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## The Power of Narratives: A Cultural History of US Involvement in Axis-Occupied Yugoslavia

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THE POWER OF NARRATIVES: A CULTURAL HISTORY OF US INVOLVEMENT  
IN AXIS-OCCUPIED YUGOSLAVIA

BY

WILLIAM P. FOUSE

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## ABSTRACT

My thesis examines the ways in which narratives about Axis-occupied Yugoslavia developed within the United States over the course of World War II and identifies how these narratives influenced the development of American foreign policy. Methodologically, I utilize the literary theories of Northrop Frye and Hayden White as a means of narrative analysis. Frye categorizes narratives as romance, comedy, tragedy, or satire. Each of these modes of employment serves as a call to action or, in the case of satire, inaction. The initial narrative related to occupied Yugoslavia was romance, and it served as a call for the United States to aid the Četnik resistance. The romantic narrative of Četnik resistance was, in part, supplanted by the romance of the communist Partisans due to the ways in which Četnik ideology conflicted with American ideals and the US government's comedic narrative of national and international unity. Many Americans became dissatisfied with US policy toward Yugoslavia and framed the cause of this dissatisfaction in terms of a moral failing, giving rise to the tragic narrative. This narrative called for the United States to return to its ideals and assume a more constructive role in Yugoslavia. However, the tragic narrative was ultimately undermined by the satirical narrative. The satirical view of Yugoslavia drew upon preconceived notions of a Balkan propensity for violence and disorder. It discouraged the US from becoming politically involved in Yugoslavia, and its emergence explains US foreign policy, or lack thereof, toward Yugoslavia at the end of World War II.

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## INTRODUCTION

On August 26, 1946, *The New York Times* printed the review of an “odd little book,” George Orwell’s *Animal Farm*. After walking its readers through Orwell’s critique of totalitarianism, the book review concluded by noting that the book served as reminder of the “ancient cycle of revolution—first brotherhood, then organization, then tyranny.”<sup>1</sup> Neither the *New York Times* reviewer nor the rest of Orwell’s American audience was privy to the book’s original preface, which was omitted from both the US and British versions. In it, Orwell castigated the complicity of “the English intelligentsia” in the uncritical propagation of Soviet propaganda. The most egregious instance of this behavior was to be found in the treatment of General Dragoljub-Dražica Mihailović, the leader of the Četnik resistance to the Axis occupation of Yugoslavia during World War II. According to Orwell,

the Russians, who had their own Yugoslav protege in Marshal Tito, accused [Mihailović] of collaboration with the Germans. This accusation was promptly taken up by the British press: [Mihailović’s] supporters were given no chance of answering it and the facts contradicting it were simply kept out of print. In July of 1943 the Germans offered a reward of 100,000 gold crowns for the capture of Tito, and similar reward for the capture of [Mihailović]. The British press ‘splashed’ the reward for Tito, but only one paper mentioned (in small print) the reward for [Mihailović]: and the charges of collaborating with the Germans continued.<sup>2</sup>

At the time that *Animal Farm* was published, Orwell’s original preface would have undoubtedly found a receptive audience in the United States. The month prior to the

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<sup>1</sup> Orville Prescott, “Books of the Times,” *New York Times*, August 26, 1946, accessed February 3, 2018, <https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1946/08/26/93148803.html?pageNumber=33>.

<sup>2</sup> George Orwell, “The Freedom of the Press,” 1945, Orwell Archive, University College London Library, Special Collections, 3, accessed February 3, 2018, <https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/orwells-proposed-introduction-to-animal-farm>.

release of *Animal Farm* in the US, Mihailović was executed in Yugoslavia after being found guilty of “treason against the people and the Fatherland” in the form of “political and military collaboration with the invader.”<sup>3</sup>

The government and private citizens of the United States attempted to intercede on Mihailović’s behalf in 1946. In response to a radio announcement in Belgrade that Mihailović had been captured on March 13, the State Department sent a message to the Yugoslav Foreign Office. The note proclaimed that Mihailović “organized and led important resistance forces against the occupiers... [and] without adequate supplies and fighting under the greatest hardships contributed with his forces materially to the allied cause so heroically participated in by Yugoslavia.” In closing, the message stated that the US government was “confident that in the interests of justice the Yugoslav Government” would avail itself of the evidence that was currently being compiled within the United States in defense of Mihailović.<sup>4</sup> The Yugoslav government was not receptive to this appeal and replied that “the crimes of the traitor Draza Mihailovich against the people of Yugoslavia are far too big and horrible that it could be or should be allowed to be discussed whether he is guilty or not.”<sup>5</sup>

