poincaré, the president of the government from January 1912 and the president of the Republic from January 1913. Poincaré symbolized everything criticized by Clemenceau: he was a devoted Catholic and a loyal advocate of the French-Russian alliance, finding it the main shield

of France against the growing wave of Germanism. Poincaré's Balkan policy was the exact opposite to Clemenceau's policy. Poincaré believed that Russia was an indispensable ally and that it was France's duty to support it in all its ventures – including those in the Balkan Peninsula. Poincaré's Balkan policy was put to test in the new Balkan crisis – the First Balkan War. Although he pointed out that France would not go to war for the sake of Russian interests in the Balkans, he believed that it was France's duty to support its ally diplomatically. Poincaré assumed the role of a mediator between Russia and the powers from the Triple Alliance. He was the first to initiate the organization of peace conferences at which the warring sides, as well as great powers, would solve their disagreements. The final outcome of Poincaré's policy was strengthening the alliance with Russia, but also taking over economic primacy in the Balkan Peninsula, where France had become the main lender to the victorious Balkan countries (Stojić, 2017, pp. 437–442).

After the dynastic change in Serbia, France gradually displaced Austro-Hungary and took its place in the loans granted for military equipment and armament. However, France's economic presence in Serbia before the foundation of the French-Serbian bank in 1910 and the Balkan Wars (1912–1913) may be characterized as moderate. In all the loans before 1913, France had participated together with other great powers because it considered investing in Serbia risky. Russia guaranteed all these loans. The loan from September 1913 was the first fully financed one by the French banks, without the participation of other powers, and this is considered the turning point and the moment when France established its economic domination.

Owing to this loan, France held 75% of Serbia's total foreign debts (Stojić, 2017, pp. 399–400). At the same time, France, signed lucrative jobs with other victorious countries in the Second Balkan War, primarily Greece and Romania, and granted them loans for the recovery from war atrocities; therefore, in general, on the eve of the First World War, the Balkans ranked second in the French stock market by the amount of invested capital. The first and unrivalled place in investments was held by Russia (Stojić, 2017, pp. 400–404).

76 | After August 1913, Poincaré reached the zenith of his popularity, despite blunt warnings by Clemenceau and other socialists that excessive attachment to the Russian Empire would take France into the abyss of the conflict of unforeseeable proportions. On the morning of 29 July 1914, when the ship of the French state delegation came to the port of Dunkirk, returning from its official visit to Russia, Serbia and Austro-Hungary had already entered the state of war, while Russia had ordered partial mobilization. The German war proclamation to France on 3 August ensued as a chain reaction consequence (Stojić, 2015, p. 103). Poincaré invited all political opponents to leave their disagreements aside and, for the sake of the *Sacred Union* (*Union Sacrée*), to unite forces in the fight against Germany. Nevertheless, Clemenceau was one of the few who ignored that invitation. The outbreak of the world war did not change his policy at all – he renamed *L'Homme libre* into *L'Homme enchaîné*, and used the newspaper as a platform for attacking Poincaré and the changing governments (Clemenceau, 1916). During the first three war years (1914–1917), Clemenceau was the President of the War Committee in the National Assembly. In that position, he was

able to follow military operations as well as the work of the Ministry of War. His criticism at the expense of the General Staff was often so extreme that several senior officers requested Clemenceau's trial for high treason. Not paying attention to his own safety, he continued requesting an increase in the military budget and putting all the resources of the country into the service of the war. His position was that everything should be subordinated to the war. Ordinary soldiers respected him because his son, his nephew and his brother fought together with them in the trenches, while his oldest daughter volunteered as a nurse (Tomei, 2018, p. 1). While Clemenceau's popularity grew, Poincaré's popularity dwindled. From August 1914 to November 1917, France had as many as four governments and none of them managed to keep the soldiers' morale and fighting spirit. The French army was on the defensive, suffering defeats and huge losses because the war was constantly waged in the territory of France. In such circumstances, with the country on the verge of defeat, in autumn 1917 Poincaré made a decision and placed the country's interest above his personal vanity. He invited Clemenceau, who was considered the final resort, to form the fifth government (Miquel, 2004, p. 8). His coming to power was welcomed by the entire press, except for the socialist newspapers for which had been and remained "the enemy of the workers" and "the first policeman of France" (Winock, 1997, p. 517).

As soon as he came to power, on 16 November 1917, Clemenceau made a precedent. In addition to the Prime Minister's function, he also took the department of the Ministry of War although he was not a professional soldier nor had any military experience. His first move was to subordinate all the

remaining resources to the war. Instead of *Union sacrée*, he proclaimed the motto *Guerre intégrale*. He mobilized the country's last defence and brought 70,000 Italian workers to consolidate the French economy. He began visiting the trenches and raising the soldiers' morale. He thought that ordinary soldiers had to hear and see their leaders in person in order to believe in fighting for the common cause. In the course of one year, he spent as many as 90 days on the front, visiting 360 different battlefields (SHD, *Voyages de Monsieur Clemenceau*; Duroselle, 1994, pp. 316–317).

Clemenceau and the Thessaloniki front

Within France, patriotism was emphasized as Clemenceau's greatest virtue, but to other nations fighting in the First World War, this was considered his worst fault. Clemenceau was completely and exclusively oriented towards the Western front and the destiny of France. He believed that the war would be decided in the West, while all other fronts were merely a distraction.

He was particularly criticizing of the Thessaloniki front. To Clemenceau, the Thessaloniki front was nothing but "wasting soldiers and money" (Feyler, 1921, pp. 12–13). On several occasions, as the President of the War Committee in the Assembly, he called for disbanding that front and sending the troops to the west. He was among the first to speak about it in *L'Homme enchaîné* and in the Assembly. In his specific style, he criticized the inactivity of the French army entrenched in Thessaloniki. He asked for that army, useless in the Balkans, to be returned to

the home front. Jovan Žujović, a special emissary of the Serbian government in France from the end of April 1915, was visibly disconcerted by Clemenceau's request in November 1915. Vesnić calmed him down claiming that Clemenceau was lonely in his opinion and that the French army would not withdraw from the Balkans (Žujović, 1986, p. 226).

It is important to emphasize that Clemenceau personally respected the Serbian army. He admired its courage and suffering in the Albanian Golgotha. During the retreat of the Serbian army and people, he bitterly attacked the French government because of its failures leading to the collapse of the Serbian state in autumn 1915 and because of the poorly organized evacuation operation of the Serbian soldiers and civilians from the Albanian coast (*L'Homme Enchaîné*, 1915, p. 1; *L'Homme Enchaîné*, 1917, p. 1). He wrote that France was responsible for Serbia's collapse and, owing to his influence in the public, we may certainly claim that in December 1915 he forced the French General Staff to form a special rescue mission led by General Piarron de Mondésir who, from December 1915 to May 1916 commanded the reorganization process of the Serbian army in Corfu (Stojić, 2016, pp. 405–427).

After forming the government and taking over the Ministry of War, he also assumed direct command of the Eastern Army. Namely, in 1915, on the occasion of forming the French expeditionary force, which was sent to Gallipoli, the relevant ministry was the Ministry of War in cooperation with the British and Russian counterparts. When the remaining French expeditionary force, together with its commander, General Maurice Paul Emmanuel Sarrail, was sent to Thessaloniki, the chain of command was not changed. The remaining anomaly

was that the Minister of War directly appointed and relieved from duty the chief commanders of the Eastern Army, while the French General Staff with the seat in Limoges decided about the army commanders on the Western front.

Clemenceau truly intended to withdraw the French soldiers from Thessaloniki; however, he was dissuaded from this by military strategists claiming that in this way he would lose Thessaloniki, the most important strategic point in the Eastern Mediterranean, thus putting it directly into the enemy's hands. Clemenceau instead decided to dismiss General Sarrail, his personal friend, since his conflicts with all other commanders could no longer be ignored. He sent General Adolphe Guillaumat to Thessaloniki, who would spend only six months as the Commander-in-Chief of the Eastern Army. During that time, General Guillaumat managed to transform the front economy (Pavlović, 2018, pp. 34). He used the rich fields where the army began its own food production because the transportation of food for soldiers and horses had been compromised by constant attacks by the Austrian cruisers in the Mediterranean. Guillaumat's plan was successful – until the summer of 1918, the soldiers planted more than a thousand hectares of arable land, from which they collected 339,000 kilograms of fruit and vegetables, as well as 113,000 bales of hay. At the same time, mining began in Chalkidiki and several archaeological expeditions successfully collected artefacts and antiquities from the territory of Greek Macedonia. However, all these successes did not prevent Clemenceau from giving a derogatory name to the soldiers of Eastern Army – “Thessaloniki gardeners” (Ancel, 1920, pp. 891, 895).

In May/June 1918, in the Third Battle of the Aisne (Battle for the Ladies' Road), the French and British armies suffered a terrible defeat. France was on the verge of military collapse. Clemenceau and Marshal Ferdinand Foch, Head of the General Staff, put the blame for that defeat on General Franchet d'Espèrey, who commanded one wing of the army (D'Espèrey, 2018, p. 34). As punishment, General d'Espèrey was appointed for the commander-in-chief of the Eastern Army on the Thessaloniki front, while General Guillaumat, entrusted with the defence of Paris, returned to France (D'Espèrey, 2018, pp. 150–151). At the moment of his appointment, D'Espèrey was a discharged officer. Clemenceau sent him to command the Eastern Army because of the words of praise by Charles de Freycinet, a friend of D'Espèrey's. The decision to appoint D'Espèrey was made by Clemenceau on his own, without consulting David Lloyd George, who sharply criticized him for such selfishness during the peace conference in Quai d'Orsay (Clemenceau, 2020, p. 103). D'Espèrey's task was to prepare French troops to re-settle gradually to the Western front, while keeping in Thessaloniki only the sufficient number of soldiers for keeping positions (Clemenceau, 1930, pp. 104–105). The circumstance unexpected and unforeseen by Clemenceau was that in a short period of time D'Espèrey would win the trust of the commanders of all other armies, particularly of the Serbian army. At only three meetings, D'Espèrey, Serbian Regent Aleksandar, General Živojin Mišić and British commander George Francis Milne drafted the plan of the front breakthrough that would change the course of the war both in the East and in the West (Stojić, 2020b, p. 459).

The plan was drafted at the beginning of August, but it just lay on the desk of the French Prime Minister and Minister of War the whole month. Sidney Sonnino and David Lloyd George gave their consent in the name of the Italian and British armies, while Clemenceau was the last to do it, waiting until 10 September. The night before the beginning of the attack, he sent a telegram to General d'Espèrey informing him that he would be the only responsible person for the operation to be conducted the following day. D'Espèrey told his orderly to burn the telegram in the candlelight and to keep all the orders unchanged (Delaye, 1956, p. 52; Stojić, 2020a, p. 244).

Not even the breakthrough of the Balkan front on 15 September 1918 changed Clemenceau's hostile attitude towards D'Espèrey and the Eastern Army. Immediately after the breakthrough, Clemenceau intended to return Guillaumat to the Balkans, but he gave up the idea after being assured that dismissing D'Espèrey at the moment when the army was at the pinnacle of its victory would compromise the achieved success. He decided that Guillaumat should lead a special mission in charge of assessing how many French and British divisions could be sent to the Western front after being replaced by the Serbian, Greek and Bulgarian units in the Balkans. He thought that the front breakthrough meant the end of the war in the Balkans, but that the final victory should be won in the West. He was furious to learn that D'Espèrey had permitted the Serbian army to cross into the territory of Austro-Hungary and to deploy its troops in the positions of the Yugoslav territory. He did not manage to stop this operation, but he stopped another order by D'Espèrey about part of the army being directed towards Vienna and

Berlin. In collaboration with the British General Staff, he directed those groups towards Istanbul and the Middle East (Stojić, 2020b, pp. 461–463).

Clemenceau and the Yugoslav idea

Just as most French politicians, Clemenceau had no clearly defined attitude towards the Yugoslav idea, and he did not want to form it either. This attitude suited his war motto about “not colluding either with soldiers or with civilians” (Clemenceau, 2020, p. 18). He wanted to come to power without any compromises and the public largely believed that he had succeeded in it because his authority and reputation were unquestionably trusted.

Just before his coming to power, he wrote in *L'Homme enchaîné* that the Yugoslav Committee should reduce its war expectations because no nation had managed to gather all its compatriots within the borders of one state. He thought that the Yugoslavs should not insist on the outlined borders, in particular because in the border regions it was impossible to assess the inhabitants' ethnic affiliation (*L'Homme enchaîné*, 1917, p. 1). He also repeated the same words to Žujović during their first encounter on St. Peter's Day in 1915. When Žujović expressed the wish of the Serbian authorities to unite all Serbs in a single state, with none of them staying outside its borders, Clemenceau mildly smiled at him and replied: “Have you ever had a cap that covered all your hair, without the smallest strand sticking under it?” (*Žujović*, 1986, p. 146). No French government, including Clemenceau's government, wanted to discuss potential changes of the borders during the war. The same attitude was taken by the intellectuals

Žujović met in summer 1915. The bluntest of them was historian and former official Gabriel Hanotaux, who once told Žujović: “All of you, both Slavs and non-Slavs, come with your claims, you want to engage us in favour of this or that opinion. Well, we will not be engaged for anyone or anything. Your aspirations are not on the agenda. Your Pan-Serbism, Russian Pan-Slavism, Pan-Romanianism, all those are dreams, phrases. [...] We would have our right arm cut off, while you are just advertising some cantons of yours” (*Žujović, 1986, p. 177*).

As for the contacts of Serbian diplomats and representatives with Clemenceau, those before 1917 may be characterized as sporadic. Vesnić, as the highest diplomatic representative, avoided contacts with Clemenceau “because he was supervised by the government”. Not paying attention to Vesnić’s warnings, Žujović insisted on meeting Clemenceau, among other eminent persons, immediately after his arrival in Paris. He visited Clemenceau twice and both times he had a very positive impression about him and their conversations. Clemenceau’s conversing manner was to keep his interlocutor at a “polite distance” (Clemenceau, 2020, p. 17). On numerous occasions Clemenceau pointed out that he “understood our arguments and approved of everything, but had no power to help us” because the entire government apparatus was against him. Žujović told him that, despite having no influence on the government, he had the public because “he did not write with his pen, but with steel arrows that killed” (*Žujović, 1986, p. 170*).

Apart from influencing officials and eminent French circles, some Serbs took a position that they had to keep closer relations with the Czechs and the Slovaks. Božidar Marković from Geneva regularly reminded Žujović during his mission in Paris

that he had to meet Tomáš Masaryk as well, and to underline the parallel between the Yugoslav and the Czechoslovakian programs in conversations with Masaryk and other Czech and Slovakian representatives. Žujović was not against these contacts and in his conversations with the Frenchmen, he always accepted and supported all the initiatives coming from the Czechoslovakian committee, including the idea of the personal union placed by the Czechs. However, Žujović and Masaryk did not meet either in France or in Geneva, where Masaryk spent much time, but eventually in London. On 19 October 1915, Žujović attended Masaryk’s lecture at the Royal College, but the Czech leader made a rather unfavourable impression on him. In his journal, Žujović wrote that Masaryk had approached him just before the lecture, so they had no time to discuss anything. In this brief encounter, he did not invite Žujović to visit him nor did he suggest meeting and discussing the complementarity of the Yugoslav and the Czechoslovakian programs. Therefore, after the lecture, Žujović concluded that the emissary in London, Mateja Bošković, was absolutely right in not appreciating the Czechoslovakian leader (*Žujović, 1986, p. 211*). If during 1914 and in the first half of 1915 there was any complementarity in the activities of these two movements, after April 1915 and Italy’s entry into the war, the two movements drifted apart on a larger scale. Italy unreservedly supported the Czechoslovakians and the idea of creating their common state. On the other hand, Italy’s hostile attitudes towards the idea of creating the Yugoslav state on the eastern coast of the Adriatic Sea, which was claimed by Italy, are well-known in historiography and, as such, they go beyond the scope of this paper. For the purpose of this paper, we will em-

phasize that the Czechoslovakian movement was much more respected than the Yugoslav one not only in Italy, but also in France. Namely, all doors in Paris were open to Tomáš Masaryk and Edvard Beneš, as former French students and university professors (Kšišnan, 2019, pp. 191–196). Clemenceau considered Beneš “one of the best people, a man of resurrected Czechoslovakia, who won the trust of all by the honesty of his words and the divinity of his intelligence” (Clemenceau, 2020, p. 121).

Unlike the coherent action of the Czechs and the Slovaks, the Yugoslav Committee and Serbian emissaries in France caused confusion in the French public by two ideas of the future organization of the Yugoslav state. Both official and unofficial France leaned more towards the federal/confederal organization of the state. As a republic dominated by the socialist-oriented parties, it completely resented the idea of creating a multinational, centralist monarchy. The most influential ambassadors in London, Washington and Rome supported Ante Trumbić and the Yugoslav Committee, while the criticized Pašić’s conservatism. The military circles were on Pašić’s side because, from the military aspect, France preferred having a country politically and economically dependent on France on the eastern coast of the Adriatic Sea, as a counterweight to Italy (SHD, Fond Clemenceau, 6 N 235; Vujović, 1987, pp. 77–103).

Clemenceau: the winner and the loser

The final stage of the war on the Western front opened a new conflict between Clemenceau and Poincaré. On 26 September, inspired by the victory

of the allies on the Thessaloniki front, French-British-American troops began an offensive in three directions. In only several days they managed to completely turn the situation over to their benefit and to push the German army from the territories of France and Belgium (Duroselle, 1994, p. 400). Poincaré then called for transferring the war to the German territory, with the aim of occupying strategically important places that would serve as a pledge during peace negotiations. In contrast, Clemenceau saw only an unnecessary waste of resources and human lives in such extension of the war. He took an uncompromising position that he did not want to postpone the end of the war for, as he pointed out, “the reasons of imperialist nature” (Clemenceau, 1996, pp. 202–203). He believed that in that manner he would break the principles he had proclaimed throughout his political career. Above all, when he came to power, he promised that the war would not last a single day longer than it was necessary. This conflict became so pronounced that Clemenceau threatened to resign, which forced Poincaré to give up his initial intention (Duroselle, 1994, pp. 316–317).

In the long run, Clemenceau’s decision proved to be wrong and cost him the loss of popularity. According to the survey conducted after demobilization, only 5% Frenchmen wanted armistice at all costs, while 90% of them wanted to transfer the war to the German territory and get revenge for all the misdeeds suffered during four years of the war. The French had not even entered Alsace and Lorraine (Duroselle, 1994, p. 404). In the Assembly, Clemenceau was fiercely attacked by the opposition, accusing him of not “disarming Germany”. The ceremonial handover of the weapons was

called for, whereas all weapons had to stay on the battlegrounds. Clemenceau called the critics “journalistic warriors”, while he found the “ceremonial disarmament” protocol unnecessary. He thought that peace brought to France and its allies was more important than the ceremony itself (Clemenceau, 2020, pp. 96–97). On 11 November, when Marshal Foch signed the armistice in Compiègne, the public was deeply disappointed. The general impression was that had not won yet, but that it should do it in the future, at the negotiation table (Tomei, 2018, p. 1). That the dissatisfaction with the end of the war did not dwindle is also corroborated by the fact that there was an assassination of Clemenceau on 19 February 1919. He was shot by three bullets, one of which perforated his lung (Vallaud, 2011, 427; Duroselle, 1988, 945). Despite grave injuries, he quickly recovered and on 14 March he continued to chair the conference (Geffroy, 1938, pp. 204–205; Porte, 2011, p. 580). His contemporaries were once again amazed by his vitality. n one occasion, British Prime Minister David Lloyd George told Franchet d’Espèrey: “Every time I see Clemenceau, he seems to be a year younger and to have one more tooth” (D’Espèrey, 2018, p. 139).

The Peace Conference began its work on 18 January 1919. It looked like a conglomerate of nations and delegates. Twenty-seven nations had their representatives at the negotiation table. During six months, sessions were held through as many as 53 commissions and committees with over 1,000 delegates participating in their work. The priority questions referred to the conditions of peace between France and Germany, while all others were treated as secondary. In the course of the conference, Clemenceau stayed the same as he was during the

war – interested solely in France. The Serbian and Yugoslav delegation, which consisted of as many as 110 members, considered the absence of Russia at the negotiation table a huge handicap. Halfway through the conference, Pašić apprehensively wrote from Paris: “The destiny of our people will be decided by the same powers which signed the Treaty of London with Italy, except for America, but it can neither protect us nor replace Russia” (Milošević & Dimitrijević, 2005). The sessions were held in the premises of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Paris (Quai d’Orsay), while the final treaty was signed in the Hall of Mirrors (Galerie des Glaces) in the Palace of Versailles. It was exactly in the Hall of Mirrors that the unification of Germany had been declared in 1871, and, as a contemporary of both events, Clemenceau wanted to use this symbolic act to assure that the Germans would never again threaten the French.

Clemenceau did not belong to the faction believing that Russia and Serbia were responsible for the beginning of the war, which is just one of the many theories provided about the causes and reasons of the beginning of the war; however, at the beginning of the conference, he took a rather rigid attitude towards the Serbian/Yugoslav delegation. He insisted on the literal interpretation of the allies’ treaties. Since Serbia had no treaties, he believed that its delegation could not have a place at the main negotiation table but should be treated as other joined allies, for example Brazil, which entered the war in 1916. Only after the efforts of others, primarily David Lloyd George who called Pašić “the most intelligent man in East Europe”, Serbia got its place at the main negotiation table and the right to decide about most important matters (Geffroy, 1938, p. 9).

Knowing that they could not count completely on Clemenceau, Serbian/Yugoslav delegates focused on winning other delegations in favour of their interests – first of all, the USA. The problem was that the US President Woodrow Wilson was present only at the beginning of the conference. Wilson actually spoke in defence of Serbia and its right to get access to the sea, yet his 14 points did not stipulate the creation of Yugoslavia, but autonomy for Croatia and Slovenia within reformed Austro-Hungary (Radojević, 2001, pp. 223–237).

To this, we should also add Clemenceau's personal attitude that Austria had to be retained in a certain form because its existence was crucial to the balance of power in Central Europe. He believed that the breakup of the Habsburg Monarchy would lead to the creation of artificial states which could not independently survive and would be gradually absorbed by Germany. He wanted to avoid the chain reaction at all costs because, in case Slavs, Czechs, Hungarians and others were allowed to form their own states, the same request could not be denied to Austrian Germans either. This scenario almost came true on 12 November 1918, when Karl Renner proclaimed the Austrian republic as integral part of the German Empire. Clemenceau and other Entente leaders succeeded in nullifying that unification act, but the threat still remained (Becker, 2012, p. 148). It was only when Austro-Hungary began collapsing internally that Clemenceau had to accept its breakup as a *fait accompli*.

The recognition of Czechoslovakia on 21 October 1918 opened the door to South Slavs as well. Clemenceau was personally against the recognition of Yugoslavia which did not have defined borders and was on the verge of a direct conflict with Italy.

During the session of the conference, he pointed out that he recognized the Treaty of London but, despite Orlando's insistence, he did not support Italian claims to Rijeka (Fiume) which was not part of the Treaty of London. The French ambassador to Rome, Victor Barrère, was deeply disappointed by such attitude of Clemenceau's. In one of his reports, he points out that Clemenceau was the object of huge adoration in Italy until that moment, but after his restraint to openly take Italy's side in the dispute over Rijeka, he irretrievably ruined his own and France's reputation. Orlando left Rome before the official signing of the peace treaty (Winock, 1997, p. 572).

On many occasions during the sessions, Clemenceau expressed his gratitude to Nikola Pašić, who had visited at the hardest moments for his country, although he had belonged to the opposition at the time. In fact, while Nikola Pašić as the president of the Serbian government stayed in Paris in winter 1915, lobbying for the aid to the Serbian state among influential persons, he consulted Milenko Vesnić whether he should visit Clemenceau as well although the latter was not a member of the government. Vesnić opposed that idea, assuring Pašić that Clemenceau was a "fierce oppositionist" who attacked the "whole world" (Geffroy, 1938, p. 7). Pašić did not take his advice – eventually he had a meeting with Clemenceau. The encounter was mainly protocolar, but of great significance to the destiny of Yugoslavia at the Peace Conference. Pašić and Clemenceau met once again in November 1917, when Clemenceau had just come to the head of the government. On that occasion, Clemenceau expressed his admiration for the heroic Serbian army (Sretenović, 2008, p. 89).

The USA was the first among great powers to recognize the existence of the South Slavic state. The official recognition by France came at the end of June, just before the end of the Peace Conference. Justifying his decision, Clemenceau said that for him Yugoslavia was an equivalent of Nikola Pašić and that he recognized the new state out of his respect for Pašić (SHD, 6 N 235, № 3717; Porte, 2011, p. 589; Vallaud, 2011, p. 454).

Conclusion

The Versailles Peace Conference was at the same time the zenith and the end of Clemenceau's political career. At the Conference itself, he was glorified as "the father of victory" (*le père de la victoire*), but in the presidential election in December he experienced a huge defeat and decided to retire from politics and the public (Becker, 2012, pp. 160, 168–169). He spent last years of his life writing his memoirs and fighting against his political opponents, even against the like-minded ones who attacked and re-examined his war policy. Only a few months before his death, he published his memoir entitled *Grandeur and Misery of Victory* (*Grandeurs et misères d'une victoire*) as an answer to the accusations and attacks by Marshal Foch, his closest wartime associate. He died on 24 November 1929, disappointed and misunderstood. Full of bitterness, in *Grandeur and Misery of Victory* he wrote that "the Frenchman loves nothing more than oblivion" (Clemenceau, 2020, p. 118).

If we compared Clemenceau's and Poincaré's perceptions of the Balkan policy in today's frameworks, we could conclude that modern France is Clemenceau's child. Contemporary French histori-

ography gives full priority to Clemenceau's vision of the world order and his policy during the Annexation Crisis over Poincaré's policy during the Balkan Wars. Clemenceau's policy in 1908/1909 is assessed as wisely pursued, with moderation and consideration. He succeeded in resolving the Annexation Crisis without compromising the interests of France. Clemenceau's political mind was acknowledged by the defeated as well. The most memorable are the words by German Emperor William II after the defeat in 1918: "If we had had Clemenceau, we wouldn't have lost this war" (Greilsamer, 2018, p. 2).

