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## **The Balkans in the Age of New Imperialism and Beyond**

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## US INFLUENCE ON THE OUTCOME OF THE CIVIL WAR IN YUGOSLAVIA 1941-1944

*Vojislav G. Pavlović*

*The White House, Washington, March 22, 1944*

*“Dear Bill (William Donovan),*

*I understand that the matter of sending intelligence officers into the area controlled by Mihailovic’s forces has been in discussion between your people and State Department. The situation as it now stands is that with withdrawal of the British mission, including our liaison officers who were connected with the mission in the Mihailovic’s territory, we have no sources of intelligence whatever in a part of the Balkans which may become an important area at some stage of the war.*

*I completely approve of the plan, which I understand you have proposed, and in which the State Department agrees that we should continue to obtain intelligence from that area, by sending in a new group only for that purpose.*

*In order that there should be no misunderstanding, it should be made clear to the British that, in accordance with the established policy and practice, we intend to exercise this freedom of action for obtaining independent American secret intelligence.”<sup>1</sup>*

A few weeks later President Roosevelt sent the following letter to British Prime Minister Winston Churchill:

*April 8, 1944*

*“My thought in authorizing an OSS mission to the Mihailovic area was to obtain intelligence and the mission was to have no political functions whatever.*

*In view however of your expressed opinion that there might be misunderstanding by our allies and others, I have directed that the contemplated mission be not, repeat not sent.”<sup>2</sup>*

In the light of the above correspondence, one is obliged to wonder who really directed American policy towards Yugoslavia. The widely accepted view,

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<sup>1</sup> Franklin Roosevelt to William Donovan, Washington 22.3.1944, President Secretary Files, box 153, Franklin Delano Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York.

<sup>2</sup> Roosevelt to Winston Churchill, Washington 8.3.1944, in F. L. Loewenheim, H. D. Langley, M. Jonas, *Roosevelt and Churchill, Their Secret Wartime Correspondence*, New York, 1990, p. 483.

in American as well as Yugoslav historiography, is that Churchill was the author of Allied war strategy for Yugoslavia. His influence on the work of the OSS, the US wartime intelligence agency, is of utmost importance, since intelligence reports from Yugoslavia were the basis for decisions that shaped that country's future. A thorough analysis of the activity of the OSS could give answers to the question of whether US policy makers were disinterested and uninformed or they deliberately left to the British Government the lead in deciding Allied strategy for Yugoslavia?

Our opinion is that Office of Strategic Services was, from the middle of 1943, quite well informed about the situation in Yugoslavia. Its reports were passed to higher circles of the Roosevelt Administration, including the President himself. The Roosevelt Administration was thus well aware of what was going on in Yugoslavia, but deliberately chose not to intervene. The British were permitted to believe that they were the authors of Allied policy towards Yugoslavia, but were given neither the means nor the chance to actively influence the outcome of the war in the country.

Only after the end of the war in Africa in November 1942 was the OSS able to form a precise picture of the situation in Yugoslavia. Nevertheless, its director, William Donovan, showed interest in Yugoslavia immediately after the USA entered the war. The Yugoslav minister in the USA, Constantin Fotitch, sent a formal demand to Donovan on January 26, 1942, asking the US Government to give twelve planes to Yugoslav aviators. The planes were intended to enable the Yugoslav Government to send supplies to the YAH (Yugoslav Army in the Homeland) in the country.<sup>3</sup> Encouraged by Fotitch, Donovan even proposed to organize a brigade from Yugoslav citizens living in the USA, equip it with arms and ammunition and, under a Yugoslav flag, send it to Yugoslavia.<sup>4</sup> Fotitch considered Donovan's project would give substantial moral support to the 50,000 men already fighting in Yugoslavia. On January 27 the project was proposed to the President, who concluded laconically:

*"I approve if you can clear it with State and War."*<sup>5</sup>

Donovan was forced to inform Fotitch that the State Department had refused the project, all available planes being needed for the war in Libya and Singapore. As a gesture of respect towards the YAH however, the US Government accepted seven Yugoslav aviators in the school for long-range bomber crews in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

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<sup>3</sup> L. Modisett, *The Four Cornered Triangle, British and American Policy towards Yugoslavia 1939-1945*, Unpublished PhD dissertation, Georgetown University, Washington 1981, p. 300.

<sup>4</sup> Donovan to Roosevelt, Washington 27.1.1942, roll 22, microfilm, M 1642, Record Group 226, National Archives, Washington (NAW).

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

Donovan was not discouraged by the negative response from the State Department, and tried to explore other ways of helping the Yugoslav resistance. He sent his representative Frank Mauran to Cairo to establish direct contact with Yugoslav Army commanders. In Cairo Mauran met General Borivoje Mirkovic, acting commander of Yugoslav forces, and the head of Yugoslav intelligence, Colonel Zarko Popovic. They agreed on ways in which American help should be sent to Yugoslavia, but the exact nature of their agreement remains still unclear. Fotitch asserts in his memoirs, that Mauran consented to send four planes with help for General Mihailovic to Cairo, where Yugoslav airmen would take over and, on a regular basis, transport supplies to Mihailovic. According to Fotitch, they also planned to send a group of American observers to Mihailovic's Headquarters.<sup>6</sup> In his report to Donovan of June 1, 1942 Mauran neither confirmed nor denied Fotitch's allegations. He concluded only that his agreement with Mirkovic could not be realized because Mirkovic and Popovic took part in an unsuccessful plot to overthrow the Yugoslav Government (the Cairo affair).<sup>7</sup>

Mauran's visit to Cairo was not altogether unfruitful, since he suggested that the OSS should send food to the YAH as a form of moral support. Each individual ration of concentrated food should be wrapped in the colours of the Yugoslav flag and include the following message from President Roosevelt:

*"Stand fast. Your friends will neither forget nor desert you."*<sup>8</sup>

However, this shipment of 416 tons of food never reached Yugoslavia. In August 1942, the British authorities in the Middle East suggested that the food was more urgently needed in Malta than in Yugoslavia. The US Joint Psychological Warfare Committee vehemently disagreed, nevertheless the food was instead distributed to the inhabitants of Malta during the winter of 1942/1943.<sup>9</sup>

Fotitch's pleas spurred another initiative for helping the YAH. On the basis of the agreement between Mauran and Mirkovic, Brigadier Walter Bedell-Smith, secretary of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, prepared a study of means of delivering help to the YAH. He suggested to Donovan a comprehensive program of diversions in the Balkans, with two main aims. First, to help the YAH under General Mihailovic. Second, to force the Germans to deploy more troops in the

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<sup>6</sup> C. Fotitch, *The War We Lost. Yugoslavia's Tragedy and the Failure of the West*, New York, 1948, p. 166-167.

<sup>7</sup> Franck Mauran to Donovan, Washington 1.6.1942, roll 45, microfilm M 1642, RG 226, NAW.

<sup>8</sup> Fotitch to Mauran, Washington 26.5.1942, Confidential papers 1942, box 209, M/40, The Washington legation, Archives of Yugoslavia (AY).

<sup>9</sup> Joint Psychological Warfare Committee to Joint US Staff Planners, Washington 4.8.1942. roll 14, microfilm 1642, RG 226, NAW.

Balkans so that fewer would be available for the spring offensive on the Russian front.<sup>10</sup>

Bedell-Smith thought that General Mihailovic, Yugoslav Minister of War, should be sent as much help as possible. As the head of the sole organized resistance movement in Europe, Mihailovic had received practically no help so far. By helping Mihailovic, thought Bedell-Smith, the USA would oblige Nazis to keep more troops in the Balkans.<sup>11</sup>

The main flaw of Bedell-Smith's project was his idea to organize an American operation with British supplies within a British theatre of operations. A long list of supplies, ranging from wireless sets to food, would have to come from already meagre British reserves in the Middle East. Even before the British could formally voice their disapproval, the project was abandoned because of Mirkovic's involvement in a tentative *coup d'État*.<sup>12</sup>

The Roosevelt Administration confirmed its support of YAH during the visit of King Peter II to the USA in June and July 1942. On June 24, 1942, President Roosevelt organized a formal dinner for the Yugoslav King, during which he publicly stated that the US Government would send all possible help to General Mihailovic. He asked King Peter to discuss the practical problems of sending American help to Yugoslavia with Donovan.<sup>13</sup> During talks with the director of the OSS, the Yugoslav King gave him the list of the supplies Mihailovic had received so far from the British Government. According to the list, compiled by Fotitch on the basis of information supplied by the Foreign Office, Mihailovic had received: five wireless sets, 68 machine guns, 888 hand grenades, 14,556 dollars, 4,474 500 Italian liras, 67,500 gold liras, 8,000 British pounds, 181 gold sovereigns, 5,000 napoleons and some ammunition, explosives, and medical equipment.<sup>14</sup>

Fotitch and Donovan continued their discussions after the King's departure. As a result of intense negotiations, the US Air Force agreed to train a group of 39 Yugoslav airmen, who were to form the first Yugoslav air squadron. Donovan personally facilitated the arrival of the Yugoslav airmen to the USA, but was unwilling to accept any responsibility for the creation of an independent Yugoslav air force. The US desire to help General Mihailovic was thus limited during 1942 to training Yugoslav air crews.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> W. B. Smith to Donovan, Washington, 26.3.1942, roll 3, microfilm 1642, RG 226, NAW.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> C. Fotitch, *The War We Lost*, p. 166-167; Mauran to Donovan, Washington, 1.6.1942, roll 45 microfilm 1642, RG 226, NAW.

<sup>13</sup> C. Fotitch, *The War We Lost*, p. 175-176.

<sup>14</sup> Donovan to Fotitch, Washington 6.10.1942, Confidential Papers 1942, box 209, M/40, The Washington legation, AY.

<sup>15</sup> Fotitch to Momcilo Nincic, Yugoslav Foreign Minister, Washington 21.10.1942, *ibid.*

Besides trying to organize the sending of supplies to Yugoslavia, the OSS and its director were particularly interested in obtaining information about the actual situation in the country. During 1942 the OSS accepted information supplied by Yugoslav Government sources and considered the Mihailovic movement to be the sole resistance movement in Yugoslavia. The first memo that spoke of Partisans, communist led resistance movement, coincided with a communist propaganda offensive against Mihailovic in the American left-wing press in December 1942. In a memorandum entitled: *Political Orientation of the Partisan Movement in Yugoslavia*, the Partisans were presented as best armed and best organized resistance movement in Yugoslavia.<sup>16</sup> The authors of the memo argued that the Partisans were not communists and that such allegations were the fruit of Yugoslav official propaganda. Since the OSS had no representatives in Yugoslavia, one wonders how the authors arrived at a such firm conclusion.

