

**ALEKSANDRA KOLAKOVIĆ, “FOR THE HOMELAND:
COOPERATION OF FRENCH AND SERBIAN INTELLECTUALS
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The book written by dr Aleksandra Kolaković “For the Homeland: Cooperation of French and Serbian Intellectuals 1894-1914” represents a product of an extensive research of twenty years of cooperation between these two countries and their intellectuals, following its developments from the mere emergence of interests among French for the Balkans, Serbia and Serbs, all to „the Eve of the First World War “. The significance of this work lays in the fact that the author herself had a chance to, as a scholarship holder of the government of the Republic of France, during her specialization at the University Paris I Pantheon Sorbonne, access and analyse original writings and documents regarding the cooperation of these two nations, and thus put in our hands a testimony about fateful connections between France and Serbia.

The author succeeded in using these 416 pages of her book not only for analysis of the cooperation between French and Serbian intellectuals, but she also dedicated her work to the analysis of the political situations in given countries during this period, as well as the individuals who actively participated in building “the eternal friendship between France and Serbia” both in France and Serbia. The time frame of this book includes twenty years, whereby the author took the year which represents a turning point in political lives of these two countries for the beginning of her research: in 1894, Franco-Russian alliance finally came into power, thus strengthening the position of these two countries in international relations; on the other hand, “it is a year which opened possibilities for new re-examinations of the principles of Serbia’s foreign policy, which is, above all, seen in its reliance on Russia“. In fact, due to its alliance with Russia, France, from this point, started strengthening its presence and interests in the Balkans. For the final date of her research, the author took the mere beginning of the First World War (1914).

The main individuals which make up the essence of this research and the centre of the book are Luis Léger, Ernest Denis, Emile Haumant, Charles Loiseau, Auguste

Gauvain, Albert Malet, Victor Bérard and André Chéradame from the French side, while among the Serbian representatives of the intellectual elite the author mentions Jovan Avakumović, Stojan Novaković, Milutin Garašanin, Mihailo Vujić, Andra Nikolić, Milenko Vesnić, Bogdan Popović, Mihailo Gavrilović, Grgur Jakšić, Milan Grol and Jovan Skerlić, and many others.

The book itself is divided into four chapters, while it should be stressed that dr Kolaković, before embarking on a detailed description of this period, as well as the main actors and the political situation in these states and in the world, first addressed the issue of defining the term ‘an intellectual’. Above all, the author pointed out the historic origin of this term, as well as the fact that this is one of the terms which does not have a universal definition. Afterwards, for the purpose of this research, she defines intellectuals as “highly educated members of the French and Serbian society, which have, in the given period, through their public appearances, speeches, books and texts in the media, as well as their actions in the field of politics, culture and science, expressed their attitudes and opinions”.

The first chapter is dedicated to French and Serbian intellectuals acting and cooperating during the given period. Firstly, the author explained the political climate in Serbia and France, by which she defined the reason for the intensified interest of the French intellectuals, first for the Balkan region, and then for Serbia, Serbs and the Yugoslavhood issue. Starting with the instability of France, shaken by the defeat by Prussia and unification of Germany, as well as the Dreyfus affair, through the decline of power of the Ottoman empire, the author depicts on these pages the beginning of interest for our region. With the emergence of first writings about history, tradition and culture of the Slavic people, the number of scientific papers about Serbia and Serbs is increasing, and at the same time, the intellectual and cultural cooperation between French and Serbs begins. The cooperation itself was based on the influences of Serbian scholars educated in France. From the Berlin congress and Serbia’s independence in 1878, emerged a need for collecting as much information as possible about this new country in the Balkans. It is also worth mentioning that, after the Great war, French intellectuals were considered among the Serbs as *the biggest or great Serbian friends*, and the “the remembrance of them strengthened the idea of an *eternal French-Serbian friendship*”. Still, as the most significant one, the author points out Léger, for whom is believed that his work had a role of initiating the research of the Balkans, Serbia and Serbs among the young French intellectuals. Together with an increase in interest of the French intellectual elite for Serbia also occurs an increase of interest in knowledge offered

by French educational centres to Serbian scientists. Thus, by the beginning of the 20th century, Paris becomes the most significant centre for Serbs, which later provides a steady basis for creation of the contemporary Serbian state built on the model of France, given that the highest political and intellectual elite was educated in the capital of France. Serbian *Parisians* have, through their actions in the field of science, culture, politics, as well as the social life of Serbia as a whole, surely made an indelible mark on the transfer of French impacts in Serbia, as well as on inspiring the interest in Serbia among the French.