To sum up Clemenceau's position towards Serbia and the Serbian national question, we should once again recall his fierce patriotism towards France. Clemenceau was one of the few politicians who belonged to France and the French people with his heart and soul. The circumstances outside his fatherland affected him only to an extent of their being harmful or beneficial to France's interests. In many biographies dealing with the person and work of Georges Clemenceau, Serbia is almost never mentioned. The same refers to the Thessaloniki front and the Yugoslav state. Historian Michel Winock, considered one of the best connoisseurs of Clemenceau, mentions Serbia only once – in the context of the number of casualties, and Yugoslavia in the context of the "Rijeka issue" and the dispute with Italy. Just like Clemenceau, his biographer Winock sees exclusively France and nothing else. Although he is considered one of the founders of the new world order, Clemenceau truly wanted to be the creator of socially more just France. He was a man ahead of his time; his political horizons were far beyond the views of his contemporaries, but his descendants granted him deserved honour and recognition.

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Заштеник

Свечане седнице Одбора Оштинине Београдске
вдржане на дан 30. Јануара 1921 год. на којој је изасла-
ник Председника Француске Републике, Г.
Џенерал Франисе 2'Еиере предао Оштинини,
орден - Крста Птогасне Мешје, којим је одликован
Београд.



Председавао В. д. председника
Г. Ј. Карајовановић

Секретар
Марко С. Јадаковић

Малко у 10 часова В. д. председника Г. Ј. Карајовановић
отвара седницу овим говором:

Господо Одборници, госпође и господо!

Данашња седница, господо има нарочити значај, како за
Београд, тако и целу нашу земљу. Београд не само носица и створ-
ник идеје политичког и националног ослобођења, наше целокупне
хришћанског народа, него и верни и искрајни политички савезник
у борби за изостанути велики међународни принцип „правде и ме-
штине“ - има данас да прими велико и ретко одликовање у знак
признања за такво своје политичко и политичко држање у прошлости
рату. И у колико то одликовање долази од Француске, једне шта-
ко велике државе, не само то њеног међународног, него и то вели-

ПРОГРАМ

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свечаности откривања споменика захвалности француској у Београду.

10. новембар:

У 8.20 часова дочек француских гостију на железничкој станици. Одело: калот, цилиндер.

Дочеку присуствују: Одбор за подизање споменика,

Пирењивачки одбор,

Преставници београдске општине,

Удружења и корпорације,

Грађанство,

Војна музика.



Г. Миљанић, председник одбора за подизање споменика поздравља госте кратким говором.

У 10.30 часова свечан дочек изасланства француске Владе и осталих француских гостију. Одело: калот, цилиндер.

Дочеку присуствују: Преставници Краљевске Владе,

Одбор за подизање споменика,

Преставници београдске општине,

Генералитет и Адмиралитет,

Музика са почасном четом,

Удружења и корпорације,

Грађанство.

Приликом доласка воза у станицу музика свира француску химну

Г. Миљанић, председник одбора поздравља госте,

Музика свира француску химну,

Шеф француске делегације обилази почасни Чет.

У 14.45 часова помен на француском и нашем гробу.

Помену присуствују: Преставници Краљевске Владе,

Изасланство француске Владе и остали гост
француска колонија,

Генералитет и Адмиралитет,

Преставници београдске општине,

Више чиновништво,

Удружења, корпорације, грађанство,

Војна музика са почасном четом.

У 20.30 часова Вагнет Краљ. Владе у Гардиским Локу.

Programme of the ceremony for the unveiling of the Monument of Gratitude to France in Belgrade, 1930 (AJ 74).

Photo: Archives of Yugoslavia



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The influence of France on sports in the Kingdom of Serbia

Abstract: During its struggle for independence in the 19th century, Serbia considered physical culture primarily through the soldiers' skills or the preparation of future soldiers. It is because of these reasons that military structures had a dominant influence on the introduction and development of physical exercise until the Great War. Gained independence and promoting the principality to the rank of the kingdom encouraged Serbian society to make significant changes in different social spheres. Physical culture also experienced positive changes after the 1880s. With the arrival of Charles Doucet, a Belgian fencing instructor, in Serbia at the end of the 19th century, Serbian society was introduced to the French fencing method. Doucet's pupils promoted the fencing sport in the Kingdom of Serbia, as well as subsequently in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. At the beginning of the 20th century, with the aim of specializing in physical culture, Officer Dragomir Nikolajević was sent to France, to Joinville School of Physical Education. After his return from schooling, Nikolajević worked on the development of the Sokol movement and the Olympic movement. By accepting Baron de Coubertin's ideas, the Kingdom of Serbia ranked among few countries which introduced Olympism before the Great War. The influence of France at the beginning of sports in the Kingdom of Serbia was the foundation for further development of physical culture in the territory of the Republic of Serbia and in the region on the whole.

Keywords: France, Kingdom of Serbia, sport, Joinville School (École de Joinville), Dragomir Nikolajević

Introduction

In the period of the Principality of Serbia, the emergence and development of physical education, as well as the first forms of sport, proceeded haphaz-

ardly, periodically and, to a large extent, with no continuity. The number of teachers in primary and secondary schools was small, while their knowledge regarding physical education was modest. The first sport-related steps were taken in different

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90 | schools of fencing, swimming and gymnastics. Fighting for its independence during the greater part of the 19th century, the Serbian state most seriously approached physical culture in military structures. From the foundation of the Artillery School as an initial form of the Military Academy to the beginning of the Great War, the physical education subjects had an important status. After gaining independence and the declaration of the Kingdom of Serbia in 1882, the army also underwent changes. In 1883, two-year general military service was introduced, thus finally putting an end to the dualism between the small standing army and massive people's army. The army was divided into permanent staff consisting of officers, non-commissioned officers and soldiers doing their military service. To this permanent staff, the reserve was added, made of the soldiers who had done their military service to the age of thirty. The permanent staff and the reserve made the first-call army. The second call-army involved conscripts of the age between 30 and 37, while the third-call army involved conscripts of the age between 37 and 50. The training content, previously available only to the members of the standing army, after the introduction of the longer regular military service, became available to all young men of military age. The entire educational content of soldiers' training was divided into the content of general-educational military character, military training and physical education, or gymnastics (gymnastics is one of the terms used to denote physical education in the period of the Kingdom of Serbia). The physical education content in all military branches was integral part of all training stages. Doing military service, as well as calling former soldiers into the

reserve, were the systematization periods of the influence of physical culture on the broader population. After its declaration of the kingdom, the Serbian state's attitude towards physical education in primary and secondary schools was raised to a higher level. First associations for physical exercise were founded, while some associations accepted the Czech gymnastics system – the Sokol. After the revival of the Olympic Games at the end of the 19th century, Olympism gained followers in Serbia in the first decade of the 20th century.

The influence of France on sport through officers and physical education teachers in the army of the Kingdom of Serbia

Although most Serbian officers were educated in the country, some officers were sent to foreign troops for further specialization. This matter and the importance of further education was discussed by Minister of War Jovan Mišković (1879) in the journal *Ratnik*: "... Is it necessary to send them abroad now, and how many of them, so that individual military spheres should be explored and studied, in order to be inevitably applied in our country afterwards?". That Minister Mišković's initiative presented to the Chief of the General Staff bore fruit is proved by the results in the specialization of the Serbian Army in the following decades. In the period 1888-1898, as many as 303 officers were educated abroad or, from minimum 18 to maximum 42 officers on an annual basis (Gavrilović, 2011, p. 113). Further education was also obtained in Russian, Austro-Hungarian, German, Belgian as

well as French armies. In the schedule of physical activities for officers, non-commissioned officers and soldiers in France, which officially came into force in 1874, the emphasis was placed on running, swimming, wrestling, singing, dancing, classical or English boxing, savate or French boxing, fencing etc. (Gavrilović, 2011, p. 28). In the eleven-year period (1888–1898), Serbian officers were not sent to France primarily for the purpose of specializing physical culture, but they certainly practised it in the French troops. In this period, 26 Serbian officers stayed in France. With their return to the country, they brought the French influence on physical culture in the Kingdom of Serbia. A systematic approach to physical culture in the army of the Kingdom of Serbia, applied by these officers, opened the opportunity for French physical culture exerting its influence on the broader population in the Kingdom of Serbia.

During its first thirty years (1850–1880), the Military Academy categorized the most prominent physical education subjects (gymnastics, fencing and swimming) into a group of major subjects, together with the French language, field fortifications and Christian Science (Ljušić, Bojković, Pršić & Jovović, 2000, p. 290). Some foreign gymnastics, fencing and swimming teachers were engaged as well. Jovan Zamastil from Vysoké Mýto, a place in the Czech part of the Austrian Empire, taught fencing, swimming and gymnastics from 1851. After Zamastil, these subjects were taught by Đorđe Marković Koder from 1858 to 1860. Marković had been professionally engaged as a gymnastics and fencing teacher in Szeged-based grammar school in Hungary (Bošković, 2014, p. 263). In addition to fortification,

rules of pioneer service and pontoon service, Engineer Captain Dimitrije Karadžić, the son of Vuk Karadžić, also taught gymnastics from 1859 to 1865. Dimitrije Karadžić graduated at the Military Engineer Academy in Bruck (Austro-Hungary) and then in Serbia he was given the rank of sub-lieutenant of the Serbian Army, and afterwards he was sent to Berlin, for military specialization in the Guards Pioneers Detachment (Šaulić, 1988, p. 236). Moreover, Infantry 1st Class Captain Lazar Cukić taught the gymnastics subject in the period 1858–1859, and in the long period between 1864 and 1887, Infantry Major Ferdo Mihoković taught swimming and gymnastics. In the period 1850–1880, four out of these five teachers of fencing, gymnastics and swimming brought their knowledge of physical culture from the territories beyond the Principality of Serbia (Zamastil, Marković, Karadžić and Mihoković). They had gained their experience primarily in Austro-Hungary. In the further development of the Military Academy (1880–1914), until the beginning of the First World War, as many as ten teachers were engaged for the above-listed subjects: Ljubomir Ilić (1886–1891), Miloš P. Vasić (1891–1899), Charles Doucet (1891–1919), Stevan P. Jovanović (1892–1895), Jovan Stojanović (1893–1894), Svetislav Mišković (1895–1897), Atanasije M. Popović (1898–1901), Dragomir T. Nikolajević (1900–1902), Aleksandar Josifović (1902–1907), Miroslav Vojinović a.k.a. František Hofman (1908–1914) (Ljušić et al., 2000, p. 299).

Two of the above-listed teachers had a significant effect on spreading the French content of physical culture among the cadets of the Military Academy and, in their further engagement,



The cabinet of anatomy at the school in Joinville
Photograph: private archives

also on the civilian population of the Kingdom of Serbia. After five teachers who had brought their knowledge of physical culture from the territory of Austro-Hungary (Zamastil, Marković, Karadžić, Mihoković and Ilić), in 1891 the Military Academy hired Belgian fencing instructor Charles Doucet. Doucet had completed the Brussels fencing school with flying colours. This school was opened in 1885, modelled after the French school in Joinville, near Paris (*École normale militaire de gymnastique*). After completing his education, as a successful and trained fencer, Doucet was engaged as a teacher in Turkey in 1889. At the suggestion of the Serbian military attaché in Istanbul, General Staff Colonel Nešić, Doucet moved to Belgrade and took up teaching fencing at the Serbian Military Academy. Before Doucet's arrival in Serbia, fencing had been taught by the old German method, while after his engagement, fencing was taught by the new French fencing method (Rašić, 1909a). This Belgian fencing instructor soon had a substantial number of students at the Military Academy, as well as in the private school he opened in Terazije, where he rented the whole floor for training premises. The most successful students included Dragomir Nikolajević, Aleksandar Josifović and Bogoljub Dinić, who, after their years-long cooperation with Doucet, were also engaged as fencing teachers at the Military Academy. Doctor Vojislav Subotić, Ješa Pantelić, Novaković and Simić were the outstanding students who attended the civilian fencing school in Terazije.

Charles Doucet's student and fencing teacher at the Military Academy, Dragomir T. Nikolajević, was another teacher at the Military Academy who significantly contributed to the influence of France

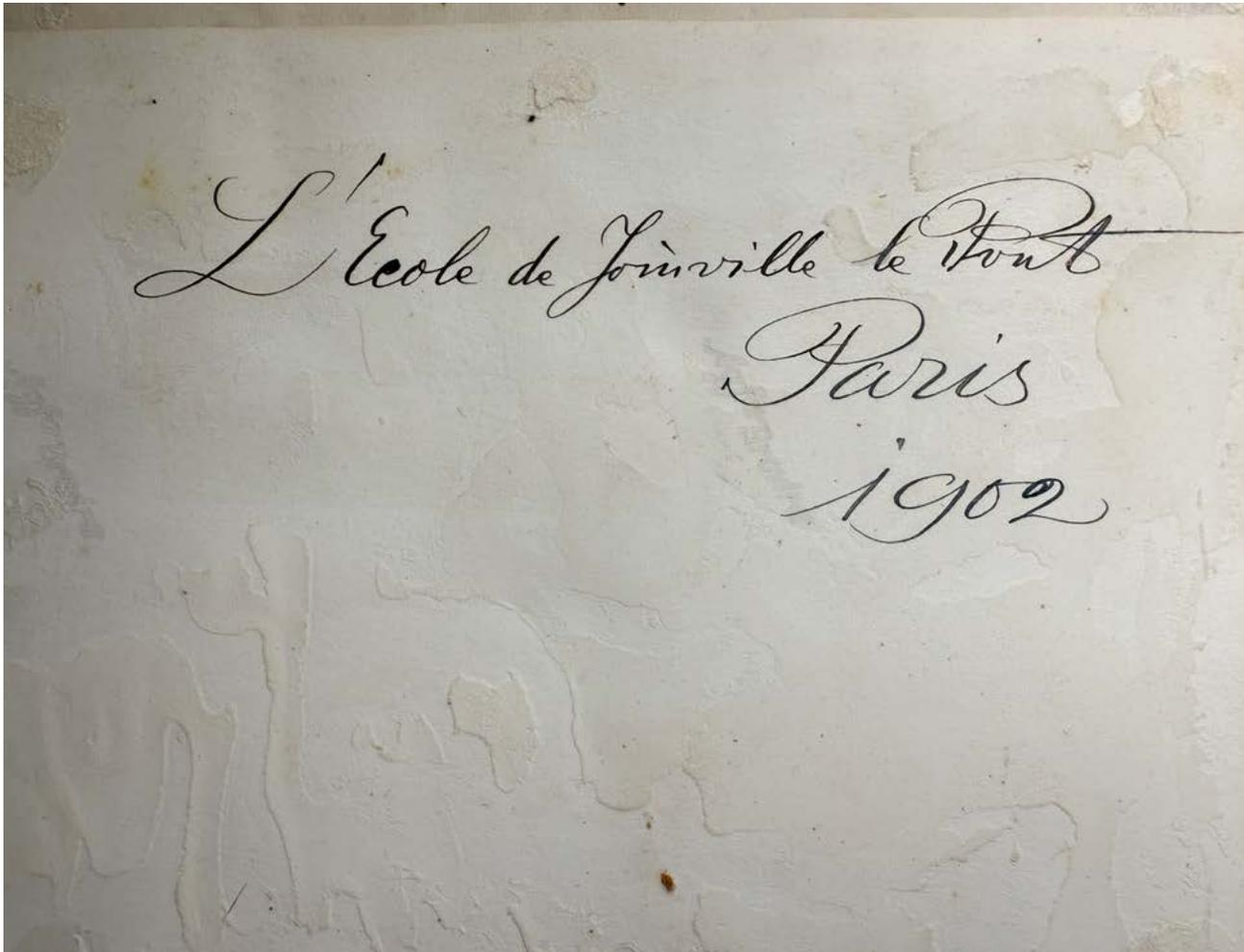
on the development of sport in the Kingdom of Serbia. The Ministry of War decided to send Nikolajević as an exceptionally talented fencer to France for further education in the sphere of physical culture, specifically to Joinville school near Paris (Naumović, 1902). The school in Joinville (*École normale militaire de gymnastique de Joinville*) was opened in 1852 and was an important place for the overall development of European physical culture in the 19th and 20th centuries (Joinville school is the predecessor of today's INSEP). Nikolajević's schooling abroad lasted from 1902 to 1904 (Military Archives, 1925). He studied different sports: gymnastics, athletics, fencing, boxing, savate, swimming, diving, wrestling, as well as anatomy, physiology and biomechanics. Nikolajević was lucky to be taught anatomy, physiology and biomechanics by famous Doctor Georges Demeny. In addition, he played for the Joinville football team, won medals in rowing and took part in athletics competitions (Vreme, 1930). He also specialized in the elements of military physical culture – bayonet fighting, uniform diving, transporting the wounded across platforms, crossing pits in uniform and with equipment over horizontally placed trees etc. After his return from specialization, Captain Nikolajević participated in running the Officers' Fencing School in this course from 1904 to 1905. Together with General Staff Major Dušan Pešić, Captain Nikolajević also performed the tasks of a member of the examination board in the Officers' Fencing School. This school gathered the officers most talented for fencing. Two streets in Belgrade were named after two students of the Officers' Fencing School – Branivoj Jovanović and Bogdan Hajnc. After his return from specialization in France, on 18 March



Dragomir Nikolajević exercises French boxing in the French school Joinville
(Dragomir Nikolajević's sport album)
Photograph: private archives

1904, Dragomir Nikolajević made a proposal at the 9th session of Belgrade Sokol Movement to train two members of this movement in boxing. The proposal of the artillery captain was accepted (Rašić, 1909b). In that period of the development of martial arts, there were two distinct boxing methods, French

and English. At the beginning of 1907, Captain Nikolajević and Lieutenant Josifović attended the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the Dutch work in the physical and cultural spheres, At the gala fencing ceremonies, Nikolajević fought with Italian teacher Zanella. Both Serbian officers were



Dragomir Nikolajević exercises savate, or French boxing, in the French school Joinville, back side of the photograph (Dragomir Nikolajević's sport album)
Photograph: private archives

awarded medals for their successful performance by Dutch Queen Wilhelmina. The participation of the Serbian officers in the Netherlands fencing

events is, after more than a century, celebrated as the Military Sports Day in the Army of the Republic of Serbia.^[2]

[2] https://www.vs.rs/sr_lat/o-vojsci/tradicija/vojni-praznici (Accessed on 5.4.2025.).

96 | During his service in Niš, Nikolajević announced writing a book with the topic of sport – “Military Library of Rational Physical Labour”. The book would encompass the content about walking and running, fencing, swimming, water polo, rowing, wrestling, French and English boxing... In his invitation for the subscription, Nikolajević emphasized that the book would be enriched with the addition of the data of French scientists, Doctor Demenÿ, Doctor Tissie, Doctor Michaux, and of the Joinville Military School (Hadžić, 1909). Before the First World War, in 1914, the first book on boxing was published in the Kingdom of Serbia, entitled *French and English Boxing*. On the last pages of the book, the author, Lieutenant Colonel Nikolajević, points out that in the preparation of this publication, he also used the works of Doctor Tissie, Doctor LaGrange, Doctor Paget, Professor Charlemont, Professor Leclerc and the practical experiences of the Joinville school.

As a former student of Joinville school, Nikolajević also took active part in the work of the Union of Sokol Societies “Dušan Silni” and the Serbian Olympic Committee.

Officer Nikolajević selflessly shared the experience gained during his schooling in France in the sphere of physical culture in the Kingdom of Serbia.

France and the Olympic movement in the Kingdom of Serbia

The most important place in the revival of Olympism and the foundation of the Olympic movement in the 19th century belongs to France, more specifically to French diplomat and pedagogue, Baron Pierre

de Coubertin. Intending to reform and improve physical culture in France, Coubertin studied different physical culture systems in Europe. In 1889, he was sent by the French Ministry of National Education to the USA and Canada to become familiar with physical culture at the universities in these countries. In his idea of the educational reform, he treated modern sport as an agent of desired changes in education (Ilić & Mijatović, 2006, p. 295). In sports magazines and at scientific gatherings, Coubertin promoted the idea of reviving Olympism. After finding like-minded people in England and the USA, the three-member committee decided that the International Sport Congress should be organized in Paris in 1894. The delegates from 11 countries attending the event decided to revive the Olympic Games in Athens in 1896. The revival of Olympism, with the dominant influence of France, was exactly an important driving force for the development of sport, as well as of overall physical culture in the Kingdom of Serbia. The first step was made at the First Olympic Games in Athens in 1896 and culminated at the Fifth Olympic Games in Stockholm in 1912, when the Serbian Olympic Club was finally accepted to the international Olympic movement.

Although it was not a participant country, the Kingdom of Serbia attended the first modern Olympic Games as a guest. In its visit to the First Olympic Games, the delegation of the Kingdom of Serbia was led by young King Aleksandar Obrenović, accompanied by the state delegation. King Aleksandar's visit was the first visit of a sovereign to the modern Olympic Games. After visiting the Serbian Monastery of Chilandar and Russian Panteleimon's Monastery at Mount Athos, the king sent to Piraeus, where he was welcomed by King

George of Greece with Crown Prince Constantine, Prince George and a large delegation. After the meal at the Greek court, the hosts and the guests went to the Olympic cycling race. On the second day of his stay, King Aleksandar appeared at the stadium when in his honour the orchestra played the national anthems of Greece and Serbia. Both rulers were enthusiastically welcomed by the present people. The following day, King Aleksandar watched the Greek athlete win the marathon and it is also assumed that he watched the competition of Momčilo Tapavica, a Serbian wrestler representing Hungary at the Olympic Games (Šarenac, Baljkas & Borovnjak, 2020, p. 39).

The king's retinue included General Franasović, the Minister of War; Lieutenant Colonel Ćirić, first aide-de-camp, Major Rašić, as well as Major Mišić, aide-de-camp. This is how Živojin Mišić described his visit to the Mount Athos and the First Olympic Games with King Aleksandar: „The king used to travel frequently abroad in those years. All aide-de-camps and orderlies escorted the king on many occasions during his journeys. However, it was never my turn, probably because at the same time I was also the commander of the battalion, while others had no other appointments or had only some clerical duties. Eventually, it was finally my turn to escort the king during his journey to Mount Athos and Athens” (Mišić, 1969, p. 181). The visit of Aide-de-Camp and Major Živojin Mišić to the Olympic Games in Athens had a positive effect on the future generations of officers, in terms of their acceptance of the Olympic ideas. The future *vojvoda* of the Serbian Army was the first to accept and spread the “flame” of Olympism among the young officers who founded the Serbian Olympic Club in 1910.

During the Olympic Games in Athens, the Serbian press published reports about the stay of the king and his retinue in Greece. The Serbian king's visit and stay were reported by *Male novine*, *Videlo*, *Večernje novosti*, *Srpske novine* etc. The intonation of the Serbian national anthem and the raising of the state flag at the first modern Olympic Games made a strong impression on the guest delegation of the Kingdom of Serbia. The officers' impressions from the First Olympic Games gave additional momentum to the influence of the army to raising the level of physical culture on the whole.

On 10 February 1910, the Serbian Olympic Club in Belgrade's “Moscow” Hotel. Out of six members of the club management, four were officers of the Serbian Army. Furthermore, in the years before the beginning of the Great War, army officers took up most functions in the management and boards of the Serbian Olympic Club (Gavrilović & Mijatović, 2020). More than 60 officers and a substantial number of soldiers took part in the development of Olympism in the Kingdom of Serbia. The most important figure in the development of the Serbian Olympic movement was officer Svetomir Đukić. From his youth he had excellent physical skills which he further developed through his education at the Military Academy. The attendance of the Serbian delegation at the Olympic Games in Athens had positive effects on the overall physical culture of the Serbian people, as well as directly on young officer Đukić. Živojin Mišić, the *vojvoda* of the Serbian Army in the Great War, stayed as King Aleksandar Obrenović's aide-de-camp at the Olympic Games in Athens. In his subsequent professional career, he promoted sport in the army, but also among people in general. In his *Memoirs from the Balkan Wars*, Svetomir Đukić writes the

98 | following: “[...] As a sublieutenant, I was under the command of Živojin Mišić in Valjevo... He advised the younger among us and drew our attention to the importance of physical exercise. He had a great influence on me and gymnastics became integral part of my life. I am grateful to him, among other things, for being able to make the Kingdom of Serbia a member of the International Olympic Association (Đukić describes his encounter with *Vojvoda* Mišić in 1913), while I was personally accepted as a member of the International Olympic Committee – an honour not only for me, but also for Serbia” (Đukić, 2014, p. 207). According to Đukić’s *Memoirs*, the Kingdom of Serbia was an official participant at the Fifth Olympic Games held in Stockholm in 1912. Serbia was represented by two competitors: Dragutin Tomašević in the marathon and Dušan Milošević in the 100-metre race. At the Stockholm games, Serbia officially joined the International Olympic Committee (Ilić & Mijatović, 2006, p. 521). A year after the Serbia’s entry into the International Olympic Committee, Svetomir Đukić, Director of the Serbian Olympic Committee, had to take up military duties because of the beginning of the Balkan Wars. This is how Major Đukić describes these abrupt changes in his *Memoirs*: “Life is full of surprises. Several months ago, I was introduced at the Swedish court as a new member of the International Olympic Committee. I could not even imagine the glory and luxury of the Swedish court. I took great care of my behaviour knowing that it was no longer my private thing, but that I represented my country, about which many of the present people knew nothing or had a completely wrong idea” (Đukić, 2014, p. 211). After the participation in the Olympic Games in Stockholm, the work of the Serbian Olympic Committee was

slowed down by the Balkan Wars in 1912 and 1913. At the beginning of 1914, the Committee organized several competitions: 200-metre race, 20-kilometre race and the cycling race. On the eve of the Great War, in June 1914, the delegates of the International Olympic Committee gathered in the City Hall of Paris. The Congress was chaired by Pierre de Coubertin, the initiator of revived Olympism, while Serbia was represented by Svetomir Đukić. Besides Coubertin, the Congress was attended by Sloane, Balck, Guth-Jarkovský, Edström and giant-like Usseaux as the closest associates of this French humanist and baron. According to officer Đukić, Coubertin was a combination of aristocratic sophistication, democratic idealism and a fighter for justice, humanity and equality. The gathered representatives respected Coubertin, feeling his contribution in the initiation of Olympism, the “ignition” of the Olympic torch, and turning humanity in a peace-loving direction (Đukić, 2015, p. 23). Serbian delegate Đukić believed that Olympic values matched the characteristics of our nation, i.e., humanity, heroism and chivalry. This is how Major Đukić further described the atmosphere at the inaugural congress before the Great War: “At the first session, the Austrian delegate authoritatively demanded that the Czech delegate, Doctor Guth-Jarkovský, should be dismissed from the IOC because the Czech Crown lands were integral part of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. Two opposed groups were immediately formed – German countries on one side, and Slavic countries on the other. A heated debate began. Coubertin was able to run even the most turbulent sessions with plenty of tactfulness, sophistication and authority, and to resume unity firmly, to find a solution, with no confusion, commotion, hesitation or rudeness – while holding

just a white piece of paper in front of him. In the end, after heated arguments, it was decided that Doctor Guth-Jarkovský should remain in the IOC. On this occasion, it could be felt that the European atmosphere was full of electricity. Coubertin sensed the onset of the terrible disaster and thought about how two and a half years before (in 776 BC), Greek tribes had stopped wars in order to hold the Olympics, while now people suspended the Olympics in order to wage wars” (Đukić, 2015, p. 24). After the Congress, the IOC members were received by French President Poincaré in the Elysée Palace Park. When Major Đukić was introduced to the French president, Coubertin pointed out the following: “He is one of the heroes of Serbia, a small nation by its numbers, but great by its chivalry”, while President Poincaré: “And also by its humanity towards its opponent” (Đukić, 2015, p. 24). On 28 June 1914, Major Đukić visited horse races in Longchamp, where, among many guests from the diplomatic corps, there was also President Poincaré with his wife. After the derby, Đukić stayed at the racecourse for a while. At that moment, terrible commission and apprehension spread among the people while newspaper sellers hurried to inform the public about the assassination of the Austro-Hungarian archduke and his wife in Sarajevo. The world soon entered the Great War, and officer Svetomir Đukić, with a large number of Serbian Olympic sportsmen, took part in the greatest, until then unprecedented, world war conflict.