A second OSS memo entitled *A Summary of Differences between the Fighting Yugoslav Forces and Mihailovich's Followers*, dated April 5, 1943, contained the information, long before the State Department was notified, that the British Government was considering abandoning Mihailovic and giving its support to the Partisans. The only possible source of this kind of information was the British intelligence agency, the Special Operations Executive.

The authors of the memo concluded that the participation of Mihailovic in the Yugoslav Government explained his unpopularity in the country. They considered that the Partisans resented the Yugoslav Government propaganda broadcasts on the BBC, because they presented Mihailovic as the sole leader of the Yugoslav resistance forces. By failing to reach an understanding with the Soviet Government, the Yugoslav Government did not facilitate Mihailovic's task. Mihailovic consequently had enormous difficulties with the Partisans. The main reason for Soviet and partisan animosity towards Mihailovic, however, was of a political nature.

OSS analysts concluded that the Soviet Government believed that the main objective of Mihailovic's movement was to restore the monarchy in Yugoslavia. Since the Soviets considered that Mihailovic's policy could prevent the entry of Yugoslavia in their zone of influence, they orchestrated a propaganda offensive in the American press against him and the YAH. The Anti-Soviet remarks and general conduct of several Yugoslav politicians in exile, only strengthened Soviet opposition to Mihailovic. Another reason for the Soviet attitude was Mihailovic's strategy of waiting for the arrival of Allied forces before calling his followers to rise against the Nazis. Soviet support for the Partisans was considered normal in the OSS, since the Partisans were thought to be fighting constantly against the Nazis. Furthermore, the OSS

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<sup>16</sup> L. Modisett, *The Four Cornered Triangle*, p. 341.

accepted as true allegations that a number of Mihailovic's commanders were actively collaborating with the Italians. The authors of the memo concluded that Mihailovic must distance himself from both the Yugoslav Government and collaborators in his movement if he wished to be generally accepted as leader of the Yugoslav resistance. It was suggested also that the US and British Governments should consider helping the Partisans, to prevent them from becoming a tool of Soviet foreign policy.<sup>17</sup>

The conclusions of the OSS differed considerably from the position of the State Department. On the basis of much the same information, State Department did not question the utility of cooperation with Yugoslav Government in April 1943. The idea of sending aid only to the Partisans was not even considered.

The influence of left-wing propaganda on the OSS was perceptible in a memorandum by Alex Vuchinich entitled *The Mihailovich Myth*, written in May 1943. Since Vuchinich's memo has the character of a study of the political orientations of Mihailovic's movement, it is useful to shed some more light on its author. Before enlisting, Vuchinich and his brother Vojislav edited a journal called *Jugoslovensko-američki glasnik* at Berkeley. During the thirties they had taken part in the campaign against right wing government of Milan Stojadinovic in Yugoslavia. Generally, *Jugoslovensko-američki glasnik*, supported the antifascist and left-wing attitudes of the prewar student movement in Belgrade. After Vuchinich's departure, the journal followed the lead of *Slobodna reč*, the unofficial organ of the Yugoslav Communist Party in the USA. Regularly publishing virulent attacks on Mihailovic, *Jugoslovensko američki glasnik* played an active part in Soviet propaganda offensive the USA.

Nikola Mirkovic, a pre-war Yugoslav left-wing activist, who lived in the USA from 1939, left the following description of Vuchinich beliefs:

*"During the first days of confusion and struggle after the German invasion of Yugoslavia, a small group of younger intellectuals, Yugoslavs or of Yugoslav extraction, was formed at the University of California. They were in complete accord with political aspirations and the intellectual atmosphere in Yugoslavia during the dictatorship. I joined this group as soon as I arrived in July 1939. This friendship was of considerable benefit in our fierce struggle against the government clique in London and Mihailovic, and for the movement for national liberation in the country. The members of our group and our American friends later occupied important posts in the administration working on the issues related to Yugoslavia and the Balkans. They were therefore in a position to correctly interpret the democratic struggle of the Yugoslav nation and put an end to the poisonous influence of Srbobran and the Yugoslav embassy, which were trying with all their might to impose their interpretation on the*

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<sup>17</sup> OSS Memo, 5.4.1943, entry 144, box 97, file 1019, RG 226, NAW.

*administration and prominent Americans. This group of honest young men included: Aleksander Vuchinich, Vojislav Vuchinich, Aleksa Dragnich, Vincent Milisic, Djordje Markovic and a few others. In (Sava) Kosanovic, who arrived in September from Africa, I found the closest friend. He had recently come from Yugoslavia and we agreed in our general aspirations as well as in details. Of the others, I was that close only to Aleksander Vuchinich.*"<sup>18</sup>

To judge from Mirkovic's description, Vuchinich was not an impartial observer, but had become a supporter of the Partisans's cause even before entering the OSS. It is no wonder that his memo was written with the sole purpose of supporting the Partisans.

Vuchinich commenced his analysis by stating that the Yugoslav Government was discredited, because it was completely divided along national lines. Its members were following opposite but equally disastrous politics. Serbian politicians wanted the restoration of the prewar "dictatorial" regime. Vuchinich insisted this was a mere continuation of the personal regime of King Alexander, thus trying to prove to his American readers the unrepresentative character of the Yugoslav Government. On the other hand, their Croat colleagues, he stated, were the exponents of Croat separatism, whose goal was the creation of an independent Croat state. The biggest flaw of the Yugoslav Government was its support of Mihailovic. The sole fact that he was a member of the Government, for Vuchinich made it a part of Axis. Vuchinich did not consider it necessary to prove Mihailovic's collaboration, he took it as a well-established fact.

As opposed to the Yugoslav Government, Vuchinich claimed that the only democratic movement of resistance in Yugoslavia were the Partisans. Since he alleged that Mihailovic's forces fought with the Nazis against the Partisans, and since the official Yugoslav propaganda attacked the Partisans, he concluded that the main objective of the Yugoslav Government was to fight not Axis, but their political opponents, the Partisans. Vuchinich's thesis revealed that, alongside the Nazi occupation, a civil war was raging between the Partisans and Mihailovic in Yugoslavia.<sup>19</sup> Vuchinich, as an old sympathizer of the Yugoslav left, sought international recognition for the Partisan movement. He did not succeed, but one must keep in mind the existence of the Partisan sympathizers in the OSS.

Vuchinich's memo was not sent to the President because it did not represent the official position of the OSS. The OSS operations in Yugoslavia were, from March 1943, directed from Cairo. General Donovan established an OSS centre in Cairo and named Colonel Ellery C. Huntington its commander.

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<sup>18</sup> Mirkovic's memo, 1943, I-3-b/725, Archive of Memorial Center Josip Broz Tito, Belgrade.

<sup>19</sup> A. Vuchinich, *The Mihailovitch Myth*, entry 154, box 40, file 609, RG 226, NAW.



Before organizing any actions in the field, the OSS had to conclude an agreement with its British counterpart, the Special Operation Executive.

Allied forces in the Middle East and the Balkans were under the command of the British General Henry Maitland Wilson, who also controlled all intelligence operations in Yugoslavia. The OSS therefore had to accept the British lead in organizing operations in Yugoslavia. In July 1942 Donovan agreed with the Chief of Operations of SOE, Brigadier Colin Gubbins that the intelligence operations in Yugoslavia would be a British responsibility.<sup>20</sup> Only when the British Government decided to extend its support to the Partisans as well as to Mihailovic, was the OSS invited to send its officers in the country. Permanent undersecretary in the Foreign Office, Sir Orme Sargent, suggested to the American Ambassador in Britain, John Winnant, in the spring of 1943, the creation of a joint mission with the task of trying to unite the Yugoslav resistance movements.<sup>21</sup>

The State Department decided not to accept the British invitation. Cavendish Canon, the expert for Yugoslavia, thought it unwise to send American officers to Yugoslavia when relations between the British Government and Mihailovic were confused.<sup>22</sup> Donovan was not told about the British invitation. He was notified only in May 1943 that Ambassador Fotitch had suggested to the President the sending of an OSS mission to Mihailovic. Fotitch thought that this would be the best way to disprove the communist claims of Mihailovic's collaboration.

Donovan was very eager to accept Fotitch's suggestion. He notified the President on May 11 that two trained OSS officers were already en route to Cairo on the first leg of their journey to Yugoslavia. One was to go Mihailovic's Headquarters the other to the Partisans. Captains George Musulin and George Vuchinich duly arrived in Cairo on May 23, but they were obliged to postpone the last part of their trip. The SOE demanded that the OSS uses its cipher, but Donovan refused. Musulin and Vuchinich were left in Cairo until Gubbins and Donovan reached a new agreement.<sup>23</sup>

It was agreed in London on July 26, 1943, that all operations in Yugoslavia would be under the SOE's command in Cairo. OSS officers could go into Yugoslavia only as a part of the existing British missions. On the other hand the OSS was given the possibility to organize submissions and send independent missions to Romania and Hungary. The OSS had to agree to use British codes,

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<sup>20</sup> K. Ford, *OSS and the Yugoslav Resistance 1943-1945*, Austin, Texas, 1992, p. 12; A. C. Brown, *The Last Hero. Wild Bill Donovan*, New York, 1982, p. 236.

<sup>21</sup> John Winant to Cordell Hull, London 14.5.1943. *Foreign Relations of the US (FRUS)*, 1943, vol. III, p. 1007-1009.

<sup>22</sup> Memorandum of Cavendish Canon, Washington 17.5.1943. *FRUS* 1943, vol. III, p. 1009-1011.