In light of the United States’ encouragement of Yugoslav resistance to the Axis

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<sup>3</sup> *The Trial of Dragoljub-Dražica Mihailović: Stenographic Record and Documents from the Trial of Dragoljub-Dražica Mihailović* (Belgrade: The Union of the Journalists’ Associations of the Federative People’s Republic of Yugoslavia, 1946), 507.

<sup>4</sup> United States Department of State, “U.S. Note on the Capture of General Mikhailovich,” *The Department of State Bulletin* 14, no. 354 (April 14, 1946): 634, accessed February 3, 2018, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=osu.32435031338353;view=1up;seq=636>. This evidence, which consisted of testimony by American military personnel, was published as Committee for a Fair Trial for Draza Mihailovich, *The Question of the Guilt or the Innocence of General Mihailovich: Report of the Commission of Inquiry of the Committee for a Fair Trial for Draza Mihailovich* (New York: 1946), accessed January 10, 2018, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015020457944;view=1up;seq=3>.

<sup>5</sup> United States Department of State, “Yugoslav Reply to U.S. Note on General Mikhailovich,” *The Department of State Bulletin* 14, no. 355 (April 21, 1946): 669, accessed February 3, 2018, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uiuo.ark:/13960/t3fx8vf3m;view=1up;seq=677>.



powers over the course of World War II, it is understandable that the US government felt compelled to assist Mihailović. Following the invasion of Yugoslavia, the United States and Britain originally supported Mihailović as the leader of the Yugoslav resistance against the occupation forces. However, from the emergence of concerted resistance activity in Yugoslavia in 1941 through mid-1943, this support was largely moral rather than material.<sup>6</sup> By the time that the US government was prepared to send military representatives and more substantial aid to Yugoslavia, the Allies had become aware of a rival resistance organization, the communist-led Partisans headed by Josip Broz “Tito.”<sup>7</sup> The US government initially sent military liaisons to both groups.<sup>8</sup> However, in 1944, the US and Britain withdrew their joint military mission to Mihailović and gave their full support to Tito.<sup>9</sup> By the end of the war, the Partisans’ military superiority to Mihailović’s royalist Četniks placed Tito in a position to reject the return of the Yugoslav king and to seize political control of postwar Yugoslavia.<sup>10</sup> This sequence of events led many to ask why it was that the United States had not only abandoned its erstwhile military ally, but also apparently played a part in bringing

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<sup>6</sup> Hugh de Santis, “In Search of Yugoslavia: Anglo-American Policy and Policy-Making 1943-45,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 16, no. 3 (July, 1981): 542, accessed August 18, 2017, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/260320>.

<sup>7</sup> A total of approximately 23 tons of supplies had been dropped to Mihailović by June 1943. Walter B. Roberts, *Tito, Mihailović, and the Allies, 1941-1945* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1987), 119. Once the Allies began shipping supplies from the Italian coast in 1943, their ability to aid the resistance forces expanded significantly. The Partisans were the primary beneficiaries. They received over 5,600 tons of supplies between October 1943 and January 1944. The Četniks received only 27 tons of supplies over this same time period. Andrew Buchanan, *American Grand Strategy in the Mediterranean during World War II* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 244.

<sup>8</sup> The first Office of Strategic Service liaisons parachuted into Yugoslavia in August 1943. They were initially assigned to the British missions that had already been established with both Tito and Mihailović. Kirk Ford, Jr., *OSS and the Yugoslav Resistance, 1941-1945* (College Station, Texas A&M University Press, 1992), 3-4.

<sup>9</sup> After the departure of the British mission, and much to the chagrin of Churchill, the United States maintained a presence among the Četniks in the form of two subsequent missions, though neither was tasked with aiding Mihailović. One was strictly an intelligence mission and the other was tasked with evacuating downed US airmen. The personnel associated with these missions were withdrawn in November and December of 1944. This severed all direct US contact with Mihailović. *Ibid.*, 131-133.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

about the rise of the communist regime that subsequently tried and executed him. It is this question that lies at the heart of this paper.

