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## GEORGES CLEMENCEAU AND CREATION OF YUGOSLAVIA\*

**Abstract:** As President of the fifth French Government and Minister of War (November 1917 – January 1920), Clemenceau made the strongest influence on the ongoing war and its end, especially regarding the Thessaloniki front and in that matter the place of Serbia in post-war Europe. The aim of the paper is to meticulously examine the standpoints of Georges Clemenceau regarding Serbia's war goals and the idea of building new states on the ruins of Austria-Hungary. In order to properly understand Clemenceau's views, we will give an overview of his political career prior to the First World War. A special attention will be dedicated to his activities as an oppositionist leader in the first three years of the war. We will study his actions regarding the place of Serbia at the table in Versailles, relations with Pašić and the final act of France's recognition of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes as the legitimate successor state of Austria-Hungary. Since Clemenceau is one of the most important figures in the context of the centenary of the First World War (1918–2018), we will conclude the paper with an examination of his place in collective memory. The facts presented in the paper rely on documents kept in French archives, published collections of documents, and literature dedicated to the political career and life of Georges Clemenceau.

**Keywords:** Georges Clemenceau, Nikola Pašić, First World War, France, Serbia, Yugoslavia, Thessaloniki front, Versailles Conference.

We can say with certainty that Georges Clemenceau is one of the most significant political figures in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, not only in France but worldwide. He was in the focus of his contemporaries, but the attention is not negligible even today, a century later. He is considered an original and by all means an extraordinary person. His

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political career lasted over forty years, but he stood up publicly in his late fifties and reached his political zenith during the First World War in his late seventies.<sup>1</sup> Michel Winock, the author of one of many Clemenceau's biographies, describes him as a man who battled his entire life, personally and politically.<sup>2</sup> According to Winock, *passion* understood in the broadest sense was Clemenceau's main life inciter. With his appearance or attitude, Clemenceau did not leave anyone indifferent. In every sphere of life Clemenceau acted as a man of firm principles ready to fight for them fearlessly. That attitude brought him many loyal friends and admirers, but also led him to many disputes and even a couple of confrontations. The most memorable was the clash with Paul Déroulède, a poet and leader of the extreme right movement. The second dominant feature of Clemenceau's personality was his ferocious patriotism. Winock wrote that his level of patriotic feelings could not be compared to any of his contemporaries. He inherited patriotism from his father, in his time a well-known Republican. Even more, he upgraded that family base with his high admiration for the Revolution. Danton, Lazare Carnot, Saint-Just were his heroes and political idols to whom he looked up his entire life.<sup>3</sup>

Georges Benjamin Clemenceau was born on 28 September 1841 in Vendée, in a small town called Mouilleron-en-Pareds. His family was Republican, which was a curiosity since Republicanism was not the dominant political faction in Vendée. Quite the opposite, through history this region was known as one of the royalist strongholds. Even so, his family's belief in Republican ideas was steadfast. Clemenceau managed to find the middle ground between Vendée and France, and to be loyal to the core to both. He often pointed out that he inherited the most dominant Vendée's features such as: criticism, a strong desire for independence, stubbornness and capriciousness, while to France as the homeland he was tied through patriotism.<sup>4</sup>

Following in his father's footsteps, Clemenceau chose to study medicine. Shortly after his arrival in Paris, fascinated by the revolutionary ideas, he stood out as one of the main debaters in *Quartier Latin*. One of his principal ideas was that the Monarchy

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Dawbarn, *Makers of New France*, London 1915, 61.

<sup>2</sup> Clemenceau attracted a lot of attention of researchers. For the purpose of this paper we will list just a few of many biographies dedicated to his life and political career: Jean Martet, *M. Clemenceau peint par lui-même*, Paris 1929; Jaques Moreau, *Clemenceau en bloc*, Paris 1931; René Benjamin, *Clemenceau dans la retraite*, Paris 1930; Georges Wormser, *Clemenceau vu de près: documents inédits, épisodes oubliés, précisions nouvelles*, Paris 1979; George Adam, *The Tiger: Georges Clemenceau, 1841–1929*, Jonathan Cape 1930; David Robin Watson, *Georges Clemenceau: A Political Biography*, David McKay, New York 1974; Edgar Holt, *The Tiger: the Life of Georges Clemenceau, 1841–1929*, Hamilton 1976; Samuël Tomei, Sylvie Brodziak, *Dictionnaire Clemenceau*, Groupe Robert Laffont, 2017; Michel Winock, *Clemenceau*, Paris 2013, etc.

<sup>3</sup> *Entretien avec Michel Winock, 14–18 Mission Centenaire – Clemenceau un Tigre dans la guerre* (2018) 1.

<sup>4</sup> Žorž Klemanso, *Vandeja i Vandejci*, Besede: najboljši govori iz svetskog besedništva, izbor tekstova Zoran S. Saramandić, Beograd 1996<sup>4</sup>, 202–203.

was to be overthrown in favour of the Republic. He was ranked very highly on the enemy list of the Napoleon III regime by constantly censuring the Second Empire. After finishing his studies, he moved to America in 1865 with the intention to acquaint himself first-hand with the American Republican system. On the way to America, he visited London where he met John Stuart Mill. They agreed that Clemenceau should translate Mill's work *Auguste Comte and Positivism*. The book was published in 1868 while Clemenceau was still in America, where he earned a living as a professor of the French language and correspondent for *Le Temps*.<sup>5</sup>

When the news struck that a war broke out between France and Prussia, without any delay Clemenceau took his wife Mary Elizabeth Plummer and their new-born daughter Madeleine, and returned to France. He left his family with his parents in Vandée, and went to Paris where he spent the entire war under the siege. At that time Clemenceau was one of the strongest supporters of Léon Gambetta. As many other people, Clemenceau strongly supported Gambetta's policy "we will not surrender into enemies' hands an inch of our homeland or a stone of any fortress." They were both strongly against the cession of Alsace with Strasbourg and one part of Lorraine with Metz to Prussia. Instead of a defeat, they promoted the idea of struggle until the last living Frenchman. However, their venturesome announcement was outvoted. Clemenceau and Gambetta had to accept the defeat as reality, with all pain in their hearts.<sup>6</sup>

During the Commune (1871), Clemenceau was elected mayor of XVIII arrondissement. This was his first public role and, from the start, he gained sympathy of the poor and working classes, most of whom lived in this part of Paris.<sup>7</sup> He had a great ambition to implement some components of American Republicanism in XVIII arrondissement, but lacked time. After witnessing the bloodshed of the *Semaine sanglante*, for the rest of his life he referred to the Commune as one of most tragic episodes in entire French history. Side by side with Victor Hugo, he advocated amnesty for all Commune's supporters. Along with Gambetta, Jules Favre, Jules Ferry and others, Clemenceau became one of the Third Republic's founding fathers – the new regime was proclaimed on 4 September 1870. In his later career, Clemenceau described it as the moment of birth of the French political nation.<sup>8</sup>

Clemenceau was elected to the first Republican Assembly as a representative of XVIII arrondissement, declaring immediately the intention to resolve huge social differences in French society. But the enthusiasm was brief. At the beginning of the

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<sup>5</sup> Dr. Velizar Ninčić, *Žorž Klemanso*, Beograd 1933, 9.

<sup>6</sup> Gistav Žefrov, *Žorž Klemanso*, preveo Andreja N. Milićević, Beograd 1938, 12.

<sup>7</sup> Ch. Dawbarn, *op. cit.*, 62.

