

**Paweł Brzegowy**  
The Jagiellonian University  
in Cracow

**ROBERT ALDRICH, JOHN CONNELL, *FRANCE'S OVERSEAS FRONTIER DEPARTEMENTS ET TERRITOIRES D'OUTRE-MER*,  
CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS 2006, PP. 368**

The object of the present review is a study authored by the Australian scientists – Robert Aldrich and John Connell, *France's Overseas Frontier Départements et territoires d'outre-mer*. During the colonial expansion, starting from the 16<sup>th</sup> c., the French monarchy, competing with other European superpowers, acquired territories in almost all parts of the globe. The French colonial empire was the world's second biggest after the British empire, but turned out to be equally unsustainable as other colonial formations. The Overseas France, which acts as a modern-day testimony to the events concerned, constitutes just a fraction of its colonial predecessor. The reviewed study consists of 10 chapters, successively tackling social and economic history as well as political conditions of the overseas departments and territories until the late 80's of the 20<sup>th</sup> c.

Chapter 1 (pp. 1-11) was given an introductory character with the term France d'outre-mer and its origin explained therein. The geographical location of the Extra-European France, its population potential and the occupied area were presented on the attached map and in the tabular breakdown. Chapter 2 *The Colonial Heritage* contains some general information on the plantation-based economy and community of the Antillean Islands, Guiana, Réunion, Saint-Pierre, Miquelon and Mayotte and gives a concise outline on the acquisition of the areas presently known as the French Southern and Antarctic Lands. In the chapter concerned, the authors divided the problem area under discussion into the first colonial period (1635-1848) and the times after 1848 until the outbreak of World War II. Chapter 3 is set in the reality of World War II, which acted as a leaven for the decolonizing process, and thus, disintegration of the French colonial empire. It was rightly noted (pp. 65-69) that the year 1946 marked the beginning of the Overseas France in its present shape, as classified into département d'outre mer (DOM), territoires d'outre-mer (TOM) and collectivités territoriales. The researchers demonstrated the disintegration of the colonial formation and Paris policy towards its integral overseas areas (pp. 90-94). Chapter 4 was dedicated to selected demographic and social issues, pertaining to the overseas French citizens in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> cc., successively describing the issues of colonial demography, emigration, DOM-TOM population and population policy of the Overseas France.

The dynamic population growth, typical of the French Antilles, Réunion or Mayotte, starting from the 50's of the 20<sup>th</sup> c., classifies these as young communities with a high percentage of people at a pre-working age, which stands in opposition to the continental France. Moreover, attention was also paid to the activities of the Bureau for Migration and Development, undertaken since the 60's of the previous century, aimed at counteracting the unemployment and undesirable social phenomena in the French Antilles (p. 112). In Chapter 5, the researchers concentrated on the economic issues, accurately proving that tourist industry is a future for the overseas economies. Despite the services sector's domination in the GDP of the American Departments of France, agriculture still remains one of the most important sectors for the regional economies. The sugar cane culture, present since the beginnings of the French colonisation, survived until modern times although lost its position in the Caribbean Departments to the benefit of bananas. The economy of French Guiana is based on: agriculture, forestry and mining focused on the excavation of gold, bauxites, tantalite and kaolin as well as the Kourou Space Centre. Undoubtedly, the presence of the above mentioned centre determines the French Guiana's strategic significance not only for Paris. The high unemployment rate and fact that the metropolis is their main commercial partner, constitutes a serious challenge to the economies of the Overseas France (pp. 156-164). Chapter 6 treats on the DOM-TOM culture and national divisions. As a result of the broad-spectrum ethnic and national diversification, the French dependable territories, contemporarily, form the neo-colonial diasporas of the metropolis. The significant cultural variety, accompanied by the economic disproportions, makes the overseas communities form an expressly separate group of the Fifth Republic's citizens, shaped, to a large extent, by the Creole culture (pp. 170-177). The next three chapters were dedicated to politics, primarily considering the activities of the political parties and local government organisation (pp. 194-199). The researchers dedicated a special part of their study to the Kanak liberation movement and New Caledonia – a community of its own kind (pp. 210-242). Being a part of the Overseas France, it constitutes a peculiar, unusual phenomenon and does not conceal its willingness to gain full sovereignty. The authors' attention was also focused on the activities of the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie, grouping the French speaking countries (pp. 255-257). In the last chapter, the DOM-TOM idea was explained and, simultaneously, the future of the Overseas France was taken into consideration.

In conclusion it should be noted that the study authored by R. Aldrich and J. Connell should be resorted to for, at least, two reasons. It is a comprehensive work treating on the Extra-European France – a kind of the "Overseas France in a nutshell". Despite the obvious selectivity of the tackled issues, the monographic study was drawn up in an accurate and interesting way. Secondly, the above mentioned study is a successful attempt at taking a side-view of the French colonialism, by the non-French scientists, equipped in an excellent research workshop. The reviewed study can be recommended not only to historians and political scientists, but also to all readers interested in the fate of the French colonial empire.

### Summary

**ROBERT ALDRICH, JOHN CONNELL, *FRANCE'S OVERSEAS FRONTIER DEPARTEMENTS ET TERRITOIRES D'OUTRE-MER*, CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS 2006, PP. 368**

The reviewed study can be recommended not only to historians and political scientists, but also to all readers interested in the fate of the French colonial empire. It is a comprehensive work treating of France's oversea territories.

**Keywords:** France's colonies, France's oversea territories, colonial policy

**Słowa kluczowe:** francuskie kolonie, zamorskie terytoria Francji, polityka kolonialna

The date of submitting the paper to the Editorial Staff: March 30, 2015.  
The date of initial acceptance of the paper by Editorial Staff: April 10, 2015.