The Kingdom of Serbia was a victorious country after the First World War and on 1 December 1918 it entered the newly-formed state of South Slavs – the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. Moreover, the Serbian Olympic Committee continued its activities within the Yugoslav Olympic

Committee, while Svetomir Đukić was appointed vice president of this organization.

Conclusion

After Serbia definitely gained its independence at the Congress of Berlin and declared itself as a kingdom, various social spheres in the Serbian state developed at a faster pace. A large number of young people returned to the Kingdom of Serbia after being educated in European countries. The wide range of knowledge transferred from abroad to Serbian society included the sphere of physical culture. Furthermore, the state took different steps in raising awareness of the importance of physical exercise. After its foundation in 1850, the Military Academy often appointed people who had been educated abroad as teachers of gymnastics, fencing and swimming. Moreover, the Military Academy also sent Serbian officers to foreign troops for the purpose of specialization in the sphere of physical culture. The French fencing method was introduced in the Kingdom of Serbia with the arrival of Charles Doucet, the Belgian fencing instructor. He made a significant contribution to the development of fencing at the Military Academy, as well as in civil society. For the purpose of specializing in the sphere of physical culture, the Ministry of War sent Officer Dragomir Nikolajević to the French School of Physical Education in Joinville. After his return from schooling abroad, Nikolajević took active part in the promotion of sport in the Sokol movement, the Olympic movement, as well as by his publications in the sphere of physical culture. The revival of Olympism at the end of the 19th century raised

awareness of physical culture at the global level. The ideas of Baron de Coubertin and his associates were recognized in the Kingdom of Serbia, which led to the Serbian Olympic sportsmen's joining the International Olympic Committee before the

Great War. France contributed to the development of physical culture in the Kingdom of Serbia and had a positive influence on its further development in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and the Republic of Serbia.

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Dado in expansion

Abstract: This essay reflects on the legacy of Montenegrin artist Dado (Miodrag Đurić, 1933–2010), who spent most of his career and life in France, in a context where new narratives in art history emerge giving more visibility to non-Western artists. Through the complex and fertile bond between the East and the West cultures, the importance of the landmark retrospective of paintings of the artist at the SASA Gallery in 2024, and the restoration of his in situ masterpiece, the Orpellières, his “Guernica in color”, the author shows Dado’s extreme contemporaneity. New insights, not only in art history, but also in aesthetics, philosophy and literature, show the fascinating echo of Dado’s work in our times.

Keywords: Dado (Miodrag Đurić), Danilo Kiš, Legacy, Catherine Millet, Orpellières, Germain Viatte

“I think that painting is an adventure, but a personal one.”

Dado^[2]

New stories, new insights

From one exhibition catalogue project to another, since I’ve been working for almost 24 years now at the Centre Pompidou as an editor, I notice how the narrative of art history has evolved through the

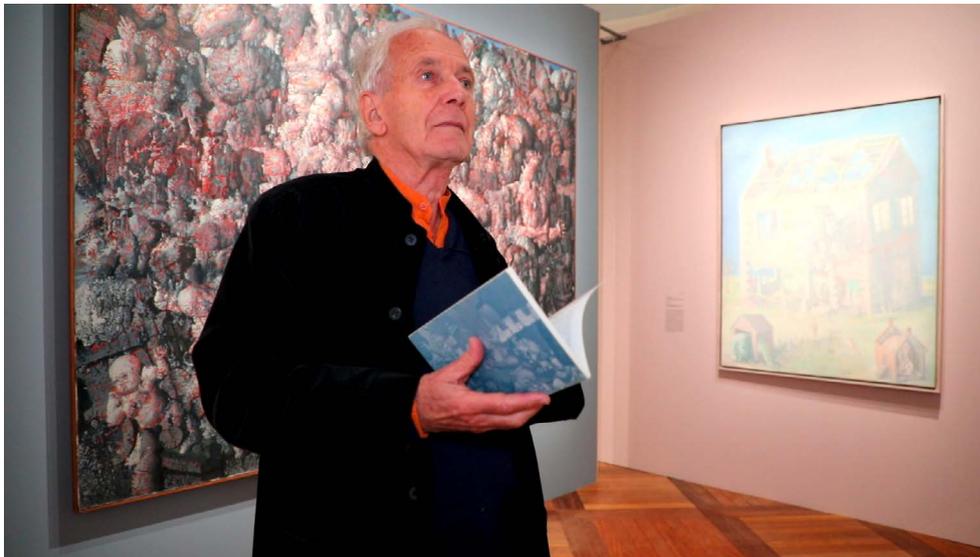
years, in a more and more globalized world – and not only in France, where I live. At the Centre Pompidou, in 2013, “Multiple Modernities, 1905–1970”, curated by Catherine Grenier, was a successful attempt to suggest other narratives, by showing other artists who have been overshadowed by the “big” official art history – mostly a Western one, with Western artists, and recalled by Western art historians – in order “to challenge mainstream discourse

[1] Author of the exhibition “Dado. Natural History, 1953–2000” at the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, in Belgrade, 21 December 2024–2 March 2025, *Editor of Dado. Peindre debout. Entretiens, 1969–2009*. Strasbourg: Éditions L’Atelier contemporain. 2016, *Dado. Portrait en fragments. Propos recueillis par Christian Derouet, 1981–1988*. Strasbourg: Éditions L’Atelier contemporain. 2023, publisher of Dado’s official website www.dado.fr / www.dado.virtual.anti.museum / www.dado.me, Editor at the Centre Pompidou, Paris, Artist’s daughter.

[2] Rajko Cerović, RTCG, *Interview with Dado*, 1971, Available at: <https://www.dado.virtual.anti.museum/interview-tv-tograd-1971-video>, 10 min. 44 sec (Accessed on March 11, 2025).

and established hierarchies” (Grenier, 2013, p. 15). More recently, the brilliant exhibition titled “Paris et nulle part ailleurs. 24 artistes étrangers à Paris” [Paris and Nowhere Else: 24 Foreign Artists in Paris] curated by Jean-Paul Ameline at the Musée national de l’histoire de l’immigration in Paris in 2022, showed that after World War II, Paris, and France more broadly, still appeared as a magnetic pole for artists coming from all over the world, as was the case for Dado, encouraged to go there by his mentor, Marko Čelebonović, a close friend of sculptor Germaine Richier, whose career in France was remarkable. Ameline also underlined the influence of native countries in the creative process of most of the exiled artists based in France, such as Chinese artist Zao Wou-Ki, Senegalese paint-

er Iba N’Diaye, Haitian artist Hervé Télémaque (Ameline, 2022, p. 49). These reminiscences – in the case of Dado, the stone texture of the Montenegrin mountains – is patent after years of exile. With *Limbo* (1958-1959), *The Architect* (1959) and *Hérouval* (1967), Dado was present in the section “Voluntary exiles”, along with Eduardo Arroyo, Alicia Penalba, Judith Reigl, Antonio Seguí, and Hervé Télémaque. He was one of the first names mentioned to Ameline by Germain Viatte, one of the best connoisseurs of Dado’s work and a major figure of the institutional art world in France of the five last decades, who contributed to the foundation of the Centre Pompidou in 1977 and curated Dado’s first retrospective at the Centre national d’art contemporain in Paris in 1970 [ill. 1].^[3]



[Ill. 1] Germain Viatte, honorary director of the Musée national d’art moderne, commenting in the catalogue of the 1970 CNAC retrospective, at the exhibition “Paris et nulle part ailleurs. 24 artistes étrangers à Paris”, Musée national de l’histoire de l’immigration, 2022 (curator: Jean-Paul Ameline)
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[3] J.-P. Ameline, email to the author, 24 February 2025.

No wonder then that the place for a “great non-conformist in the history of art”^[4], to take up the expression of art critic Catherine Millet, is increasing as well as his reception in this new context, where non-Western artists are gradually brought to light. Millet uses the term of “re-evaluation”^[5], and underlines the fact that Dado’s work is above all classifications – which undoubtedly makes it difficult for academic art historians to integrate in their narratives. She also insists on the fact that Dado’s art is eternal, because unlike other artists of the same generation, it is not driven “by an explicitly political message, anchored in reality. [...] It is also maybe for this very reason that his painting will live forever, because it says the essence of things. [...] Dado goes to the root of evil. There are some artists who convey a message, who comment in a way the world, the evil in this world, and there are some, like Dado, who go to the root of evil.”^[6]

A complex legacy connecting the East and the West

It’s been more than 14 years now that I’ve been working on my father’s legacy. A difficult task, but

also a rewarding one, which request a daily commitment – as I always say, it is a work whose level is so high that we can feel only humble, and we can’t lie – unlike others which are in a way made for talks only. Dado was not only a “total” artist – who practiced different techniques with an unequivocal virtuosity, his ability to renew himself was also exceptional. He was also very lucid about the recognition of his work: “The value of a painting can only be recognized 10, 30, 40 or 50 years after it has been completed. Canvases need to be covered in dust before their quality can be judged. There has to be a distance. It’s exactly the same when you see Lake Skadar. When you swim in the lake, you can’t see it very well. You have to go up to Košćele^[7] to admire it. That goes for paintings as well as books.” (Dado, 2016a, p. 222). The Skadar lake, a region where his paternal grand-mother Janica was raised, seems pivotal in the building of Dado’s universe, as exemplified by the vision of the corpses of the horses, “the most lyrical, the most beautiful view”^[8], he recalled in 1969 to Marcel Billot and Germain Viatte, curators of his first retrospective at the Centre national d’art contemporain, or the trauma of the brutal death, precisely on the lake at the end of the 1950s, of his best friend Cugo, whose father owned a locksmith workshop, where the two friends

[4] Sanja Blečić and Snežana Nikčević, *Dado: ukrštanja / Métissages*, 2011, RTCG, Available at: <https://www.dado.virtual.anti.museum/metissages-rtcg-documentary>, 52 min., 52 sec. (Accessed on March 11, 2025).

[5] *Ibid.*, 51 min., 54 sec. (Accessed on March 11, 2025).

[6] C. Millet, conversation at the Galerie Jeanne Bucher Jaeger, Paris, 1st of February 2024, Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/syndrome.dado/videos/351683657693311>, 37 min. 14 sec.–38 min. 27 sec. (Accessed on March 11, 2025).

[7] The place where Dado chose to be buried, in Montenegro, not far from his native town, Cetinje, in Montenegro.

[8] “I was on my usual walk with my friends to see Lake Scutari [Skadar], 10 kilometres from there, and then, round a bend, puff... We were... overcome by a stench... but incredibly violent, of putrefaction, you see. What was there?”

used to spend Saturday afternoons tidying up the tools (Dado, 2024a, pp. 220-221; Dado, 2024b, p. 263) – an important motif in Dado’s early paintings of the 1950’s and 1960’s, which could also refer to the well-known shoes factory of the Đurić family in Montenegro.^[9]

The reception of Dado’s work, a work which speaks to all generations, to all audiences, all cultures, has been increasing during those last years^[10] – also in a context where its themes are more contemporary than ever: war, poverty, despair, but such a view is a simplified one. What makes it also universal is the fact it reunites several cultures, in the most interesting and original way. Dado himself expressed this oscillation between two worlds in 2001: “I have become bicephalous. I have two heads: a Montenegrin one, and a supposedly Western one.”^[11]

This statement – which, not surprisingly, was printed on the introductory text of the room devoted to Dado at the “Paris et nulle part ailleurs” exhibition in 2022 at the Musée national de l’histoire de l’immigration [ill. 2] – perfectly reflects

the irony that characterized Dado’s perception and attitude towards life in general. But it also enhances his immense capacity of absorption of the Western culture which started even before his arrival in France in 1956, from a very early age, with the discovery of Western painting thanks to Italian officers during World War II, who made friends with his family and showed him some art books with reproductions of works by Renaissance painters. Dado would later recall this introduction to classical painting to Rajko Cerović, in 1971, claiming that none of this painting could equal the beauty of the landscape of Rijeka Crnojevića in Montenegro: “The first paintings that amazed me, that I really didn’t admire, some Italian officers brought them, during the war, some reproductions of Raphael and such. Some crappy Renaissance, pardon me. They’re so polished there... creepy, actually.”^[12] Both statements speak volumes about the ambivalence that Dado felt throughout all his life towards the Western “grand” culture – a mix of genuine interest and fascination and a natural rebellion due to its predominance. Around 1946,

There were three horses that had been dumped like that on the side of the road, in the sun, and behind the three horses, there was Lake Scutari, the most lyrical, the most beautiful view you can imagine! Because the lake, one can see it from a bird’s eye view, 15 kilometres from there. It is no longer the blue one sees, with little waves and fish that are in there... One doesn’t see anything, it’s a thing, an extraordinary backdrop. So surely it’s elements like that which built the mind of a kid. Among other things, there is that, and then, I don’t know, to reminisce all those things...” (see: Dado, 2024 a, pp. 220-221).

[9] *The Late Shoemaker* (1969), exhibited at the CNAC retrospective in 1970 and in “Dado: Natural History, 1953–2000” at the SASA Gallery in Belgrade in 2024 obviously refers to this factory.

[10] One significant example: in the 1960’s, Dado’s influence on German artists such as Georg Bazelitz or Eugen Schönebeck (in their 1962 *Pandemonium Manifesto*) has been highlighted in 2012 by Gregor Jansen (see: Jansen, 2012, p. 18).

[11] Dado, quoted at the beginning of *Dado: ukrštanja / Métissage* (2011). Available at: <https://www.dado.virtual.anti.museum/metissages-rtcg-documentary> (Accessed on March 11, 2025).

[12] Rajko Cerović, RTCG, *Interview with Dado, 1971*, Available at: <https://www.dado.virtual.anti.museum/interview-tv-titograd-1971-video>, 5 min 2 sec.–5 min. 22 sec. (Accessed on March 11, 2025).

DADO

Cetinje, Monténégro, 1933
Pontoise, France, 2010

Miodrag Đurić (dit Dado) naît au Monténégro peu avant la guerre et l'occupation nazie de son pays, dont le souvenir douloureux hante tout son travail. Dans les années 1940, il étudie les Beaux-Arts à Belgrade, avant de partir en 1956 pour Paris. Il y rencontre le galeriste Daniel Cordier qui l'introduit dans la scène parisienne, impressionné par ses toiles représentant des bûches. Fasciné par le processus organique de la vie et de la mort, Dado peint avec virtuosité des êtres étranges, mutilés. Son obsession pour la représentation de la misère et de la souffrance humaines fait écho aux thèmes de la poésie orale populaire des pays slaves. À la fin des années 1960, Dado développe ses recherches par la gravure, le collage, la sculpture. Fuyant le tumulte parisien, il s'installe à Hérouval avec l'artiste cubaine Hessie et fait de son atelier un lieu d'« art total » occupé par ses fresques, ses sculptures et assemblages d'objets. À partir du début des années 1990, alors qu'éclate la guerre en ex-Yougoslavie, son œuvre s'étend de plus en plus à l'espace et il investit des bâtiments abandonnés de sa peinture et de sculptures. Il s'intéresse aussi au développement des arts numériques et conçoit lui-même un « anti-musée » virtuel, comme une sorte d'œuvre testamentaire.



Dado dans son atelier, Hérouval, 1960
Photographie: Christian Dreyer
© Musée national de l'histoire de l'immigration

« J'étais plus nostalgique quand j'étais jeune,
trop attaché au Monténégro. Avec le temps,
je suis devenu biphote. J'ai deux fâtes.
L'une monténégrine, l'autre soi-disant occidentale. »

"I was more nostalgic when I was young, too attached to
Montenegro. As time went by, I graduated two fates.
One is Montenegrin, the other is so-called Western."

Miodrag Đurić (aka Dado) was born in Montenegro shortly before the war and the Nazi occupation of his country, memories of which haunt his work. In the 1940s, he studied Fine Arts in Belgrade, before leaving for Paris in 1956. There he met the gallerist Daniel Cordier who introduced him to the Parisian scene, impressed by his paintings of babies. Fascinated by the organic process of life and death, Dado masterfully painted images of strange, mutilated beings. His obsession with portraying human misery and suffering echoes the themes of the popular oral poetry of Slavic countries. In the late 1960s, Dado developed his research through engraving, collage and sculpture. Fleeing the chaos of Paris, he settled in Hérouval with the Cuban artist Hessie and turned his studio into a place of "total art" filled with his frescoes, sculptures and object assemblages. From the 1990s, with war breaking out in ex-Yugoslavia, his work increasingly extended to space and he filled abandoned buildings with his painting and sculptures. He was also interested in the development of the digital arts and designed his own virtual "anti-museum", like a sort of testimonial work.

Cetinje, Montenegro, 1933
Pontoise, France, 2010

Écriture de Dado avec Christian Dreyer
dans le cadre de la programmation de l'exposition
« Dado. L'insupportable du trait »,
au Collège de France, du 10 novembre
au 10 novembre 2010-10 janvier 2012.
Musée national de l'histoire de l'immigration

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[III. 2] View of the introductory text of the room devoted to Dado, at the exhibition "Paris et nulle part ailleurs. 24 artistes étrangers à Paris", Musée national de l'histoire de l'immigration, 2022

© Ph. Lebruman

his discovery of modern art (Francis Bacon, Ivan Albright, Ben Shan) in *Life Magazine* was also decisive in the edification of his visual art vocabulary (especially, in the case of Albright, for the mineral period of the 1958–1962). Some ten years later, in France, Dado met decisive new “intercessors” of the French and European culture in the figures of artist Bernard Réquichot, who introduced him to the poetry of Henri Michaux, but also the Liencourt

couple, who both came from families from the French aristocracy, or renown Slavist Georges Nivat. In a recent interview for France Culture, the latter evoked his friend Dado in these terms: “He would transform everything into something grotesque: his house, the surrounding landscapes, himself, his own children... Everything had a sense of grotesque, and at the time there was a kind of hidden lyricism.”^[13] It is precisely this bridge between

[13] Georges Nivat, À voix nue, “Le sérieux et le loufoque”, 4/5, France Culture, 25 February 2025, available at: <https://www.radiofrance.fr/franceculture/podcasts/a-voix-nue/le-serieux-et-le-loufoque-8548121>, 24 min. 57 sec. (Accessed on March 11, 2025).

[Ill. 3] Dado, *Portrait of Old Lévêque*, 1959

Ink on paper, 32.5 × 43.5 cm

Private collection

Photo: Adam Rzepka

East and West that Dado personifies, as did his dear friend writer Danilo Kiš, with a similar “pathos and irony” (Kiš, 2023, p. 18) – a complex one though. French painting played a pivotal role in the bond with the adoptive country; Dado’s first visit, in August 1956, when he arrived in Paris, was to the Musée du Louvre. Three decades later, in 1988, he claimed: “French painting moves me deeply. Chardin, Fragonard, I love this. In fact, French painting is the only painting I know. Why? Because the light of this country is the only one I know” (Dado, 2023, p. 20). The encounter in 1958 with inhabitants of the village of Courcelles-lès-Gisors, in the Vexin region, so representative of a still very

rural France, was also decisive. At first rejected by the villagers, Dado confessed in 1988 to Christian Derouet that he had discovered in Courcelles “an extraordinary world, whose existence was totally unknown to [him], [...] the *true* proletariat, atrocious and beautiful at the same time” (Dado, 2023, p. 22), a big shock for an artist like him coming from a communist country where the idea of human equality was central. In a quasi-anthropological perspective, he made a “small chronicle of a village, which didn’t have access to running water at the time” (Dado, 2023, p. 21), by portraying the villagers of Courcelles in his drawings – and even in his paintings actually^[14] – of this period [ill. 3 and 4],

[14] For instance, a marginal with whom Dado started a friendship in 1958 in Courcelles-lès-Gisors, Old Lévêque (“Père Lévêque”), was the model for *Thomas More* (1958-1959), and Dado drew him several times [ill. 3 and 4].

Amarante Szidon
Dado in expansion



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[III. 4] Dado, *Thomas More*, 1958-1959
Oil on canvas, 162 × 130 cm
Private collection, courtesy Galerie Baudoin Lebon
© Jacques Bétan

a way of giving back to these humble people their dignity. In the same series of conversations with Derouet, Dado had also this sharp sentence, a very meaningful one: “You need to know whether you are a humanist or not” (Dado, 2023, p. 123). Such a fertile and ambivalent oscillation between two universes wouldn’t have made been possible without the exile – in Dado’s case a “voluntary” one –, which nurtured deeply the work, throughout the years, from the early mineral period to the last bronzes series titled *Angels of Montenegro*.^[15]

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“Dado, Natural History, 1953-2000” at the SASA Gallery, Belgrade, December 2024

The title of the exhibition, supported by the Foundation for the Serbian People and State and the Plavo Foundation, is of course a reference to Dado’s fascination for the *Histoire naturelle* of 18th-century French naturalist Buffon, which gave birth to a whole series of paintings in the 1980’s and to the *Cabinet d’histoire naturelle*, a set of “dadoised” armchairs in the studio of Hérouval [ill. 5]. My purpose was to sketch a *Natural history* of Dado himself, through a first retrospective of the most impressive paintings from the early years [ill. 6] – beginning with the portrait of the tutelary figure of Marko Čelebonović (1953) – to the extraordinary



[Ill. 5] Entry of the exhibition “Dado: Natural History, 1953–2000”, SASA Gallery, Belgrade (author: Amarante Szidon)
© Enter media, Srbija



[Ill. 6] An exhibition view of “Dado: Natural History, 1953–2000”, showing the paintings of the 1950’s
© Enter media, Srbija

[15] It was exactly one of my main purposes when I decided to add notes for the two books of interviews, *Peindre debout* (2016) and *Portrait en fragments*: explaining to the French readers some facts or even notions at the core of Dado’s background through his early years in Yugoslavia, almost unknown in France. *Angels of Montenegro* has been chosen as the title of the exhibition of the collection of Novica Jovović at the Montenegrin Academy of Sciences and Arts in Podgorica (Montenegro), in February 2025. (see: Dado, 2016b; Dado, 2023).

creative rejuvenation of the 1990s and 2000s [ill. 7]. It was the first time that as many works from different periods were gathered – and especially for the Belgrade years with the exceptional loan of the three jewels of the 1950’s by the Museum of Contemporary Art of Belgrade. The high quality of the Serbian private collections, which I’ve known and appreciated for almost a decade and increased thanks to the Cordier auctions at Sotheby’s Paris in 2018 and 2021^[16], was undoubtedly a decisive trigger to achieve this project, thanks to the determinant help of Nikola Stojčević and Borko Petrović, real and sincere admirers of Dado’s work. In order to make them accessible to a larger audience, my texts were translated into English by Paul Buck and Catherine Petit, whom I first met professionally at the Centre Pompidou for our project of the Picasso’s drawings album (Lemonnier, 2023) and with whom a much more personal connection was established very quickly thanks to the multiple echoes in our lives – through a dear friend of Paul, French writer Bernard Noël, who wrote two important essays on Dado.^[17] With more than 42,000 visitors, the exhibition, the first retrospective of paintings since my father’s death, was perceived and understood as it was: a gift to the town where everything begun for Dado, who started “doing Dado” in Belgrade with *The Cyclist* (which features a cross of Lorraine, emblem of



[Ill. 7] An exhibition view of “Dado: Natural History, 1953-2000”, showing the paintings of the 1990’s

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the French resistance!) and *Holy Virgin*, after his release from jail in May 1955, where he was imprisoned with other outsiders during Khrushchev’s official visit (Dado, 2024b, p. 280).

**A work of expansion: The Orpellières,
one of the places where Dado
“expressed [himself] at the best”^[18]**

The “*Guernica* in colour” (Jouffroy, 1999, p. 40) of Dado has been facing deterioration through the years since its inauguration in 1999, and it seemed to me essential to integrate this work

[16] “Dado”, Galerija Hexalab, Belgrade, 28 March–15 April 2015; Dado, Moderna Galerija, Valjevo, 25 September 2017– 1 January 2018.

[17] See also: www.dado.virtual.anti.museum/bernard-noel. (Accessed on March 11, 2025).

[18] “The painting, with the frames, and this furniture aspect, is the perfect example of the bourgeois art. Which isn’t the case of a leper house or a disused wine making concern. It’s here where I expressed myself at the best” (Dado, in Jorge Amat, *Dado tagueur*, www.youtube.com/watch?v=IXroEV_ggbU, 1 hour 3 min. 24-40 sec. Accessed on March 11, 2025).



[Ill. 8] The team of restorers at work on one of the walls of the Orpellières, Sérignan, 2022

© Conservatoire du littoral / Фотографија Maixent Collado

into the narrative of the Belgrade retrospective with a documentary made by the Montenegrin television in 2023.^[19] Thanks to an ambitious restoration program implemented in 2020 by the Conservatoire du littoral, a French state body in charge of the preservation of the littoral, run by Agnès Vince, it was saved – at least for some time [ill. 8] (Aussilloux-Correa & Szidon, 2023). It is precisely this risk, this struggle with nature which is particularly relevant in Dado's original approach – who as early as the 1950's, driven by

lack of economic means, favoured crude supports, like the covers of mattresses sent by his own father who worked at the Cetinje hospital. In the 1990's, leaving the comfort of the studio, he chose to work in other places: first in a village house in the Aveyron region (1992); then in the Orpellières, in Sérignan (Hérault) (1994), in the Embassy of the 4th International in Montjavoult (1996), in the Chapelle Saint-Luc in Gisors (1999) [ill. 9], in a blockhouse in Fécamp (Normandy) (2003). For Dado, it was also a way

[19] Sanja Blečić in collaboration with Snežana Nikčević, *O prolaznosti i trajanju/On the Ephemeral and the Eternal*, RTCG, 2023, Available at: <https://www.dado.virtual.anti.museum/orpellières>. (Accessed on March 11, 2025).