<sup>8</sup> The Third Republic lasted until 1940. It was often called imaginary because the regime was full of contradictions. At the start, it was proclaimed by the Monarchist Assembly, and many believed that it was a merely temporary solution. It did not have a constitution, but only a corpus of constitutive laws adopted in 1875–1876 (Vincent Duclert, *La République imaginée 1870–1914*, Paris 2010, 31, 121–124).

1880s, Clemenceau expressed discontent with the progress of reforms and distanced himself from his former friends by associating his policy with the radical left wing. In the following decades, he became one of the fiercest critics of governments and ministers. He stated his opinions in newspapers, mostly in his paper *Le Justice*, launched in 1880. He even parted with his political mentor Gambetta, accusing him of aiming to accumulate all legislative prerogatives into his own hands in order to gain absolute power. Gambetta died in 1882 and they never reconciled. In 1884 Clemenceau turned to criticizing the Senate for the lack of an official constitution.<sup>9</sup> Next year he targeted French imperialistic policy in Indochina and his former friend Jules Ferry. He was the first who called him *Ferry le Tonkinois*. The assaults against Ferry were so harsh that he lost his position and the trust of his supporters. Through his entire life Clemenceau acted against imperialism, advocating that the government had to resolve poverty instead of spreading its influence in Africa and elsewhere. In his first published work *La Mêlée Sociale* (1895), he stood out for the rights “ceux d’en bas” against “ceux d’en haut.” Clemenceau combined his anti-imperialistic doctrine with anticlericalism. He never hid his critical attitude towards the Catholic Church and religion. In his public speeches and articles he insisted on laicism, especially in the sphere of education. With his anticlerical work, he contributed much to the last act of separation of the Church from the state in 1905.<sup>10</sup> All these actions and beliefs earned him the reputation of an incorruptible person and for many years he was known by the nickname of *tombeur de ministères*.<sup>11</sup> In 1906, the journalist of *L’Aurore* Émil Buré gave him another peculiar nickname – *Tiger*, which would follow him until nowadays. Clemenceau never referred to himself as *Tiger*, but nonetheless he was flattered to be called that way, especially when in the late eighties he shot a tiger during his visit to India.<sup>12</sup>

Clemenceau began his political rise at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In 1902 he became a senator and, in 1906, under the presidency of Armand Fallières, he was elected Prime Minister, for the first time in his life. The first government lasted until 1909. During his first premiership, Clemenceau had the intention to put behind *politique de la Revanche* which shaped French political life since the defeat in 1870. He appointed his friend Stephen Pichon the Minister of Foreign Affairs and in 1907 sent to Berlin the new ambassador Jules Cambon. The new ambassador was known for his open-minded attitude and the policy that France and Germany had much more in common instead of futile fights, meaning that both countries could profit in the sphere of the economy and commerce.<sup>13</sup> But the first positive step towards the French-German reconciliation was thwarted with the outbreak of the Annexation

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<sup>9</sup> V. Duclert, *op. cit.*, 121–124; Dominique Barjot, Jean-Pierre Chaline, André Encrevé, *La France au XIXe siècle 1814–1914*, Paris 1995, 331–340.

<sup>10</sup> Jean-Marie Mayeur, *La séparation de l’Église et de L’État*, Paris 1965.

<sup>11</sup> Ch. Dawbarn, *op. cit.*, 63.

<sup>12</sup> Jean-Baptiste Duroselle, *La Grande Guerre des Français*, Paris 1994, 321.

<sup>13</sup> E. Malcolm Carroll, *French Public Opinion and Foreign Affairs 1870–1914*, London 1931, 256.

Crisis (October 1908 – March 1909). The crisis not only alienated France and Germany even more, but also put in jeopardy the alliance between France and Russia. Instead of offering support, Clemenceau and Pichon took a firm stance towards Russia, not showing even a shred of good will to help their ally. The Annexation Crisis showed in the best light all Clemenceau's features: he only cared for France and did not care about Russia's foreign interests or the Russian prestige among Balkan Slavs. Clemenceau and Pichon well assessed that the alliance between France and Russia would survive the Annexation Crisis, despite their disloyalty, but failed to consider the consequences that their policy of turning the back on Russia had on the future of the alliance. Always too preoccupied with France and its interests, Clemenceau never considered that in the long run his policy of denying support to Russia in the Annexation Crisis would weaken the alliance facing the Central Powers and thus accelerate the outbreak of the First World War.<sup>14</sup>

### **Clemenceau and the war**

On the eve of the First World War, Clemenceau launched the new newspaper *L'homme libre* (1913). The paper was new but Clemenceau was the same and used the new platform to continue his advocacy against the establishment. In this period, Raymond Poincaré became Clemenceau's main political target. Especially discontent with Poincaré's Balkan policy during the Balkan Wars, Clemenceau took as a personal provocation Poincaré's decision to appoint Stephen Pichon Minister of Foreign Affairs in March 1913. He even managed to win him over to his side. The public made jokes about Clemenceau, saying that Pichon, from Clemenceau's biggest supporter, became Poincaré's most loyal collaborator. Resentful as he was, Clemenceau did not forget this insult either to Poincaré or Pichon.

The outbreak of the war did not change Clemenceau's attitude. Unlike other French policymakers, the outbreak of the war did not surprise him. Clemenceau was ready to give his maximum defending the country. With the personal example, he aimed to show to his fellow countrymen the proper way of defending the motherland. His son, older daughter, grandson, nephew and two brothers were fighting in trenches or helping in hospitals. These facts were highly praised in the French public which was deeply convinced that only the poor and lower classes were fighting for the national cause, while the rich lived comfortably far away from the first lines.

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<sup>14</sup> Contemporary French historiography is more inclined towards Clemenceau's policy in 1908–1909, while severely criticizing Poincaré's diplomacy during the Balkan Wars. Georges-Henri Soutou believes that Clemenceau conducted careful but clever and cunning diplomacy and that he managed to resolve the crisis without compromising France's interests. On the other hand, Poincaré tied France to Russia and put the country in the first line of the crisis (1912–1913), which in the long term dragged the country into WWI (Biljana Stojić, *Francuska i balkanski ratovi (1912–1913)*, Beograd 2017, 30–33).

Clemenceau's personal example was always compared with that of Poincaré who was married to a widow and was childless. In his memoirs Poincaré wrote: "Clemenceau despises me, does not miss any opportunity to insult me, to make fun of me, to create an image of me as a blind man who obeys the Church and clericalism."<sup>15</sup> He was not any nicer to other members of the Government. Several senior officers and parliament members advocated that Clemenceau should be tried before the military court for high treason. But all these critics were nothing compared with hundreds of thousands of people who read *L'Homme enchaîné* daily.<sup>16</sup> He changed the paper name in September 1914 when censorship suspended publication for one week.<sup>17</sup>

In the first three years of the war (1914–1917), Clemenceau acted as the President of the Army Committee in the National Assembly. From that position he openly criticized officials conducting the war. He constantly insisted that the war had to be more offensive and aggressive and spoke in favour of increasing the war budget. He focused his attacks against the lousy medical organization of taking care of the wounded and their transport from the front to hospitals.<sup>18</sup>

While officials were upset about speeches and writing of "this eternal oppositionist", day after day Clemenceau gathered more and more supporters who truly believed in every word he said. Working from the margins, he managed to oust Poincaré from the pedestal of the national leader. Despite the fact that Clemenceau was always openly hostile towards him, Poincaré could not disavow Clemenceau's patriotism.<sup>19</sup> He was therefore considered a person for the Government from the beginning of the war, but due to his temper he was always considered the last solution.<sup>20</sup> Even Poincaré deeply knew that he would lose popularity among his supporters by inviting Clemenceau to assume power in November 1917, but for the sake of the country he did not hesitate. He explained his choice with the words: "And with a lot of flaws, jealousy, hatred, he has the one quality that Joseph Caillaux does not have: the very same Jacobins patriotism as it was in 1793."<sup>21</sup>

Clemenceau accepted Poincaré's call very aloofly because he believed that he was the one who cleared his own path to the top. Georges Clemenceau's Government, the

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<sup>15</sup> Pierre Miquel, *"Je fais la guerre". Clemenceau, la père la victoire*, Paris 2004, 8.

