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Britain, Mihailović and the Chetniks, 1941–42

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For Jenny

Contents

<i>Preface</i>	ix
<i>List of Abbreviations</i>	xi
<i>Map: Partition of Yugoslavia 1941</i>	xv
1 Occupation and Reaction	1
2 The Special Operations Executive (SOE), the Yugoslavs and European Resistance	17
3 Preparation	31
4 Approbation	59
5 Frustration	100
6 Alienation	128
7 Conclusion	187
<i>Notes and References</i>	202
<i>Selected Bibliography</i>	318
<i>Index</i>	331

Preface

The story of Britain's relationship with the Yugoslav royalist resistance movement, formed under the leadership of Colonel Dragoljub (Draža) Mihailović in the late spring of 1941, is one of failed hopes and expectations, misunderstandings and double standards, in which terms such as betrayal, duplicity and deception have long been the common coinage of debate. Fuelled by the selective memories of those unfortunate enough to have found themselves involved in a struggle of almost unparalleled complexity and brutality, the mythologisation of the war in Yugoslavia has all but obscured any possibility of impartial analysis and arguably still prevents this. Indeed, this is probably even more the case in the Western world than it is within Yugoslavia itself, where following Tito's death in 1980 there was (at least until recently) a trend towards greater historical objectivity. This state of affairs is perhaps inevitable, given that the conventional interpretation of Anglo-Yugoslav wartime relations propagated by F. W. D. Deakin and others has only recently come under a sufficiently scholarly form of attack, but it has the unfortunate effect of rendering reasoned debate on the subject as difficult as ever. Despite this, the very attraction of studying Yugoslavia's wartime history remains that of attempting to unravel its multiple layers in pursuit of a truth which, since it is only comprehensible in terms of the sum total of human experience, can never in fact be attained. Conscious of this paradox, this work seeks instead to achieve the more modest aim of shedding further light on one important aspect of a subject which has caused great controversy in the past, and which will no doubt continue to do so in the future.

This book (which, as the endnotes alone will make blindingly obvious, has its origins in my PhD thesis) was originally conceived with far grander intentions; specifically, providing a detailed analysis of Britain's wartime relationship with both the Communist and non-Communist resistance movements which emerged in the wake of Yugoslavia's defeat by the Axis in April 1941. However, it proved impossible to achieve this objective within the space available without resorting to the kind of inaccurate generalisations which have characterised so many previous surveys of Yugoslavia's wartime history, and without ignoring a number of important

questions which have interested other writers. Consequently, although much of the basic research for the original project has been done, this material could not be incorporated in the present study. For similar reasons a large amount of background information, along with some documentary evidence, has been relegated to the endnotes. It was felt that while this material was indeed relevant to the period covered and ought to be included, to have done so within the body of the work itself would have made for too disjointed a final text; something which is especially true in view of the tangential nature of many questions which arise from any study of the war in Yugoslavia.

Lack of space precludes mention of all those who have helped with my research or motivated me to persist with my work to the bitter end. However, I would like to acknowledge the assistance of the staff of the Public Records Office, Kew, the library of the School of Slavonic and East European Studies, London University, and the Prince Consort's Army Library, Aldershot. In addition, I would wish to express my gratitude to the members of the Association of Serbian Chetniks in Great Britain, and especially to their secretary, Mr Ilija Preocanin. Although some of my conclusions will no doubt contradict their own, their friendship and hospitality, offered without conditions, has been much appreciated. Above all, however, I would like to thank my family, Marie, and my PhD supervisor, Mr Trevor Jones, for their great encouragement during the time that it took for this work to reach fruition. Like the British policy-makers themselves, on many occasions the enormous complexity of wartime events in Yugoslavia threatened to overwhelm me. Without their help, I would surely have succumbed to the temptation of giving up the struggle long ago.