<sup>23</sup> Donovan to Roosevelt, 11.5.1943, roll 23, microfilm 1642, RG 226, NAW; W. Roberts, *Tito, Mihailovic and The Allies 1941-1945*, New Jersey, 1973, p. 128.

and the existing SOE system of communications.<sup>24</sup> The second Donovan-Gubins agreement only confirmed the priority of British interests in the Balkans. Only after its conclusion the first OSS officers were sent to Yugoslavia. Lieutenant Walter R. Mansfield joined the British mission under Colonel William Bailey at Mihailovic's Headquarters on August 18. A few days later (22.8.1942) Captain Melvin O. Benson joined the mission led by Colonel William Deakin at the Partisan's Headquarters.<sup>25</sup>

### *1. The Balkan project of the OSS*

The arrival of American officers in Yugoslavia demonstrated that Donovan had great plans for Balkans. In August 1943 Donovan proposed to the Joint Chiefs of Staff a plan aimed at forcing Germany's Balkan satellites to withdraw from the war. The imminent capitulation of Italy and the withdrawal of its forces from the Balkans would prove to the elite's of the Balkan countries that the Axis was losing the war. They would be petrified by the possibility that, after the Allied victory, their countries could fall under exclusive Soviet influence, and this fear should be used for starting negotiations with those politicians in Budapest, Sofia, Bucharest and Zagreb who were not collaborating with the Axis. The objective of negotiations would be to induce them either to withdraw their country from the war, or to create serious difficulties for the Nazis.<sup>26</sup>

Donovan wanted to exploit the fear of Soviet domination, without giving any assurance to Balkan elite's that the USA would protect them from the Soviet Union. He demanded from Balkan statesman to cooperate with the Allies, even though he was ready to let the Soviet Union dominate the Balkans after the war. He was only proposing to intensify economic relations between the USA and those countries that agreed to oppose the Nazis. The OSS's immediate objective was to organize the following independent actions in the Balkans: 1) to create an independent intelligence network; 2) to establish contacts with existing resistance movements and create new ones where there were none; 3) to disrupt the Axis system of communications in the Balkans. Donovan presented his Balkan project in the form of a long memo consisting of: 1) an analysis of the political situation in the Balkans; 2) a report on the present situation; 3) an attempt at a sociological analysis of the Balkan societies.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Agreement between Donovan and Gubins, London 26.7.1943, entry 190, box 88/1, RG 226, NAW.

<sup>25</sup> K. Ford, *OSS and the Yugoslav Resistance 1943-1945*, p. 3-4.

<sup>26</sup> Donovan to Brigadier John Deane secretary of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Washington, 20.8.1943, entry 190, box 88/1, RG 226, NAW.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

Trying to describe the political situation in the Balkans, Donovan concluded that the Axis did not have the support of the Balkan nations. To keep the region under control they had to deploy large armies (31 Italian, and 18 German divisions). The Quisling governments stayed in power only because they had Axis support. The only exception was the Pavelic government, which was backed by a significant proportion of the Croats. Purely national interests motivated the actions of Balkan statesman. During the Axis occupation, collaboration served to protect the interests of their community. They also tried to profit from the situation and enlarge their territories at the expense of neighbouring nations that did not adapt as well. He concluded that the Balkan elite's did not collaborate with Axis out of belief. If the best interests of their nations demanded it, they would gladly cooperate with the Allies. On the other hand Donovan insisted, pro-Allied feelings were deeply rooted in the Balkans. There were also strong sympathies for Russia, although not for communism.

Donovan thought that the political situation was the consequence of long lasting policies of the Balkan elite's (government employees, officers, and liberal professions). He judged that their only objective was the preservation of the existing social order. American experts generally considered the political order in the Balkans as the barely concealed dictatorship of small elite's that manipulated democratic institutions in order to preserve their power and continue to exploit their co-nationals. Since all they cared for was their social position, Donovan thought fear of the Soviets would force them to seek Allied protection, once Nazis were unable to protect them anymore. This ruthless and simplified analysis of Balkan political situation revealed both unbridled confidence in the superiority of US democratic institutions and the naive tendency of the Roosevelt Administration to accept leftist explanations of the European situation.

Expecting that Balkan statesman would ask for guarantees that their cooperation with the Allies would not lead to communist domination of the region, Donovan wrote:

*"It is obvious that Great Britain and the United States cannot give such guarantees. We do not know Russia's present intentions regarding the future of the Balkans. We can assume, however, that they would not welcome any serious extension of Anglo-American influence in an area in which Russian Governments have long taken a very special interest.*

*A further assumption for the purpose of this survey is that it would not be feasible to send a military force of any considerable size to the Balkans at the present time.*

*The problem therefore is to plan measures which may help end the war in South-eastern Europe without the use of large Anglo-American forces, without long-term military or political commitments to Balkan states, and without antagonizing the Russian Government. Plans must be devised,*

*therefore, to bring about the defection of some or all of the Balkan states now collaborating with Axis, to induce these states to use their own military strength to attempt the isolation of the German army units in the Balkan and Aegean area, and to assist in the establishment of relatively stable non-communist but not anti-Russian Governments in the Balkans.*"<sup>28</sup>

As a first step in his Balkan project, Donovan suggested the establishment of contacts with influential members of governing circles in Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria and Croatia that were not tied with the Nazis. The representatives of these countries should be warned from the beginning that:

*"No commitments of any kind, express or implied, are to be given with respect to any post-war territorial readjustment. It is sufficient to emphasize that a nation, which sits at the peace conference on the side of the victors, can expect much better treatment than one on the side of the vanquished...*

*It can be pointed out that every nation which has joined the United States in the war against the Axis has qualified for 'lend-lease' facilities."*<sup>29</sup>

Donovan concluded the memo by expressing his firm belief that the Balkan project would force the Nazis to keep 18 divisions in the Balkans, disrupt their lines of communication in the region, and prevent them from exploiting its mineral and oil reserves. The biggest advantage of the project was that it did not require the use of American troops.

Before his project could be put into action, Donovan agreed that the Soviet Government should be consulted. He thought the Russians would endorse it because it would facilitate their westward advance. The political consequences of the arrival of Soviet troops in the Balkans did not trouble Donovan. Since the Soviet Government had signed the United Nations Charter, Donovan considered it had accepted the right of the Balkan nations to organize free and democratic elections after the war. Taking for granted that the Soviets would respect the freely expressed political will of the Balkan nations, Donovan believed his project would prevent social revolutions and make possible a lasting peace agreement in the Balkans. Donovan could utilize the fear of the Balkan elite's as he was persuaded that the Soviets would not change the existing social and political order within their zone of influence.

Fear of communism was for Donovan only a useful instrument in a psychological warfare. The only criterion for judging the democratic character of any government was the degree of its cooperation with the Allies. Since the Soviet Union had almost single-handedly fought the war in Europe, its interests and opinions were to be respected and its ideological perspective put aside.

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<sup>28</sup> OSS's Memo, *Operations in the Balkans after the Fall of Italy. Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

Donovan had a very low opinion of Balkan elite's because he believed that they more or less willingly collaborated with the Axis. Only the countries that fought against the Axis were American allies. Whether Balkan countries had democratic institutions and free economies, was, in itself, of much less importance.

Not only Donovan, but also the Roosevelt Administration generally, considered the Soviet alliance of utmost importance. The Policy Group of the State Department came to much the same conclusion as Donovan in its memo of September 1943. State Department experts led by Charles Bohlen, concluded that Soviet foreign policy followed two seemingly contradictory courses: 1) the determination to cooperate with the Western Allies on the basis of the principles contained in the Atlantic Charter; 2) the intention to act independently in Eastern Europe, following exclusively Soviet interests.

On the one hand, the Soviet Government had signed the United Nations Charter and the Alliance Treaty with the British Government (26.5.1942). In both documents it accepted formal obligation to cooperate in establishing a just and lasting peace settlement in Europe. Nevertheless, the Soviet Government never formally accepted the concept of collective security, or expressed its views on the post-war organization of Europe.

At the same time, the Soviet Government repeatedly insisted on few basic demands. It demanded that its frontiers of June 1941 be restored, including territories gained under the Nazi-Soviet pact. The Soviets were firmly opposed to creating any sort of confederations in Eastern Europe. They considered them as a new *cordon sanitaire*. State Department experts also noticed the tendency of Soviet diplomats to liberate themselves from commitments accepted at earlier stages of the war. The contours of an independent Soviet foreign policy, even opposed to American foreign policy, were seen mainly in Soviet actions in Eastern Europe. The break in relations with the Polish Government in exile and the creation of the Union of Polish Patriots in Moscow, suggested that Soviet Government wanted to have absolute control over Poland. The founding of the German National Committee in Moscow was another sign that, after the German defeat, the Soviets intended to dominate Eastern Europe.<sup>30</sup>

The State Department dismissed this scenario as exceedingly pessimistic and insufficiently founded. It was believed however, that the Soviet Government wanted to keep both options open. Therefore American diplomacy thought it had to persuade the Soviets that it was in their own interests to cooperate with the Western democracies. The US Chiefs of Staff also judged it indispensable to secure Soviet cooperation, since after the war, the Red Army would be in a position to dictate political changes and territorial settlements in Eastern Europe

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<sup>30</sup> "Memorandum Policy Group", *Present Trends of Soviet Foreign Policy*, Washington 18.9.1943, N. 4, Charley Notter Files, box. 119, RG 59, NAW.

and the Balkans. The USA was unable to prevent such a result, because it could not defeat Germany without Soviet help.<sup>31</sup>

The main problem for the Democratic Administration was whether the Soviets would agree to take part in the system of collective security, which President Roosevelt felt was the only way to secure a lasting peace. The concept of collective security was based principally on understanding between the great powers. All other problems, such as frontier settlements in Eastern Europe, were of much less importance and should be seen only in the perspective of reaching a global agreement with the Soviet Union. The Roosevelt Administration was ready to accept a dominant Soviet influence in Eastern Europe if the Soviet Government agreed to be part of the United Nations. The novelty of Roosevelt's concept of international organizations was that they established open zones of influence. US condoned the creation of a Soviet zone of influence in Eastern Europe, because it preserved means to influence the political and economic situation in the region through the United Nations. Even though the Soviets would have the dominant influence in the Eastern Europe they would not have the liberty to do whatever they pleased.

The State Department agreed that the Soviet Union had the right to demand that no hostile government should be permitted to take power in Eastern Europe. But the Soviet Government should not be allowed to install friendly governments all over Eastern Europe by force. In order to prevent both possibilities, American experts proposed a regional system of collective security guaranteed by the great powers. The Soviet Government could thus feel secure, while the political and economic freedom of the region was preserved. Direct Soviet influence would be felt only in problems related to the defence.<sup>32</sup>

Donovan's intention to use fear of communism to force the Balkan countries to free themselves from the Axis is understandable in the context of America's overall policy towards the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union had agreed that the Roosevelt Administration should dictate Allied policy in areas of vital interest for the USA, such as: South America, South East Asia, and Western Europe. Therefore it was of primordial importance to prevent a quarrel over Eastern Europe ruining the prospects for reaching a global agreement with the Soviet Union.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff approved Donovan's Balkan project on September 7, 1943, but demanded that the State Department and the Soviet Government be notified before it was put into action. Donovan was also warned

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<sup>31</sup> M. Matloff, *Strategical Planning for Coalition Warfare 1943-1944*, I, Washington, 1959, p. 292-293.