<sup>16</sup> G. Žefrov, *op.cit.*, 185–187; His friends Louis Lumet and Jean Martet collected articles that Clemenceau published over the years and printed them in 1916 in the book *La France devant L'Allemagne* (G. Clemenceau, *La France devant L'Allemagne*, Paris 1916).

<sup>17</sup> Samuël Tomei, *Dans la fureur de la guerre*, 14–18 Mission Centenaire – Clemenceau un Tigre dans la guerre (2018) 1.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>19</sup> P. Miquel, *op. cit.*, 50–51.

<sup>20</sup> In French social circles there was the following popular anecdote: when in October 1915 Aristide Briand formed the Government popularly called "Government of Ancients", Clemenceau replied to Eduard Grey that he was not a minister since he was still very young and his time was about to come (Viscount Grey of Fallodon, *Twenty-Five Years 1892–1916*, II, New York 1925, 251).

<sup>21</sup> P. Miquel, *op. cit.*, 50–51; J-B. Duroselle, *La Grande Guerre des Français*, 315.

fifth from the beginning of the war, was established on 16 November. That was the turning moment in the entire war: the French and British army were pushed back on the Western front, Italians were beaten in the battle of Caporetto, the Bolsheviks overthrew the Tzar and took control over Russia. Everything suggested that the Entente Powers were on the brink of a military collapse.<sup>22</sup> Coming to power in that challenging moment, Clemenceau managed to stabilize the Western front, but also to impose himself as the most prominent political leader not only in France, but in England and Italy as well. Lloyd George and Sidney Sonnino were overshadowed and forced to follow Clemenceau and his ideas.

His first move as the President of the Government was to replace all corrupt and incompetent people from the establishment. For Clemenceau, integrity was everything so he chose to be surrounded with the people he truly trusted. The Government consisted of 14 ministries, of whom nine were Radical Socialists and Socialists. Besides premiership, Clemenceau appointed himself the head of the Ministry of War, which was a highly dangerous decision since he did not have any military background. To compensate for his lack of military experience, he elected General Jean Jules Henri Mordacq as his Chief of Cabinet and the right hand. He gave the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Stephen Pichon. In his memoirs, Louis Franchet d'Espèrey, Commander of the Allied Army (June 1918 – 1920), noted that Clemenceau chose Pichon just to treat him as a batman.<sup>23</sup> Apart from him and Pichon, other members of the Government did not have any experience in the public service. The only prerogative they had was being personally connected to Clemenceau. That fact provided him with unlimited supremacy over the entire state – the military and civil sector.<sup>24</sup> In the proclamation of 20 November Clemenceau underlined what kind of policy he intended to conduct: “No more pacifist campaigns, no more German intrigues, treason or semi-treason: the war. Only the war remains”.<sup>25</sup> At the beginning of the war, Poincaré proclaimed the *Union sacrée* doctrine, which meant that political parties put aside all quarrels and disagreements for the sake of defending France. Being a harsh critic of the Church and Poincaré, Clemenceau did not wish to stand behind this slogan and invented the new one – *Guerre intégrale*, meaning the war was above all. Clemenceau managed to subordinate everything to the ultimate goal, i.e. winning the war. He decided to call into the army the last defence of the country – young boys from the 19<sup>th</sup> class, undertook army reorganization, started negotiations with Italy, aiming to bring 70,000 Italian workers in order to consolidate the French economy. Within a short time, he managed to reconcile the strongly opposed army and critics of the war, and in some way, he became the bond gathering all the disagreeing parts of France. In the last war year, he was the only politician who worked in the French interest – everybody knew

<sup>22</sup> Dr. V. Ninčić, *op. cit.*, 30.

<sup>23</sup> Luj Franše D'Epere, *Memoari: Solunski front, Srbija, Balkan*, prir. Vojislav Pavlović, Novi Sad 2018, 139.

<sup>24</sup> J-B. Duroselle, *La Grande Guerre des Français*, 318.

<sup>25</sup> G. Žefrov, *op.cit.*, 195.

that the well-being of France was his only and supreme concern.<sup>26</sup> The entire public opinion supported him. He was supported even by conservative newspapers: *L'Echo de Paris*, *Le Figaro*, *Le Gaulois*, etc. Hard to imagine, but even papers such as Charles Maurras' *L'Action Française* and *Le Matin* owned by Aristide Briand, one of his many political opponents, had no negative comments regarding his government.<sup>27</sup>

By all means, all measures Clemenceau undertook were very radical, but even so, nor for a second did he lose the trust of the Assembly and Senate. He introduced the practice of accountability which, in a certain way, meant the triumph of parliamentarism. In one of the most heated Assembly sessions held on 8 March 1918, he stated: "My foreign policy and my interior policy are equal. In my interior policy I am in a constant fight; in foreign policy I am fighting. I am in the war all the time... Russia betrayed us, I am continuing to fight, unfortunately Romania is forced to capitulate, I am still in the war, and I will continue to fight, until my last dying breath".<sup>28</sup> This attitude and unbreakable enthusiasm was the main difference between Clemenceau and the previous four prime ministers. He claimed that brave French soldiers just needed a bit of morale boosting and that it was the crucial precondition for a final victory.<sup>29</sup>

According to a survey carried out in autumn 1917, the morale of French soldiers was at the lowest. Soldiers complained of rain, bad nutrition, bitter wine, severely suffered of coldness, etc. Clemenceau made significant changes in the treatment of *poilus*. From the start of hostilities, Clemenceau was the most ferocious protector of soldiers' rights; now when he was in power, it was the right moment to fulfil those promises. Historian Jean-Baptiste Duroselle counted that Clemenceau spent 90 days in total and made 360 visits to various battlefields in just one year of premiership (16 November 1916 – 11 November 1918). He strongly believed that French soldiers just needed to see and hear their leaders among themselves.<sup>30</sup>

He made a turnover in France's political life. He was highly respected among soldiers and called *le premier poilu de France*.<sup>31</sup> In post-war Europe, Clemenceau was recognized as the key factor for the triumph of the Entente Powers. Even German Emperor William II admitted it unquestionable by saying: "If we had had Clemenceau, we would not have lost this war".<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> *La Question D'Orient et la France. Lettre à M. Georges Clémenceau par M. N. Seulesco*, Paris 1887, 8.

<sup>27</sup> J-B. Duroselle, *La Grande Guerre des Français*, 317.

<sup>28</sup> G. Žefrov, *op.cit.*, 197–198; S. Tomei, *op. cit.*

<sup>29</sup> Sometimes, his enthusiasm was described as childish. The public was referring to him as Peter Pan of French politics (Ch. Dawbarn, *op. cit.*, 74).

<sup>30</sup> Service historique de la Défense (SHD), *Voyages de Monsieur Clemenceau, Président du Conseil, Ministre de la Guerre aux Armées* (janvier 1918 – janvier 1919); P. Miquel, *op. cit.*, 101; J-B. Duroselle, *La Grande Guerre des Français*, 316–317.