[Ill. 9] Chapelle Saint-Luc, Gisors
© Ville de Gisors

of emancipating himself from the art market, and he chose deliberately to get supported by a few faithful collectors, instead of being alienated by an art dealer. Created between 1994 and 1999, during the war in Yugoslavia (hence the ironical “humanitarian aid” inscription and the hospital beds, among other elements), the Orpellières offer an insight into Dado’s realm on many levels. Indeed, the place bring together two aspects that had always fascinated Dado: an exceptional flora and fauna, and also the presence of a non-academic language, the graffiti, on the walls of this former wine yard – the motif of the wall being another crucial motif from the

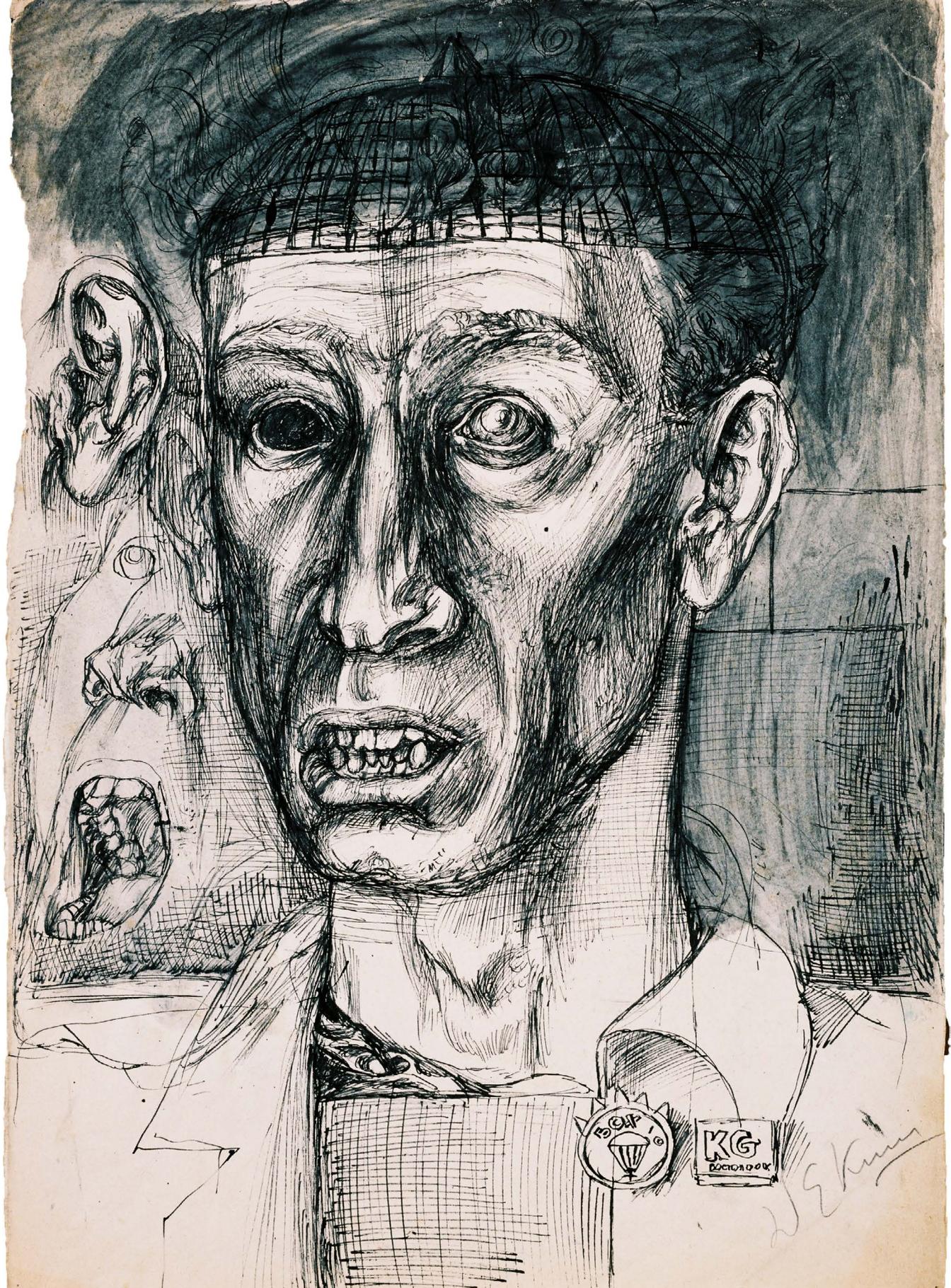
early years. Understanding and restituting “the phenomenon of life” was Dado’s major preoccupation since his childhood, and the tutelary figures of his grand-father, Dr Jovan Kujačić, and his mother, Vjera, contributed largely to it. Painting on the existing graffiti, Dado started a dialogue with anonymous artists, and integrated some monumental assemblages such as elements taken from the scenery he created for *Tamerlano* (1992) and *Llanto por Ignacio Sánchez Mejías* (1996) and car wrecks, among others – featured the two partisans hung by the Nazis in Cetinje in January 1944 with two boards hung on the ceiling [ill. 10]. In a “dadoised” bookshelf, one



[Ill. 10] Les Orpellières, Sérignan. On the left: the two partisans hung by the Nazis in Cetinje in January 1944
Photo: Bernard Rivière

also notices a dedicated book by his dear friend Danilo Kiš, *Grobnica za Borisa Davidoviča* [*A Tomb for Boris Davidovitch*], to whom Dado paid many tributes in his late bronzes of the 2000's, and portrayed as early as 1955 [ill. 11]. In that *in situ* masterpiece, which should be opened to the public in 2026–2027, some reminiscences of the works of the Belgrade years also emerge: for instance, the columns in the painting *Untitled*,

[Ill. 11, page 125]
Dado, *Portrait of Danilo Kiš*, 1955
Ink on paper, 41.5 × 30 cm
Former collection of Jernej Vilfan
Photo: Domingo Đurić



KG
DOCTOR

Handwritten signature



[Ill. 12] Untitled, 1954-1955
Oil on canvas, 70 × 92 cm
Zoran Popović collection

1954-1955 (shown at the Belgrade exhibition) [ill. 12] seem to be made real in the Orpellières [ill. 13]! The coherence of the work appears here in the most brilliant way.

“Being ever present”^[20]

Today, the influence and the role model of Dado is patent among young generations of painters and artists, not only from Montenegro, Serbia or ex-Yugoslavia, but also in France – in this regard,

[20] It is the title of the poem of Paul Buck, who performed it on January 31, 2025, at the SASA Gallery.



[Ill. 13] A column in the Orpellières, Sérignan (France),
circa 1994
Photo DR

the selection of Dado as a tutelary figure at the section “Immortelle. Un regard sur la peinture figurative en France” [Immortal. A Focus on Figurative Painting in France] curated by Amélie Adamo and Numa Hambursin in Art Paris at the Grand Palais in April 2025 thanks to the Galerie Jeanne Bucher Jaeger is very significant. Let us hope this recog-

nition by new generations may contribute to the development of academic research which could bring to light the multiple and singular connections between different cultures, this fertile and complex bridge between East and West. One can regret that the importance of each culture is not yet analyzed in depth and developed by the scholars of the “opposite” world, as it appears to me to be a crucial point to understand the universal character of Dado’s legacy.

As I wrote in my preface in the Belgrade exhibition catalogue, the early years of Dado in Belgrade still need to be explored (Szidon, 2024b, p. 17). As strange as it may seem, no photographic archives of Dado’s presence at the Academy of Fine Arts have been found yet; and there is still much to learn about the close relationship that Dado seems to have developed with his mentor Marko Čelebonović, as well as the important visit of Henry Moore in Belgrade in Spring 1955, who immediately noticed the profound originality of Dado’s work (Szidon, 2024a, p. 90).

In February 2024, when we presented the two books published by the Éditions de l’Atelier contemporain, *Portrait en fragments* and *Dado. Le temps d’Hérouval*, at the Galerie Jeanne Bucher Jaeger, Catherine Millet shared a very pertinent thought. “Dado invented the gestural figuration”, she claimed, in an echo of the well-known “gestural abstraction”.^[21] She was probably inspired by the beauty of the photographs of my late brother, Domingo Đurić, showing Dado almost dancing at work in his

[21] C. Millet, available at: <https://www.facebook.com/syndrome.dado/videos/351683657693311>, 41 min. 05 sec. (Accessed on March 11, 2025).



[Ill. 14 and 15] Dado in his studio, Hérouval, 1980

Photos: Domingo Djuric

studio in Hérouval at the beginning of the 1980's [ill. 14 and 15], which were selected in the book *Dado. Le temps d'Hérouval*.

In the same brilliant manner, Kamini Velodi, of the Royal College of Art [ill. 16], delivered a lecture on Dado and French philosopher Gilles Deleuze at the SASA Gallery in January

31, 2025. Basing her demonstration on the letter that Deleuze sent to Dado in December 1994, at the dusk of his life (he committed suicide the year after)^[22], and especially on Deleuze's formula "a terror where the matter is man", she highlighted the "points of resonance and affinity" between Deleuze's philosophy and Dado's work, opening a

[22] <https://www.dado.virtual.anti.museum/gilles-deleuze-letter-to-dado>. (Accessed on March 11, 2025).

new insight into Dado's universe, where the motifs of the animal and the machine were determinant from the early years, as exemplified in *The Crucifixion* (1955), a work which enabled Deleuze to "enter into a personal, secret relationship" with Dado's work [ill. 17].

Dado's deep connection with literature is also still to be analyzed in depth, and not only through his friendship with Danilo Kiš and Henri Michaux – as in the latter's poetry, the correspondences with Dado's work are so troubling, exemplified by the choice of the title of a poem of Michaux, *Meidosem*, for a series of paintings. "An orphan of language", as he used to define himself, Dado was fond of Russian and French literature. *The Large Farm*, his tribute to Bernard Réquichot (1962-1963,



[Ill. 17] Dado, *The Crucifixion*, 1955
Oil on canvas, 50 × 40 cm
Private collection
Photo: Domingo Đurić

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[Ill. 16]
Evening "Dado through Words and Paintings",
SASA Gallery, 31 January 2025
From left to right: François-Marie Deyrolle
(Éditions l'Atelier contemporain), Amarante
Szidon, Kamini Vellodi (Royal College of Art,
London), Paul Buck
© Enter media, Srbija

Centre Pompidou, Musée national d'art moderne, Paris) is a direct reference to the *Dead Souls* of Gogol, one of his favorite writers. No wonder that Dado inspires writers in his turn – as his fruitful collaborations with Claude Louis-Combet or Matthieu Messagier show (Louis-Combet, 1992a, Louis-Combet, 1992b, Messagier, 2004). Recently, Paul Buck made us a moving gift last January 31 at the SASA Gallery by writing a poem, reflecting his perception of Dado's paintings. Dado's work, by many ways, opens to us an endless variety of approaches. As a model of freedom, of a work which never fell into the trap of compromises, it definitely incites us to invent new narratives and insights to capture its very essence.

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F like friendship

Discovering Belgrade and Serbia during my visit to the exhibition "Dado: History of Nature, 1953–2000" in the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts last December, thanks to the kind invitation of the Foundation for Serbian People and State, has left an extremely strong and vivid impression on me.

This short stay in Belgrade, whose complex and eclectic architectural heritage is quite permeated by the brutalist style, enchanted and inspired me at the same time, enabling me to see how rich and intensive the exchange between France and Serbia was through their friendship, lively, human, cultural



Laurent Le Bon during his visit to Serbia, at the opening of the retrospective exhibition "Dado: The History of Nature 1953 - 2000" by Amarante Szidon, Belgrade, 21 December, 2024.

Photo: Enter media

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and artistic, as well as how it is once again, at the beginning of the 21st century, becoming stronger after tragic events in the 1990s. The monument of gratitude to France, the work by Ivan Meštrović, particularly impressed me, as well as the building of the French Embassy, the masterful work by Roger-Henri Expert, with the furniture specially designed by Jules Leleu, one of the greatest Art Deco names. The mock-up of this monument, *L'Élan de la France*, is an exhibit of the collections of Centre Pompidou [illustration]. In my opinion, these two places perfectly show the extent to which French-Serbian friendship is essentially generous and fruitful. It is interesting to know that in the past few years, the restauration work on the monument and the furniture in the Embassy is performed thanks to the close cultural cooperation of our two countries and the selfless support of the Institute *Mobilier national*.

Other unforgettable moments of my stay include the visit to the Museum of Contemporary Art, where we were cordially welcomed by Director Maja Kolarić and her team, and the Museum's

fascinating exhibition of surrealism; the tour of the Palace of Federation, today's Palace of Serbia, as well as the Museum of Yugoslavia with Tito's mausoleum – as well as the fascinating Museum of Nikola Tesla and the National Museum, whose rich collections were a pure delight. During my stay, I had the pleasure of meeting extraordinary artists, primarily Dušan Otašević and Mrđan Bajić, whose ateliers we visited.

In these uncertain and turbulent times, history can always offer us valuable messages. Another retrospective view of the 1930s shows us the real importance of the exchange between France and Serbia. Paris, the City of Light, was an unavoidable destination to the artists from all parts of the world, including Serbian artists. Namely, Dado's professor at the Art Academy, Marko Čelebonović, who studied at the Academy Grande Chaumière and was a close friend of Germaine Richier's, achieved an imposing career in France. His works, just as Meštrović's, are kept in the collections of Centre Pompidou [illustration]. Meštrović and Čelebonović are two visionaries



Illustration: Ivan Meštrović
L'Élan de la France, cc. 1929

Mock-up of the Monument of Gratitude to France (the Monument for France), raised in Belgrade in 1930
Bronze, 52 × 57 × 14,5 cm
Centre Pompidou, National Museum of Modern Art, Paris
Artist's donation, 1933. JP 93 S



Illustration: Marko Čelebonović
Atelier, 1939.

Oil on canvas, 92,3 × 65,3 cm
Centre Pompidou, National Museum of Modern Art, Paris
Purchased by the state, 1939; attribution, 1939. JP 919 P



Laurent Le Bon with the president of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Zoran Knežević, and the Minister of Culture of the Republic of Serbia, Nikola Selaković, at the opening of the retrospective exhibition "Dado: The history of nature 1953-2000" by Amarante Szidon, Belgrade, 21 December 2024.

Photo: Enter media

who strongly inspired the generation of post-war artists who stayed in France in shorter or longer periods of time. They include the great names of figurative painting, such as Vladimir Veličković, Ljuba Popović, Petar Omčikus and, of course, Dado Đurić.

This exceptional exhibition of Dado's works in the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts is the first retrospective of the artist's painting opus

since his death. It provides a refreshing insight into his creative path through an accurate thematic and chronological approach. Visiting the exhibition, I had an opportunity to see the works from the artist's Belgrade period, completely unfamiliar to the French audience, which show the artist with an already extremely original and shaped mature expression, before his arrival in France in 1956. Moreover, it was great pleasure to see the works

124 | from the 1990s, the period of outstanding creative renaissance that is vividly testified by the masterpiece *Orpellières*^[2] and so remarkably shown at the exhibition. Dado is an artist I have always admired. Like Picasso, he possesses a unique style and ability of incessant rejuvenation, so typical of great artists. Long before I met him in 2007, thanks to his daughter Amarante, I had discovered his works during my studies and then appreciated him even more through conversations with Alfred Pacquement and Germaine de Liencourt, one of Dado's friends of long standing and also a close friend of Daniel Cordieros, as well as through conversations with

her husband, François de Liencourt, a diplomat and great connoisseur of the USSR.

One of the great merits of this exhibition is that it shows the constant flow, the never-ending intercultural dialogue, and presents the key to understanding Dado's artistic opus. In two years, at the same time when Belgrade hosts EXPO 2027, Centre Pompidou will celebrate its 50th birthday by the project "Constellation". Let this beautiful event, whose triumphant and well-deserved success fills me with joy, contribute to the strengthening of good dynamics of exchange between our two countries through future projects.

[2] I took part in the excellent documentary film made by the Montenegrin television in honour of the restauration of Orpellières. The film shown at the exhibition, "Dado: on the Transient and the Eternal", was directed by Sanja Blečić in cooperation with Snežana Nikčević, in 2023.



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The Role of the Institute for Political Studies in French-Serbian Scientific Cooperation and Cultural Diplomacy^[2]

Abstract: The Francophonie is extremely important for the development not only of “cultural diplomacy”, but also of increasingly broader scientific cooperation, implementation of joint projects, activities and exchange of knowledge with the Republic of Serbia, as well as the whole region of the Western Balkans. The research is aimed at determining the scope, results as well as perspectives of the cooperation between the Institute for Political Studies, as one of the most outstanding actors in scientific, expert and cultural relations, and French scientific-research and educational institutions. In the research preparation, the author used the content analysis and limited observation with participation. In conclusion, Serbia is one of the key countries in the region for building scientific cooperation with France and, with rather limited funds allocated to social sciences and humanities en générale, the Institute for Political Studies manages to maintain the image of good partner through its exchange of knowledge, publications and implementation of joint project activities.

Keywords: French Republic, Republic of Serbia, Institute for Political Studies, cultural diplomacy, scientific cooperation

Introduction

The end of the Cold War brought the whole world into a zone of uncertainty, but also of hope that the atrocities of all great wars, including those territorially limited ones, would never repeat. However,

in the past few years, we have witnessed that the rattling of weapons and the revival of military alliances among countries has once again become popular. Are interstate relations measured only by comparing their nuclear and other weapons, military capacities and power, or is still possible for

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the countries to cooperate in the fields of culture, science and common progress? The French state, although a nuclear power, one of the leading countries of the European Union, but also an important factor in world's politics, has always had a strong cultural and scientific influence in the world thanks to its use of cultural diplomacy for increasing its impact and improving international relations.

The Western Balkan countries, particularly Serbia, have undergone almost three decades of the transitioning period, during which they have tried to overcome the breakup of the single Yugoslav state, to leave completely the communist milieu, and to join the European Union, for the purpose of modernization and keeping pace with the modern world. For such changes, it was necessary to find partners so that the vital domains of the country, including education, technological development and science, gained a special place and could uninterruptedly progress and develop. Owing to historical relations, the influence of the Francophonie, French culture, but also to the decades-long experience of the French state in the field of education and science, Serbia began and/or continued its cooperation with France. Bilateral relations of these two countries were recovered not only due to Serbia's efforts to return to the European tracks, but also due to France's opening and its revived interest in developing cultural diplomacy with Serbia and the rest of the region.

Scientific and cultural cooperation has enabled the development of so-called cultural and/or scientific diplomacy. Scientific diplomacy gained its modern form and taxonomy in 2009 and was classified into: 1) science in diplomacy (as an advisory instrument for improving foreign policy goals); 2)

diplomacy for science (diplomacy facilitating and improving international scientific cooperation); 3) science for diplomacy (scientific cooperation which improves bilateral and international political relations) (Turekian, Gluckman, Kishi, & Grimes, 2017, p. 2). The instruments of implementing scientific diplomacy are most simply reduced to scientific cooperation through mobility of students and professors, and exchange of knowledge and experience (Fähnrich, 2015). Here it must be added that in the past few years, the most important form of cooperation has been the implementation of joint projects and, within them, the organization of scientific conferences, panels, co-publication of papers, visits and workshops. This enables not only institutional cooperation and exchange of experience, but also individual contacts are made, which is of great importance particularly to young researchers. How important cultural and scientific diplomacy are for spreading French influence and enhancing so-called *soft power* throughout the world is proved by Sylvie Retailleau's speech in the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs in 2023. She says that 65% of all scientific publications in France are prepared in cooperation with foreign researchers, and that in 2022 as many as 400,000 foreign students began their higher education in France, which ranks it as the sixth most desirable destination for academic specialization worldwide (Kolaković, 2023, p. 13).

One of the scientific-research organizations in Serbia that has recognized the potential of Serbian-French scientific relations and builds them selflessly through joint activities, publications, projects, visits and programs, is the Institute for Political Studies in Belgrade. For almost 60 years

since its foundation, thanks to dozens of employed researchers, the Institute for Political Studies has established itself as one of the leading scientific-research institutions in Serbia. Given the broad sphere of social sciences and humanities, particularly political, historical and sociological, the Institute has built an image of a reliable partner in creating and analyzing national public policies. Moreover, the Institute is now increasingly recognized as the leader in establishing new or renewing former international scientific relations, as was the case with French higher education institutions and other non-academic organizations.

The aim of this paper is to answer the question as to the scope of cooperation between the Institute for Political Studies and its French partners, what this form of scientific diplomacy implies, and what the perspectives of these relations are. As a participant of certain activities in Serbian-French scientific cooperation, the author applied the content analysis, as well as limited observation with participation. The paper consists of four segments. After introductory considerations, the cooperation is presented through bibliography that is related to France in various domains. Most frequently those are scientific papers which offer new views of important events, as well as discoveries in the domain of shared history, development of cultural, economic and regional cooperation, as well as the perceptions of the shared future. Below is the overview of joint project activities, and the author's polemics and conclusion of the paper by the hypothesis about the potentials of Serbian-French scientific relations.

Publications of the Institute for Political Studies – the reflection of French-Serbian scientific cooperation

The activities of the Institute for Political Studies can be perfectly monitored on the basis of the publications with thematically different, but quite interesting and significant perspectives and views of Serbian-French relations. An interesting fact is that in the past few years many published scientific papers, monographs and special editions of scientific journals^[3] have been dedicated to historical ties between these two countries. Particularly popular are those publications referring to current diplomatic relations, cooperation in different domains, as well as potential proposals and ideas of future cooperation.

Among the above-mentioned publications, the journal *Serbian Political Thought* (*Srpska politička misao*) stands out. According to the list of categorized scientific journals published in Serbia, it has the category of M24 (MNTRI, 2023, p. 43). Given the scope of the manuscript, the author will present only some interesting topics and articles in which the Institute for Political Studies is singled out not only as an important factor in the strengthening and construction of Serbian-French relations, but also as a necessary partner in the deepening of regional good neighbourly relations which France, as it has already been mentioned, appreciates to a large extent.

One of the interesting volumes of the journal *Serbian Political Thought*, in the form of a special

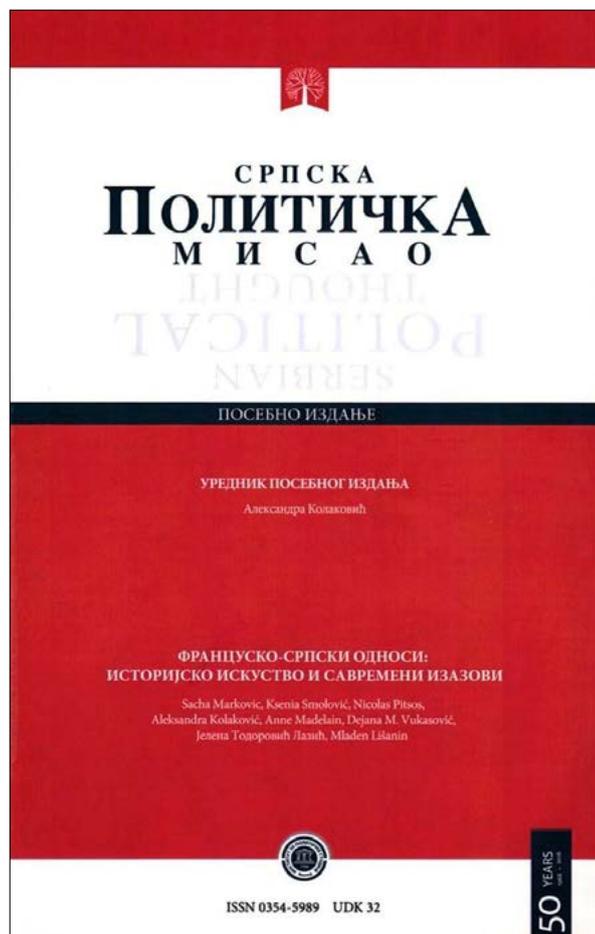
[3] The bibliography of the Institute for Political Studies can be found on the website of the Repository of the Institute, available at: <http://repositorijumips.rs/>.

edition, was published in 2018. This edition did not only crown the activities of the joint project of Serbian and French researchers, “French-Serbian relations in the domain of diplomacy and media representation: Historical experience and contemporary challenges” (No. 451-03-01963/2017-09/07), but it symbolically came to the light of day on the 50th anniversary of the Institute’s foundation, in the year that marked the beginning of celebrating another anniversary – 180 years from the establishment of Serbian-French diplomatic relations (MSP, 2019).

128 | By examining this special edition of the journal, a number of scientific papers can be observed written both by Serbian scientists from the Institute for Political Studies, and by French scientists from Sorbonne University. The thematic collection encompasses important papers which in one place sum up the relations between these two countries with all diplomatic rises and falls. The introductory paper speaks exactly about the French press before the Congress of Berlin in 1878, which did not consider favourably full independence of Serbia, Montenegro and Romania. On the contrary, the French press published a number of “anti-Slavic” texts, to say the least, aimed at protecting the already weakened Ottoman Empire and insisting on the so-called Serbian and Montenegrin aggression and Orthodox Slavic violence against the Turks (Markovic, 2019, p. 7). These were followed by the texts about French reactions to the regicide in 1903, as well as the position of French society and state towards Serbia’s territorial expansion during the Balkan Wars. The originality of these papers is reflected in the content analysis of the daily newspapers of the time, which openly showed the position of the public towards

the Serbian and Montenegrin people, as well as the data from the formerly unpublished archive documents and diplomatic correspondence. A special historical and political-scientific contribution of these papers derives from the fact that from the examples of other countries, even at that time it was possible to see the ideological polarization of France. Specifically, from the example of Serbia’s territorial expansions during the Balkan Wars, it is possible to see a clear difference between the manner in which the state was understood by so-called nationalists and by libertarians. Nationalists relate the term “state” to the understanding of the 19th-century concept which relies on the concept of the “medieval” state and continues it while, on the other hand, the anti-nationalist/libertarian bloc sees the state as a social construct and territorial enlargement only as “expansionist pretexts” of former Ottoman territories, without the recognition of the “historical right” (Pitsos, 2018, p. 79).

