

UDC 930.85(4-12)

ISSN 0350-7653
eISSN 2406-0801

SERBIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES AND ARTS
INSTITUTE FOR BALKAN STUDIES

BALCANICA

XLVII

ANNUAL OF THE INSTITUTE FOR BALKAN STUDIES

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BELGRADE
2016



DUŠAN T. BATAKOVIĆ, *LES SOURCES FRANÇAISES DE LA DÉMOCRATIE SERBE (1804–1914)*. CNRS ÉDITIONS, 2013, 578 p.

VOJISLAV G. PAVLOVIĆ, *DE LA SERBIE VERS LA YOUGOSLAVIE. LA FRANCE ET LA NAISSANCE DE LA YOUGOSLAVIE 1878–1918*. BELGRADE: INSTITUT DES ÉTUDES BALKANIQUES, ACADEMIE SERBE DES SCIENCES ET DES ARTS, 2015, 500 p.

Reviewed by Veljko Stanić*

“Only Paris can be loved a thousand times”, Rastko Petrović wrote to Milan Rakić and his wife Milica in the late 1920s which in the eyes of a benevolent observer may still have been an epoch of French cultural predominance in Europe. Milan Rakić emerged in Serbian literature in the first years of the twentieth century as a Baudelairean poet, and two decades later his young admirer Rastko Petrović chose the company of French Dadaists and Surrealists. Rakić served as Yugoslav Minister in Rome, a famous poet and a respected diplomat of refined manners, and Petrović, after his first literary accomplishments, also embarked on a diplomatic career. Even though they did not share the same aesthetic outlook and sensibility, both intimately lived in the European *République des Lettres* the tone of which, if truth be told, was still set by France. They represented the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (SCS) which had won a place in the interwar Europe of constitutional, parliamentary and national states. The bond between them was forged through shared Francophilia and a dialog with French culture which the Serbian intellectual elite had been carrying on through a few generations. However, the liberal world in which they lived was coming to its end; irrationality, a crisis of democracy, and totalitarian ideologies would irretrievably take away the Paris that Rakić and Petrović had known.

The books of two Serbian historians recently published in French – Dušan T. Bataković’s *French Sources of Serbian Democracy 1804–1914* and Vojislav G. Pavlović’s *From Serbia to Yugoslavia: France and the Birth of Yugoslavia 1878–1918* – shed light on

the unusual role that France had in the development of modern Serbia, offering a rare pleasure because they can be read productively in parallel. Characterized by meticulousness in approach, enviable erudition and marked reflexivity, they complement one another to provide a comprehensive overview of the past.

Dealing with political programmes and doctrines, and the development of institutions in Serbia, the voluminous work of Dušan T. Bataković focuses on the French influence observable in the ideological, political as well as legislative domains. Bataković sums up France’s privileged legacy in Serbia as “a taste for freedom, revolutionary spirit, egalitarian democracy”. Nineteenth-century Serbia was not in a position to follow only one model of political development; that possibility was precluded by the complexities of her history and her exposure to various and frequently opposing influences. This book depicts the step-by-step process of Serbia’s modernization and the opening of her society to foreign influences – Austrian and Russian, but also British, Swiss and French. However, it would be more correct to speak of cultural transfers, of exchange and interaction, which were shaped by the needs of those who chose models to follow, while at once modifying and adapting them. In this respect, Bataković maintains that it was France with her system and values that was closest to the political needs of modern Serbia. The French ideas of popular sovereignty, natural rights and national state, as much as the revolutionary maxim *liberty*,

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equality, fraternity, made an unquestionable impression in agrarian and egalitarian Serbia. The French political imaginary shaped the Serbian understanding of nationalism and democracy, civil society and resistance to absolutism. In other words, the development of Serbian national identity in the nineteenth century may also be looked at against a transnational backdrop, through elements that are common to seemingly strictly separated entities. Furthermore, despite two very different political and cultural contexts, Bataković sees a similar political evolution in nineteenth-century Serbia to contemporary France: "at first a social and national revolution accompanied by a series of wars, then a defeat, occupation and restoration, then a series of new rebellions supported by an upsurge of democratic aspirations which end up in absolutism; then another series of wars, lost and won, and, finally, the establishment of parliamentary democracy." In France, this process lasted from 1789 to 1875, and in Serbia, a similar development from 1804 until 1903.