<sup>31</sup> S. Tomei, *op. cit.*

<sup>32</sup> Laurent Greilsamer, *Le verbe et la volonté*, 14–18 Mission Centenaire – Clemenceau un Tigre dans la guerre (2018) 2.



### Clemenceau and Serbia's war goals

At the same time, Clemenceau's incontestable patriotism was his biggest flaw, at least in the eyes of those nations that sought to be united and aimed to rebuild their national identity within different state borders, etc. Completely oriented towards France and the Western front, Clemenceau did not care much about other battlefields. He was particularly unsympathetic to the Thessaloniki front, the "waste of soldiers and money", as he usually referred to it. In Clemenceau's perception, the only purpose of the Balkan war theatre was to engage as many German troops as possible in order to release pressure in the West. This strategy became crucial especially after Russia withdrew from the war, giving to Germany free hands to use against France its entire army capacity. On several occasions Clemenceau wanted to withdraw French troops, but did not succeed because the General Staff convinced him that the decision could be catastrophic and could open the opportunity for the Central Powers to seize Thessaloniki as a strategically important point in the Eastern Mediterranean. Despite the fact that French troops remained in the Balkans, he continued to make bitter comments such as "the gardeners of Thessaloniki" or "a hundred thousand slackers in the East" at the expense of *L'Armée d'Orient*.<sup>33</sup>

Among many changes he made when he took power was the replacement of the Commander-in-Chief on the Thessaloniki front. The Allied Army was under direct control of the French Ministry of War, so Clemenceau took liberty and replaced General Maurice Sarrail (September 1915 – December 1917) with General Adolphe Guillaumat. The main intention of this change was to lower expenses for the troops, so Guillaumat had the task to explore possibilities of reducing the number of soldiers and, if necessary, to ensure their transport to the Western front. Enjoying great military reputation, General Guillaumat arrived in Thessaloniki as a temporary solution and he made the strongest contribution to agricultural and industrial manufacture, as well mining in Chalkidiki. By the summer of 1918, soldiers collected 339,000 kilos of fruits and vegetables, as well 113,000 bales of hay for the nutrition of horses and other animals. Independent army manufacture meant less dependence of France and Great Britain and a reduction in the sailing risk in the Mediterranean Sea that was constantly under the threat of enemy's armadas.<sup>34</sup>

In June 1918 Guillaumat was called off from the Balkans. His new task was to take command over the Paris defence, while Clemenceau appointed General Franchet d'Espèrey for the new, third in the row, Commander-in-Chief of the Allied Armies.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Colonel F. Feyler, *La Campagne de Macédoine 1917–1918*, Genève 1921, 12–13.

<sup>34</sup> Jaques Ancel, *La croisade de Salonique*, Revue des Deux-Mondes (15 février 1920).

<sup>35</sup> Clemenceau made this announcement without consulting Lloyd George and Sidni Sonino. By the alliance agreement he was obliged to do so. During the Versailles Conference he admitted to them that at the moment of appointment D'Espèrey was a discharged officer. Lloyd George said to him that he had luck to make a good choice, but Clemenceau wickedly replied: "That is actually correct, but there are so many people who are not so lucky as I am" (Georges Clemenceau, *Grandeurs et misères d'une victoire*, Paris 1930, 104–105).

Clemenceau frankly said to D'Espèrey that the Balkans was his "Limoges", which motivated the new commander to prove him wrong.<sup>36</sup> The main difference between General D'Espèrey and the two previous commanders was that he despised politics and was a soldier by all means.<sup>37</sup> Contrary to Sarrail and Guillaumat, he easily managed to find the middle ground with other commanders, especially with the Serbian General Staff. Together with the Chief of the Serbian General Staff Field Marshal Živojin Mišić and Prince Regent Aleksandar, in just three meetings they made the plan for the breakthrough of the front. The main idea was that the Serbian army would lead the attack of the Allied Armies with the support of two French divisions and French artillery. After the breakthrough on the frontline, other armies (British, Italian, Greek) would enter into the war. The direction of the breakthrough would be the line Dobro Polje – Kravica – Obla Čuka – Borova Čuka – Veternik – Sušica river.<sup>38</sup>

It took one month of planning the operation and two months to get the diplomatic approval for the plan. Clemenceau was the main obstacle. While the British and Italian Governments gave their consent by 5 September, Clemenceau waited five more days to give his blessing. Despite having given the green light, the night before the start of the operation, he sent to D'Espèrey a telegram: "You are aware that tomorrow's operation will be conducted entirely on your responsibility". D'Espèrey burned the telegram on the candle flame and said: "orders stay as we agreed upon".<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> During the war, punished officers were sent to the garrison located in Limoges, far from the frontline. This resulted in the expression *limogé* for those out of favour. D'Espèrey was punished because Clemenceau decided to protect General Foch in front of the Assembly and to punish him for the defeat in the battle at the *Chemin des Dames* (F. D'Epere, *Memoari. op.cit.*, "Izveštaj kapetana De Montegidea o njegovoj misiji u Parizu septembra 1918", 34, 158; G. Clemenceau, *Grandeurs et misères d'une victoire*, IV).

<sup>37</sup> As a competent officer, D'Esperey noticed from the first moment that the current situation was all in favor of the Allied troops. In a communiqué to Mišić on 6 July he said: "Preconditions for such operation are all accomplished. The morale of the Bulgarian army and people are weak. Bulgaria is left to itself because Germany withdrew its almost entire army force for the purpose of war in France. In such circumstance, Germany will not be able to protect Bulgaria, but provide only late and insufficient support" (*Veliki rat Srbije za oslobođenje i ujedinjenje Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca 1914–1918. g., 1918. godina*, knj. 26, III period rovovske vojne. Pripreme za ofanzivu, Od komandanta savezničkih vojsaka, Aktom Br. 4439/3 od 6. jula, 96–97).

<sup>38</sup> *Veliki rat Srbije za oslobođenje i ujedinjenje Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca 1914–1918. g., 1918. godina*, knj. 26, III period rovovske vojne. Pripreme za ofanzivu, Naređenja (izveštaji) Vrhovne komande Aktom Str. Pov. OBr. 26543 od 8. jula 1918 god – Komandantu II armije, 112.

<sup>39</sup> D'Espèrey does not mention this episode in his memoirs, but several of his soldiers do (Charles de Foucauld, *Franchet d'Espèrey – Maréchal de France*, Paris 1956, 52; Krunoslav J. Spasić, *Luj Kordije i njegovi radovi o probijanju Solunskog fronta*, Srbija 1918. godine i stvaranje Jugoslovenske države, ur. Slavenko Terzić, Beograd 1898, 119–127). The artillery started the operation on the 14<sup>th</sup> at 8 am while infantry followed on 15 September at 5.30 am (F. D'Epere, *op.cit.*, 85; *Veliki rat Srbije za oslobođenje i ujedinjenje Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca 1914–1918. g., knj. 26, III period rovovske vojne. Pripreme za ofanzivu*, 3; *Veliki rat Srbije za*

The victorious operation which ended with the unconditional surrender of Bulgaria and Turkey did not soften Clemenceau's rigid and deprecatory attitude towards the Thessaloniki front. Until the very end he questioned the importance of the Balkan front and denied the contribution of D'Espèrey's victory in the final triumph.