<sup>32</sup> "Memorandum Policy Group": *Some Suggestion for Determination Future Bases of Soviet-American Relations*, N. 17, Washington 23.9.1943, Charley Notter Files, box 119, RG 59, NAW; Memorandum Policy Group: *Soviet Attitude on Regional Organisations in Eastern Europe*, No. 14, Washington 23.9.1943, *ibid*.

that the OSS should not take part in any operations in the Balkans that might involve the USA politically. The sole purpose of OSS operations must be the common fight against the Axis. Firm instructions were also issued to Donovan to choose between the resistance forces on the basis of their contribution to the common struggle, and not their political orientation.<sup>33</sup>

The Joint Chiefs of Staff and Donovan agreed that the OSS should not get involved in the Yugoslav civil war or any other conflict of a political nature in the Balkans. Since the British Government had already established contact with the Partisans, the Yugoslav Government in exile and general Mihailovic had lost their last hope that the Western democracies would try to influence the outcome of the civil war in Yugoslavia. Inasmuch as the Soviet Government gave full diplomatic and propaganda support to the Partisans, they were in a much better position.

After Donovan's Balkan project had been approved, a group of OSS, experts including Alexander and Vojislav Vuchinich, wrote an implementation study for Yugoslavia.<sup>34</sup> They wanted to define clearly the objectives of the project and ways to achieve them. They commenced by stating that the potential of Yugoslav resistance was indisputably great, but the civil war between the Partisans and Mihailovic's forces was preventing them to make full use of it. The first objective must be to reach an agreement between two rival resistance movements. In order to do this the OSS experts first analysed their organization, strategy and political orientation.

The Partisans, or the Army of National Liberation, according to the OSS, were concentrated in Slovenia, Lika, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Dalmatia and Montenegro. Their leader was Josip Broz Tito, who commanded a small army of 25,000 men, mostly Serbs. The Partisans claimed that they were democrats, even though communists occupied important positions in their movement. The OSS's experts concluded that:

*"The Partisans profess adherence to democratic principles. There are undoubtedly a number of communists in positions of influence within their organization. However, the majority of Partisans are not communists and many are conservative. The term "communism" in Yugoslavia, about which the Serb peasant has only the vaguest notions, has come to mean opposition to monarchy. In that sense, there might be many Partisans who are communists but probably only a very small percentage of Partisans espouse Marxist communism. The Partisan leaders have stated that they do not favour extensive political and economic changes. However, the extremists among them would*

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<sup>33</sup> John Deane to Donovan, Washington 7.9.1943, roll 131, microfilm 1642, RG 226, NAW.

<sup>34</sup> Lieutenant Commander K. W. Hinks to Colonel A. H. Othank, *Implementation Study for a Special Military Plan for Psychological Warfare in Balkans (Yugoslavia)*, Washington 7.9.1943, roll 131, microfilm 1642, RG 226, NAW.

*probably exploit a favourable opportunity to impose a radical program upon Yugoslavia".*<sup>35</sup>

Therefore, the OSS concluded that the Partisan movement was a leftist coalition formed from different social strata.

The King and his Government were represented in the country by general Mihailovic, the Minister of War, who commanded the 20,000 strong Yugoslav Army in the Homeland. The YAH was led by commissioned officers and had the structure of a regular army, divided in corps all over Serbia and Sanjak.

For the OSS the Yugoslav civil war was the consequence of opposing visions of the postwar political order of the rival resistance movements. The Partisans and a large part of Yugoslav population were against the restoration of the "*authoritarian monarchy*", and were thus political adversaries of the Yugoslav Government. Mihailovic, as the King's minister fought for the return of the King to the country and the restoration of the pre-war political and social order.

The authors of the memo accepted as true the Partisans view of the situation in Yugoslavia. They did not believe that the Partisans had alienated the population by trying to organize a communist revolution.<sup>36</sup> But, they thought that a number of Mihailovic's commanders had collaborated with the Italians, who supplied them with arms, munitions and supplies.

Authors of the implementation study for Yugoslavia repeated the accusations against Mihailovic first made by Alexander Vuchinich:

*"It is charged by some of his critics that Mihailovic is cooperating with certain prominent Serbs in exile, some of them in the Government in exile, who advocate a return to the 'old days' and wish to have a strong army formed under Mihailovic not to fight the enemy but to prevent social change and restore order in Yugoslavia. This Army would make it possible for King Peter II and the Government to return as soon as the Axis is defeated."*<sup>37</sup>

Once again, the US intelligence agency endorsed clearly pro-partisan views of the situation in Yugoslavia. Its experts even stated that the Yugoslav Government accused the Partisans of being communists, only because they were against the restoration of monarchy in Yugoslavia.

It is difficult to see how a legally elected government could do anything else but to try to restore the pre-war political order. For that purpose, it was

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<sup>35</sup> OSS Planning group 49/1, *Special Military Plan for Psychological Warfare in the Balkans (Yugoslavia)*, Washington 25.9.1943, *ibid*.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid*.



normal to use the troops under the Yugoslav Minister of War. According to the OSS experts, the Yugoslav Government should not even try to regain its constitutional position. Such reasoning demonstrates how thin the line was separating the proclaimed desire not to intervene in the Yugoslav civil war from reports that implicitly forced their readers to take sides. Trying to be impartial, the OSS experts treated the Yugoslav Royal Government, formed by representatives of the largest political parties in the country, and a resistance movement of uncertain importance and political orientation, as equals. The formally neutral position of the OSS was thus transformed into unofficial support for the Partisans because the OSS experts on the basis of unverified information believed that the Partisans expressed the political will of the majority of the Yugoslav population.

A Yugoslav Section was created in the OSS centre in Cairo and given the task of accomplishing Donovan's Balkan project. The principal task of the Yugoslav Section was to help the development of resistance movements in Yugoslavia. Qualified staff was brought from the USA to work in its three sections: Special Operations, Intelligence, and Psychological Warfare. The Special Operations Department was supposed to disrupt communication lines with Germany, and prevent the Nazis from exploiting the Bor copper mines. The Intelligence Department was ordered to gather information about the Axis order of battle in Yugoslavia and industrial plants of strategic importance, such as the led mines in Trepca, and the Ikarus aircraft parts factory in Zemun.<sup>38</sup>

After the OSS Planning Group had approved the implementation study for Yugoslavia, Donovan personally made some changes. He issued instructions that the new OSS base should be established in Italy, from where an OSS intelligence network in Yugoslavia could be organized and Axis lines of communications sabotaged.<sup>39</sup>

OSS Balkan project was then sent for approval to Allied commanding officer in the Mediterranean theatre. It was proposed that over 120 OSS men be sent to both resistance groups in order to try to unite them in the common fight against the Axis. The OSS also planned to send supplies, arms and ammunition to both movements. Besides helping the Yugoslav resistance, OSS demanded the permission to send special intelligence missions in Yugoslavia. They were supposed to send data on Axis troops in Yugoslavia, as well as on Yugoslav resistance. It was hoped that Yugoslavia could be the base from where the OSS missions could be sent to Hungary, Rumania, Bulgaria, and even to Austria.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> Donovan to Rodgers, Washington 27.10.1943, roll 131, microfilm 1642, RG 226, NAW.

<sup>40</sup> Over-all Program for Strategic Services Operations in the Balkans based in Cairo, Egypt, Washington 9.11.1943, *Ibid.*

After such a long and tedious journey through labyrinth of American Administration and Allied chain of command, Donovan's Balkan project was surpassed by events. Edward Buxton, Donovan's deputy demanded in November that Lynn Farish, the first American officer who visited Partisan's headquarters, reads and comments the project.<sup>41</sup> After another delay, the project arrived in Cairo at the beginning of January 1944. Head of OSS Cairo, Colonel John Tulmin judged the project as unfeasible. The situation in Yugoslavia changed dramatically since it was made. Following the British lead, OSS was in the process of abandoning all contact with Mihailovic. At the beginning of February 1944, only one officer was left at Mihailovic headquarters. In the meantime the Partisans have gained the status of an Allied army, and demanded to be treated as such. They were willing to accept only American officers who would coordinate the arrival of supplies.

Therefore, the first objective of the project, uniting of the resistance movements was unfeasible. The second, the disruption of Axis communication, was more a process than a state of affairs. In guerrilla warfare, Tulmin tried to explain to his superiors, communication was constantly sabotaged and repaired. His judgment of the Donovan Balkan project Tulmin summarized saying:

*"The mission suggested in the over-all Program constitute an excellent framework against which to examine our activities so that we may be assured that the facilities of this office are being used to the best advantage".<sup>42</sup>*

In the end, Balkan project was considered more as a set of general instructions, then as comprehensive plan of the OSS activities in the Balkans. Nevertheless, it shows clearly the objectives of American policy towards Yugoslavia. First of all, the Partisans were increasingly becoming the focus of American attention. At first only pro-partisan lobby paid attention to their activities, then at the beginning of 1944, the OSS as a whole centred its attention on communist led movement in Yugoslavia. This was the consequence of the decision taken at Teheran Conference.

## 2. *The Teheran Conference*

Before the Roosevelt Administration decided to give its support only to Partisans, the OSS reports were carefully evaluated, and the importance of Yugoslavia for Allied plans in Mediterranean carefully analysed. The situation in Mediterranean changed dramatically after the capitulation of Italy. For British

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<sup>41</sup> Buxton to Colonel A. H. Othank, Secretary of the OSS Planning Group, Washington 9.11.1943, *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> Memorandum from OSS Cairo concerning Over-all Program for Strategic Services in the Balkans based in Cairo, Egypt, Cairo 31.1.1944, *ibid.*

Prime Minister it proved his Mediterranean strategy was right. Therefore, he had once again put the plans for further offensive in the Mediterranean on the agenda of the Allied Combined Chiefs of Staff. As far as Yugoslavia was concerned, he immediately sent a new British mission in the country headed by his personal representative Brigadier Fitzroy Maclean. Since after the landing of Allied forces in Italy the importance of Yugoslavia increased considerably, he wanted the mission to have a political and not only military character. Maclean, who spent several years in British embassy in Moscow, was ideally suited for the job. He was immediately promoted to the rank of brigadier, and was given direct access to Churchill.<sup>43</sup> He arrived in Yugoslavia on September 19, 1943, with Major Lynn Farish as the American representative.