For the development of Serbian-French cooperation through centuries and decades to be complete, the *Collection* also offers a text about Serbian society’s collective memory of important historical facts and examines Serbian society’s attitude about “eternal friendship” of Serbia and France. This “eternal friendship” was built on the alliance in the Great War, the memory of France’s role on the Thessaloniki front, the education of 5,000 Serbian students whose return to the fatherland was of great significance for the reorganization and prosperity of the country, as well as on the subsequent war alliance in the Second World War, when the former image became rather ideologically coloured (Kolaković, 2018, pp. 83–84). That image has not been so pronounced and stable since the 1990s, because of



An issue of the Serbian Political Thought journal, dedicated to Serbia-France relations, published by the Institute for Political Studies, prepared on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Institute's founding

Photo: Institute for Political Studies

the betrayed expectations of Serbian society in the European integrations process which were turned towards France and its help. The author concludes that the fraternal alliance and the thread of friendship built during the Great War still prevail in Serbian society, “although they underwent moments

of doubt during the wars in Yugoslavia in the 1990s and the NATO bombing of Serbia in 1999” (Kolaković, 2018, p. 101). Within the publishing activities of the Institute for Political Studies, in 2016, Kolaković, PhD, also published a monograph *In the Service of the Fatherland: Cooperation of French and Serbian Intellectuals 1894–1914*, in which she comprehensively explained the beginnings of the creation of Serbian-French friendship and so-called cultural diplomacy (Kolaković, 2016). Moreover, this monograph corrects substantial gaps in Serbian history, political science and other related sciences, in which its special scientific contribution is reflected.

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The remaining papers in this publication from 2018 are characterized by the political and diplomatic aspects of modern bilateral relations in terms of European integrations. It is pointed out that the Western Balkans (and Serbia as the leader in the region) “played a crucial role in the development and promotion of the EU’s security policy, and that it constituted ‘an experimental area’ for further development of this policy, its attitude towards the NATO and the OUN, as well as the general direction of further development of this policy” (Vukasović, 2018, p. 128), as well as that the development of Euroscepticism in France as the EU axis country lies in historical reasons and inefficiency of institutions, while in Serbia as a membership candidate it lies on fatigue and disappointment due to “pre-accession conditions” (Lazić, 2018, p. 181).

A special collection *France and Serbia: Challenges of Eternal Friendship (La France et la Serbie: Les défis de l’amitié éternelle)* from 2021 was also dedicated to French-Serbian relations and it strengthened the already built scientific cooperation between institutions Sorbonne-Paris IV,

the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs of the French Republic, the Embassy of the French Republic in Serbia, as well as of the French Institute in Belgrade with the Institute for Political Studies and the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development. The Collection analyzes in the topics of the special edition from 2018 an even more detailed and comprehensive manner, adding new and previously unpublished hypotheses from the shared past. The specific feature of this publication is reflected in even greater interest of French and Serbian scientists, as well as the emphasis on current bilateral and regional relations, having in mind the fact that France adopted the new Strategy for the Western Balkans in 2019 (Kolaković & Markovic, 2021, p. 11).

Some of interesting topics in the *Collection* refer to the connection of Serbian-French diplomacy and industrialization in the period from 1871 to the beginning of the First World War. This paper emphasizes the expansion of the railway network in the territory of Serbia by 27.3% in the relevant period, which led to the opening of new mines, factories, the French bank, as well as new trends in communication – “the iron road” enabled the development of the telegraph and, subsequently, of telephone lines (Hassler, 2021, pp. 35–36). The Second World War brought new perspectives to French-Yugoslav military relations due to the opening of the Balkan front (Denda, 2021, p. 177), as well as the attitude of the Kingdom in exile towards “De Gaulle’s France”, which proceeded through extra-institutional diplomatic and para-diplomatic channels (Milikić, 2021, p. 197). The post-war period brought tense relations with France because of Yugoslav’s relations with the Soviet Union. At that time, cultural diplomacy

served to the communist regime in improving the image of Yugoslavia in France (Kolaković, 2021, pp. 229–230). The aspect of cultural diplomacy is also enriched in the interesting texts about Serbian cinematography (Naïma, 2021), as well as in the perception of Serbian painting in France (Mladenović, 2021).

The position of Serbia and the role of France within European integrations in this *Collection* are particularly emphasized by former ambassador, Mr. Lopandić, PhD, who concludes that it is in mutual interest that Serbia should become a member-state, i.e., that France finds it important to sit at the table together with the countries with which it has historical ties and good cooperation (Lopandić, 2021, p. 359), while Vukadinović, PhD, thinks that the European Union’s hesitation and additional complexity of the accession process consequently leads to a great influence of non-European countries, e.g., Russia, China and Turkey, on the region (Vukadinovic, 2021, p. 347).

In another special edition of the journal *Serbian Political Thought*, published in 2022, greater interest of France in the region of the Western Balkans may be observed at the time when it chaired the European Union. This edition is innovative in comparison to previous ones because of its emphasis on economic relations and France’s interests in reinforcing its presence in Serbia. The researchers of the Institute for Political Studies analyzed the tendencies in the development of relations between Serbia and France in different periods since the end of the 19th century to date. They concluded that the “higher level of economic cooperation resulted in the improvement of political relations of the two countries and vice versa, and that the 1990s were

the period of the lowest level of economic and political relations in the history of Serbia and France” (Rapajić & Matijević, 2022, p. 164). The flow of foreign direct investments and the arrival of French companies were made possible by the opening of Serbian economy and liberalization of relations with the EU (*Ibid.*). On the other hand, Vukadinović, PhD, seems to continue the research from the 2021 *Collection*, since he believes that France’s strategy is to support the creation of the macro-region concept in the Western Balkans.^[4] The author concludes that such tactics of interstate, regional economic networking within the region is favourable for France, as well as the entire EU, because in that manner they can displace other great powers from this territory (Vukadinović, 2022, p. 197).

The topic of the last published edition of *Serbian Political Thought* in 2023 was regional development of science and scientific cooperation among the Western Balkan countries. Although all the texts do not refer directly to France or French-Serbian relations, the contribution of this edition is in the previously never-published results reached by the researchers. The research results are the outcome of the program “Pavle Savić”, active since 2003 regarding scientific cooperation in the Danube region, and the program ES-Balk (Enseignement supérieur dans les Balkans occidentaux), in which the Institute for Political Studies participated. Regional cooperation in the sphere of economy, as

previously explained by Vukadinović, PhD, as well as in the sphere of culture and science, is of crucial significance to France, its increased influence and the Francophonie in the region. However, in contrast to French cultural diplomacy, in Serbia, the most important is “science for diplomacy” – the science as a channel of improving diplomatic relations, the situation in Albania is completely different.

In one of the papers in this edition of *Serbian Political Thought*, which analyzes France’s influence on science and higher education in Albania, the conclusion reached is that “overall bilateral relations between these two countries can really be described as friendly, but the general observation is that French presence in Albania is disproportional to good bilateral relations” (Topalović, 2023, p. 100). It is with this topic, i.e., the development of scientific and cultural diplomacy, particularly after 2019 and the adoption of the aforementioned strategy for the Western Balkans, that Kolaković, PhD, opens this edition. This scientific paper recapitulates not only the history of scientific cooperation, but also modern aspects and tendencies of French scientific diplomacy in the territory of the Western Balkans. Although it is possible to observe the world trend in funding and investing in natural sciences,^[5] it is encouraging to see applications for projects and funds in the sphere of social sciences and humanities, for which the smallest quantity of resources was previously allocated (Kolaković, 2023).

[4] Macroregions are formed for preparing and implementing joint projects of the countries which want to become full members of the EU (Serbia is a member of the Adriatic-Ionian and the Danube macroregions).

[5] In 2022, the Serbian-French Innovation Forum was founded with the aim of thematic exchange of knowledge and experience. At one of its first meetings, it placed an emphasis on the fields of industrial process digitalization, as well as on the question of the future of agriculture and nutrition (Institut Français, 2022).

Implementation of joint projects and activities – the status and perspectives

Project engagement in the past few decades is one of the most important activities of scientific-research institutions in the world. The projects do not resolve only specific problems or fill the gaps in scientific research, but they are also extremely important in the development of bilateral and international cooperation. That Serbia is an attractive country for scientific cooperation and diplomacy is proved by the fact that between 2006 and 2020, as many as 353 project applications were received, 134 of which were selected for financing by France, while this number increases on an annual basis (Kolaković, 2023, p. 22).

One of the pioneering projects implemented by the Institute for Political Studies and its partners from France is “French-Serbian relations in the domain of diplomacy and media representation: Historical experience and contemporary challenges” (“Relations franco-serbes dans le domaine de la diplomatie et la représentation des médias: Expérience historique et défis contemporains”). From the beginning of 2018, within this project, Serbian and French academicians have conducted research in French and Serbian archives and libraries, organized a panel in Belgrade entitled “Ideas and changes: transfer of knowledge and images of the Other in French-Serbian relations” (“Idées et changements: transfert de connaissances et images

d’un autre dans les relations franco-serbes”), a round-table discussion in Paris entitled “(Un)explored topics of French-Serbian relations” (“Les thèmes (non) explorés des relations franco-serbes”) and a conference in 2019 (Kolaković & Markovic, 2021, p. 11). Thanks to this project, Serbian and French scientists had the opportunity to publish the aforementioned special edition of the journal *Serbian Political Thought* in 2018, to organize research and study visits, as well as a series of lectures about the history of Serbian-French relations in the Cultural Centre of Novi Sad.^[6] The anniversary – 180 years from the establishment of French-Serbian diplomatic relations – was celebrated at the conference on 26th and 27th June 2019.

We must not forget the other joint project which, apart from the Institute for Political Studies, also involves the partners: EUR’ORBEM and Sorbonne University, Paris. The project resulted from the aforementioned *Collection* from 2021 and the special edition of the journal *Serbian Political Thought* “France and the Western Balkans: the legacy of the past and the EU integration process”. Since in the relevant period the COVID-19 pandemic was declared, study tours, visits and workshops were cancelled.

The project “Reinforcement and perspectives of scientific cooperation in the Western Balkans” (“Reinforcement et perspectives de la coopération scientifique dans les Balkans Occidentaux”)^[7] jointly implemented since 2021 by the National Institute

[6] The series of 6 lectures by Kolaković, PhD, in the Cultural Centre of Novi Sad is available at: https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=aleksandra+kolakovi%C4%87+kcns

[7] The project financed by the program ES-Balk (Enseignement supérieur dans les Balkans occidentaux) was entrusted by the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs (Ministère de l’Europe et des affaires étrangères [MEAE]) to the management of the company France Education International. See: <https://edbalk.eu/le-projet/>.

of Oriental Languages and Civilizations (L'Institut national des langues et civilisations orientales [INALCO]) in Paris, the Institute for Political Studies in Belgrade, the Faculty of Philology in Nikšić and the Faculty of Law in Bitola, one of the most important in cooperation to date. Apart from the fact that it is directed towards strengthening and intensifying French-Serbian scientific-research relations and forming a regional doctoral school, it is of extreme importance to emphasize that its goal is to help and facilitate accession to the European Union, i.e., to meet the standards in these spheres. Thanks to mutual activities, many workshop were held at which the participants, as well as the employees of the institutions as project partners, had the opportunity to learn the basics of project writing and to position common interests in science within the European integrations process.

On 3rd and 4th March 2022, in the premises of the Institute for Political Studies, a workshop was held under the name “Scientific and university cooperation of Serbia and the Western Balkans, and the experience of doctoral schools” (“La coopération scientifique et universitaire entre la France et les Balkans occidentaux et l’expérience des écoles doctorales”). In the workshop, good and bad experiences of the participating countries were pointed out in the implementation of doctoral academic studies, as well as the prospects of young doctoral students for further specialization (ESbalk, 2022a). In the middle of September 2022, a workshop was held at the Faculty of Law “Saint Clement of Ohrid” in Bitola, entitled “For connected higher education” („Pour un enseignement supérieur connecté”) (Edbalk, 2022b). It was the first joint framework for the work of all the partners, where it was possible to point clearly

to different perspectives of the countries regarding scientific cooperation with France, but also to the status and position of science and researchers in Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Afterwards, on 27th and 28th October, in the premises of the Institute for Political Studies, a workshop was held under the title “Position of scientific research in the European integrations process. Project identification, preparation and implementation” (“La place de la recherche scientifique dans le processus d’intégration européenne: identification, rédaction et réalisation des projets”). This activity was determined as extremely important due to the transfer of the knowledge of Serbian and French experts about writing European research projects for the program “Horizon Europe”, which opened the space for joint applications (Edbalk, 2022c). Applying for and potential approval of the implementation of these projects has immeasurable significance not only for institutions, but also for researchers’ individual progress and development. Good project writing and management techniques are necessary given the fact that in the sphere of social sciences and humanities it is extremely difficult to get large grants. The reason lies in their lack of popularity, particularly referring to social sciences, because of their inability to offer quick and practical solutions to certain problems and needs of society as required by the modern world. Technical orientation towards shared applications for project funding is the foundation of the bright future of Serbian-French scientific relations.

Moreover, we should also point out the joint conference held in Paris in November of the same year, when the representatives of the Institute for Political Studies, led by Aleksandra Kolaković,

PhD, had the opportunity to discuss and assess the success of previous activities with their project partners, as well as to draw attention to potential future challenges of scientific-research cooperation (Edbalk, 2022d). A special place was given to the topics about the role and position of young people in higher education and science, including the organization of a doctoral school for students and researchers of the Western Balkan countries. Within this project, two webinars were held with the aim of emphasizing the importance of young experts – doctoral students and those with a doctoral degree – in building common future and progress of individual countries.

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Conclusion

In the course of more than 180 years of history of French-Serbian diplomatic relations, there have been many rises and falls – from firm “eternal friendship” during and after the Great War, via disappointment of the Serbian people due to the bombing of Serbia in 1999, to renewed close cooperation and reliance on France within European integrations, which were tests for Serbian-French relations. In these hot-cold relations of the two countries, what is exceptional is successful scientific and educational cooperation and the strengthening of cultural and scientific diplomacy at the beginning of the new millennium. The French government allocates substantial funds and regularly issues advertisements for the mobility of students

and researchers from Serbia who, apart from their temporary stay in France, can also improve their skills and transfer gained knowledge into their country, thus creating substantial social capital (Topalović, 2023, p. 99) and forming an important part of Serbian intelligentsia. A great role in the scientific cooperation with French institutions in social sciences and humanities in the past several years has been played by the Institute for Political Studies. Thanks to the implementation of numerous projects with French partners, science has become one of important diplomatic channels. By connecting researchers, the Institute has managed to publish one joint collection and three special editions of the journal *Serbian Political Thought* and, as a publisher, it has also opened the doors to many other texts with the Francophone topics. In addition, it has organized a large number of conferences, scientific gatherings, study and research visits and workshops. Moreover, along with bilateral activities with Serbian institutions, by adopting the new Strategy for the Western Balkans in 2019, France managed to connect the entire region in scientific terms. Through cultural/scientific diplomacy, France maintains its influence in these territories, facilitates researchers’ networking and helps in the process of overcoming the burden of the war past and specific differences in the region. That is why it can be concluded that cultural and scientific diplomacy are already proven methods for establishing good bilateral, as well as regional relations, and that good foundations have been laid for further and even broader cooperation.

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Testimonies



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Letter from a traveler to the president of the Republic^[1]

Returning from Macedonia, Serbia, and Kosovo, I feel compelled to share an impression with you: I fear, Mr. President, that we are on the wrong path. You are a man of action. You have little regard for intellectuals who fill our columns with grandiloquent and peremptory approximations. That suits me fine: neither do I. I will therefore stick to the facts. Each of us has our own facts, you might say. The ones I observed during my short stay - a week in Serbia (Belgrade, Novi Sad, Niš, Vranje) from May 2 to May 9, including four days in Kosovo, from Priština to Peja, from Prizren to Podujevo - do not seem to correspond to the words you are using, from afar and in good faith.

Do not consider me biased. I spent the previous week in Macedonia, witnessed the arrival of refugees, and listened to their testimonies. I was deeply moved, like so many others. I was determined to see "the other side" and understand how such atrocities could be possible. Distrusting the tourist-like trips or journalistic bus tours, I requested from Serbian

authorities my own interpreter, my own vehicle, and the freedom to visit and speak to anyone I wished. They honored this request.

Is the interpreter important? Yes. I observed, to my great dismay - but how could it be otherwise? - that in Macedonia and Albania, one often relies on local interpreters who, as sympathizers or militants of the UCK (Kosovo Liberation Army) in most cases, impose their own perspective and network on foreign visitors. Reports of atrocities are too numerous to doubt their core truth. However, some testimonies I gathered, later verified on-site, turned out to be exaggerated or even inaccurate. This does not, of course, diminish the abomination of the exodus.

You keep telling us: "We are not waging war against the Serbian people but against a dictator, Milošević, who, refusing all negotiations, coldly planned the genocide of the Kosovars. We are merely destroying his repressive apparatus, a destruction already well advanced. And if we continue to

[1] The text is reproduced in its entirety from the academic journal *Etudes de lettres / Studies in Literature*, Faculty of Philology, University of Lausanne (2000). The text was first published in *Le Monde* on 13 May, 1999.

Illustrations with the text: Editorial Board of *Progress*.

English translator: Svetlana Guconić

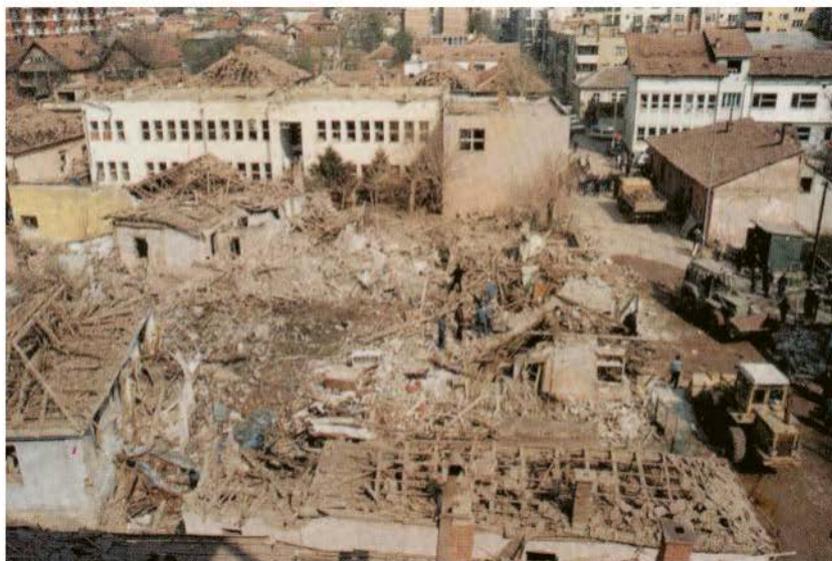


Photo No. 1: View of the place hit by the missile in Dušana Trivunca Street in Aleksinac

strike, despite regrettable targeting errors and unintentional collateral damage, it is because Serbian forces persist in their ethnic cleansing operations in Kosovo.”

I am afraid, Mr. President, that each of these words is a deception.

1. “Not waging war against the people...” Do you not know that in the heart of old Belgrade, the children’s theater *Duško Radović* is adjacent to the television building, and the missile that destroyed the latter also struck the former? Three hundred schools, across the country, have been hit by bombs. Schoolchildren, left to their own devices, no longer attend classes. In the countryside, some children are picking up yellow explosive tubes shaped like toys (CBU 87 cluster bombs). The Soviets used similar bombs in Afghanistan. Factory

destruction has left 100,000 workers unemployed – the workers who earn 230 dinars, or 91 francs, per month. Approximately half the population is unemployed. If you think this will turn them against the regime, you are mistaken. Despite fatigue and shortages, I observed no cracks in the national unity. A young girl in Priština told me: “When four Chinese citizens from a great power are killed, the world is outraged. But when 400 Serbs die, no one cares. Strange, isn’t it?”

I did not witness the carnage caused by NATO bombers on buses, columns of refugees, trains, the hospital in Niš, or elsewhere. Nor the raids on Serbian refugee camps (Majino naselje, April 21, four dead, twenty injured). I speak of the roughly 400,000 Serbs deported from Krajina by the Croats, without microphones or cameras.

To stick to the locations and times of my stay in Kosovo, NATO spokesman General Wertz stated: “We have not attacked any convoy, and we have never targeted civilians.” A lie. In the hamlet of Lipjan, on Thursday, May 6, I saw a private house obliterated by a missile: three little girls and two old people slaughtered, with no military target within three kilometers. The next day, in Prizren, in the Roma neighborhood, I saw two other civilian shacks reduced to ashes two hours earlier, with several victims buried underneath.

2. “The dictator Milošević...” My interlocutors from the opposition, the only ones I spoke with, reminded me of harsh realities. An autocrat, fraudster, manipulator, and populist though he may be, Mr. Milošević has nonetheless been elected three times: dictators are elected once, not twice. He adheres to the Yugoslav Constitution. There is no single-party rule. His party is a minority in Parliament. There are no political prisoners, and coalitions shift. He is almost absent from the daily landscape. You can criticize him openly at café terraces - and people do - but most don't really care. He exerts no “totalitarian” charisma over minds. The West seems a hundred times more obsessed with Mr. Milošević than his fellow citizens are.

To invoke Munich in reference to him is to invert the relationship between the weak and the strong, presuming that a poor, isolated country with ten million people, which covets nothing beyond the borders of former Yugoslavia, could be compared to Hitler's powerful and over-equipped Germany. If you cover your eyes too tightly, you become blind.

3. “The genocide of the Kosovars...” A terrible chapter. Among Western witnesses, accessible and

present on the ground, I met only two. One of them, Aleksander Mitić, of Serbian origin, is a correspondent for AFP in Priština. The other one, Paul Watson, an Anglophone Canadian, is the Central Europe correspondent for the *Los Angeles Times*. He has covered Afghanistan, Somalia, Cambodia, the Gulf War, and Rwanda: he's no novice. Rather anti-Serbian, he had been following the civil war in Kosovo for two years and knew every village and road. A hero, and thus a modest man. When all foreign journalists were expelled from Priština on the first day of the bombings, he went underground to stay, anonymously, continuing to move around and observe.

His testimony is measured and, when cross-checked with others, convincing. Under the barrage of bombs, the worst atrocities were committed during the first three days (March 24, 25, and 26), including arson, looting, and murder. Several thousand Albanians were then ordered to leave. He assured me that, since then, he had not found evidence of a crime against humanity. Certainly, these two scrupulous observers could not have seen everything, and I even less. I can only attest to Albanian peasants returning to Podujevo, Serbian soldiers standing guard in front of Albanian bakeries - ten of them reopened in Priština - and the wounded from the bombings, both Albanian and Serbian, lying side by side in the hospital in Priština (2,000 beds).

So, what happened? According to them, it was the sudden superimposition of an international aerial war onto a local civil war - one of extreme cruelty. Let me remind you that 1,700 Albanian fighters, 180 Serbian police officers, and 120 Serbian soldiers were killed in 1998. The UCK (Kosovo Liberation Army) kidnapped 380 people, releasing 103

Lettre d'un voyageur au président de la République

Suite de la première page

Certains témoignages que j'ai recueillis, vérification faite ensuite sur les lieux d'origine, se sont révélés cependant outranciers, voire inexacts. Ce qui ne change rien, bien sûr, au scandale ignominieux de cet exode.

Que nous répétez-vous ? « *Nous ne faisons pas la guerre au peuple serbe mais à un dictateur, Milosevic, qui, refusant toute négociation, a programmé de sang-froid le génocide des Kosovars. Nous nous limitons à détruire son appareil de répression, destruction déjà bien avancée. Et si nous continuons à frapper, malgré de regrettables erreurs de ciblage et d'involontaires dommages collatéraux, c'est que les forces serbes continuent au Kosovo leurs opérations de nettoyage ethnique.* »

J'ai lieu de craindre, Monsieur le président, que chacun de ces mots ne soit une duperie.

1. « *Pas la guerre au peuple...* » Ne savez-vous pas qu'au cœur du vieux Belgrade le théâtre pour enfants Dusan-Radevic jouxte la télévision et que le missile qui a détruit celle-ci a frappé celui-là ? Trois cents écoles, partout, ont été touchées par les bombes. Les écoliers, laissés à eux-mêmes, ne vont plus en classe. Dans la campagne, il en est qui ramassent des tubes jaunes explosifs en forme de jouets (modèle CBU 87). Ces bombes à fragmentation, les Soviétiques en répandaient de semblables en Afghanistan.

La destruction des usines a mis à pied cent mille travailleurs - avec un revenu de 230 dinars, soit 91 francs par mois. La moitié, à peu près, de la population est au chômage. Si vous croyez la retourner ainsi contre le régime, vous vous égarez. Malgré la lassitude et les pénuries, je n'ai pas observé de fissure dans l'union sacrée. Une

réquippée de Hitler. A trop se voiler la face, on devient aveugle.

3. « *Le génocide des Kosovars...* » Terrible chapitre. Des témoins occidentaux, accessibles et oculaires, je n'en ai rencontré que deux. L'un, Aleksander Mitic, d'origine serbe il est vrai, est correspondant de l'AFP à Pristina. L'autre, Paul Watson, canadien anglophone, est correspondant pour l'Europe centrale du *Los Angeles Times*. Il a couvert l'Afghanistan, la Somalie, le Cambodge, la guerre du Golfe et le Rwanda : ce n'est pas un bleu. Plutôt anti-Serbes, il suivait depuis deux ans la guerre civile au Kosovo, dont il connaît chaque village et chaque route. Un héros, donc un modeste. Quand tous les journalistes étrangers, au premier jour des bombardements, ont été expulsés de Pristina, il s'est planqué pour rester, anonymement. Sans cesser de circuler et d'observer.

Son témoignage est pondéré et, recoupé avec d'autres, convaincant. Sous le déluge des bombes, les pires exactions ont été commises, les trois premiers jours (24, 25 et 26 mars), avec incendies, pillages et meurtres. Plusieurs milliers d'Albanais ont alors reçu l'ordre de partir. Il m'a assuré n'avoir pas trouvé trace, depuis, d'un crime contre l'humanité. Sans doute ces deux scrupuleux observateurs n'ont-ils pas tout vu. Et moi encore moins. Je ne puis témoigner que de paysans albanais de retour à Pudzajevo, de soldats serbes montant la garde devant des boulangeries albanaises - dix rouvertes à Pristina -, et des blessés des bombardements, albanais et serbes côte à côte, dans l'hôpital de Pristina (deux mille lits).