Consequently, in Clemenceau's vision of the post-war world, Serbia did not have an important place. Personally, he had a great sympathy for the suffering of Serbia and its people during the war.<sup>40</sup> After the Serbian army crossed Albania in autumn–winter 1915 and was evacuated in Corfu, Pašić went to France seeking help and support. He had the intention to talk to all prominent politicians regardless of their political orientation. When he mentioned Clemenceau's name, Ambassador in Paris Milenko Vesnić spoke categorically against Clemenceau's plan, underlining that it would be a waste of time because "Clemenceau is an oppositionist to the core who is attacking vigorously the entire world in his *L'Homme Enchaîné*." Pašić listened carefully, but decided to do the opposite without notifying Vesnić. Among other features, Clemenceau was known for his vanity, and during the peace negotiations in Versailles he remembered that the Serbian Prime Minister had paid him a visit while he was an oppositionist.<sup>41</sup> They met for the second time in November 1917, when Clemenceau expressed his admiration towards the heroic Serbian army.<sup>42</sup> He repeated the same phrase in the telegram on 29 July 1918, expressing his belief that the "main war goals of the Serbian army will be honoured in peace time."<sup>43</sup>

Clemenceau was aware of the Yugoslav idea, present in France's diplomatic language since the Annexation Crisis of 1908–1909.<sup>44</sup> If he needed to express openly his opinion regarding the Yugoslav idea, he was in favour of the advice that on 5 July 1915 Lord Crewe, British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, gave to Ante Trumbić: "Allies will respect the feelings of Austria-Hungary's Slavs and their desire to be united with Serbia

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*oslobođenje i ujedinjenje Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca 1914–1918. g., 1918. godina*, knj. 27, *Ofanziva, Prvi period: Dobropoljska bitka, Proboj neprijateljskog fronta i izbijanje srpske vojske na reku Vardar*, Beograd 1936, 1).

<sup>40</sup> In *L'Homme Enchaîné* he criticized very harshly the incompetence of the Allies to help Serbia and Montenegro by sending troops too late and the decision of Sarrail to withdraw from North Macedonia. And by that decision Serbian and Montenegrin armies were left to fight alone against three enemies. On 25 December 1915 he wrote ironically "Déjà ce serait un succès si nous pouvions réussir à venir appréciablement en aide à de malheureuses populations mourant de froid et de faim" (*L'Homme Enchaîné, Pour le front français*, № 441 (25 décembre 1915) 1; *L'Homme Enchaîné, L'Italie ne pensait qu'au Carso*, № 1123 (13 Novembre 1917) 1).

<sup>41</sup> G. Žefrov, *op.cit.*, 7.

<sup>42</sup> Stanislav Sretenović, *Francuska i Kraljevina Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca 1918–1929*, Beograd 2008, 89.

<sup>43</sup> AMAE, Papier d'Agents – Georges Clemenceau (198), doss. 1, № 189 (29 juillet 1918).

<sup>44</sup> The Yugoslav idea or Yugoslav question were promoted mostly by Serbian intellectuals, usually former French students who had strong links within intellectual circles (S. Sretenović, *op.cit.*, 43).

and Montenegro, but neither country managed to have all people within the borders of one state.” Like Lord Crewe, Clemenceau was inclined to the idea that Trumbić and the Yugoslav Committee should lower their expectations especially in border regions where it was difficult to assess people’s nationality.<sup>45</sup> This can be concluded indirectly, while officially France evaded to give any official statements about Niš or the Corfu declaration. All five war governments, including Clemenceau’s, did not want to discuss any possible changes on the ground, creation of new countries on the ruins of opposing countries before the end of the war. The situation was even more delicate given that the Entente traded same territories between Serbia, Italy and Romania.<sup>46</sup>

In order to win official and unofficial circles on their side, the Serbian Government and the Yugoslav Committee financially supported many activities in France: publishing brochures and books, organizing various events, paying intellectuals to speak in favour of the unification of South Slavs, etc.<sup>47</sup> It was easier to win the unofficial part of France, so it was not surprising that publishing the Corfu declaration in *Le Temps* on 3 August 1917 was greeted among the French intellectual circles.<sup>48</sup> However, that was not the case with diplomatic circles. The main obstacle was the fact that the Serbian Government and the Yugoslav Committee had not been on the same page most of the war. French politicians differentiated between Serbian Government’s propaganda and that of the Yugoslav Committee. In comparison, the work of Ante Trumbić and the Committee was seen as far more effective. Some of the most influential French diplomats such as Paul Cambon, ambassador to Great Britain and Jean Jules Jusserand, ambassador to the USA, were in favour of Committee’s perception, while severely criticizing Pašić’s conservative views. According to Cambon and Jusserand, Pašić deliberately neglected cultural and religious differences among the Yugoslav peoples and accordingly built a weak ground for the new state.<sup>49</sup> The standpoint of the Serbian Government was supported by Frenchmen who were in service in the Balkans such as Ambassador Joseph de Fontenay (1917–1921) or last commander-in-chief of the *Allied armies* General Franchet d’Espèrey.<sup>50</sup> Another important issue was the question what France would gain from the new state and what position the new state would have in the post-war European political system. Before the war, Serbia was under the French cultural and economic influence, but that was not the case with Croatia, Slovenia or Bosnia. An additional problem was that the state’s western borders were in direct collision with the aspiration of Italy, which France granted by the London Treaty in April 1915.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> L’Homme enchaîné, *Une délégation Jougo-Slave au Foreign-Office*, № 274, 2.

<sup>46</sup> Dimitrije Dimo Vujović, *Kako su Francuzi tokom Prvog svetskog rata vidjeli problem stvaranja jugoslovenske države*, Glasnik Odjeljenja društvenih nauka – CANU 5 (1987) 77–103.

<sup>47</sup> SHD, État-Major de l’armée de terre, fond Clemenceu, 6 N 235, № 23.12.17, Jugo-Slavie, 26 Décembre 1917.

<sup>48</sup> D. Dimo Vujović, *op. cit.*

<sup>49</sup> D. Dimo Vujović, *op. cit.*

<sup>50</sup> SHD, État-Major de l’armée de terre, fond Clemenceu, 6 N 235, № 5.1.18, Serbie, 8 Janvier 1918; D. Dimo Vujović, *op. cit.*

<sup>51</sup> D. Dimo Vujović, *op. cit.*

When it comes to military circles, they shaped their attitude in the light of the war contribution. The Army was much more in favour of the idea that Serbia should gain outlet to the Adriatic Sea. Likewise, they were keen to accept unification with Montenegro, as was stated in Wilson's *Fourteen Points*. Many influential military experts believed that the Serbian-Montenegrin state could be stable and prosperous. On the other hand, until late 1918 they were against the disbanding of the Austro-Hungarian territory and the creation of new, in their opinion, artificial states. French military authorities believed that the dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy would destroy the balance of power in Central Europe. Another concern was that Germans from Austria would follow the example of Hungarians and Slavs and request to be united with Germany.<sup>52</sup> And finally, there was the threat of a rising Bolshevik influence towards the new Slavic countries. As the Minister of War and close to military circles, Clemenceau was more in favour of the army stance.

### **Yugoslavia's path towards international recognition**

The war on the Western front ended in a great anxiety and disagreement between Clemenceau and Poincaré. The downfall of the Central Powers in the Balkans had a large influence on operations on the Western front. The course of events confirmed D'Espèrey's vision from the beginning of the war that it was possible to break down enemy's strength from behind, through the Balkans.<sup>53</sup>

After the debacle in the Balkans, the morale of German soldiers was at the lowest and that opened the door for the final operation in the West. On 26 September, French and Americans started an attack in the direction of Mézières. The next day, in the north, the British attacked Cambrai, while at the same time in the centre of the front French and British soldiers started a joint attack on Busigny, heading north in the direction of Saint-Quentin.<sup>54</sup> In October, the situation turned over in favour of the Entente Powers so Poincaré suggested that the French army should march across the border in order to shift the war to the German soil. An additional reason was the chance for the army to occupy strategically important points and provide more options for bargain during peace negotiations. Clemenceau did not see any benefit in postponing the war except for producing more and more casualties. He said that "it would be disrespectful towards the French nation if we postpone the war even a day longer than necessary." He resolutely took a stance that he did not want to delay the war for imperialistic reasons.<sup>55</sup> In exchanging views he did not want to step down

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<sup>52</sup> That suspicion actually arose when on 12 November 1918 socialist Karl Renner proclaimed the Austrian Republic as an integral part of the German Empire. Clemenceau abolished it supported by other powers (Jean-Jacques Becker, *Clemenceau – chef de guerre*, Paris 2012, 148).