In Washington, Churchill at the same time tried to persuade the Joint Chiefs of Staff to pursue the strategic initiative gained by the capitulation of Italy. He suggested organizing an amphibious landing in Dalmatia, with the help of Yugoslav resistance. As an alternative he proposed an Allied landing on Dodecanese islands after the retreat of Italians. In fact, he suggested a comprehensive plan of offensive for the Balkans that included air raids of Ploesti oil fields from the airstrips at Rhodes. He believed that the presence of Allied troops in the Aegean would induce the Turks to enter the war on the side of Allies. The untold objective of his plan was the invasion of Balkans from its most southern point.

The future of the two rival resistance movements in Yugoslavia depended on the choice the Allies would make between two alternative plans Churchill proposed. If the Allied forces commenced their offensive in the Balkans with the landing in Dodecanese islands, their advancement would lead them inevitably through Central Serbia mostly controlled by Mihailovic's forces. On the other hand if they organized only the amphibious landing in Dalmatia, they would need the help of Partisans who controlled the hinterland. Before a decision on the course of Allied offensive in the Balkans could be taken, missions were sent to Mihailovic and to Partisans Headquarters to gather necessary information on the strength and organization of both resistance movements. Fitzroy Maclean led the mission to Partisans and Brigadier Armstrong, with Lieutenant Colonel Albert Seitz as it's the American member, the mission to Mihailovic.

The decision to undertake an offensive in the Balkans was largely contingent on the outcome of the Allied campaign in Italy. The US Joint Chiefs of Staffs were generally against any kind of offensive in the Balkans, and especially before the Allied armies achieved the objectives in Italy defined at Quebec Conference. At Quebec it was agreed that the first objective was to throw Italy out of the war. That being done, the US planners wanted to tie down in Italy as

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<sup>43</sup> Eden and Churchill to General Wilson, London August 1943, PREM 3/510/9, PRO (Public Record Office).

many Axis armies as possible in order to facilitate the landing in Northern France. An offensive in Balkans could only lessen the Allied pressure in Italy, and disperse Allied forces. The troops for the Balkans could only come from Italy, and thus prevent the build-up of troops in England. Therefore, the US Chief of Staff General George Marshall concluded that the idea of landing in Dalmatia must be abandoned.<sup>44</sup>

At the meeting of the US and British General Staffs with Roosevelt and Churchill, held in Washington in September 1943 was decided only that the Allies should proceed with offensive in Italy with the objective of establishing the front in Northern Italy. Roosevelt thought that operations in the Balkans could be organized only in particularly favourable circumstances. In the meantime, Allies could only try to increase the aid sent to Yugoslav resistance, if possibly through Dalmatian ports.<sup>45</sup> This was immediately done, as we have seen during operation Audrey.

Even while the negotiations took place in Washington, British army actualized the alternative Balkan strategy by conquering the island of Cos, Samos and Leros. Since British troops were unable to defend those islands, let alone organize further offensive, the Dodecanese plan had to be considered once again. General Eisenhower believed that further offensive in the Aegean was impossible, because it would weaken the Allied armies in Italy, and unable them to proceed with offensive. The reaction of the Nazi high command obliged the Allies to modify their plans. The Nazis reoccupied the islands in the Dodecanese, and demonstrated their intention to form and defend a line of defence south of Rome.

Generals Eisenhower and Wilson, during their meeting in Tunis on October 9, 1943, had to decide whether to concentrate all their forces for the liberation of the island of Rhodes, or to proceed with offensive in Italy in order to capture Rome. Unanimously they decided that Rome was the objective of greater strategic importance. British Prime Minister was notified that his Aegean plan must be definitely abandoned.<sup>46</sup>

Even though both Churchill plans for Balkans have been abandoned, the decision of Allied Staffs had enormous consequences for the destiny of both Yugoslav resistance movements. The Aegean plan was definitely abandoned, and thus the territories controlled by Mihailovic's forces in Morava valley, lost their strategic importance. On the other hand, although the Allies abandoned the idea of landing in Dalmatia, they still planned to established contacts and supply the Yugoslav resistance movements through Dalmatian ports. In that way the Partisans, who controlled the Dalmatian hinterland, were in the position to

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<sup>44</sup> M. Matloff, *Strategical Planning for Coalition Warfare 1943-1944*, p. 252.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 253.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 258.

establish contact and receive supplies from Allies. The contacts established in the fall of 1943 enormously influenced the attitude of Allies towards resistance movements in Yugoslavia in favour of Partisans.

The OSS reports had also considerable influence on the outcome of the civil war in Yugoslavia. Based on the intelligence reports it was decided how to incorporate plans for particular country in the general framework of Allied strategy. From September 1943, Donovan regularly sent to the President estimates of the situation in Yugoslavia. They presented the situation in Yugoslavia as clearly favourable for Partisans. Donovan reported to Roosevelt on the October 28 that the Partisans were present all over Yugoslavia except in Macedonia and Serbia. Mihailovic had only 15,000 men in Serbia. The Partisans had the popular support, which they intended to use to found a democratic and federal Yugoslavia. Donovan did not believe that Partisans were led by communists, but he considered the Yugoslav King and his Government as highly unpopular in the country. In the conclusion of his report Donovan stated that the Serbs disliked the Americans as reactionaries, whereas the Americans were very popular among other Yugoslav nations. Since Donovan did not disclose the sources on which his report was based, one wonders how such firm conclusion reached.<sup>47</sup>

Further Donovan estimates were based on reports of the OSS officers from Yugoslavia. At the beginning of November Donovan notified the President about the first two Huot's trips to Dalmatia.<sup>48</sup> As we have seen on his third trip Huot brought Major Lynn Farish back to Bari, where on October 29 he wrote a comprehensive report about the Partisans. It is generally assumed in American and Yugoslav historiography, that Farish's reports influenced Roosevelt's attitude towards Yugoslavia at the Teheran Conference.

Before leaving for Middle East the President officially delivered airplanes to Yugoslav airmen, who have just finished their training in the USA. On that occasion he spoke for the last time with Fotitch. The Yugoslav Ambassador advocated the creation of a new Salonika front, even against the advice of American and British staffs. The President replied that the Allied landing in Europe is a military problem and will be treated as such. However, he added that he considered the policy of zones of influence as unacceptable, since it necessarily led to new wars.<sup>49</sup> Fotitch concluded that the Allies would not organize the landing in the Balkans for political reasons only, but they would not allow the Soviets to create their zone of influence in Eastern Europe.

Such were the President's views on Yugoslavia when he received Farish's report on the eve of his departure for Teheran. Farish wrote his report based on

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<sup>47</sup> Donovan to Roosevelt, Washington 28.10.1943, PSF, box 153, Roosevelt's Library, Hyde Park.

<sup>48</sup> Donovan to Roosevelt, Washington 1.11. 1943, roll 23, microfilm 1642, RG 226, NAW.

<sup>49</sup> C. Fotitch, *The War We Lost*, p. 215.

experience he gathered while trying to build an airport in the town of Livno. Maclean sent him there to get him out of the Partisans Headquarters. Since he did not know the language, and he had no one to translate for him, he could not learn much about his hosts. Nevertheless, after only forty days he wrote his report saying firmly that the future in Yugoslavia undoubtedly belongs to Partisans. He insisted that the Partisans were more numerous and better organized than it was generally known outside Yugoslavia. The movement was started and led by communists but it did not have communist character. However the communists in their ranks tried to influence the post-war future of Yugoslavia. Its biggest quality was its continuous struggle against the Axis. On the other hand, Farish believed that Mihailovic was more interested in fighting the Partisans than the Nazis. Therefore, his contribution to the Allied war effort was negligible. Evidently influenced by Partisan's propaganda, Farish stated that they had 18 divisions with a total of 180,000 men. He concluded his report by saying that the Partisans were the most important resistance movement in Yugoslavia, and that they deserve every help the Allies could give them. He was impressed also by the political structure of their movement. He considered it as a completely new political form that provided the framework for the cooperation of all Yugoslav ethnic groups. Farish even thought, it could become a model for all Eastern and Central European countries. Although he had no doubts about the importance of the Partisans movement, Farish advised his superiors to compare his conclusions with those of OSS officers who were sent to Mihailovic's Headquarters.<sup>50</sup>

Lieutenant Colonel Albert Seitz wrote his report at the same time as Farish, but it reached Washington much later. Due to misunderstandings with the British head of the mission, Brigadier Armstrong, Seitz's reports written on October 25 arrived in Cairo on November 7 and in Washington only after Roosevelt's departure on November 22. He noted that Mihailovic's forces were present only in Serbia, but he could not judge exactly their strength. His troops were formed from peasants, who were firmly tied to their villages, thus his units were not mobile, and they suffered enormously from the Axis reprisals. Mihailovic's troops lacked arms and ammunition, and the communications between the units were very bad. The savage reprisals of Nazis, Ustashis and Bulgars, forced Mihailovic to be inactive until the capitulation of Italy. Then his troops took the towns of Kolasin, Prijepolje, Berane, Bijelo Polje, Priboj, Visegrad and Rogatica. Lately his actions were less numerous, since Mihailovic wanted to coordinate his operations with the Allies plans.

Seitz confirmed that Mihailovic considered himself as the only representative of the constitutional Government of Yugoslavia, and as such he fought the Partisans because they wanted to overthrow it. He witnessed actual

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<sup>50</sup> Farish to Huot, Bari 29.10.1043, 860H.01/644, RG 59, NAW.

fighters in the towns of Prijepolje, Bijelo Polje, Kolasin and Gacko, where the Partisans took the towns only after Mihailovic's forces had left them. He also noticed that the relations between Mihailovic and the British were very tense. The British demanded that he limit his operations on the eastern parts of the country and to cease all attacks on Partisans, but he refused. Seitz personally believed that the only way to obtain Mihailovic's cooperation was to increase dramatically the quantity of supplies sent to him. He proposed to make a thorough inspection of Mihailovic's troops, and then to come out of the country to submit his report.<sup>51</sup>

Comparing Farish and Seitz reports one first notices the difference in tone. Farish wholeheartedly supports the Partisans, while Seitz tries to give an impartial and objective view. Nevertheless, according to both reports Mihailovic's forces were concentrated in Serbia. The difference between them was the consequence of intensive propaganda work of Partisans. They had, as we have seen from Huot's experience, ready answers on all questions. The identical political views and the same number of Partisan's troops were given first to Huot, and then to Farish. Seitz had no information of that kind, but he had personally seen Mihailovic forces fight, and he was able to make his own conclusions. His estimates were thus much vaguer which was more natural in guerrilla warfare.