The author dedicated the following chapter to the network of contacts and cooperation between French and Serbian intellectuals. Above all, the author differentiates relations and cooperation between these intellectuals based on the nature of those relations, stating that the most significant are the ones created in at an early age, during the school years of Serbian intellectuals in French university centres. There were also relations created throughout careers, scientific cooperation and data or information exchange between diplomats and politicians. Political and diplomatic contacts between Serbs and French are not reflected only in the cooperation between Serbian intellectuals educated in Paris with their French colleagues, but it is also significant that relations of Serbian rulers and dynasties with France and French also left a strong mark on cooperation of these two countries. In this regard, it is worth mentioning that the Serbian king, Aleksandar Obrenović, had two French teachers, while the other Serbian ruler from the beginning of the 20th century, king Petar I Karađorđević, spent a significant part of his life in France. Besides all this, the author also stresses the significance of cooperation in the field of journalism, as well as the significance of economic and masonic relations between the Serbs and the French.

The year which marked the beginning of this research is also the year when creation of strong cooperation with France begun, at which point Milutin Garašanin took the office of the Serbian minister in Paris. Afterwards, the mission of every Serbian minister in Paris became making an impact on economic, diplomatic and scientific role of not only Serbia, but also Serbians in both Serbia and France. The chapter “Serbian Elites and France – Hopes and Expectations” closely depicts efforts and hopes of Serbian intellectuals in presenting Serbia in the best light possible. The best example of a successful presentation of Serbia in Paris, as stated by the author, is participation of Serbia in the World exhibition in Paris in 1900 by constructing a Pavilion where industrial objects, agricultural exhibits, as well as products of the national industry were presented. In this chapter, dr Kolaković stresses the

significance of the work of two Serbian intellectuals, Milutin Garašanin and Milovan Milovanović, who were, during this period, advocating for stronger connections between Serbia and France. Their work, together with numerous works written by prominent French intellectuals of that time, have focused the friendship and cooperation of these two countries on creating an ever-lasting link between these two nations.

The fourth, and also the last chapter of this book, entitled “Serbs and French Interests in the Balkans”, represents the culmination of the author’s research. The last pages of this book are written by the works and actions of French intellectuals who dedicated their work to the Balkans at the turn of the century, as well as by thoughts of these intellectuals regarding the conflict between Serbia and Austro-Hungary and the Balkan wars. At the point when it becomes clear that Germany wishes to expand its influence, France and French intellectuals took a new stand towards the Balkans and Serbia, standing in their defence. France and French intellectuals and journalists, in the wake of the Balkan wars, always stressed the significance of the fact that the Balkans should belong to the people living there, and the first idea regarding the unification of the Southern Slavs and the emergence of Yugoslavhood.

The book written by dr Aleksandra Kolaković leads us on a twenty-year-long historical journey, during which we embark different, but equally significant individuals which have shaped the *eternal French-Serbian friendship*. As stated by dr Kolaković, “The French have expressed a great interest in discovering *the secrets* of the Balkans, and their Serbian interlocutors tended to explain Serbian interests through their friends and acquaintances”. The significance of this scientific monograph lays not only in the fact that it enlightens numerous social and political events which have impacted the creation of the contemporary Serbian state, but also in the fact that this book serves as a form of thank-you note to all the ones which, through their interests and wishes to work “for the homeland”, have helped the creation of cooperation between their homelands, with a mutual benefit. Due to that, we may rightfully state that the book “For the Homeland: Cooperation of French and Serbian Intellectuals 1894-1914” might be seen as a great testimony which keeps the efforts of the intellectual elites of these two nations away from oblivion.