<sup>53</sup> Biljana Stojić, *French military missions in Serbia during 1915*, *The Great War in 1915*, ed. by Dalibor Denda and Mario Christian Ortner, Belgrade 2017, 256–276.

<sup>54</sup> J-B. Duroselle, *La Grande Guerre des Français*, 400.

<sup>55</sup> S. Tomei, *op. cit.*; Ž. Klemanso, *Vandeja i Vandejci*, 202–203.

even a bit. On 8 October, Poincaré accused Clemenceau “of cutting the strings for the French army”. Resentful, Clemenceau threatened to resign.<sup>56</sup> Seeing that any longer discussion would be worthless, Poincaré stepped down. It is worth to note that Clemenceau became very unpopular after this decision. According to surveys, only 5% of Frenchmen wanted an immediate armistice, while the majority, over 90%, desired to punish Germans by transferring the war to their soil. The public believed that the war could not end while Germany was still holding Alsace and Lorraine and a part of Belgium.<sup>57</sup> However, Clemenceau did not want to please the masses, for the first time in his political career. He assessed that troops were too fatigued and that it was the right moment to put an end to the dreadful war.

The text of the Compiègne Armistice was written and signed by Marshal Ferdinand Foch on 11 November at 11.11 am. The signing of the agreement was followed by the ringing of all church bells in entire France. *L’Humanité* declared the end of the war in its well-known style: “Bas les armes, citoyens! Vive la République allemande.”<sup>58</sup> On his part, Clemenceau announced the details of peace in front of the National Assembly in the Bourbon Palace. He opened a solemn session by paying tribute to “nos grands morts qui nous ont fait cette victoire” and concluded the speech with words: “En cette heure terrible, grand et magnifique, mon devoir est accompli...”<sup>59</sup> Nonetheless, even Clemenceau was quite aware that signing of the armistice was just one, smallest step towards a long-term peace. The same was said by delegates in the Assembly to General Mordacq: “Nous avons gagné la guerre, il va falloir gagner la paix et ce sera peut-être encore plus difficile.”<sup>60</sup>

The Peace Conference started on 18 January 1919 in the chateau of Versailles in the presence of 53 commissions, with more than 1000 delegates representing 27 nations.<sup>61</sup> Raymond Poincaré, Woodrow Wilson, Lloyd George, Sidney Sonnino and Georges Clemenceau spoke at the opening ceremony. On Wilson’s suggestion, Clemenceau was elected President.<sup>62</sup> At the start, it looked that negotiations were going smoothly, and with no excessive debate delegates agreed on the Covenant of the League of Nations. But not everybody was pleased with the Conference. On 19 February, an anarchist, cabinetmaker Cottin shot Clemenceau with three bullets.<sup>63</sup> Clemenceau was severely injured, one bullet caused the perforation of his lungs.

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<sup>56</sup> J-B. Duroselle, *La Grande Guerre des Français*, 316–317.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibidem*, 404.

<sup>58</sup> Rémy Porte, *Chronologie commentée de la Première Guerre mondiale*, Paris 2011, 555.

<sup>59</sup> S. Tomei, *op. cit.*; Ž. Klemanso, *Vandeja i Vandejci*, 202–203; J-B. Duroselle, *La Grande Guerre des Français*, 417.

<sup>60</sup> S. Tomei, *op. cit.*

<sup>61</sup> Pierre Vallaud, *14–18 La première guerre mondiale*, Paris 2011, 428.

<sup>62</sup> R. Porte, *op. cit.*, 572.

<sup>63</sup> The end of the war revived social tensions all over Europe. Clemenceau was not the only the victim of agitated people who directed hatred towards leaders. In December 1918 Portuguese President Sidónio Pais was assassinated (P. Vallaud, *op. cit.*, 427; Jean-Baptiste Duroselle, *Clemenceau*, Paris 1988, 945).

Nonetheless, he managed to recover impressively fast. Already on 27 February he started with some official activities, while on 14 March he regained his chairman position at the Conference.<sup>64</sup> His energy and vitality become a legend, as also seen in the following words of Lloyd George to General D'Esperèy: "Every time when I see Clemenceau, he has one tooth more and a year less."<sup>65</sup>

During the months of negotiations Clemenceau remained on the same line from the war period, i.e. protecting the interests of France. He was ready to defend them in front of enemies, but also before allies. *Le Tigre* of the war was transformed into *Le Tigre* of the peace, as formulated by Jean-Jacques Becker.<sup>66</sup> As the Conference president, he could not be openly biased, and set to himself the goal to reconcile French interests with those of Great Britain, Italy and the USA.

Among many issues on the Conference agenda was the (non)recognition of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, proclaimed on 1 December 1918. Since the state did not have the international status, Serbia was its official representative in Versailles. The delegation members were elected by 22 December. The delegation was headed by Nikola Pašić, President of the Government, while the number of other delegates was not strict. At one point, the delegation counted 110 members.<sup>67</sup>

From Serbia's point of view, a big disadvantage was Russia's absence from negotiations. Pašić was very concerned because one part of the French public strongly believed that Russia was the most responsible for the outbreak of the war, and that it was the Russian fault that France entered into the war. Without Russia at the table, the rage of those circles shifted towards Serbia, because in their view Russia entered into the war to protect Serbia and for that purpose dragged France along with it. In April 1919 Pašić wrote: "The destiny of our people is in the hands of four Great Powers. Arbitrage and plebiscite are excluded. That will apply to other people. Our case will be discussed (when our delegation presents the facts) by the same countries responsible for the London Treaty, except America which, even if it wants to protect us, cannot replace Russia."<sup>68</sup>

Clemenceau was not part of the faction believing in the culpability of Russia and Serbia, but nonetheless he kept the same rigid attitude towards Serbia. Discussing Serbia's place at the table, he acted as a legalist and insisted that Serbia should be

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<sup>64</sup> G. Žefrov, *op. cit.*, 204–205; R. Porte, *op. cit.*, 580.

<sup>65</sup> L. Franše D'Epere, *op. cit.*, 139.

<sup>66</sup> J-J. Becker, *op. cit.*, 144.

<sup>67</sup> Miladin Milošević, Bora Dimitrijević, Nikola Pašić – Predsedniku vlade. Strogo poverljivo, lično, Pariz 1919–1920, *Pašićeva pisma sa konferencije mira*, Zaječar 2005.