The OSS sent to the President, while he was still in Washington, first the memorandum written by pro-partisan analysts in the OSS and then the Farish report. Only in Cairo Donovan included Seitz's conclusions in a comprehensive report about Yugoslavia that he sent to the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The Chiefs of Staff and the President thus had all available information from Yugoslavia, even though they could study Farish report at length, whereas only in Cairo they could read the excerpts from the Seitz report.<sup>52</sup>

The situation in Yugoslavia was analysed in Cairo with special attention to the advancement of Soviet armies. The Red Army was approaching the Rumanian frontier, and thus a whole range of political and military problems had to be discussed. The Joint Chiefs of Staff believed that the Red Army would control all of Eastern and Central Europe after the defeat of the Nazis. There was no way the American Army could prevent such an outcome of the war, since the victory was impossible without the Soviets contribution. The US Chiefs of Staff then decided to concentrate their attention on achieving a complete cooperation with the Soviet Army in order to shorten the war. President even thought that the American Army should intervene in the Balkans if the Soviets demanded it.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Seitz to OSS Headquarters, 25.10.1943, entry 144, box 97, file 1019, RG 226, NAW.

<sup>52</sup> Donovan to Joint Chiefs of Staff, Cairo, 26.11.1943, entry 146, box 63, file 860, RG 226, NAW.

<sup>53</sup> M. Matloff, *Strategical Planning for Coalition Warfare 1943-1944*, p. 292-293, 343-344.

During the first day of the Teheran Conference Roosevelt proposed a joint Allied action with Partisans in northern Yugoslavia, with the goal of helping the Soviet offensive in Rumania. Churchill agreed, but Stalin was against. The Soviet Union wanted the second front in France not in the Balkans. The Soviets considered all operations, which were not tied with the landing in Northern France as the waste of troops and of valuable time.<sup>54</sup> The fate of Yugoslavia was sealed when two biggest armies agreed that there would be no Allied landing in Yugoslavia. Their agreement was based on the assumption that Yugoslavia would be a part of Soviet zone of influence. Roosevelt was prepared to accept the creation of Soviet zone of influence, if that was the price to pay for a global agreement with the Soviets. Consequently, it was natural that only the Soviets protégés were considered as Allies in Yugoslavia. All further decisions about Yugoslavia had to take into considerations first Soviet interests.

The final declarations of Teheran Conference confirmed the Partisans as the only resistance movement in Yugoslavia that would receive Allied help. This decision was clearly politically motivated. President Roosevelt expressed his views about Yugoslavia in Cairo, when he told the American ambassador at Yugoslav court, Lincoln Macveagh:

*“Mihailovic (President said) is acting in concert with Germans, to same extent at least, and Tito is not; therefore, we shall support Tito. I asked whether he could be sure of his information in this matter he said ‘no’, but it is the best information we can get, and we must act on it. The truth is that in regard to the guerrilla resistance in both Greece and Yugoslavia, the allied policy has been - and has had to be, - purely opportunist. We are out to defeat the Germans and must use what instruments we can find to hand. If they fail us we must switch and try others. ... The President said that his idea of the best way to handle Yugoslavia and Greece would be to put wall around them and let those inside to fight it out, and report when all was over who was top dog.”<sup>55</sup>*

The success of Partisans was primarily a consequence of the creation of the Soviet zone of influence. It is also true that the Partisans had a very effective propaganda, and the centralized structure that permitted them to react faster and more resolutely. The Partisans asked Captain Benson and Lieutenant Colonel William Deakin to assist at the ceremony of capitulation of the Italian division in Split, whereas Colonel Bailey demanded that he personally accept the capitulation of the Italian division in the town of Berane. Partisans succeed in disarming the Italians, but Bailey did not, and the Italians in Berane were disarmed only after the arrival of Partisans. The Partisans had no obligations

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<sup>54</sup> First Plenary Meeting, November 28, 1943, of Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin in Teheran, FRUS, The Conferences at Cairo and Teheran, p. 493-496.

<sup>55</sup> J. O. Iatrides, *Ambassador Mac Veagh Reports*, Princeton, 1973, p. 397.



towards Allies, whereas Mihailovic and his Government depended on their political support. Undoubtedly Partisans were able to disarm Italians all over Dalmatia, and to control for several weeks the coast, before the Nazis arrived. Mihailovic troops at the same time had considerable problems in disarming Italians in Sanjak and Eastern Bosnia.

### *3. The OSS missions in Yugoslavia*

The result of the decision taken in Teheran to send all supplies only to Partisans was that all Allied officers at Mihailovic Headquarters were advised to cross over to Partisans. Seitz, Mansfield and Musulin, OSS officers at Mihailovic's Headquarters were informed at the end of December. Since, they had just finished their two months tour of Mihailovic's troops, Seitz and Mansfield decided to leave the county and file in their reports. Mansfield arrived in Bari at February 14th and Seitz a month later, on March 15.<sup>56</sup>

Seeing that Partisans were the most important resistance group, a new Allied mission was sent to Broz Headquarters. Major Farish and Lieutenant Eli Popovich as its American members arrived in Bosanski Petrovac on January 17. At the middle of January, the OSS had one officer with Mihailovic, George Musulin, and several with Partisans. Besides Farish and Popovich, Lieutenant James Goodwin was also a member of Allied mission headed by Brigadier Maclean. Captain George Selvig was already at Broz Headquarters, while Lieutenant George Vuchinich was sent to Slovenia at the end of November 1943.

First independent intelligence OSS mission headed by Lieutenant Colonel Richard Weill arrived at Partisans Headquarters on February 27 1944. Although he left Yugoslavia on March 19, his report arrived in Washington approximately at the same time as Seitz's and Mansfield's. On the basis of these three reports the OSS could form a clear picture of the situation in Yugoslavia.<sup>57</sup>

Before trying to compare their conclusions, one must keep in mind that their authors were not in the same situation when they wrote them. Seitz and Mansfield spent several months visiting Mihailovic's troops in Serbia, while Weill wrote his report after spending three weeks at Broz Headquarters. On his way out of Yugoslavia, Seitz spent a month with Partisans thus he was in a position to compare the organization of the two resistance movements. Weill had few contacts with Partisans units other than the General Staff, and he never met Mihailovic troops. Since none of the three officers spoke the language, they had to use the services of local interpreters. However, while Seitz and Mansfield

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<sup>56</sup>K. Ford, *OSS and the Yugoslav Resistance 1943-1945*, p. 38-39, 44-45.

<sup>57</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 60-63.

could go where they pleased, Weill's interpreter along with other Partisans, did his best to control Weill's movements.

The first important issue they noted in their reports was the numerical strength of both movements. Mihailovic told Mansfield that his movement had 57,440 men under arms at the end of 1943, another 169,900 could be mobilized in the age of 18 to 40, and 58,520 over 55 years of age. Mansfield personally estimated that Mihailovic commanded over 35,000 men.<sup>58</sup> He personally saw 10,345 men in the regions he visited that represented only a quart of territory Mihailovic's troops controlled. Based on his personal experience, Seitz estimated that the potential strength of Mihailovic forces was 325,000 men.<sup>59</sup> Weill estimated that the Partisans units were 300,000 men strong. Broz told him that they could easily mobilize another 200,000. Weill considered this to be untrue, since he already noticed an important percentage of woman and children in the Partisans units.<sup>60</sup> While he was with the Partisans Second Corps, its commandant Peko Dapcevic told Seitz that Partizans had 180,000 men under arms. He could not verify that figure, but he concluded that although Dapcevic told him that Second Corps had 25,000 fighting men, Seitz saw only 15,000.<sup>61</sup> The difference in numbers was accounted for by unreliable troops that consisted of ideological adversaries, mobilized by force.

Seitz and Weill estimates of the numerical strength of two movements were practically identical. The difference was that Weill accepted Broz's figures about 300,000 Partisan's men under arms as true, while Seitz estimated the potential strength of Mihailovic units at 325,000 men.

Seitz showed that Partisans figures were completely unreliable, and since Weill was not in the position to verify Broz figure, it could also be taken only as estimation. It is evident that the Partisans had good reasons to increase the number of their troops, since they could then ask for proportionally more supplies. Seitz conclusion passed completely unnoticed, although he spent more than five months in Yugoslavia, while Weill's conclusions draw attention of the complete Administration. The political decision to give all aid only to Partisans assured widest circulation to reports that justified it. Although Mansfield and Seitz's reports proved the important military potential of Mihailovic's movement, the same political decision made their conclusions completely irrelevant. Therefore, the potential of Mihailovic units was left unused, because the Allies did not want to send them arms and ammunition.

The structure of the two movements drew particular attention of the OSS officers. Seitz and Mansfield thought that the officers at the Mihailovic's

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<sup>58</sup> Mansfield's report, 1.3.1944, roll 132, microfilm 1642, RG 226, NAW.

<sup>59</sup> Seitz's report, 5.5.1944, roll 132, microfilm 1642, RG 226, NAW.

<sup>60</sup> Weils' report, 27.4.1944, roll 131, microfilm 1642, RG 226, NAW.

<sup>61</sup> Seitz's report.

General Staff were of poor quality. On the other hand, the officers who commanded the units smaller than corps were competent, and led their units well. Commissioned officers commanded Mihailovic's units that were organized on the territorial basis. Each county formed one brigade. Only 250 men from each brigade were under arms in the woods, while the rest of the troops were only periodically called up for practice. Depending on the county, Mansfield estimated that the brigades had from 2,500 to 5,000 men. The brigades formed the corps that were under direct Mihailovic's command. One particular characteristic of Mihailovic's organizations was the complete autonomy of action the corps commanders had in the territory they controlled. Other units could enter their territory only with theirs, or Mihailovic's permission. Each corps had its Headquarters with all necessary services. The mayors, who collaborated closely with the corps commanders, kept the draft lists. Their major problem was the lack of arms and ammunition. All other logistical problems they solved with the help of local population who gave them food and shelter. These conclusions were valid for Serbia only, since Seitz and Mansfield noticed that the situation in Eastern Herzegovina and Dalmatia was completely different. There, the Mihailovic's units had considerably more arms and ammunition, but less discipline than in Serbia. However, Seitz and Mansfield concluded that Mihailovic's troops controlled Serbia, Sanjak, Eastern Herzegovina and parts of Dalmatia.<sup>62</sup>

Weill's conclusions on the military organization of the Partisans were completely different from those of his predecessors. First, he stated that war in Yugoslavia had the character of guerrilla warfare. Therefore, all claims about "free Partisan's territory" were untrue. There were parts of Yugoslavia without enemy troops, but they could enter them whenever they liked. He concluded that there were no established lines of front and no free territories behind them. Even Broz's General Staff was always prepared to leave its present location, if the enemy approached. Weill cited the example of the city of Drvar, where Broz Headquarters was located in February and March 1944. Italians first held Drvar, then the Ustashi and Nazis. It had no air defence, and the enemy could enter the town with tanks and infantry in few hours. The success of the Partisans, concluded Weill, depended more on the personal qualities and skill of their commanders, than on the strategy and tactics of their headquarters.