In this string of events, the Serbian Revolution at the beginning of the nineteenth century is portrayed as a Balkan-style French Revolution. It was very early on, in the Serbian Constitution of 1835, that influences of the French Charter of 1814 and of its revised 1830 version became observable. The revolution of 1848 spurred a new enthusiasm for liberal traditions of the French Revolution. By actively supporting national movements in Europe during the reign of Napoleon III, France acquired a foothold in the Serbia of the Constitutionalists (*Ustavobranitelji*) and Prince Michael. From the 1856 Paris Peace Treaty, France was building its presence in the Concert of Europe. Geopolitical reasons and ideological affinities favoured France's growing importance for Serbia in the late nineteenth century and, especially, in the first decade of the twentieth century. French steadily growing financial presence only buttressed that fact, and helped Serbia to free herself not only

from her economic dependence on Austria-Hungary but also from the Empire's political tutorship.

What provides the backbone of the book's narrative, however, are four generations of "Parisians", the Liberals, the Progressives, the Radicals and the Independent Radicals, whose different and opposing paths create the long road of struggle for constitutionalism and parliamentary democracy in Serbia during the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Each of these four generations owed much to the French political ideas and doctrines. On the one hand the Liberals of the St. Andrew's Day Assembly of 1858 introduced the values of popular sovereignty into the political life of Serbia and stressed the importance of parliament, connecting them, in their romanticism, with the patriarchal principles typical of the Serbian past. On the other hand the Progressives, an urban, highly educated conservative elite, planned reforms inspired by July Monarchy France. Both were replaced by Radicals who, after initially Russian and Swiss influences, found a long-term model in the French radicalism of the Third Republic. These connections were based on ideological reasons, personal contacts, changing international relations, but also on the French notion of the nation as a civic community based on individual rights. The first modern, massive political organization in Serbia, the Radical Party, amalgamated democracy and nationalism by mobilizing the peasantry, and directed the struggle for constitutionalism and the rule of law towards national unification and gradual transition from the Serbian to the Yugoslav idea. Yet, culturally and ideologically, the Independent Radicals were the greatest Francophiles. They dominated Belgrade University and the *Srpski književni glasnik* (Serbian Literary Herald), they introduced the so-called "Belgrade style" which attained extraordinary heights in literary criticism, essay writing and modern historiography, and their public engagement, not only in Serbia but

also in Europe, made the small Balkan kingdom into a "Republic of Professors" on the model of France. This confirmed the continuous attractiveness of French intellectual models, from Guizot, Sainte-Beuve, Renan and Taine to Barrès and Bergson.

At the end of Bataković's book, Serbia and France are at the threshold of the Great War. But Vojislav Pavlović takes up the story where Bataković leaves off. While Bataković deals with the problem of the transnational transfer of political ideas and institutions, Pavlović meticulously analyses the arena of international affairs. Even though his book covers the period from the Congress of Berlin in 1878 to the end of the Great War in 1918, the actual focus of his research is on Franco-Serbian relations during the war and the role of France in the creation of the Yugoslav state. Contrary to a view that is widely accepted even in academic circles, Pavlović demonstrates that France did not create the Yugoslav state, but rather that it grew on the foundations laid by the Serbian military victories and the Radical Party's policies pursued during the First World War. But, how did this atypical Franco-Serbian alliance look like?

Pavlović distinguishes four stages in the French attitude towards Serbian national policy. In the first phase, which began in the late nineteenth century, French financial presence in Serbia, even though not directly conflicting with Austrian and German interests, helped Serbia to wrest herself from Austrian dominance. The second phase, from the outbreak of the war in 1914 to the Italian defeat at the Battle of Caporetto in 1917, was the period when the Serbian government was the sole advocate of the Yugoslav programme. France, however, had no particular strategy regarding either Serbia or the Balkans, and, as in the years before the war, she followed Russian Balkan policy. Between Caporetto and the September of 1918 the activity of the Yugoslav Committee became more clearly manifested. Even during the last, fourth phase, from September

to December 1918, France continued her reactive style of policy, concerned above all else with the issue of Italian expansionism in the Eastern Adriatic.