<sup>68</sup> Pašić most probably had in mind the case of Czechoslovakia. In June 1918 America and the Entente powers were recognized by Czech Legions as an ally and on behalf of that recognition Thomas Masaryk made the proclamation of the Czechoslovak Republic on 21 October. The creation and existence of Czechoslovakia were thus unquestionable. At the start of the Peace Conference on 20 January, France signed a military agreement regarding cooperation with Prague (R. Porte, *op. cit.*, 573; M. Milošević, B. Dimitrijević, *op. cit.*).

considered only an “adjoined ally”, such as, for example, Brazil.<sup>69</sup> He had an admiration for casualties and contribution of the Serbian army in making the breakthrough on the Thessaloniki front, but insisted that Serbia did not have any written agreement with the Entente. Thanks to the backing of other delegates, especially Lloyd George who once called Pašić “the most intelligent man in Eastern Europe”, Serbia got a place at the table side by side with great powers and in the following months played a significant role that Clemenceau wished for.<sup>70</sup>

Already familiar with Clemenceau’s stance, during preparations for the Conference, Yugoslav diplomats focused more on other countries, especially on the American President. Seeking Wilson’s support, Ljuba Stojanović, Secretary of the Serbian Royal Academy of Sciences, accurately noticed: “Wilson’s ideas of international society may look utopian for old Europe, but those ideas are achievable and I believe they will materialise. Englishmen, Frenchmen, Italians, even Germans and their allies are in deep quandaries and are less hostile than before and as long as the war lasts, they will continue to decline; in its constant desire for colonization, America has the power to suppress them, and if they refuse, it will force them.” With no doubt, Stojanović, as the rest of world, recognized the rise of the new power in the international horizon, and predicted that the USA would in the following years gain more and more political supremacy in world politics.<sup>71</sup> But it be must underlined that even Wilson in his *Fourteen Points*, published in January 1918, did not anticipate the dissolution of Austria-Hungary and the unification of Austrian Slavs with the Slavs in Serbia and Montenegro. Wilson spoke in favour of Serbia’s right to get the outlet to the sea, autonomy for Croatia within the borders of reformed Austria-Hungary, etc.

Yugoslavia’s advantage was that in the midst of various and very complex problems discussed at the Conference, the problem of Austria-Hungary’s heritage was one of minor ones. Clemenceau was opposed to the idea of total dissolution of Austria-Hungary, but the country collapsed from the inside and all the influence of France or other countries could not save it. In the atmosphere when Czechs and Slovaks proclaimed unification and Hungarians create their own state, South Slavs gained support from Wilson and the USA, and even Clemenceau did not have any other choice but to accept the *fait accomplis*. France officially recognized the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes in June 1919.<sup>72</sup> Justifying this painful decision, Clemenceau said that “Yugoslavia is equal to Nikola Pašić”, meaning that he accepted

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<sup>69</sup> Brazil entered into the war on 11 April 1916 by declaring war on Germany. Its naval fleet patrolled across the Atlantic Ocean and seized German ships. The war was declared on Austria-Hungary on 14 September 1918 (R. Porte, *op. cit.*, 383, 533).

<sup>70</sup> G. Žefrov, *op. cit.*, 9.

<sup>71</sup> Mira Radojević, *Jugoslovenstvo u prepisci srpskih intelektualaca (1914–1918)*, Pismo, ur. Radoš Ljušić, Beograd 2001, 223–237.

<sup>72</sup> Among large countries, the USA made the first official recognition of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. In the letter of State Secretary Robert Lansing written on 6 February 1919, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes was designated with that name, which meant unofficial recognition, but the official recognition took place on 5 June 1919.



the new state only out of respect towards Pašić. Formally, the new state was internationally recognized only after the signing of the Treaty of Saint-Germain with Austria in September 1919.<sup>73</sup>

The Versailles Treaty was concluded on 28 June at 3.55 pm and Clemenceau announced it in *La galerie des Glaces*, making a clear reference to 1871 and the proclamation of the German Empire in the same room. That moment was the zenith of his political career and the public hailed him as *le père de la victoire*.<sup>74</sup>

### **Last years of Clemenceau's life and today's commemoration**

Relying on the popularity he gained in the war and peace negotiations, Clemenceau was one of the candidates at the presidential election in November 1919.<sup>75</sup> This election showed that preventing the troops from marching across the borders affected his reputation more than he predicted. On top of that, his despotic governance produced even more enemies and opponents. Many of his friends did not forget control he had in conducting the war. Furthermore, during peace negotiations he was pulling all the strings, excluding almost completely the rest of the Government from any decision-making process.<sup>76</sup> In the election, he was defeated by Paul Deschanel, which was a revenge for all disputes they had through decades.<sup>77</sup> As soon as he got the election result, he resigned from Premiership in January 1920 and withdrew completely from public life. Unexpectedly, he was deeply dismayed with the defeat, feeling unappreciated and unwanted. In some way he felt that his energy and enthusiasm were required to gain victory, but in peace they became nothing more than a burden.

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<sup>73</sup> S. Sretenović, *op. cit.*, 101. Nonetheless, official recognition did not mean determination of state borders. Already on 19 April Wilson refused to add to the Conference agenda a discussion about Dalmatia in the context of Serbo-Italian quarrel. In the same period France got a confidential report from Trieste about a heated situation in the city. According to this report, a conflict among Serbia and Italy was just the matter of time. In March 1920, it was decided at the Conference to let Yugoslavia and Italy settle issues between themselves. On 20 September 1920 Gabriele D'Annunzio proclaimed independent Rijeka (Fiume) and opened the crisis, which lasted after the Second World War (SHD, État-Major de l'armée de terre, fond Clemenceu, 6 N 235, № 3717, Trieste, 15 Avril 1919; R. Porte, *op. cit.*, 589; P. Vallaud, *op. cit.*, 454).

<sup>74</sup> J-J. Becker, *op. cit.*, 160, 168–169.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibidem*, 171.

<sup>76</sup> When it comes to Poincaré, he was supposed to be included in the Conference according to his presidential rights, but Clemenceau did his best to exclude him completely with the justification that he was a "nationalist" and "stiff". Francois Roth in its *Raymond Poincaré: Un homme d'état républicain* states that in that time Poincaré as president did not exist at all (J-J. Becker, *op.cit.*, 150).

<sup>77</sup> *Ibidem*, 178.

Clemenceau dedicated the last years of his life to writing. In 1926, he published *Demosthenes* – a sort of an autobiography, and a year later he published *Au soir de la pensée*, which is considered his philosophic testament.<sup>78</sup> The death of Marshal Foch in March 1929 saddened him deeply. In the memorial to the Marshal, Raymond Recouly pointed out some mistakes that Clemenceau made during the war, making a reference to interviews he had with Marshal in 1919–1923, published as *Le Mémorial de Foch. Mes entretiens avec le maréchal*. Those implications aroused in Clemenceau bitterness and indignation. For the last time, the 88-year-old *Tigre* entered into a political debate with Recouly and deceased Foch.<sup>79</sup> He felt that he had to go publicly and defend his honour. In his last work *Grandeurs et misères d'une victoire*, he led a polemical dialogue with his former friend: “Avez-vous pensé que si je mourais avant vous, comme il était probable, je serais resté, post mortem, sous le poids de vos accusations. Monsieur le Maréchal, cela n’aurait pas été d’un soldat.”<sup>80</sup> But, there was not enough time to see the reaction of the public, because he passed away on 24 November 1929, in his apartment in Franklin Street 8. The book was published in 1930, after his death, and today many researchers believe that it cannot be considered his memories, for the simple reason that he was a man who never looked back at the past.<sup>81</sup> In his last will written on 28 March 1929, Clemenceau designated his friend Nicolas Piétri as the executor and left a very detailed instruction for the funeral. He wished to be buried near his father at Colombier, in his native Vendée. He did not want any funeral procession, official or religious ceremony, or even a monument. He just wanted a very simple iron railing, with no inscription.<sup>82</sup>

Expect for this short episode in the last decade of his life, in collective memory up until the present time Georges Clemenceau has remained on the same pedestal as in 1918. Today, Clemenceau enjoys considerable popularity and respect both among the general public and researchers. Unlike Poincaré, Delcassé, Paléologue and many other contemporaries remembered as Europe’s gravediggers and responsible for the outbreak of the war, Clemenceau’s legacy endured intact. Three years after Clemenceau died, in 1932 sculptor François Cogné made his statue at Champs-Élysées. Since then, on the commemoration day of 11 November, the President of the Republic pays respect in front of his statue and the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier under the Arc de Triomphe.<sup>83</sup> On 11 November 1941, Général de Gaulle swore on Clemenceau’s memorial and tomb that France would regain its 11 November and promised that France would be victorious again.<sup>84</sup> De Gaulle thus linked the memory of the First with the Second World War, connecting his legacy with Clemenceau’s.