Alors, que s'est-il passé ? A leur avis, la superposition soudaine d'une guerre aérienne internationale à une guerre civile locale, celle-ci d'une extrême cruauté. Je vous rappelle que, en 1998, 1 700 combattants albanais, 180 policiers et 120 soldats serbes

Kosovo convaincues d'exactions. Maquillage ? Alibi ? Mauvaise conscience ? Ce n'est pas à exclure. Après, l'exode a continué, mais à plus petite échelle. Sur injonction de l'UCK, désireuse de récupérer les siens, par crainte de passer pour des « collabos », par peur des bombardements - qui ne distinguent pas, à 6 000 mètres, entre Serbes, Albanais et autres -, pour rejoindre les cousins déjà partis, parce que le bétail est mort, que l'Amérique va gagner, que c'est l'occasion d'émigrer en Suisse, en Allemagne ou ailleurs... Propos entendus sur place. Je vous fais mention, non caution.

Aurais-je trop écouté « les gens d'en face » ? Le contraire serait du racisme. Définir *a priori* un peuple - juif, allemand ou serbe - comme collectivement criminel n'est pas digne d'un démocrate. Après tout, il y a eu, pendant l'occupation, des divisions SS albanaise, musulmane et croate - jamais de serbe. Ce peuple philosémite et résistant - plus de dix nationalités coexistent en Serbie même - serait-il devenu nazi avec cinquante ans de retard ? Nombre de réfugiés kosovars m'ont dit qu'ils avaient échappé à la répression grâce à des voisins, des amis serbes.

4. « *La destruction bien commencée des forces serbes...* » Désolé : celles-ci semblent se porter comme un charme. Un jeune sergent pris en stop sur l'auto-route Nis-Belgrade et servant au Kosovo m'a demandé pour quelle raison stratégique l'OTAN s'acharnait sur les civils. « *Nous, quand on va à la ville, où il n'y a plus d'électricité, on est forcé de boire du Coca-tède. C'est embêtant, mais on peut faire avec.* » Je suppose que les unités ont leur groupe électrogène.

Vous avez, au Kosovo, cassé des ponts, que l'on contourne aisément par des gués - quand on ne passe pas dessus, entre les trous. Endommagé un aéroport sans im-

frontière face à l'Albanie et les documents d'identité des partants m'ont indigné. C'est de crainte, m'a-t-on répliqué, que les « terroristes » ne s'infiltrèrent à nouveau, en les subtilisant pour maquiller voitures et papiers. Beaucoup a pu échapper à mes modestes observations, mais le ministre allemand de la défense a menti, le 6 mai, lorsqu'il a déclaré qu'« *entre 600 000 et 900 000 personnes déplacées ont été localisées à l'intérieur du Kosovo* ». Sur un territoire de 10 000 kilomètres carrés, cela ne passerait pas inaperçu aux yeux d'un observateur en déplacement, le même jour, d'est en ouest et du nord au sud. A Pristina, où vivent encore des dizaines de milliers de Kosovars, on peut déjeuner dans des pizzerias albanaises, en compagnie d'Albanais.

Nos ministres ne pourraient-ils interroger là-bas des témoins à la tête froide - médecins grecs de Médecins sans frontières, ecclésiastiques, popes ? Je pense au Père Stéphane, le prier de Prizren, singulièrement pondéré. Car la guerre civile n'est pas une guerre de religion : les mosquées, innombrables, sont intactes - sauf deux, à ce que l'on m'a rapporté.

On peut acheter la politique étrangère d'un pays - ce que font les Etats-Unis avec ceux de la région -, non ses rêves ou sa mémoire. Si vous voyiez les regards de haine que jettent, aux postes-frontières, les douaniers et les policiers macédoniens sur les convois de chars qui remontent chaque nuit de Salonique à Skopje, sur leurs escortes arrogantes et inconscientes de ce qui les entoure, vous comprendriez sans peine qu'il sera plus facile de rentrer sur ce « théâtre » que de s'en extraire. Aurez-vous, à l'instar du président italien, la vaillance, ou l'intelligence, de renoncer à des postulats irréels, pour rechercher, avec Ibrahim Rugova, et selon ses propres termes, « *une solution politique sur des bases réalistes* » ?

En ce cas, un certain nombre de réalités s'imposeront à votre attention. La première : pas de salut en dehors d'un *modus vivendi* entre Albanais et Serbes, comme le demande M. Rugova, parce qu'il n'y a pas une mais deux, et même plusieurs communautés au Kosovo. Sans entrer dans la bataille des

Parler face à M. Milosevic de Munich, c'est inverser le rapport du faible au fort et supposer qu'un pays isolé et pauvre de dix millions d'habitants,

les pénuries, je n'ai pas observé de fissure dans l'union sacrée. Une jeune fille m'a dit à Pristina : « Quand on tue quatre Chinois, ressortissants d'une grande puissance, le monde s'indigne ; mais quatre cents Serbes, cela ne compte pas. Curieux, non ? »

Je n'ai certes pas été témoin des carnages opérés par les bombardiers de l'OTAN sur les autobus, les colonnes de réfugiés, les trains, sur l'hôpital de Nis, et ailleurs. Ni des raids sur les camps de réfugiés serbes (Majino Maselje, 21 avril, quatre morts, vingt blessés). Je parle des quelque quatre cent mille Serbes que les Croates ont déportés de la Krajina sans micros ni caméras.

Pour m'en tenir aux lieux et moments de mon séjour au Kosovo, le général Wertz, porte-parole de l'OTAN, a déclaré : « Nous n'avons attaqué aucun convoi et nous n'avons jamais attaqué de civils. » Mensonge. J'ai vu dans le hameau de Lipjan, le jeudi 6 mai, une maison particulièrement pulvérisée par un missile : trois fillettes et deux grands-parents massacrés, sans objectif militaire à 3 kilomètres à la ronde. J'ai vu, le lendemain, à Prizren, dans le quartier gitan, deux autres masures civiles réduites en cendres deux heures plus tôt, avec plusieurs victimes enterrées.

2. « Le dictateur Milosevic... » Mes interlocuteurs de l'opposition, les seuls avec qui je me sois entretenu, m'ont rappelé aux dures réalités. Autocrate, fraudeur, manipulateur, et populiste, M. Milosevic n'en a pas moins été élu à trois reprises : les dictateurs se font élire une fois, non deux. Il respecte la Constitution yougoslave. Pas de parti unique. Le sien est minoritaire au Parlement. Pas de prisonniers politiques, des coalitions changeantes. Il est comme absent du paysage quotidien. On peut le critiquer sans se cacher aux terrasses de café – et on ne s'en prive pas –, mais les gens ne s'en soucient guère. Aucun charisme « totalitaire » sur les esprits. L'Occident semble cent fois plus obnubilé par M. Milosevic que ses concitoyens.

Parler face à lui de Munich, c'est inverser le rapport du faible au fort et supposer qu'un pays isolé et pauvre de dix millions d'habitants, qui ne convoite rien en dehors des frontières de l'ancienne Yougoslavie, puisse être comparé à l'Allemagne conquérante et su-

de dix millions d'habitants, qui ne convoite rien en dehors des frontières de l'ancienne Yougoslavie, puisse être comparé à l'Allemagne conquérante et suréquipée de Hitler

ont été tués. L'UCK a kidnappé 380 personnes, en a remis en liberté 103, les autres étant mortes ou disparues, parfois après torture – parmi elles 2 journalistes et 14 ouvriers. L'UCK revendiquait 6 000 clandestins à Pristina, et ses snipers, m'a-t-on dit, sont entrés en action aux premières bombes. Les Serbes, jugeant qu'ils ne pouvaient se battre sur deux fronts, auraient alors décidé d'évacuer manu militari la « cinquième colonne de l'OTAN », sa « force terrestre », c'est-à-dire l'UCK, en particulier dans les villages où elle se confondait avec et se fondait dans la population civile.

Localisées mais certaines, ces évacuations, dites là-bas « à l'israélienne », et dont l'ancien d'Algérie que vous êtes se souvient certainement – un million de civils algériens furent déplacés et enfermés par nous dans des camps barbelés, pour « vider l'eau du poisson » –, ont laissé des traces à ciel ouvert, ici et là : maisons brûlées, villages déserts. Ces affrontements militaires ont entraîné des fuites de civils – pour la plupart, m'a-t-on dit, des familles de combattants – avant les bombardements. Elles étaient, selon le correspondant de l'AFP, en nombre très limité. « Les gens trouvaient refuge dans d'autres maisons voisines, a constaté ce dernier. Personne ne mourait de faim, ne se faisait tuer sur les routes, ne fuyait vers l'Albanie et la Macédoine. C'est l'attaque de l'OTAN qui a bel et bien déclenché, en boule de neige, la catastrophe humanitaire. De fait, il n'était pas besoin, jusqu'alors, de camps d'accueil aux frontières. » Les premiers jours, tous en conviennent, ont vu un déchaînement de représailles de la part d'éléments dits « incontrôlés », avec la complicité probable de la police locale.

M. Vuk Draskovic, vice-premier ministre qui a aujourd'hui pris ses distances, et d'autres m'ont dit avoir fait, depuis, arrêter et inculper trois cents personnes au

portance, détruit des casernes vides, enflammé des camions militaires hors d'usage, des maquettes d'hélicoptère et des pièces d'artillerie en bois posées au milieu des prés. Excellent pour l'image-vidéo et les briefings en chambre, mais après ? Souvenez-vous que la défense yougoslave, formée par Tito et ses partisans, n'a rien d'une armée régulière : disséminée et omniprésente, avec ses PC souterrains, préparée de longue main aux menaces conventionnelles – jadis, soviétique. On y déplace même les canons avec des bœufs, pour éviter la détection à la chaleur.

Il y a au Kosovo – ce n'est pas un secret – 150 000 hommes en armes, de vingt à soixante-dix ans – il n'y a pas de limite d'âge pour les réservistes –, dont seulement 40 000 à 50 000 pour la III^e armée du général Pavkovic. Les talkies-walkies en relais paraissent en bon état, et ce sont les Yougoslaves eux-mêmes qui brouillent les réseaux – l'UCK se servait de portables pour renseigner les bombardiers US.

Quant à la démoralisation espérée, n'en croyez rien. Au Kosovo, on attend nos troupes, je le crains, de pied ferme, non sans une certaine impatience. Comme me disait un réserviste de Pristina qui allait acheter son pain, son AK à l'épaule : « Vivement l'intervention terrestre ! Dans une vraie guerre, au moins, il y a des morts des deux côtés. » Le wargame des planificateurs de l'OTAN se déroule à 5 000 mètres au-dessus du réel. Je vous en conjure : n'envoyez pas nos sensibles et intelligents saint-cyriens sur un terrain dont ils ignorent tout. Leur cause est peut-être juste mais ce ne sera jamais pour eux une guerre défensive et encore moins sacrée, comme elle le sera, à tort ou à raison, pour les volontaires serbes de Kosovo et Metohija.

5. « Ils continuent le nettoyage ethnique... » Les plaques d'immatriculation accumulées au poste-

plusieurs communautés au Kosovo. Sans entrer dans la bataille des chiffres due à l'absence de recensement fiable, j'ai cru comprendre qu'il y avait un million et plus d'Albanais, deux cent cinquante mille Serbes et deux cent cinquante mille personnes appartenant à d'autres communautés – Serbes islamisés, Turcs, gorans ou montagnards, romanis, « Égyptiens » ou gitans albanophones –, lesquelles craignent la domination d'une grande Albanie et ont pris le parti des Serbes. La deuxième : prévenir la renaissance d'une guerre intérieure féroce, épisode d'un aller-retour séculaire, l'acte I sans lequel l'acte II d'aujourd'hui est incompréhensible, mais qui succédait lui-même à une oppression antérieure.

Les politiques au présent se mènent toujours par analogie avec le passé. Encore faut-il trouver la moins mauvaise possible. Vous avez choisi l'analogie hitlérienne, avec les Kosovars en juifs persécutés. Permettez-moi de vous en suggérer une autre : l'Algérie. M. Milosevic n'est certes pas de Gaulle. Mais le pouvoir civil a affaire à une armée qui en a assez de perdre et rêve d'en découdre. Et cette armée régulière côtoie elle-même des paramilitaires autochtones qui pourraient bien ressembler un jour à une OAS.

Et si le problème n'était pas à Belgrade, mais dans les rues, les cafés, les épiceries du Kosovo ? Ces hommes-là, c'est un fait, n'ont rien de rassurant. Ils m'ont, une fois ou deux, pris sévèrement à partie. Et je dois à la vérité de dire que ce sont des officiers serbes qui, arrivant à la rescousse, m'ont à chaque fois sauvé la mise.

Vous vous souvenez de la définition par de Gaulle de l'OTAN : « Organisation imposée à l'Alliance atlantique et qui n'est que la subordination militaire et politique de l'Europe occidentale aux États-Unis d'Amérique. » Vous nous expliquerez un jour les raisons qui vous ont conduit à modifier cette appréciation. En attendant, je dois vous avouer une certaine honte quand, demandant, à Belgrade, à un opposant démocrate serbe pourquoi son actuel président recevait avec empressement telle personnalité américaine et non française, il me répondit : « De toute façon, mieux vaut parler au maître qu'à ses domestiques. »

Régis Debray

of them; the rest either died or disappeared, sometimes after torture - including two journalists and 14 workers. The UCK claimed to have 6,000 operatives in Priština, and its snipers, I was told, sprang into action at the first bombs. The Serbs, believing they could not fight on two fronts, reportedly decided to forcibly evacuate NATO's "fifth column", its "ground force" - i.e., the UCK, particularly in the villages where it blended with and hid among the civilian population.

These localized, but undeniable, evacuations, there referred to as "Israeli-style" - a method that you, as a veteran of Algeria, surely recall (one million Algerian civilians were displaced and confined by us in barbed-wire camps to "drain the water from the fish") -

have left visible traces here and there: burned houses, deserted villages. These military confrontations led to civilian displacements - mostly, I was told, families of fighters - before the bombings. According to the AFP correspondent, they were relatively limited in number. "People found refuge in other nearby homes", he observed. "No one was starving, being killed on the roads, or fleeing to Albania or Macedonia. It was NATO's attack that truly triggered, like a snowball, the humanitarian catastrophe. In fact, there had been no need for refugee camps on the borders until then". The first days, as all agree, saw an outbreak of reprisals by so-called "uncontrolled" elements, likely with the complicity of local police.

To invoke Munich in reference to him is to invert the relationship between the weak and the strong, presuming that a poor, isolated country with ten million people, which covets nothing beyond the borders of former Yugoslavia, could be compared to Hitler's powerful and over-equipped Germany. If you cover your eyes too tightly, you become blind.

Mr. Vuk Drašković, the Deputy Prime Minister who has since distanced himself from the government, and others told me that, in the meantime, they had arrested and charged 300 people in Kosovo for atrocities. A cover-up? An alibi? A guilty conscience? It cannot be ruled out. Afterwards, the exodus continued but on a smaller scale. At the orders of the UCK, eager to reclaim its people; out of fear of being seen as "collaborators"; due to fear of

bombings - which, from the height of 6,000 meters, do not distinguish between Serbs, Albanians, or others; to reunite with relatives who had already left; because livestock had died; because America was going to win; or simply to seize the opportunity to emigrate

to Switzerland, Germany, or elsewhere... These are the reasons I heard on the ground. I report them without endorsing them.

Did I listen too much to "the other side"? The opposite would be racism. To define a people - whether Jewish, German, or Serbian - as collectively criminal is unworthy of a democrat. After all, during the occupation, there were Albanian, Muslim, and Croatian SS divisions - but never a Serbian one. Could this philosemitic, resistant people - comprising more than ten nationalities coexisting within Serbia itself - have become Nazi fifty years too late? Many Kosovar refugees told me they had escaped repression thanks to Serbian neighbors and friends.

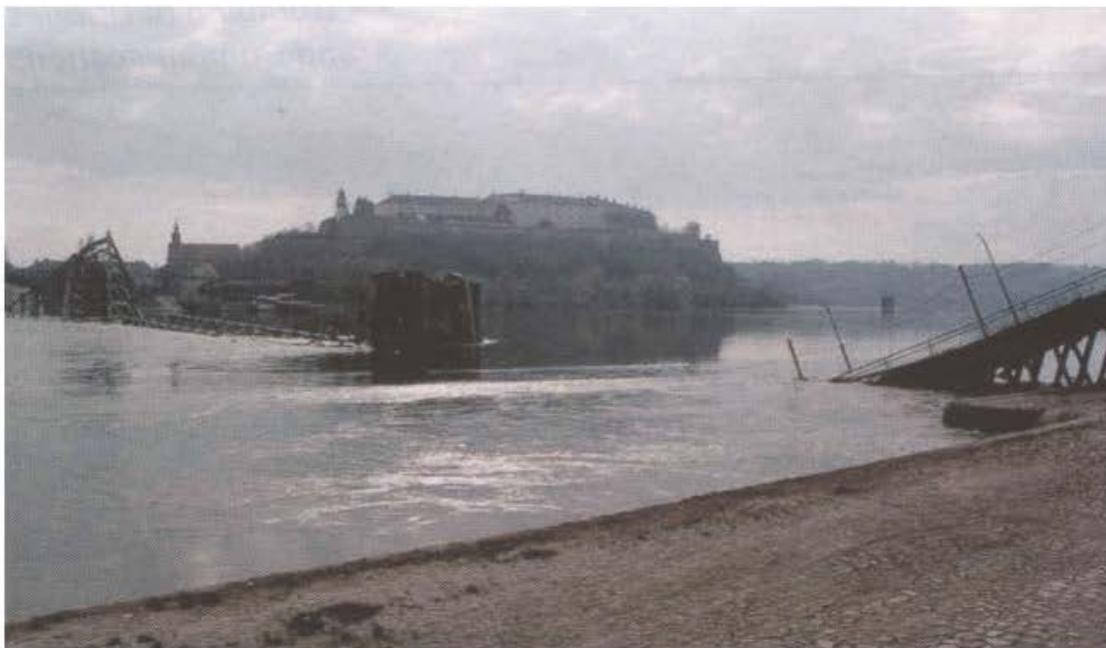


Photo No. 2: Petrovaradin Bridge, Novi Sad

4. “The well-underway destruction of Serbian forces...” Sorry, but they seem to be doing just fine. A young sergeant serving in Kosovo, whom I picked up hitchhiking on the Niš-Belgrade, asked me what strategic reason NATO had for targeting civilians. “When we go to town, where there’s no electricity anymore, we’re forced to drink warm Coca-Cola. It’s annoying, but we manage.” I assume the military units have their own generators.

In Kosovo, you’ve destroyed bridges that are easily bypassed by fording rivers - or even still crossed directly, between the gaps. You’ve damaged an insignificant airport, destroyed empty barracks, set fire to out-of-service military trucks, wooden models of helicopters, and mock artillery pieces

placed in open fields. Great for video footage and indoor briefings, but then what? Remember that Yugoslavia’s defense, shaped by Tito and his partisans, has nothing in common with a regular army: it’s dispersed and omnipresent, with underground command posts, long prepared for conventional threats - once Soviet. They even move cannons with oxen to avoid heat detection.

In Kosovo, there are - this isn’t a secret - 150,000 armed men, ranging from twenty to seventy years old (there is no age limit for reservists), of whom only 40,000 to 50,000 belong to the Third Army under General Pavković. The relay-based walkie-talkie networks seem to be in good shape, and it’s the Yugoslavs themselves who



Photo No. 3: The destroyed train carriage, photographed on its way to Leskovac during the rocket attack on a train on the bridge in the Grdelica Gorge

are jamming communication channels—the UCK (Kosovo Liberation Army) was using cell phones to relay information to U.S. bombers.

As for the anticipated demoralization, don't believe it. In Kosovo, they're waiting for our troops, I fear, with determination, even impatience. As a reservist in Priština, heading to buy bread with his AK slung over his shoulder, told me: "We're looking forward to the ground intervention. In a real war, at least there are deaths on both sides." NATO planners' war game is playing out 5,000 meters above reality. I implore you: don't send

our sensitive and intelligent Saint-Cyriens to a terrain they know nothing about. Their cause may be just, but it will never be a defensive war for them, let alone a sacred one, as it will be - rightly or wrongly - for the Serbian volunteers of Kosovo and Metohija.

5. "They continue the ethnic cleansing..." The license plates accumulated at the border post facing Albania and the identity documents of those leaving left me outraged. The reply I received was that this was out of fear that "terrorists" might infiltrate again by stealing them to disguise cars

and papers. Much may have escaped my modest observations, but the German Defense Minister lied on May 6 when he declared that “between 600,000 and 900,000 displaced persons have been located inside Kosovo.” In a territory of 10,000 square kilometers, this would not go unnoticed by an observer traveling from east to west and from north to south on the same day. In Priština, where tens of thousands of Kosovars still live, one can have lunch in Albanian pizzerias, alongside Albanians.

Could our ministers not interview calm-headed witnesses on-site – Greek medical doctors from *Doctors Without Borders*, clerics, or priests? I think of Father Stéphane, the Prior of Prizren, particularly measured in his views. Namely, the civil war is not a religious war: the countless mosques are intact – except for two, as I’ve been told.

You can buy the foreign policy of a country – as the USA does with those in the region – but not its dreams or its memory. If you could see the hateful glares Macedonian customs officers and policemen cast at the border posts on the tank convoys traveling from Thessaloniki to Skopje at night, along with their arrogant escorts oblivious to their surroundings, you would easily understand that it will be far easier to enter this “theater” than to leave it. Will you, like the Italian president, have the courage or the intelligence to renounce unreal postulates and seek, together with Ibrahim Rugova, as he himself puts it, “a political solution based on realistic grounds”?

If so, a number of realities will demand your attention. The first: there is no salvation outside of a *modus vivendi* between Albanians and Serbs, as requested by Mr. Rugova, because Kosovo is

home not to one but two – and indeed several – communities. Without delving into the numerical debate caused by the lack of reliable censuses, I understand that there were more than a million Albanians, 250,000 Serbs, and 250,000 others belonging to various communities – Islamized Serbs, Turks, Gorans (mountain dwellers), Romanis, “Egyptians” or Albanophone Roma – who fear domination by Greater Albania and have aligned with the Serbs. The second: preventing the revival of a ferocious internal war, an episode in a secular back-and-forth, Act I without which today’s Act II is incomprehensible, but which itself followed a prior oppression.

Policies in the present are always conducted by analogy with the past. But one must find the least bad analogy possible. You chose the Hitlerian analogy, with the Kosovars as persecuted Jews. Allow me to suggest another one: Algeria. Mr. Milošević is certainly no de Gaulle. But the civilian government faces an army that is tired of losing and dreams of a showdown. And this regular army coexists with local paramilitaries which might one day resemble an OAS^[2].

And what if the problem isn’t in Belgrade but in the streets, cafés, and shops of Kosovo? These men, it’s a fact, are not reassuring. They took me severely to task once or twice. And I must truthfully say that it was Serbian officers who, arriving to the rescue, saved me each time.

You remember de Gaulle’s definition of NATO: “An organization imposed on the Atlantic Alliance, which is nothing but the military and political subordination of Western Europe to the United States of America.” You will explain to us one day the reasons that led you to revise this assessment. In the

meantime, I must confess a certain shame when, asking a Serbian democratic opponent in Belgrade why his current president eagerly welcomed such

and such an American figure but not a French one, he replied: “In any case, it’s better to talk to the master than to the servants.”

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[2] OAS – Organisation de l’armée secrète (French secret paramilitary formation)



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Hearing of General Philippe Morillon in the French National Assembly^[2]

(Thursday, January 25, 2001)

Presided over by Mr. François Loncle, President

President François Loncle: To provide some context, as we have just heard from General Janvier, who commanded the United Nations peacekeeping forces in former Yugoslavia in 1995, during the events in Srebrenica, I would like to remind everyone that General Morillon, whom I warmly thank, is now one of our colleagues as a Member of the European Parliament. He commanded UNPROFOR from October 1992 to July 1993 and the Rapid Reaction Force from 1994 to 1996.

General, thank you for agreeing to take part in this hearing. You are well aware of the circumstances that have led us to hold this session behind closed doors, although we initially planned to open it to the press. As you know, we received a statement

from the Ministry of Defense on this matter. Nonetheless, we are very pleased to hear from you, General, and we will ask you questions afterwards.

General Philippe Morillon: I believe it is essential, even though you may already be informed, to recall the circumstances under which, before my appointment to command the Rapid Reaction Force, I personally became involved in the mission of the United Nations Protection Force, in what initially led to the Srebrenica tragedy.

Srebrenica is located along the route through which the Ottoman Empire entered the region. It is separated from the Sandžak province in Serbia, which is predominantly Muslim, by the Drina River. This area, including the surrounding countryside, had a majority Muslim population.

After the beginning of the crisis, marked by an initial offensive by the Serbs who seized Srebrenica,

[1] Commander of UNPROFOR (October 1992 - July 1993) and of the Rapid Reaction Force (1994-1996)

[2] The testimony of General Morillon in the National Assembly of France was taken from the website: <https://www.voltairenet.org/?lang=fr>

English translator: Marijana Labus Vuković

150 | the city was recaptured by Bosnian forces under the command of Naser Orić. Orić, who led the Bosnian army forces in the enclave, has himself admitted that he conducted military actions from Srebrenica which resulted in the massacres in the surrounding Serbian villages. These raids made him Enemy Number One among the Serbs, particularly after an attack they have never forgiven. This attack occurred during Orthodox Christmas Eve, a sacred night in January 1993, when his forces carried out raids on the Serbian villages and committed massacres of the civilians. In the spring of 1993, I was personally taken to visit the sites and witness the mass graves exhumed after the Serbs resumed their offensive in the region.

There was a degree of accumulated hatred that made me fear what, unfortunately, happened two years later: namely, if Srebrenica were to fall under Serbian control, there would be horrifying massacres. It was for this very reason that I took the initiative - after informing the relevant authorities within the United Nations, first General Wahlgren and then Kofi Annan himself, who was the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations at the time - to go to the field and undertake the action that you are aware of, with the consequences you know.

Contrary to what has been said about me exceeding my mandate, this action was authorized by the mission entrusted to me, which was to assist any person in danger. I was convinced that the tens of thousands of inhabitants who had taken refuge in the city were in mortal danger – either from starvation and freezing or massacres triggered by the heightened desire for revenge among the Serbs. My actions were also driven by the mediation role I had been assigned by the International Conference on Peace in Yugoslavia and the mission of Cyrus

Vance and Lord Owen, followed by Martti Ahtisaari and Stoltenberg, who were negotiating the implementation of the Vance-Owen agreements in Geneva. You will recall that these agreements were eventually signed in Athens by Milošević himself, by Izetbegović - albeit reluctantly - and by Karadžić, and they included provisions similar to those incorporated into the Dayton Accords two years later.