SIMON TREW

List of Abbreviations

AD/3	SOE codename for Lord Glenconner (appointed head of MO4 August 1942)
A/H31	SOE codename for Draža Mihailović
AM	Air Ministry
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
C	Head of SIS; also sometimes used to refer to SIS itself
CD	Executive Director of SO 2/SOE
C-in-C	Commander in Chief
CIGS	Chief of the Imperial General Staff
COS	Chiefs of Staff
CPY	Communist Part of Yugoslavia (see also KPJ)
CSDIC	Combined Services Detailed Interrogation Centre
Section D	Office within SIS involved in sabotage and other subversive acts (est.1938)
DDMI (O)	Deputy Director of Military Intelligence (Operations)
DGFP	<i>Documents on German Foreign Policy</i>
D/H2	SOE codename for Colonel SW Bailey
DM	Draža Mihailović
DMI	Directorate/Director of Military Intelligence (War Office)
DMO	Directorate/Director of Military Operations (War Office)
DPA	Directorate of Propaganda and Agents, part of SOE Middle East (est. Aug 1941)
DSO	Directorate of Special Operations, part of SOE Middle East (est. Aug 1941)
DSO	Distinguished Service Order
DSO (BI)	Director of Special Operations, SOE
DSP	Directorate of Special Propaganda, part of SOE Middle East (est. Aug 1941)
EH	Electra House, body dealing with 'black' (subversive) propaganda (est. 1938)
FO	Foreign Office
FORD	Foreign Office Research Department
G(R)	Offshoot of MI(R) based in Middle East
GHQ ME	General Headquarters Middle East

GS(R)	War Office department (est. 1938) involved in study of guerrilla warfare (retitled MI(R) 1939)
HSS	<i>Hrvatska seljačka stanka</i> (Croat Peasant Party)
ISLD	Inter Services Liaison Detachment (cover name for SIS Cairo branch)
ISOS	British decrypts of <i>Abwehr</i> (German intelligence) signals
JIC	Joint Intelligence Committee
JPC	Joint Planning Committee
JPS	Joint Planning Staff
JVO	<i>Jugoslovenska vojska u Otadžbinu</i> (Yugoslav Army in the Homeland)
KPJ	<i>Komunistička partija Jugoslavije</i> (Communist Party of Yugoslavia)
HMG	His Majesty's Government
MEW	Ministry/Minister of Economic Warfare
MI3b	Section within War Office DMI dealing with Yugoslavia
MI5	British secret counter-intelligence service
MI6	See SIS
MI14	War Office military intelligence section dealing with structure and order of battle of German armed forces
MI(R)	Military Intelligence (Research); successor to GS(R)
MO4	Cover name for SOE Middle East headquarters
MOI	Ministry/Minister of Information
MOS	Minister of State
MSS	Most Secret Source (aka 'Ultra')
MV	Merchant Vessel
NDH	<i>Nezavisna Država Hrvatska</i> (Independent State of Croatia)
NKVD	<i>Narodnyi Komissariat Vnutrennikh Del</i> (People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs; Soviet counterpart to SOE/SIS).
OKW	<i>Oberkommando der Wehrmacht</i> ; (German) Armed Forces High Command
OSS	Office of Strategic Services (US counterpart to SOE/SIS)
PICME	Political Intelligence Centre Middle East
PID	Political Intelligence Department of the Foreign Office (pseudonym for PWE)
PM	Prime Minister
PPS	Personal Private Secretary
PWE	Political Warfare Executive
RAF	Royal Air Force
RJ	Red Jacket (closed FO files in Public Records Office, Kew)

RYG	Royal Yugoslav Government
SIS	Secret Intelligence Service (aka C or MI6)
SOE	Special Operations Executive (est July 1940)
SO 1	Part of SOE, based on EH
SO 2	Part of SOE, created by merger of Section D and MI(R)
SO 3	Part of SOE; planning section
TDM	<i>Trial of Draža Mihailović</i> (transcript)
TGMWC	<i>Trials of the German Major War Criminals</i> (transcript)
WCO	War Cabinet Office
WO	War Office
W/T	Wireless Telegraphy
Y1	PWE Croat propaganda station (aka 'Zrinski')
Y2	PWE Serb propaganda station (aka 'Šumadija')
Y3	PWE Slovene propaganda station (aka 'Triglav')
ZPT	Žarko Todorović

Map designed by Alison Cox

PARTITION OF YUGOSLAVIA 1941