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<sup>78</sup> Georges Clemenceau, *Démosthène*, Paris 1926; idem, *Au soir de la pensée*, Paris 1927.

<sup>79</sup> G. Clemenceau, *Au soir de la pensée*, II.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibidem*, II.

<sup>81</sup> J.-J. Becker, *op. cit.*, 179.

<sup>82</sup> Dr. V. Ninčić, *op. cit.*, 33–34.

<sup>83</sup> J.-B. Duroselle, *Clemenceau*, 945.

<sup>84</sup> J.-J. Becker, *op. cit.*, 206–207.

This link of the two probably most important Frenchmen of the 20<sup>th</sup> century still endures and has a strong impact on contemporary France.

Had it not been for the war, Clemenceau would be remembered as just one of the politicians of the Third Republic, without great importance. But his biggest contribution to the positive memory is the fact that he was not a Germanophobe. He never showed a slightest sign of hatred towards the German people. Even at the Peace Conference he did not wish to humiliate Germany, but only wanted to protect France and its interests. For that reason, Jean-Baptiste Duroselle disagreed with the comparison of Clemenceau with Otto von Bismarck. Duroselle noted that, as a Machiavellian, Bismarck was prepared to do everything for Prussia and Germany, while Clemenceau was equally critical towards France as any other state. His idealistic goal was the homeland built on fairness and justice, but in order to achieve that, he did not wish to make France the most imperial power on the ruins of German, Russian, Austro-Hungarian or Ottoman Empires.<sup>85</sup>

In 1931, the Museum of Georges Clemenceau opened in his house where he spent his entire life, and in 1937 a gallery was opened. The museum contains original items from Clemenceau's life, paintings of his friend Claude Monet, a library, private garden and various original items. In 1955, the apartment and garden were classified as historical monuments. The museum and gallery were fully renovated in 2015. In 2005, the state bought Clemenceau's birth home in Vendée and transformed it into Le Musée national Clemenceau de Lattre.<sup>86</sup>

On 11 November 2017, current President of the Republic Emmanuel Macron proclaimed 2018, the centenary of the Great War, the year of Georges Clemenceau. Following that announcement, *Mission Centenaire 14–18*<sup>87</sup> launched in January 2018 the entire website dedicated to Clemenceau and organized many public manifestations for *Père de la victoire*. In 2018 two exhibitions dedicated to Clemenceau were organised. The first took place in the Panthéon and was titled *Georges Clemenceau – le courage de la République* (November 2018 – February 2019) which presented Clemenceau's life through different aspects: as a man from Vendée, journalist, doctor, politician, dreyfusard, war chief, art lover. The second took place in the Musée de l'Orangerie (12 November 2018 – 11 March 2019), honouring connections between Georges Clemenceau and Claude Monet. On 10 and 11 November 2018, composer Jacques Raveleau-Duparc performed the musical *Clemenceau, le musical* in Palais des Congrès de Paris. Even *Tour de France* in 2018 started in Vendée with the motto of following in Clemenceau's footsteps.<sup>88</sup> The Ministry of Education also proclaimed 2018 as the year dedicated to Georges

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<sup>85</sup> *Ibidem*, 143.

<sup>86</sup> *L'année Clemenceau "Père la victoire"*, 2018: Centenaire de la Première guerre mondiale, vol. 4, 16–17.

<sup>87</sup> <http://www.clemenceau2018.fr/> (February 2019).

<sup>88</sup> *L'année Clemenceau "Père la victoire"*, 2018: Centenaire de la Première guerre mondiale, vol. 4, 14, 19.

Clemenceau. In October 2018, in cooperation with Établissement de communication et de production audiovisuelle de la Défense (ECPAD), the Ministry of Education filmed the audio-visual material *Clemenceau à l'École* for high-school students. The Ministry of the Military established the award for eloquence *Prix Georges Clemenceau*, targeting young officers and university students.<sup>89</sup> With state support three documentaries were filmed about Clemenceau: *Le Dernier Monet, Les Nymphéas et l'Amérique* (in April 2018); *Clemenceau dans le jardin de Monet: chronique d'une amitié* (November 2018) and *Clemenceau, retours en Vendée* (November 2018).<sup>90</sup>

Acting on Clemenceau's will, already in 1930 Clemenceau's former Chief of Cabinet General Mordacq handed to the Service Historique de la Défense (SHD) Clemenceau's entire archive. These documents are today organized in 242 boxes and the majority are digitalized and open for online access. Besides the SHD, documents related to Clemenceau, his life and political career are kept in the Archives du ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires étrangères, Archives départementales de la Vendée, Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF), Centre des monuments nationaux (CMN), Établissement de communication et de production audiovisuelle de la Défense (ECPAD), Musée Clemenceau de Paris, Musée national Clemenceau de Lattre, Direction des patrimoines de la mémoire et des archives (DPMA).<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> *Ibidem*, 18.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibidem*, 18.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibidem*, 15.

Биљана Стојић

## ЖОРЖ КЛЕМАНСО И СТВАРАЊЕ ЈУГОСЛАВИЈЕ

### Резиме

У раду *Жорж Клемансо и стварање Југославије* бавили смо се односом председника француске владе Жоржа Клемансоа (новембар 1917 – јануар 1920) према питању стварања Југославије и њеног међународног признања. Да би свеобухватно сагледали Клемансоово виђење тог питања, дали смо преглед његовог политичког ангажовања до новембра 1917. године. Посебну пажњу смо посветили еволуцији његових политичких ставова, положају и улози коју је имао у француском политичком животу, са посебним акцентом на његово ангажовање током прве три године рата у својству опозиционог новинара и председника Комитета за рат у Народној скупштини. У контексту централне теме разматрали смо његове ставове према Солунском фронту, ратним циљевима Србије, судбини аустроугарског наслеђа, југословенској идеји и коначно признању Краљевства СХС на Версајској мировној конференцији. Клемансо је био најтврђи противник стварања нових држава на темељима разрушене Аустроугарске. Но, како су он и Конференција имали сложенијих проблема од питања Аустроугарске, пратећи пример других великих сила Клемансо је почетком јуна у име Француске признао међународну легитимност Краљевству СХС. Образлажући такву одлуку истакао је да је за њега држава СХС једнака Пашићу, односно да је признаје из пијетета према њему. Како је Клемансо једна од најзначајнијих личности XX века не само француске већ и светске историје, рад смо закључили анализом његовог места у историји, колективном сећању у контексту стогодишњице од завршетка Првог светског рата. Рад је заснован на грађи француских архива, Дипломатског и Војног, као и на релевантној литератури и мемоаристици.

**Кључне речи:** Жорж Клемансо, Никола Пашић, Први светски рат, Француска, Србија, Југославија, Солунски фронт, Версајска конференција.



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