There is no doubt, therefore, that France considerably helped Serbian national unification, but there was no particular plan behind it. Delcassé believed in an enlarged Serbia (with Bosnia and Herzegovina, an outlet to the Adriatic Sea, Slavonia, and Bačka, in exchange for Macedonia), and the London Treaty clearly showed that the Yugoslav option was not even on the Allied list of possibilities. Serbian defeat in the latter half of 1915 postponed all consideration of the Yugoslav question until the spring of 1918. It was only in April 1918 that Clemenceau consented to the dissolution of Austria-Hungary. The possibility of creating a Yugoslav state was not seriously taken into consideration until the summer of 1918, and even then Clemenceau was concerned with Germany. Moreover, France did not influence the internal organization of the future state. An alternative to the unitary system was Trumbić's confederal proposal, but the French were not too enthusiastic about the idea. They were even less enthusiastic about a Yugoslav state that would be composed of former Austro-Hungarian provinces without Serbia.

Can this *désengagement* of France be understood as lack of interest? In our view, such an understanding would be an *erreur de perspective*. The Kingdom of SCS/Yugoslavia was to have its place in interwar French foreign policy, and her cultural diplomacy was to pay it much of attention. Even before 1914, and especially during the war, Serbia had enjoyed much sympathy in French public opinion, as she did among scholars and political writers. Their influence on the political decision-making process may have been relatively small, but their influence on the public understanding of the world and of the spirit of the time was no doubt great. Yet, what seems to have been the main factor was the ability of the Serbian political

elite to grapple with high politics on a European scale, supported by the Serbian army's outstanding war effort. These skills of Serbian elites had for the most part been built in Serbia's close relations with the French Third Republic. Pašić was not merely a contemporary of Clemenceau and Poincaré; he was their Balkan counterpart. In this respect, Pavlović shares Bataković's views. If Serbia was on the same side with France in 1914, it was not by chance: French culture made a lasting imprint on Serbia's politics, society and culture through processes which had been taking place for a century. In the end, Pavlović concludes that the Radicals lost the battle with history. After the war ended in 1918, they were old and unwilling to change and adapt. There is some irony in the fact that they shared the fate of their French political allies.

A century later, it is easy to see that almost all features that made up this turbulent period of history are gone. French interest in the Balkans had its roots in romanticism and, at least in scholarly and intellectual circles, drew on the tradition of the Illyrian provinces. French universalism, which was not just Enlightenment-inspired but had

its origins in the epoch of classicism, had a magnetic attractiveness for small European nations. France as a beacon of liberty carried with itself a civilizing mission and liberal ideas. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, anti-German sentiment and Franco-Slavic rapprochement only coalesced with these already established processes. Simultaneously, the development of French Slavic studies and of the so-called *science de l'étranger*, and the growing importance of academic forums and journals, allowed a more immediate contact with hitherto little-known European nations.

Only liberal and democratic ideas have stood the test of time, but nowadays even they appear in new guises and overshadowed by a deep crisis. The Franco-Serbian alliance from the time of the Great War may also be seen as a *diplomatie de l'esprit* in which France generously offered the world her visions, and Serbia gave Europe the best part of herself. But a dialog with seemingly forgotten topics from the past, is it not also a road to a new understanding of the world which we all share? We can hardly find a better signpost than the books reviewed here.

A SCHOLARLY PROJECT OF NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE ACCOMPLISHED.
DOCUMENTS ON THE FOREIGN POLICY OF THE KINGDOM OF SERBIA 1903–1914

Vasilije Dj. Krestić*

From 1964 the publication of the *Documents on the Foreign Policy of the Kingdom of Serbia 1903–1914* series was overseen by a committee of the Department of Historical Sciences of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts (SASA), which was headed successively by Petar Popović, Jorjo Tadić, Vasa Čubrilović and Radovan Samardžić and, after them, by Vasilije Krestić as series editor. The editors of individual volumes were renowned historians, members of the SASA, senior fellows of its institutes or

senior archival specialists: Vladimir Dedić, Života Anić, Kliment Džambazovski, Mihailo Vojvodić, Andrija Radenić, Dušan Lukač and Ljiljana Aleksić-Pejković.

The aim of the project was to collect and prepare for publication the documents received or produced by the Kingdom of Serbia's Ministry for Foreign Affairs. The Ministry's archive suffered much damage,

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