I was convinced that the local population was in grave danger. My interlocutors assured me that they were only defending themselves, that they were not attacking anyone, and that they wanted nothing more than peace. I convinced them that, if that were truly the case, the only solution to prevent the excesses they attributed to their subordinates - whose actions they refused to take responsibility for - was to deploy observers on the ground.

Following the success of this action, I proposed at the time, with the agreement of Sarajevo, President Izetbegović himself, and the Serbs, the implementation of what I always described as a temporary expedient: the application in the Srebrenica area of the provisions we had negotiated with the Bosnians and the Serbs under the framework of the Vance-Owen plan. This involved demilitarizing the area rather than creating protected zones. An agreement was signed to this effect: the Bosnian fighters present in the enclave under the command of Naser Orić were to withdraw, those who chose to stay had to surrender their weapons, and the others were to join Bosnian forces stationed in Tuzla or Žepa. After their withdrawal, it was also agreed that the Serbs would gradually withdraw from all surrounding villages, as it was understood that the population of Srebrenica could not continue to live trapped in the enclave and would need to return

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to the neighboring villages to have any chance of a decent life. That was the plan that had been accepted, but unfortunately, it could not be implemented because Mladić opposed its execution. The United Nations Security Council then decided to create the so-called protected zones extended to all the enclaves—six of them: Bihać, Sarajevo, Gorazde, Žepa, Srebrenica, and Tuzla.

However, the decision taken by the Security Council was not followed by the deployment of the resources necessary for the mission assigned to my successors. That was when the tragedy unfolded. Kofi Annan's very courageous report acknowledged the UN's responsibilities. There was naïve idealism in New York, which I had denounced, that assumed the mere presence of peacekeeping forces

- equipped with the bare minimum - would be sufficient to carry out the mission. This was an illusion that I had denounced, as did all my successors after me. This led to a situation where these protected zones - within which we were unable to prevent the actions of the Bosnian forces themselves - gradually became the areas where Bosnian forces felt relatively safe and from which they launched attacks against the Serbs. This explains the rage of the Serbs, and Mladić in particular, against this decision.

What followed, as you know, was the gradual erosion of our ability to act, the tragedy of hostages being taken in Sarajevo and elsewhere during the Ascension of 1995. It was also the resurgence of hope that we should take pride in, with the retaking of the Vrbanja Bridge. Minister Léotard, of course,

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The National Assembly in Paris, France, January 17, 2023.

Photo: Shutterstock

remembers this. It was also the decision, accepted at France's urgent request, to deploy the Rapid Reaction Force, without which military commanders had no means at their disposal.

I recall, and have published, details of an earlier intervention considered during the Vukovar tragedy in Croatia in the autumn of 1991. A study was conducted in Metz, within the staff of the First Army, where I served as Chief of Staff, with the representatives of nine nations of the Western European Union at the time. Thirty-five senior officers studied possible interventions in this crisis and proposed plans, all of which required the deployment of a Rapid Reaction Force. This plan was not implemented because the European Union lacked the political will. Instead, the United Nations intervened with its forty-year tradition of peace-keeping operations, which aimed to avoid dragging soldiers into conflicts by arming them as lightly as possible and prohibiting the use of force except in self-defense. This was, of course, a mistake. Such an approach was suitable for interposition forces but entirely inadequate for the missions assigned to the UN force from the outset.

It was France that requested the implementation of this Rapid Reaction Force. It was France that insisted on moving towards this notion of extended self-defense, which allowed commanders on the ground to deploy their forces not only when the lives of their own soldiers were in danger but whenever the mission required it.

Could we, under these conditions - and this is the true criticism of France's actions and General Janvier's leadership - have stopped Mladić in his advance on the enclave of Srebrenica, then Žepa, and Gorazde?

I sincerely believe the answer is no. There was an illusion, nurtured during the Gulf War, that pressing a button could summon fire from the sky to stop all the villains. That may have been true in the desert war, but it was not applicable in a terrain as unsuitable for armored deployment as Bosnia and Herzegovina in general, and the Srebrenica region in particular. Therefore, at this point, without knowing exactly what General Janvier may have told you, I sincerely believe that, as was later demonstrated in Kosovo, airstrikes alone could not stop Mladić's forces. Such actions could only have been effective as part of a ground operation. And here is the most important point in my view: this ground operation was not carried out by the Bosnian forces. As you probably know - and if you don't, I have published this without ever being contradicted - the Bosnian forces withdrew before the fall of Srebrenica. Naser Orić had left the enclave a week before Srebrenica fell. It would have been enough for his forces to mine the road to prevent tanks from entering Srebrenica.

I did not hesitate to say and write that Mladić fell into a trap in Srebrenica. Remember, we were on the verge of a withdrawal - just speaking of withdrawal - of the UN peacekeepers, as all voices, particularly in Washington at the time, were advocating for the lifting of the arms embargo. We had made it very clear that if the arms embargo was lifted, UN peacekeepers could no longer remain on the ground.

Mladić was justified in believing that the fall of Srebrenica would lead to the lifting of the arms embargo. But he didn't care at all, because he knew perfectly well that what the Bosnian forces needed were heavy weapons. No one would have allowed such weapons to reach the ground - neither the

Croats nor the Serbs - and heavy equipment cannot be parachuted. So, Mladić wanted nothing more than that. He expected resistance, which he did not encounter. I don't think he anticipated the massacres, but here, he completely underestimated the accumulated hatred. I don't believe he ordered them, but I don't know for certain; it's my personal conviction.

As for me, when I won my battle against Milošević, it was by announcing this: "If you take Srebrenica, there will be massacres, and the international community will take a stand against you."

I will conclude this introduction by saying that I am convinced the population of Srebrenica fell victim to reasons of state - reasons of state situated in Sarajevo and New York, certainly not in Paris. If I had been able to evacuate everyone who requested it at the time I intervened in Srebrenica, we would undoubtedly have saved a number of lives. You know that I was only able to evacuate the wounded and 2,000 to 3,000 women and children. It was Izetbegović's authorities that opposed the evacuation of all those who requested it - and there were many - to Tuzla. We could not do it because we would have been seen as aiding the policy of "ethnic cleansing" ourselves, as the UN forces. So, I am not assigning blame. I once again acknowledge the courage of Kofi Annan in the report he wrote, taking responsibility. The fundamental mistake came from the fact that no one listened to the warnings. I testify to this as the commander of the Rapid Reaction Force at the time, as I was the one who gave General Soubirou his mission when he was sent to Ploče first and, unfortunately too late, to Sarajevo. France's intention was indeed to break free from the helplessness we were in,

but unfortunately, this Rapid Reaction Force was deployed too late. It took the tragedy of Srebrenica, the sight of this population being treated like cattle - even before the extent of the massacres became known - for awareness to dawn that the UN forces needed to be given the means, including air support, and the right to use it.

I went to Washington in August 1995, immediately after the fall of Srebrenica. I arrived on August 4. The day before, the U.S. Congress had decreed the lifting of the arms embargo. Let me share a testimony that I have already cited. Upon my arrival, I was met by an American journalist. I took a taxi driven by a Black taxi driver who, upon hearing me speak, asked which country I was from. I told him I was French. He said to me: "You French, you're the only ones who understood. We can't let these people be treated like cattle."

I sincerely believe that we have no reason to be ashamed of the actions taken by France over there, that the stand at the Vrbanja Bridge was truly the first turning point. But in the United States, the shift only came after the fall of Srebrenica. I had written from the start that as long as Washington was not invested in resolving the crisis, there would be no solution. Clinton had the political foresight to sense, in response to the deep and intimate reaction of the American people, that he could confront the Congress. The decision to deploy the Rapid Reaction Force, the decision to activate the batteries deployed on Mount Igman—all of this ultimately led to Mladić's defeat and the signing of the Dayton Accords. But it took four years for this necessity to be recognized. I sincerely believe it was not for lack of effort by the French command on the ground or of the government, as far as I could tell, in advocating for it.

Mr. Pierre Brana: You mentioned something that struck me as absolutely essential—that you perceived very early on the hatred dividing the protagonists and relayed this feeling of hatred to the UN.

General Philippe Morillon: I also relayed it to Belgrade. I went to see Milošević and told him: “Here is what will happen.” He helped me. If I succeeded in this struggle at the time, it was thanks to Milošević’s stance. But New York was fully aware.

Mr. Pierre Brana: Ultimately, given that New York was aware of this hatred, the tragedy of Srebrenica - while not predictable, as no one can claim such a tragedy is predictable - became possible. That is to say, it was known that there was hatred capable of leading to massacres. So, the atmosphere must have been such that it was understood that the slightest misstep could result in something horrific.

You criticized the Bosnian army earlier.

General Philippe Morillon: No, not the Bosnian army. I said that Naser Orić, in my view, obeyed the order from Sarajevo to leave the area.

Mr. Pierre Brana: So, let’s say the Bosnian government.

General Philippe Morillon: I am not afraid to say that it was Sarajevo that deliberately provoked the tragedy. It was the presidency - it was Izetbegović. Naser Orić obeyed the Bosnian presidency in Sarajevo.

Mr. Pierre Brana: The advantage with you is that you are both a politician and a military man. You can, therefore, synthesize the two perspectives.

General Philippe Morillon: That was an advantage I had, which my friend Janvier did not have. I’m not afraid to say it - I was in a situation where I had been given a political mission. Indeed, I had to assume both roles.

Mr. Pierre Brana: Do you believe that, in military terms - and here I am addressing the soldier - the Bosnian army could have held Srebrenica?

General Philippe Morillon: Yes. It would have cost significant casualties. I believe - I would need confirmation - that Mladić was prepared to accept the prospect of losing 7,000 men in that battle. He entered without a fight. When I tell you he fell into a trap, and that this trap was deliberate, it is not the criticism of Izetbegović. In my view, he had no other way to achieve his goal, which was to get the international community to take a stance on his side.

Mr. Pierre Brana: And in military terms, on the Dutch side?

General Philippe Morillon: The Dutch - I feel for them with all my heart, even today, for finding themselves in that appalling situation. They were, first of all, few in number. They saw the fighters themselves abandon the position, and they were not allowed to fire unless their lives were in danger. I don’t want to cast blame on them. They might have made a last stand, perhaps. They didn’t, and that’s a fact, but I don’t want to cast blame on them.

Mr. Pierre Brana: And what about General Janvier’s directive stating that fulfilling the mandate was subordinate to the safety of UN personnel?

General Philippe Morillon: He surely explained this to you. It’s the terrible consequence of the “zero casualties” policy, which I have always denounced. If you’re not prepared to accept losses, then there’s no point in having an army. I denounced this in Washington at the time as well.

Mr. Pierre Brana: When we met Admiral Lanxade, he told us that Srebrenica could have been saved in 1994, but not in 1995.

General Philippe Morillon: I think he's right. Srebrenica could have been saved by deploying the Rapid Reaction Force sooner. If the Rapid Reaction Force had been present in Srebrenica, it would have demonstrated a political will that Mladić was aware did not exist. Under those circumstances, I repeat, Mladić had only one objective: to provoke the withdrawal of the UN force so that he could face his enemies one-on-one, convinced as he was that he would defeat them effortlessly. To him, we were just "spoilers" getting in his way, and that was his only objective. Don't forget that he was the sole authority at the time, from 1993 onwards, and even more so later. I wrote and published that, when I met him after he opposed the implementation of the Vance-Owen plan, I told him: "You have taken your responsibility; you carry a heavy burden. I hope your people will never have to regret your decision."

Mr. Pierre Brana: How do you explain this abominable massacre?

General Philippe Morillon: By accumulated hatred. There were beheadings. There had been atrocious massacres committed by Naser Orić's forces in all the surrounding villages. When I went to Bratunac at the time of my intervention, I could feel it. Since then, there have been very good books about this tragedy that confirm what I am telling you.

Mr. François Léotard, Rapporteur: If the Chairman permits, I would like to refer to a personal experience from before my government mandate,

I am not afraid to say that it was Sarajevo that deliberately provoked the tragedy. It was the presidency - it was Izetbegović. Naser Orić obeyed the Bosnian presidency in Sarajevo.

which I can therefore share with the Information Mission very simply. I visited Yugoslavia in 1991-1992. In some places, people were nailed to barn doors. Women were raped in public squares. Reports from consuls or French observers at the Quai d'Orsay were extraordinarily soothing, saying that it wasn't serious and nothing would happen. I met most of the French diplomats in the region at that time, and they said things would settle down. That was the beginning of the crisis.

I remind you that Vukovar fell in 1991, and it was the first European city wiped off the map since 1945.

As for the hatred mentioned by General Morillon, it dates back to 1389. There are six centuries of hatred in this region. One can read *The Knife* by Vuk Drasković or *The Bridge on the Drina* by Ivo Andrić; the literature itself, Serbian or Bosnian, is the literature of hatred. People impaled, dismembered, and destroying one another for six centuries.

Mr. Pierre Brana: Who could imagine massacres as gratuitous as these in the 20th century?

Mr. François Léotard, Rapporteur: Those of the last war were dreadful. There were baskets of eyes, ears, and noses cut off. Unfortunately, this is a region where ethnic and religious hatred is deeply rooted and passed down from generation to generation. Our French stories about our German neighbors are nothing compared to what was passed down within Yugoslav families.

I'll stop there and return to asking General Morillon a few questions.

Mr. François Léotard, Rapporteur: I don't want to put you in a position of contradicting General Janvier, but I would simply like to ask you some questions that we asked him earlier. It is possible that your analyses are slightly different.

He spoke, as everyone knows, about significant divergences in the analyses and behaviors of the allies in this matter, particularly on the ground, with deputies or subordinates of other nationalities. Can you confirm this situation and its reality?

The second question ties in with the one Pierre Brana asked. At what point did you have a sense of a possible disaster in Srebrenica, and how did you convey this to the UN headquarters?

For the third question, which I myself asked General Janvier earlier, your analysis might be different, as I think I just understood. If, instead of 400 Dutch soldiers, there had been 400 French soldiers, regardless of their unit, do you think it would have unfolded in the same way?

General Philippe Morillon: Regarding the divergences between soldiers of different nationalities, I had a freedom of action that Janvier could never have had. Therefore, when I had problems with contingents, and I did, I often went directly to the governments concerned - for example, the Egyptian contingent contesting my decision to deploy them to certain locations. Of course, we had to consider the reactions of the leaders of each contingent. I was fortunate, at the time of the launch of the operation in Bosnia-Herzegovina in September 1992, and when I was entrusted with the command, to bring together the representatives of the staff and governments of the main contingents in Zagreb. I proposed a plan that was accepted by these governments and staff, which allowed me to tell the leaders of different contingents on the ground:

"Either you accept this order, or I request your replacement." I don't believe Janvier ever found himself in such a position after me. No one after me was in this position because I was the only one with such initiatives. It's probably why, at the end of my mission, the UN appointed a permanent civilian delegate, Mr. Stoltenberg, who was in Geneva, not Sarajevo. I don't know what General Janvier may have told you.

Mr. François Léotard, Rapporteur: He emphasized the British.

General Philippe Morillon: I always had excellent relations with the British and never had any issues with them.

Mr. François Léotard, Rapporteur: At what point did you sense there would be a humanitarian disaster?

General Philippe Morillon: In the week preceding my action, I received a visit from Mr. Joxe, who was making his farewells. I took the initiative to go to the field with a few men because I knew that I could reach there alone, due to the respect each of the combatants had for me. So, I was the only one who could go there. I told Minister Joxe at the time and, of course, I told General Wahlgren, my superior. There were also a German photographer and a representative of *Doctors Without Borders* who had managed to enter Srebrenica. I myself had been to Srpska in the week preceding this. I received information from this doctor that people were genuinely dying of hunger and cold.

Mr. François Léotard, Rapporteur: Did you put this in writing?

General Philippe Morillon: Yes, surely. I have my notes.

Mr. François Léotard, Rapporteur: Could we have access to them?

General Philippe Morillon: I will ask for them to be found. I told Wahlgren, but he had just arrived. I must have written it down, as I sent daily reports to the UN.

President François Loncle: You mentioned Minister Joxe. For me, that recalls either late 1992 or early 1993. He was appointed to the *Cour des Comptes* at that time. I was in the government, and it was Pierre Bérégovoy who served as interim.

General Philippe Morillon: He left in February 1993. At the exact moment I was in Srebrenica, it was Mr. Bérégovoy. But I saw Minister Joxe during his farewell visit and expressed my concerns to him. That was most likely in February 1993.

General Philippe Morillon: Regarding what would have happened if the contingent present in Srebrenica had been French, I do not wish to delve into that subject.

Mr. François Léotard, Rapporteur: There has been talk of the Dutch failures. I would like to know your opinion as a military man. Personally, I do not share that sentiment. General Janvier said earlier that if it had been the French, it would have played out differently.

President François Loncle: Meaning they would have attacked, while the Dutch did not.

General Philippe Morillon: Throughout my time on the ground, I told my contingent commanders: "Only passivity is disgraceful. I don't want to hear about the rules of engagement. You can 'bug me' as much as you like with the mandate." Everyone knows that I held this attitude consistently. This was possible for me because I assumed both political and military responsibilities, but Janvier did not have this opportunity. Would the French have done a Camerone? It's in their tradition. If there had been legionnaires, yes.

That said, let's get to the heart of the matter - and now it's the Christian in me speaking. The heroic last stand is forbidden by Christian morality because war is considered an evil, and the implementation of military action, being a lesser evil, can only be justified if there is a chance of achieving the objective. It is not prohibited by military regulations; in fact, it is even celebrated. I was a legionnaire myself. Some have said that I staged a heroic last stand in Srebrenica. No. I was aware that I had a chance of winning that battle, but I would not have led the few men I had with me - including, remember, some Americans - if it had only been about saving the honor of the United Nations. Srebrenica in 1995? Saving honor, yes, that is in the French tradition. But I refuse to condemn the Dutch.

Ms. Marie-Hélène Aubert: I feel somewhat conflicted. On the one hand, our French interlocutors say - and I'm slightly exaggerating - "We were the only ones who wanted to do something."

General Philippe Morillon: I think that's true.

Ms. Marie-Hélène Aubert: On the other hand, the French were always considered rather pro-Serb. I don't say this in an accusatory manner.

General Philippe Morillon: I don't take it that way.

Ms. Marie-Hélène Aubert: Which is understandable, actually - there are cultural and religious affinities that led the French to be more lenient toward the Serbs than toward the Muslims. I use the term "Muslim" intentionally.

General Philippe Morillon: It was a nationality at the time.

Ms. Marie-Hélène Aubert: That makes sense. So, I see a certain contradiction here. I have a hard time believing that it's solely an Anglo-American conspiracy accusing the French of having been

too lenient towards the Serbs in the beginning. There are also objective reasons for this. Moreover, François Léotard just mentioned that reports from the field seemed to downplay the scale of events, attributing them to ancestral conflicts. What is your perspective on this contradiction?

Secondly, regarding Sarajevo, it is clear - and all our interlocutors have told us this - that Sarajevo was the primary concern for the French. In the Vance-Owen plan or the Juppé-Kinkel plan, what happened to the eastern enclaves? Was there not a sort of tacit agreement to let things slide in order to save Sarajevo, even at the cost of allowing the enclaves to be neglected, without fully imagining the scale of the massacres, particularly in Srebrenica?

President François Loncle: On the first point, we can also refer to an issue often raised by commentators and historians: the weight of history and Serbia's engagement alongside the Allies during the Second World War, as well as the tradition of Franco-Serbian friendship. Did this play a role in any way?

General Philippe Morillon: If we gave that impression, it's because, as a rule, when we had obtained an agreement from the Serbs - there was only one level at which an agreement could be reached: it was Mladić - he kept his word, whereas the others did not.

President François Loncle: The others...?

General Philippe Morillon: The Bosniaks, and even the Croats, to a lesser extent. But that had no impact on the ground, at least when I was there.

Of course, the Serbs always highlighted Franco-Serbian friendship. But for us on the ground, tasked with impartiality, if we were perceived as siding with the Serbs, it was because we adhered strictly to impartiality and denounced - something I was the first to do during my entire time there - attacks

when they came from other parties. The international press, and public opinion through it, sided with the weaker party, i.e., the Bosniaks, against the Serbs. It was a difficult role to play, but if I managed to achieve what I did in Srebrenica at that time, it was because I believe - and I still receive testimonies about this today - that all three communities recognized this impartiality. While I was on the ground, there was no question of any of my subordinates taking sides. But when you remain neutral, you're not always understood, and that may be the root of this criticism. I don't know if my answer satisfies you.

Ms. Marie-Hélène Aubert: You personally, beyond the impartiality expected of you, did you in fact...?

General Philippe Morillon: The day Mladić broke his word, it made headlines in the media. I refused to shake his hand.

Ms. Marie-Hélène Aubert: For you, was it clear that there was an aggressor and a victim or not?

General Philippe Morillon: When I left Sarajevo on July 13, 1993, I received particular attention from all parties, starting with Izetbegović, but not from Mladić.

Ms. Marie-Hélène Aubert: Did you consider that there was an aggressor and a victim, and that the victim should be defended, or not?

General Philippe Morillon: No. I experienced the crisis from its beginning in April 1992 and I always refused to label parties as aggressors or victims. This is something the Bosniaks held against me for a long time.

President François Loncle: How would you define the conflict?

General Philippe Morillon: This appalling tragedy, which was unforeseen, is the resurgence of the fear

of domination. The Serbs in the mountains around Sarajevo were there because they had been told that if they didn't go, their wives would have to wear Islamic veils. I can attest to that. This is the sickness of this country. Minister Léotard has already mentioned that it has lasted for seven centuries. As long as there is an authority above them ensuring that no one dominates, the system holds. This has historically been the role of the Ottoman Empire, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and Tito. If Tito succeeded in his reconciliation pact, it was based on this theme. And this is the role they expect from Europe today. This is why we must stay there. I continue to maintain personal relationships with all the countries involved as part of the European Union delegation for Southeastern Europe.

The answer lies here: it is the disease of fear that has been exploited, and we cannot forgive

those who have taken advantage of it by recalling past massacres. This solidarity in the act of killing immediately drags into it those men and women who, just before the tragedy, were marching in the streets of Sarajevo saying, "He is Serbian, I am Muslim, we could never fight one another." But when their brothers fall, the vicious cycle of violence and fear - blood and vengeance - is unleashed. I tried to break it during my time there, but unfortunately without success. Quite honestly, that is how I experienced it.

President François Loncle: Thank you very much, General. That was extremely insightful.

General Philippe Morillon: I told journalists, because, of course, they tried to draw me into this debate: I refuse to be seen as the "white eagle" while Janvier could be cast as the "black eagle".

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Photo No. 4: The monument to Kings Petar I Karađorđević and Aleksandar I Karađorđević in Aleksandar I of Yugoslavia Square in Paris.

Photo: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia

Book Review

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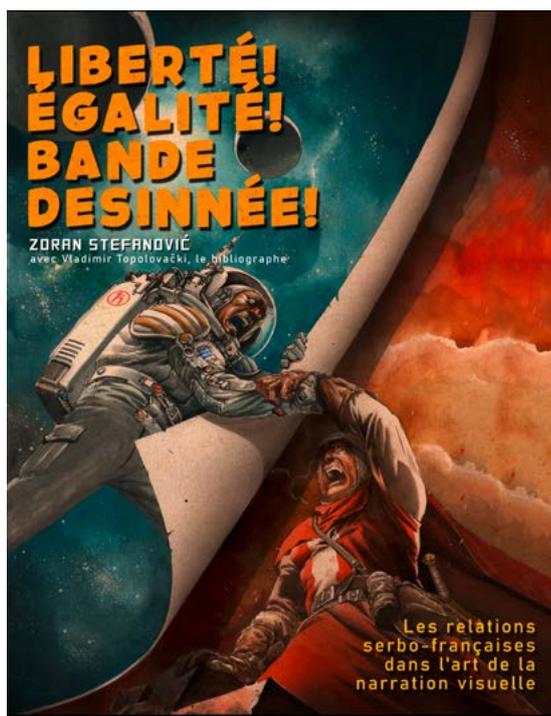
Review

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Comic Strip Studies as a Comprehensive Cultural-Historical Insight and Model for the Future



Stefanović, Zoran; Topolovački, Vladimir (bibliographer) (2023): *Liberty! Equality! Comic! Serbian-French Relations in the Art of Visual Storytelling*. Belgrade: Institute for Cultural Development Research. Expanded edition of the book: Stefanović, Zoran; Topolovački, Vladimir (bibliographe) (2022): *Liberté! Egalité! Bande dessinée! Les relations serbo-françaises dans l'art de la narration visuelle*. Belgrade: Institut pour l'étude du développement culturel.
Cover illustration: Aleksa Gajić.

The famous slogan of the French Revolution *Liberty, Equality, Fraternity*, which is also the principle of the French Republic, in the title of the book *Liberty! Equality! Comic!*, confirms its associative appeal. On the one hand, it evokes France, but on the other,

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it replaces fraternity by elevating the comics and graphic novels to the status of one of the highest values. The subtitle of this precious publication, *Serbian-French Relations in the Art of Visual Storytelling*, more precisely points to the broader framework in which, alongside the comics, other closely related forms of visual storytelling also appear. Book was published by the The Institute for Cultural Development Research in Belgrade, with the support of the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Serbia. It was authored by the versatile Zoran Stefanović, a historian and theorist of culture, visual storytelling expert, founder of the Project Rastko digital library, and playwright, alongside bibliographer Vladimir Topolovački. The first edition of this publication in French, *Liberté! Égalité! Bande dessinée: les relations serbo-françaises dans l'art de la narration visuelle* (2022), was presented at the Serbian Cultural Centre in Paris in 2022. Compared to the French edition, the Serbian edition is expanded both in text and bibliography. The Serbian edition was presented at the Gallery of the Institute for Cultural Development Research in Belgrade on March 31, 2023, as part of the four-day event "Literature and Comics". The book contains a touching dedication: Dedication to the heroes of the great adventure – I dedicate this book to the memory of the main heroes of this story, my noble teachers: Đorđe Lobačev (1909-2002), Srećko Jovanović (1930-2008), Žika Bogdanović (1932-2021), and Zdravko Zupan (1950-2015), as well as to the memory of the equally noble Snežana Zupan (1957-2023).