On the other hand, Weill believed that Partisans succeeded in disrupting the enemy's lines of communications. They even obliged him to concentrate his forces in cities and to leave them only in heavily armed convoys. However, he considered completely false Partisans statements that they alone tied down in Yugoslavia over 17 enemy divisions and more than 500,000 enemy soldiers. Weill firmly said that Partisans were unable: 1) to drive the enemy out of the

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<sup>62</sup> Seitz's and Mansfield's reports.

country; 2) to prevent the enemy to withdraw from the country; 3) to destroy enemy forces in their country. They were capable only to annoy him, to prevent him to exploit country's natural resources, to obstruct the transport of his troops and to disrupt its lines of supply, and to weaken the moral of his troops by creating the atmosphere of general insecurity in the country. Their mode of warfare could be changed only if the Allies could regularly send them supplies by sea. Naturally the Allies should have sufficient number of ships men and supplies necessary for this kind of operation. However, even if the Allies could send them all necessary supplies, Weill considered the Partisans incapable of organizing a modern army with tanks and heavy artillery.

The complexities of logistics needed to organize a modern army with ammunition and oil dumps exceed their capacities. Therefore, Weill saw as their biggest achievement the survival of their movement until the end of war. The biggest help they could get were the supplies of small arms they already were receiving.

The comparative analysis of two movement's organizations shows that, although the Partisans received considerable aid, both movements still had guerrilla character. In spite of bombastic statements about a "free Partisan territory", neither of the two movements did control completely any part of Yugoslavia. Partisan's units were present at marginally larger portions of the country than Mihailovic's (Croatia, Bosnia, Lika and Slovenia as compared to Serbia, Montenegro, Eastern Herzegovina and Sanjak), but the main achievement of both movements was their bare survival. Weill proved that the outcome of war in Yugoslavia did not depend on the force of the two movements, but that the outcome of the civil war did. Farish's enthusiastic reports enabled Partisans to get more arms and thus to mobilize more troops. Thus created army could not influence the fight against the Axis, but it gave great advantage to Partisans in the civil war and got media coverage in the West.

The political consequences of the civil war in Yugoslavia particularly interested the OSS. Mansfield firmly believed that the majority of population in Serbia did not want the communism, since they were profoundly attached to Karageorgevich dynasty and the democracy.<sup>63</sup> Therefore the Partisans were unwelcome in Serbia. Particularly because their immediate plan at the beginning of 1944 was to enter Serbia and change its political order. Seitz reported that as soon as they entered the towns in the valley of the river Lim they destroyed all public records of ownership, and forcefully drafted the men. In Serbia this was seen as the first stage of a social revolution, where all private property would be abolished.<sup>64</sup> The mobilization was considered as means of political pressure. While civil war in Serbia was only in the future, it raged in Herzegovina and

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<sup>63</sup> Mansfield's report.

<sup>64</sup> Seitz's report.

Dalmatia, regions Seitz and Mansfield passed through on their way out of Yugoslavia. They suggested different explanations for it.

Citing his sources among Mihailovic's officers, Mansfield said that the civil war had ethnic origins. After the Partisans left Serbia, large number of Ustashis joined their units. In this way they tried to avert the punishment they deserved for committed massacres of Serbs. Therefore, no understanding was possible with Partisans since they harbored war criminals. Mansfield noticed also that a group of Mihailovic's officers wanted to found a Serbian state instead of Yugoslavia after the war. Major V. Lukacevic and some other officers advocated a compromise with the Partisans in order to fight the Axis.<sup>65</sup>

For Seitz the civil war started because Serbs were afraid of communists in Partisans ranks. The communists represented a quart of Partisans forces according to Seitz. They were first nationalists and then communists, so there were only few internationalists amongst them. No compromise was possible between two movements thought Seitz, since they would rather fight amongst themselves then against the Axis, although both movements profoundly hate the Axis. Therefore, Seitz suggested that Allies form a buffer zone between two movements in the valley of Lim, using for that purpose the Italian units still in Yugoslavia under the command of Allied officers. Thus, the civil war would be stopped, and the Allies could furnish arms and supplies to both movements and use the whole potential of Yugoslav resistance.<sup>66</sup>

Seitz and Mansfield drew attention once again to the military potential of Mihailovic's troops and to the strategic importance of Vardar-Morava valley. The Nazi troops were expected to retreat from Greece along these routes. They particularly tried to prevent the spreading of civil war in Serbia. Since the vast majority of Serbs supported the King and Mihailovic the arrival of Partisans could only open another internal front where the Serbs would fight the communists.

Weill considered the Partisans as the only respectable political force on Yugoslavia's political scene. He thought that they achieved the unprecedented degree of national and confessional understanding within their movement, thus largely surpassing other mutually opposed groups such as royalists, domobrans, and others. He considered them to be the most active, the most disciplined, the most numerous resistance movement. Nevertheless, he clearly distinguished their achievements from their propaganda. When Broz told him that the Partisans would respect the political will of the people after the war, he added:

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<sup>65</sup> Mansfield's report.

<sup>66</sup> Seitz's report.

*“The Partisan party presumably continuing in control as the means of expressing the people’s will in national affairs.”<sup>67</sup>*

Weill understood quite well the Partisans way of thinking. Broz told him that the King must first dismiss Mihailovic as his minister before he could start negotiating with him. Even then Broz felt bound by the decisions of the AVNOJ, that forbade the return of the King, before a plebiscite could be organized to decide the form of political order. Weill concluded that:

*“Tito’s political philosophy seemed to be that he would compromise, for the sake of valuable political support outside of Yugoslavia, with unimportant details of his political plans for the country, but that he would stand firm in support of his plan main outline - an outline which is, in his mind, clear an unequivocal.”<sup>68</sup>*

The nature of Partisans political plan was clear for Weill. The Partisans wanted to take the power in Yugoslavia, and they used the fight against the Axis as the means to achieve it. Weill described the Partisans plans as follows:

- “1) The Partisans will increase their quantitative and qualitative strength in the country, military and politically.*
- 2) The strength of opposing factions will decline, although these factions may never be totally obliterated.*
- 3) At the close of Axis hostilities with Yugoslavia, the Partisans will control the entire country, even if it involves the internal strife and bloodshed to assert and maintain this control.*
- 4) The Partisans will remain in control for at least one year after the close of hostilities.*
- 5) There is a good possibility that they will remain in control for several years.*
- 6) They will fulfil their campaign promises: there will be plebiscites, local committees in an ascending pyramid from villages, to provinces, and regions, to the national Committee. In other words, there will be a representative form of government.”<sup>69</sup>*

According to Weill the general policy of the Partisans was due also to the support they received from the Soviet Union. In order to secure their long lasting interests in Yugoslavia, Soviets gave political and propaganda support to the Partisans during the war, and were prepared to defend their interests on the forthcoming peace conference. For Weill, common Slav origins not the communist propaganda explained the great influence Soviets had in Yugoslavia.

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<sup>67</sup> Weill’s report.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

British also had clear objectives and interests in Yugoslavia, while the USA seemed completely uninterested.<sup>70</sup>

Although he made the first realistic appraisal of the Partisans military strength and their political objectives, Weill concluded that they should have complete Allied support. No moral criteria hindered his judgment. He saw that Partisans wanted to overthrow the legal government of Yugoslavia, and he proposed to support them since he thought they had fair chances of succeeding. This was the only way for the USA to retain some influence with the movement that would clearly win the civil war in Yugoslavia. The USA did not want to interfere in the Yugoslav civil war, and they were ready to accept the winner whoever he may be. The fact that their material support largely contributed to Partisans victory was not the source of any moral dilemma neither in the OSS nor in the Roosevelt Administration.

After he left Yugoslavia, Weill proceeded to Algiers where he reported to head of OSS base in the Middle East, Edward Glavin. He suggested to Glavin to send an official American mission to Partisans, to withdraw all OSS personal from Mihailovic's movement and to compare his conclusion with those Seitz made. Glavin decided to send Weill to Washington to deliver the message Broz's sent to President, and to explain his suggestions.<sup>71</sup> Although the OSS head office instructed Weill to write a report and to return to Yugoslavia, he arrived in Washington where he was even received by Eleanor Roosevelt.<sup>72</sup> Weill's report got the widest distribution in the Administration. The copy was sent to the President, the Secretary of State, and the head of State Department's European section, Freeman Matthew.

Weill's report was thoroughly scrutinized in the State Department. It was considered as contradictory. Weill suggested considering Partisans as the only fighting force in Yugoslavia, although he said they could never be anything else but a guerrilla movement. He proved false their allegations that they tied down important enemy forces in Yugoslavia. Although he had no knowledge of Mihailovic's movement, he saw Partisans as the winners in the civil war. He predicted that the Partisans would shape the political future of the country forgetting the deeply rooted attachment of Serbs to the ruling dynasty, or the massive adherence of the Croats to the HSS. He neither took into consideration the profound religious beliefs of Catholics and Orthodox in Yugoslavia, which would make it impossible for them to accept an atheist, communist government.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> Glavin to Buxton, Algiers, 11.4.1944, entry 190, box 88/1, RG 226, NAW.

<sup>72</sup> Weill to Shepardson, Washington 22.5.1944, entry 190, box 88/1, RG 226, NAW.

<sup>73</sup> Memo of the European Department in the State Department Washington 9.5.1944, 860H.00/1626 1/2, RG 59, NAW.