The extensive monographic study by Zoran Stefanović is written clearly, engagingly, and dynamically, with comprehensive cultural-historical insights, as well as a deep dive into details and

the uncovering of some lesser-known facts. In addition to the study, at the end of each section, the book also includes a selection of illustrative references with cover illustrations or graphic novel panels that allow the reader to indulge in the enjoyment of the masterful pictorial language. The thoroughly compiled bibliography by Zoran Stefanović serves as a foundation for future research and attests to numerous authors who have written about comic strips and cultural connections. Stefanović compiled the comics and graphic novels bibliography of Serbian and Yugoslav comics in France, while the bibliography of French comics in Serbia was authored by Stefanović and Vladimir Topolovački.

The study of cultural and historical ties between two nations, in broader or narrower contexts, requires knowledge not only of the two cultures but also of the wider cultures connected to them. French-Serbian cultural relations have strengthened and weakened in waves. Their golden age undoubtedly spans the decades around the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, when French cultural influence easily and fruitfully spread throughout Serbia, Bulgaria, and Romania. France's support for Serbia in World War I made these ties even stronger in political, cultural, and social aspects. The author of the monograph systematically emphasizes the social circumstances in various types of transmedia storytelling throughout the text. The book uncovers bidirectional connections, and its uniqueness lies in revealing to the French the hidden presence of Serbian comics authors and the contributions of Balkan comics to French culture. In the introductory section, the author uses the metaphor of "underground rivers" for this purpose.

By mentioning the names of comics in the leading comic cultures of the world, it is pointed out that Dušan Duda Timotijević coined the term “strip”, shortened from the English “comic strip”, with a shared Indo-European root with Slavic languages, which is reflected in Serbian *strizati/strići*, and Proto-Slavic *strigti* “to strip, to cut out”.

In the first chapter, “The History of Serbian Comics: From the European Genome to National Treasure”, it is pointed out that the image as storytelling has had a long duration, even dating back to Palaeolithic drawings in Mediterranean Europe. The phenomenon of Serbian-Byzantine frescoes from the 12th to the 15th century is presented as the era of proto-comics. The author has proposed a culturally and historically conceived periodization of Serbian comics, i.e., a periodization embedded in the main cultural-historical currents, along with the factors that comics creators have incorporated into it with their talents and ideas, enriching the creativity of their era. Zoran Stefanović opted for figurative names of epochs that recall Hesiod’s titles in the *Theogony*, and the idea of how the original world of the Golden Age deteriorates from the Silver to the Bronze and Iron Ages. However, Stefanović’s periodization does not adhere to any preconceived idea. Although he implemented the idea very successfully, surprisingly, the author never emphasized that the proposal for the periodization is his own work. The Platinum Age (1880–1934) was marked by Jovan Jovanović Zmaj, painter Josif Danilovac, Branislav Cvetković, “marked by a genius trait” Stanislav Vinaver, and, in transition, editor Dušan Timotijević, whose light strokes of drawn portraits are complemented by praises of their contribution to the distinguished beginnings of visual

storytelling in Serbian culture. The Golden Age (1930–1941) represents an era of great illustrators and scriptwriters, a time of significant intertwining of American influences and the presence of Dashiell Hammett and illustrator Alex Raymond in the *Politika* paper, as well as Eastern Slavic influences with indigenous contributions from scriptwriter Branko Vidić, and illustrators Đorđe Lobačev (Yuriy Pavlovich Lobachev), Vlasta Belkić, Đuka Janković, Momčilo Moma Marković, and others. The Dark Age of Serbian Comics (1941–1951) encompasses the war years of Nazism, during which the partisan comic and the activities of Sergey Solovyov are mentioned, as well as the years of communist repression, during which it was believed that comics were reactionary and anti-Marxist. The Silver Age (1952–1970) consists of the return of Disney and the West, the revival of *Politikin Zabavnik* (1952), and a series of magazines such as *Dečje novine*, *Veseli zabavnik*, *Kekec*, *Plavi vjesnik* in Zagreb, and *Mali jež*. The Bronze Age (1971–1990) is made up of comics from the significant publisher called Dečje novine, and the first works of the highly influential Enki Bilal, who achieved great success in France. It was also a period of flourishing comic studies in the major cities of the former Yugoslavia, with particular emphasis on the work of Žika Bogdanović as an editor, theorist, translator, and publisher, as well as the importance of the humorous Serbian comic “Svemironi” by Lazar Stanojević, and the theoretical journal “Kultura”, which was edited by Ranko Munitić in 1975. The work of several comic artist groups in various cities is highlighted, as well as the significance of the Yugoslav comic exhibition organized at the Centre Pompidou in Paris in 1986. Zoran Stefanović places the Iron Age (1991–2010) in

the years of wars and wild transition and highlights many activities in which, alongside Zdravko Zupan, he himself participated with Serbian and foreign comic artists. It is emphasized that the French pan-European award received by Goran Skrobonja, Vladimir Vesović, and Dražen Kovačević for the series “Točak” served as an impetus for further promotion of Serbian comics in France, as well as the success of the first Serbian feature-length animated film, *Technotise: Edit i ja* by Aleksa Gajić. The Silicon Age (after 2011) was marked by a series of Serbian editions on the global level and the first comic lexicon in Eastern Europe, *Comics We Loved*. Comic festivals in Serbia and in countries on the territory of former Yugoslavia testify to the success of the comic scene and the persistence of comic authors and publishers.

The second chapter, “The Engagement Lasted Long: Serbs in French Comics, French in Serbian”, highlights the significant contributions of Serbian authors to the renowned French comic scene. It illuminates the artistic paths and intersections of Đorđe Lobačev’s work in the 1930s, the meandering influences of various European cultures, and emphasizes that Yugoslav comics were under the decisive influence of the French scene. In the 21st century, according to the author, a merger of the French and Serbian comic scenes occurred, confirmed by the large number of Serbs and other Yugoslavs in French comics. In the main stream of French comics, Enki Bilal, a major creator of European culture, is joined by significant works of Igor Kordej, Zoran Janjetov, Rajko Milošević (“Guéra”), Vladimir Krstić (“Laci”), Gradimir Smuđa, and Dražen Kovačević. The cultural role and work of Zoran Tucić, an architect-conservator, who was the

author of the comic “The Third Argument” based on the prose of Milorad Pavić and the first president of the revived Association of Comic Artists of Serbia, are also highlighted.

The third chapter, “Case Study: Nightmares of the European Avant-Garde – the Comic Novel ‘Vampire’ and the Essay ‘Genesis of Art’ by Miroslav Feller”, presents in detail the unusual short comic novel by Zagreb native Miroslav Feller, which was first published in the Belgrade magazine “Svedočanstva” in 1925, under the theme “Records from the House of Darkness (The Creation of Madness)”. Thanks to the French translation by Monny de Bouilly, a Belgrade Jew and Serbian avant-garde artist, this work was published in the surrealist journal “La Révolution surréaliste”. The author raises a series of provocative questions about the connections of this work with the “paper film”, avant-garde films, and the influence of this comic novel about incest and subsequent patricide in the conflict between the Zenitists and Surrealists over the understanding of reality and ideology.

A huge propensity of Serbian comic authors toward French comics and their two-way connections in the past incite one to consider their personal and collective influences. Artists as individuals certainly find their own way to personal role models and partners in French, American, and Italian comic world alike. A study by Zoran Stefanović answers how France came to possessing such an important place. Personal connections are and will continue to be important, but the French never assumed a superior colonialist or manipulative stance in their relations with others, and so, that was an opportunity to look at the possible development of mutual cultural ties without the burden of the past.

The book *Freedom! Equality! Comic! Serbian-French relations in the art of visual storytelling* represents a significant cumulative image of past relations of artists from the two cultures that were very fruitful, with incentives for additions of new facts and interpretations in further advancements of knowledge about transmedia storytelling. It contains questions directed both towards the future and uncertain paths in the search for new civilizational models. It is about opening questions concerning the future of humanity in a world of technology,

which increasingly casts a shadow and threatens to limit its creator, as well as questions of values in the future world. Given the dual French-Serbian perspective, the book raises issues not only related to the further cooperation of Serbian comic authors with French publishers, who have immense reputation, success, and circulation in the global market, but also provides a new research and production methodology across all other bilateral fields of culture.

References

- Stefanović, Z., Topolovački, V. (2023). *Liberty! Equality! Comics! Serbian-French Relations in the Art of Visual Storytelling*. Beograd: Zavod za proučavanje kulturnog razvitka. [In Serbian]
- Stefanović, Z., Topolovački, V. (2022). *Liberté! Egalité! Bande dessinée!: Les relations serbo--françaises dans l'art de la narration visuelle*. Belgrade: Institut pour l'étude du développement culturel.
- Tamburić, Ž., Zupan, Z., Stefanović, Z. (2011). *The Comics We Loved: Selection of 20th Century Comics and Creators from the Region of Former Yugoslavia*. Beograd: Omnibus [In Serbian, English]
- Topolovački, V. (2011/2018). *Infinite itinerary through the world of comic books. Book 1-4*. Zagreb: Strip-agent. [In Serbian]

Instructions for Authors

The editorial board of the journal *Napredak* will only consider articles which are in accordance with these Instructions. The journal publishes only new and original articles. The editors will accept papers *in extenso* which have previously partially been published at a scientific gathering, under the condition that this is duly indicated by the author. Any attempt at plagiarism or self-plagiarism will be sanctioned (banning the author from publishing his/her work in this journal for a length of time which corresponds to the severity of the plagiarism; the institution with which the author is affiliated, and the appropriate professional organizations will also be informed of the wrongdoing).

Papers are published in the Serbian language (only Cyrillic alphabet) and English. The editorial board encourages authors to submit papers in both languages.

The editorial board maintains the right to proof-read and edit all the papers, in accordance with best practices and Serbian/English language standards. After presenting their papers, authors are required to submit a statement signed by all the authors and co-authors asserting that the paper has not been published either partially or wholly in another publication. The

statement on the particular contribution of each author must be signed by every author, scanned and sent with the manuscript, as additional documentation. This is to ensure that all authors are made responsible for the fulfilling of all the conditions. After this, the paper goes through the editorial process.

Accepted papers are published in the order the Editorial Board establishes, on the suggestion of the Chief Editor and Executive Editor. In the case of Thematic Issues, the Chief Editor and Executive Editor will take into consideration the suggestions of the guest editor of the Thematic Issue, before sending the paper to the Editorial Board. The journal *Napredak* publishes papers in the field of social sciences and related multidisciplinary papers that shed light on society.

The papers are categorized in accordance with the 2009 *Act on the editing process of scientific journals* adopted by the Minister of Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia.

Papers can be:
Scientific articles:

1. **Original scientific papers.** These papers expose previously unpublished results of the author's per-

sonal research, conducted according to scientific standards. The length of the body of these papers must not exceed 28,800 characters with spaces. This number does not include the name, middle initial, surname and affiliation of the author, the title of the article, the summary (up to 800 characters with spaces), key words (up to 5 words or phrases), the list of references, footnotes;

2. **Review.** Contains an original, detailed critique of a scientific problem or area, in which the author has established his/her credentials, confirmed also by the presence of self-citations. The body text of a review must not exceed 28,800 characters with spaces. The total number of characters does not include the elements stated above (cf. Original scientific papers);

3. **Brief or previous statement.** This is an original full format scientific paper up to 18,000 characters with spaces in length, or a preliminary paper. The total number of characters does not include the elements stated above (cf. Original scientific papers);

4. **Scientific critique, or polemic.** (discussion on a given scientific subject, exclusively on the basis of scientific arguments) and reviews. The length of these papers is up to 10,000 characters

with spaces. This type of paper must include the name, middle initial, surname and affiliation of the author, as well as a summary up to 400 characters with spaces in length, key words (up to 5 words or phrases), a list of references. These elements are not included in the total number of characters allowed.

Expert papers:

1. **Expert paper** is an article which presents information that contributes to the study of social phenomena but not necessarily based on the scientific method. These papers must not exceed 18,000 characters with spaces. The total number of characters does not include the elements stated above (cf. Original scientific papers);

2. **Informative contribution** (editorial, commentary, information on the work of the Foundation which is the publisher of *Napredak*, etc.). These texts are shorter, with a length of up to 12,000 characters with spaces. The total number of characters does not include the elements stated above (cf. Original scientific papers);

3. **Review** (book, research, scientific event, etc.). The length is up to 7000 characters with spaces. The use of photographs is encouraged (images of book covers, photographs of events, etc.). Images count as 500 characters with spaces. A review does not contain a summary or key words but must include references.

The journal *Napredak* will not publish papers that contain less than 5 references. The Editorial Board encourages authors to use journal references of a more recent date, if possible.

All types of papers can contain photographs, graphs, tables, and other illustrations. Every illustration counts as 500 characters with spaces. The

Editorial Board encourages the use of illustrations, especially graphs and tables, to present data which do not have to be repeated in the body, but just referred to. Every table must have a number (1 – n) and title, while every image (graph, photograph...) must have a number (1 – n) and caption.

The authors and co-authors suggest the category of the manuscript. This is also done by the reviewers, but the final decision on the categorization is made by the Chief Editor and Executive Editor of the journal.

The manuscripts must contain standardized abbreviations, but not in the title or abstract. The full name with its abbreviation in parenthesis is given when first mentioned. Abbreviations are permitted further on in the text, both in the abstract and in the paper itself. Abbreviations must not be used in the conclusion of the paper (not abstract).

In the case of a paper written in the Serbian language, foreign names are transcribed, and the original name given in parentheses the first time they are mentioned in the text. In the case of papers written in the English language, names are given in the original format or transcribed (eg. Chinese or Arab names). Foreign phrases are written in the original format, in italics, and if necessary, their translation and meaning are given in a footnote.

Manuscripts must be submitted as a Word Document, line spacing 1.5, A4 paper size single sided, margins 2.5 cm, justified alignment, font size 12pt, Times New Roman. Bold and italics should be avoided and can be used in subheadings. The Summary, Key words, and footnotes are single spaced, 1.0.

Submitted manuscripts are sent (without author's name) to at least two

reviewers/editors. Comments and suggestions of the editors and reviewers (not giving the reviewer's name) are sent back to the author.

After undergoing a peer and editorial review, the paper is sent back to the author. All changes must be made within the space of three days. During this phase it is not possible to make significant changes but only correct minor typing and similar mistakes. If the corrected text is not returned to the Editorial Board within three days, the Editorial Board will assume that the author has no further comments. The manuscripts of papers approved for publication are not returned to the author.

Preparing a manuscript

Manuscripts are prepared in accordance to APA citation format. Parts of the paper are: title page, abstract and key words, body, acknowledgements (optional), references, appendices (tables, images). Pages must be numbered (upper or lower right corner), starting with the first page.

1. Title Page

a) The title of the paper should be brief, clear and informative, in the Serbian or English language, without abbreviations and it should correspond to the contents of the paper. Headings and subheadings should be avoided. If the paper is the result of research conducted during a project or if the authors feel the need to express their gratitude to a supporting institution or individual, this can be done in a footnote at the end of the title.

b) Above the title, in the upper left corner, in large letters, the author suggests the category. Below this is

the name, middle initial and surname of the author and co-authors. Scientific papers can have up to two co-authors. The Editorial Board encourages authors to publish papers written by one author. Papers with more than two authors/co-authors will not be considered. After the surname of the author/co-author it is necessary to place a numbered footnote (starting from 1), which gives the professional title of the author/co-author and his/her electronic address (email). The author/co-author responsible for corresponding with the Editorial Board is required to provide telephone numbers (mobile, landline) and postal address (with the words “for correspondence purposes”), besides his/her electronic address. The footnote(s) for each of the author(s)/co-author(s) states the year of birth of the author(s) (e.g. born in 1968.)

c) Below the name of each author/co-author it is necessary to give their affiliation. In the case of institutions with complex organizations, all levels of organization must be stated, from the highest to the lowest (e.g. name of university, name of faculty, name of department), the location of the institution and the country in parentheses.

2. Summary and key words

On the second page of the paper, it is necessary to provide a structured summary in Serbian and English, written concisely and including the Introduction/Aim, Basic Premise, Methods (research methods, basic procedures, sampling), Results (most important), and Conclusion. It is necessary to underline new and important aspects of the research. A structured summary must not exceed 800 characters with

spaces. In the case of scientific critiques, polemics and reviews, a summary must not exceed 400 characters with spaces.

The summary must be followed by Key words, not exceeding 5 concepts or phrases.

Papers categorized as reviews do not require an abstract but it is necessary to provide the following information on the book (event) being reviewed, in the following order: Name and Surname of author (in the case of an Event, the name of the event organizer); title of the book in italics (or title of the Event in italics); place of publication; publisher; year of publication (place of event, time of event), total number of pages (not applicable to Events). A photograph of the book/event reviewed must be submitted in JPEG or TIFF format as an attached file, minimum resolution 300x300 pixels.

Example of review:

Stjuart Prajs: Izučavanje medija. Klio, Beograd, 2011, 749 p.

Example of event:

European Sociological Association: 13th ESA Conference(Un)Making Europe: Capitalism, Solidarities, Subjectivities. Athens (Greece), 29.08 - 01.09.2017

3. Body of text

The body of the paper starts at the third page. It is suggested but not required that original scientific papers and reviews, especially if they are based on empirical research, be structured thus: Introduction/Aims of research; overview of methodology; results; discussion; conclusion. For scientific pa-

pers categorized as “Brief Statements” and “Scientific critique, polemics, reviews”, structuring is not required.

Tables, graphs and images are incorporated into the body, except in the case of a book or event review where the photographs are submitted as a separate file.

Illustrations, maps, photographs, graphs and other images are submitted in JPG or TIFF format, minimum resolution of 300x300 pixels.

Every illustration (table, graph, drawing...) must be numbered and captioned (center alignment) in the following way:

- The title of the table is given above.

Example:

Table 1: Average values of ethnic distance

- Graphs, photographs and other illustrations are captioned below.

Example:

Graph 1: Average values of ethnic distance scores

Tables should be simple, in black and white, no shading. Indentations and alignment in tables must be produced via automatic formatting, not by manually adding spaces.

All types of graphs must be black and white, and with the use of different types of lines.

3.1 Citing and referencing other authors in the body

In accordance with the APA Citation standard, citations are given EXCLUSIVELY in the body, in bibliographical parentheses.

The use of footnotes is allowed only for the purposes of comments, in order to avoid loading the text. It is on the author's discretion to decide to provide in a footnote additional information (e.g. email of author, acknowledgements, etc.), brief explanations regarding certain terms and concepts (e.g. the meaning of a lesser-known Latin proverb), biographical data of importance for the understanding of the text (e.g. providing biographical information on a theorist in order to better understand the context). Footnotes can be used to comment or critique the position of other authors (e.g. regarding their inconsistent views on a subject), to provide an illustrative example or interesting comment regarding another author or for the purpose of directing the reader towards another author's work.

Bibliographical references are always given in the Latin alphabet. In the Literature section, only one place of publication is given, even if the publication itself names several.

AUTHOR(S) BIBLIOGRAPHICAL PARENTESES – FIRST MENTION IN TEXT

Work by one author (Lukić, 1995a, p. 209) (Lukić, 1995a, p. 30)

Work of one author published in the same year as previously cited work (Lukić, 1995b, p. 30) (Lukić, 1995b, p. 20)

Work by two authors (Haralambos & Heald, 1989) (Haralambos & Heald, 1989)

Work by three to five authors
FIRST MENTION: (Marković, Golenkova, Šuvaković, 2009); SECOND AND OTHER MENTION OF SAME WORK: (Marković et al, 2009)

Work by more than seven authors (Mihailović et al, 2012) (Mihailović et al, 2012)

GROUP (INSTITUTION, ORGANIZATION) WITH A RECOGNIZABLE ABBREVIATION

(Republički zavod za statistiku [RZS], 2020) (RZS, 2020)

GROUP WITHOUT RECOGNIZABLE ABBREVIATION (Centar za profesionalni razvoj zaposlenih u obrazovanju, 2020) (Centar za profesionalni razvoj zaposlenih u obrazovanju, 2010)

Included within bibliographical parentheses should be the surname of the author, the year of publication and if necessary the number of the page. If there is more than one author with the same surname, especially if they are cited or referenced in the paper, the APA standard clarifies that the initial of each author be provided before the surname.

If a page number is provided in bibliographical parentheses (in the case of a direct quote), it is separated with a comma, preceded by the abbreviation "p.". In some cases, it is not necessary to provide page numbers (if the entire work is referenced, or the idea contained within; that is, if there is no direct quote).

Example:

In his text Petrovic enters into a polemic with several methodologists and researchers of social phenomena, pointing out their schematism in the interpretation of statistical data, as well as their lack of knowledge of the concept of "civil society" (Petrovic, 2020).

For sources and literature in foreign languages it is possible to use "et al" instead of the Serbian "i dr.". It is also

possible to use "&" instead of "and" in Anglo-Saxon literature.

In the case of citing several authors at the same time, according to the APA standard, the author's names are given within one set of parentheses, in alphabetical order.

Example:

Not an insignificant number of authors believe that globalization is a historical process that started centuries ago (Bžežinski, 2015, p. 14; Chumakov, 2010, p. 49; Mandelbaum, 2004, p. 257; Robertson, 1992, pp. 58-59; Hatibović, 2002; Šuvaković, 2004, str. 53)

Quotations are given within a sentence. However, if the quotation contains more than 40 words it is necessary to separate the quotation in a new paragraph (automatic), with speech marks. The bibliographical parentheses is given after the last punctuation mark. The rest of the text that follows is in a new paragraph.

Example:

"The basic elements of the gay movement correspond to the chief aspirations of (post)modern capitalism. The emphasis in personal or collective identity is transferred from its locus in the system of production on "lifestyle" (consumer behavior model). Hence, the popular (hypnocratic) culture contains so little information on class identity, while sexual identity is given the central position of social and personal attention. The more people's needs for freedom can be satisfied in the area of work or politics, the more "freedom" in consumer behavior and lifestyle is advocated in the public (cultural) sphere. This

includes “sexual freedoms”. (Antonić, 2014, p. 210)

Continuing with our research, we reached the clear and unambiguous conclusion...

3.2 References in the Literature section – an overview of common cases

3.2.1 General remarks

The Literature section is the same for both versions of the paper. The titles of the references are always in the English language, even if the source was not originally written in the English language but, for example, in Serbian. In this case, it is necessary to give the original language in brackets (e.g. [In Serbian]). References are given in alphabetical order (Serbian Latin). If only foreign authors are cited, references are given in British alphabetical order. If works from different languages are referenced, they are arranged in Serbian Latin alphabetical order. Letters which do not exist in Serbian Latin (W, Q, Y, X) are given last.

Serbian surnames should be written in Latin and Serbian diacritic signs should be used.

If more than one work by an author is cited, then the works are listed by date of publication (from oldest to most recent).

If the author published one work individually, the second work as a co-author, the third with two other authors, it is necessary to first list the work written individually, then the work written with one other author, then the work written with two other co-authors. Alphabetical order should be followed when giving authors' surnames.

If works of one author published in the same year are referenced, they should be listed with letters added to the years (2019a) (2019b), etc.

3.2.2 Monographies

Surname, Initial. (year of publication). *Title of monography in italics*. Place of publication: Name of Publisher.

If there is more than one city with the same name (in the case of cities in different states of the USA), it is necessary to provide the state name after the city.

If the monography is available online it is encouraged to provide a link, with the comment “Available at”.

Example:

Antonić, S. (2014). *Power and sexuality: the sociology of the gay movement*. Istočno Sarajevo: Sociološko društvo Republike Srpske. Available at [sahttps://fedorabg.bg.ac.rs/fedora/get/o:7605/bdef:Content/download](https://fedorabg.bg.ac.rs/fedora/get/o:7605/bdef:Content/download) [In Serbian]

Lukić, R. (1995a). Basics of sociology. Beograd: Zavod za udžbenike i nastavna sredstva, BIGZ [In Serbian]

Lukić, R. (1995b). Political parties. Beograd: Zavod za udžbenike i nastavna sredstva, BIGZ [In Serbian]

3.2.3 Articles in serial publications

Surname, Initial. (year of publication). Title of article. *Name of journal* vol. (issue no. in year): pages from – to.

If the paper has a DOI, this is given at the end; if the paper is available online it is encouraged to provide a link, with the comment “available at”.

Example:

Antonić, S.(2013). Social mobility in socialist Serbia: a revisionist

approach. *Sociološki pregled*, XLVII (2), 145–170 Available at [http://scindeks-clanci.ceon.rs/data/pdf/0085-6320/2013/0085-63201302145A.pdf#search="Antonić Slobodan"](http://scindeks-clanci.ceon.rs/data/pdf/0085-6320/2013/0085-63201302145A.pdf#search=) [In Serbian]

Vuletić, V, Stanojević, D. (2013). Social Networks - Networks of Old School Ties. *Kultura*, (141), 37-52. doi:10.5937/kultura1341037V [In Serbian]

The Editorial Board strongly encourages authors to give the DOI of papers published in journals instead of the URL or http:// address.

3.2.4 Articles published in thematic collections, chapters in monographs, statements in proceedings

Surname, Initial. (year of publication). Title of article. In: Name initial and surname of editor with (ed. or eds. in parentheses). *Name of publication in italics*. (pages from – to). Place of publication: Name of Publisher.

Example:

Petrović, J. (2014). Note on the so-called. the new French sociology and its methodological consequences - a review of the most important issues. In: J. Petrović, D. Đorđević (eds) *Research of social phenomena: methodological considerations* (213-222). Niš: Filozofski fakultet Univeziteta u Nišu; Mašinski fakultet Univerziteta u Nišu [In Serbian]

3.2.5 Daily newspaper articles

Surname, Initial. (year, month, day of publication). Title of article. *Title of Newspaper in italics*, p. X

Example:

Vuletić, V. (2017, July 13). Region and barriers. *Politika*, p. 28 [In Serbian]

3.2.6 Texts in periodicals (weekly, bi-weekly, monthly, annual publications)

Surname, Initial. (year, month, day of publication). Title of article. *Title of publication*, issue no., pages from – to. (NO ABBREVIATION to “p.”)

Example:

Čomski, N. (2009, September, 4). Victims of the Imperial Mentality of the West (interview). *HMH* 3041, 19-21. [In Serbian]

3.2.7 Citing unpublished doctoral dissertation or master thesis

Surname, Initial. (year of defense). *Title of dissertation in italics*. (doctoral dissertation / master’s thesis). Name

of institution where the thesis was defended, place [In Serbian].

3.2.8 Citing a doctoral dissertation available in database

Surname, Initial. (year of defense). *Title of dissertation in italics* (doctoral thesis / master’s thesis). Name of institution where the thesis was defended, place. Available at [In Serbian].