More important than the unflattering appreciation of the State Department, was the distribution the Weill report had. He corroborated the conclusion Huot and Farish already made. Even more important, it was in complete accord with the general American policy of non-interference in Yugoslav affairs, which was tantamount to abandoning of Yugoslavia to Soviets. The Mansfield report was therefore practically ignored. He was considered as irrelevant since it brought information about a small part of Yugoslavia: Western Serbia, Northern Montenegro and Eastern Herzegovina. One of the OSS experts for the Balkans J.W. Lane concluded that Mihailovic was not preserving his forces to aid the Allied landing in the Balkans, but for the final show down with the Partisans. He even said:

*“As long as Mihailovic plays the Government-in-Exile game and fights Tito, he may not collaborate with Germans openly, but he will certainly not collaborate with the Allies.”<sup>74</sup>*

Nevertheless, Mansfield report was sent to the State Department, Army and Navy intelligence. The Reports from Mihailovic’s Headquarters thus stayed in the intelligence community, and never reached the higher echelons of the Roosevelt Administration. The prevailing and official appreciation of situation in Yugoslavia was troubled only when Farish filed his second report from Yugoslavia in March 1944. The man, who practically wrote Partisan’s credentials in Washington, presented a more complex and thus more disturbing picture of Yugoslavia.

Only during his second mission in Yugoslavia from January 19 to March 16, 1944 Farish became fully aware of the importance the ethnic strife and the civil war had for the future of Yugoslavia. He began his report intitled *The Political Situation in Yugoslavia*, by saying that the enemy deliberately triggered the ethnic conflict in Yugoslavia. The Axis’s principal objective was the annihilation of Serbs, since they were considered as the strongest and the most dangerous adversary. This policy bore results, since the conflicts between Ustashi, Partisans and Mihailovic’s forces, left profound scars, and the mutual hatred will not be easily forgotten.

Farish still thought the Partisans were the most numerous and the best organized resistance movement, but the prolonged stay in their Headquarters forced him to change his opinion about their political program. He concluded that the numerous hard-core communists amongst Partisans could prevent them from realizing their publicly proclaimed objective of founding a new and democratic Yugoslavia. Farish was thus the first OSS officer to note the existence of important communist influence on Partisans. Being the author of

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<sup>74</sup> Lane to Richard Southgate, Washington 21. 4.1944, entry 146, box 63, file 859, RG 226, NAW.



Partisans fame in Washington, he could not be accused of anti-Partisan bias. He even said that the communists wanted the USSR to annex Yugoslavia as one of its soviet republics. Farish estimated that in the event of communist victory in Yugoslavia, all pre-war democratic institutions would be closed.

Believing still that the Partisans would decide the fate of Yugoslavia, he noted the existence of a liberal fraction within their movement that sincerely fought for the fulfilment of proclaimed objectives. Based on some of its public statements, Farish considered Broz to be a member of the liberal party among Partisans. Farish considered the communist ideology as completely unsuited for Yugoslavia. From his personal experience and from reports he got from Slovenia, Dalmatia, and Slavonia, he concluded that the vast majority of the population, and Partisans did not want the establishment of communist political order.

For Farish ethnic and religious strife was no longer the biggest problem for Yugoslavia, but the dilemma which political system, western or soviet, will prevail after the war. Farish even thought that the same dilemma would be the biggest European problem after the war. Therefore, the situation in Yugoslavia demanded special attention since the problem arose first there. In the end Farish confirmed that the Yugoslav Government was right in saying that the biggest problem Yugoslavia had, was the struggle between communism and democracy.

For Farish this dilemma could be solved only within the Partisans movement, since they will undoubtedly dominate Yugoslavia after the war. Since Partisans will be the first to liberate their country, purely political conflicts would start first between communist and liberals in their ranks. Since the outcome of this conflict could serve as model for the rest of Europe, Farish concluded that the American reaction to the Yugoslavia's civil war could influence the post war situation in Europe, and American relations with Europe. Having all this in mind Farish suggested that the USA help the liberal partisan group to create a democratic Yugoslavia.<sup>75</sup>

Farish's analyses were always more oriented towards the future. In March 1944 the outcome of Yugoslavia's civil war for him was a settled issue. He was worried about the country's post war political order and that it should not set a bad example for the rest of Europe. For him the only way to prevent such an outcome was to give all possible support to Partisans. Yugoslav Government was therefore no more a relevant political force. His only worry was to prevent the communist in the Partisans ranks to bring Yugoslavia in the Soviet sphere of influence.

Written at approximately the same time as Weill's, Farish's reports gave completely new picture of Yugoslavia. There were no more illusions about

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<sup>75</sup> Farish to Paul West, OSS's commanding officer in the Mediterranean, Bosanski Petrovac, 5.3.1944, entry 144, box 96, file 1015, RG 226, NAW.

military strength and politic orientation of the Partisan movement. The OSS knew that communists wanted to use the Partisan movement and the fight against the Axis to take power. The OSS merely noted these new information, without trying to analyse the circumstances that permitted the Partisans to be in a position to decide the future of Yugoslavia. The OSS as well as the entire Roosevelt's Administration was not prepared to act in Eastern Europe, but only to note the developments that took place.

The Roosevelt's Administration wanted to preserve the general democratic principle, and did not worry about a particular situation. The Democratic Administration was prepared to accept the Partisans victory in Yugoslavia, so long as they respected several fundamental democratic principles. If they did not, they could set a bad example, and thus endanger the whole structure of international relations based on the principles contained in the Atlantic Charter. The principle and not the fate of a given country was important for the Roosevelt's Administration. The Yugoslav Government could not understand such policy, since its members considered themselves responsible to the people who voted for them. The communists understood more easily that the democratic form was more important than the democracy itself, since they were responsible only to their party. Yugoslavia was thus given to the communists, and the democracy sacrificed to uphold the global division of the spheres of influence between the USA and the USSR.

Lynn Farish once again left his testimony about the consequences of such a decision. During his third mission Farish spent three months from April 16 to July 16 in southern Serbia. There he witnessed fierce fighting between the Partisans and Mihailovic's troops. After experiencing personally all atrocities of the Yugoslavia's civil war, his perspective changed radically. Only then Farish was forced to conclude that the ethnic, political and social conflicts in Yugoslavia were so complicated that it was practically impossible for unbiased and good willed strangers to understand them. The conflicts had religious and ethnic origins. Both sides in the Yugoslav civil war claimed to fight for a united, free and democratic Yugoslavia. Their ultimate proclaimed goal was to enable the people to express their will on the free elections after the war. Both movements had propaganda services and used it frequently. Mihailovic claimed that the Partisan's real objective is to enforce communism in Yugoslavia, whereas they said that Mihailovic ultimate goal is to reinstate the dictatorial and corrupt pre-war regime. Both sides accused the other of not fighting seriously against the Axis, and both considered the other movement as the real enemy and not the Nazis. The best description of the civil war in Yugoslavia Farish gave when he said:

*"We saw both Chetnik and Partisans wounded. To me they were only poorly clothed, barefoot and hungry peasant farmers, some of them badly wounded,*

*who had borne their pain with forbearance one would hardly believe possible. I could not see any dangerous characters among them. I couldn't tell who was Left or who was Right, who was Communist or Reactionary. Somehow these terms that one hears used so gladly on the outside did not seem to fit the actual circumstances.*

*What a very peculiar set of circumstances these facts bring out! Rifles stamped "U.S. Property", firing W.R.A. Ammunition, flown by American airmen in American aircraft being fired at people who have rescued other American airmen and who were doing everything to make them comfortable and to return them to safety."<sup>76</sup>*

Farish thought that the vast majority of population in Yugoslavia could not be classified by their political views. They were simple peasants who wanted only a stable government which will respect their church and their King, and give them a more prosperous life. They sincerely wanted to fight the enemy. Although the interior situation was more than confused, they did considerable harm to the Axis troops in Yugoslavia. Senseless mutual killings must be stopped, and there is no sense in investigating who started it. The Allies did not succeed in creating a unified front in Yugoslavia. Therefore, the civil war continued, and there was no united government or a united command of the resistance forces. For Farish the first measure to be taken was to neutralize the extremist in both movements. Farish considered that the USA could use its moral authority to reconcile and unite the resistance movements in Yugoslavia. The supplies sent to both movements in the end were received by the same barefooted and hungry peasant, who helped American officers in Yugoslavia, and who actually fought against the enemy forces. The US Government should first try to stop the civil war. It was particularly unpleasant for Farish to see how American arms were used to kill those who helped save American pilots. Farish could not imagine that the great powers were unable to stop the civil war in Yugoslavia. He considered the conflicts in Yugoslavia as one of the local conflicts that started during the war. Therefore he wondered whether the US Government fought the present war only to witness a series of local wars grow once again in an another global war. The issue was particularly important because both movements in Yugoslavia paid more attention to fighting each other in the recent months than to fighting the Axis. Farish concluded that the outcome of the civil war and the post war political order was their first priority and the common struggle was far less important.<sup>77</sup>

Sincere and tragic statement of the man who was largely responsible for the impression the Roosevelt Administration got about the Partisans, showed how difficult it was for outsiders to understand the cruelty of the political and

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<sup>76</sup> Farish's memo, Bari 8.7.1944, 860H.01/7-844, RG 226, NAW.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

ethnic strife in Yugoslavia. The tone and the nature of Farish third report were quite different from everything that was written about Yugoslavia before. His colleagues analysed the situation in Yugoslavia from the standpoint of American interests, whereas the fate of Yugoslavs was of far less importance. Farish's third report was first sent to President Roosevelt, who dispatched it to the Chiefs of Staff, demanding their commentaries and suggestions.<sup>78</sup> In July 1944, as a year before, American generals were not prepared to change their strategy for the sake of the sufferings of the Yugoslavs. No American military involvement in Yugoslavia was possible, and the decision was final.

The previsions about the Partisans victory in Yugoslavia were the fruit of cold judgments, which did not consider the cost of their victory, nor its consequences. The decision that the USA had no vital interest in Yugoslavia, Farish tried to put in context of its moral responsibility towards the peasant, the true ally of the American soldier. His tentative to induce great powers to use their authority and power to help Yugoslavs end their civil war, did not bore fruit. The cold logic of international relations, on which the Allied coalition was founded, took interest only in global arrangements, while local bloody conflicts were only incidents to be regretted. They did not deserve, nor did they get any attention. Americans did not want to get involved in Yugoslavia's civil war for military nor for political, and still much less for humanitarian reasons. Their only activity was solely motivated by their war objectives to get precise information from Yugoslavia. The fact that it was transformed in a decisive support for the Partisan's was regretful, but nothing more could be done.

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