In his explanation of US policy on Yugoslavia, David Martin, who served as secretary for the Commission of Inquiry that had compiled the above-mentioned testimony of US servicemen in defense of Mihailović in 1946, arrived at a conclusion similar to that of George Orwell. However, the communist influence that Martin identified was far more extensive than even Orwell suggested. As Martin wrote in *Ally Betrayed*,

even in the heart of democratic England and America, the Soviets are able to exercise certain totalitarian controls in their own interest. Employing... the influence of party-members and fellow [travelers] in key positions... they were able to compel the suppression of news, to obtain the currency of expedient lies, and even to contrive the falsification of British and American military intelligence. The simple fact is that Britain and America were duped into supporting Tito.<sup>11</sup>

Martin's assertions were not merely a manifestation of anti-communist hysteria driven by fears associated with the emerging Cold War, although they undoubtedly were a reflection of this as well. There is substantial evidence of the presence of communists and their ideological sympathizers within the ranks of both the British Special Operations Executive (SOE) and its American counterpart, the Office of Strategic Services (OSS). Possible infiltration of the OSS aside, if there was a decisive communist influence on British policy from within the SOE, this would invariably have impacted US policy. Wherever British policy led in Yugoslavia, at least in regard to military liaison and supply operations, the Americans invariably followed, though often not immediately or without protest. This can be seen in the initial

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<sup>11</sup> David Martin, *Ally Betrayed: The Uncensored Story of Tito and Mihailovich* (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1946), 4.

decision to back both Tito and Mihailović, as well as in the eventual decision to remove all Allied liaisons from the Četniks.<sup>12</sup>

There has been particular attention paid to the influence that James Klugmann, a Soviet mole within the SOE, had upon Allied policy toward the Yugoslav resistance groups. In one of his later books, *Web of Disinformation*, Martin argued that Klugmann was “*primarily* [Martin’s emphasis] responsible” for the “handing over [of] a nation [Yugoslavia] of 15 million people to Communist control” through the manipulation of intelligence information in favor of the Partisans.<sup>13</sup> In his memoir, *The Rape of Serbia*, Michael Lees, one of the British liaison officers assigned to Mihailović, recounted his apoplectic reaction upon reading Basil Davidson’s account of the “shenanigans” in which Davidson and fellow leftist members of SOE, to include Klugmann, engaged at the British headquarters in Cairo, ultimately leading “to Churchill’s dramatic modification of Yugoslav policy” in favor of the Partisans.<sup>14</sup>

While there is substantial evidence that Klugmann’s communist sympathies drove his activities within SOE, historian Roderick Bailey questioned the extent of Klugmann’s influence upon policy. That Klugmann perceived that he wielded significant influence upon policy is shown in Bailey’s essay, “Communist in SOE.” In a conversation, which Bailey suspected was captured by British intelligence via a listening device, between Klugmann and a member of the British Communist Party, Klugmann explained that

the first political aim was to get permission for our Yugoslav section to

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<sup>12</sup> Ford, *OSS and the Yugoslav Resistance*, 181.

<sup>13</sup> David Martin, *The Web of Disinformation: Churchill's Yugoslav Blunder* (San Diego, California: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1990), xix.

<sup>14</sup> Michael Lees, *The Rape of Serbia: The British Role in Tito's Grab for Power, 1943-1944* (San Diego, California: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1990), 18-25.

learn from Intelligence sources about Partisans, to show that there were Partisans as well as Chetniks. That took about three months - a fight with the Foreign Office and War Office, and GHQ Middle East.

The second step was to get permission to send certain agents not only to the Chetniks but to the Partisans... that was another three months, fighting, persuading, documents organizing, every type of work.

The next three months was to get permission to send arms to the people that were Partisans as well as arms to the Chetniks.

The next three months, four months about, was to get permission to send people to support the Partisans in Serbia, which was the area where Mihailovitch was strongest. Previously we'd only been allowed to send them to other areas.

The next stage—again for four or five months—was... skewing [and] building up reports we were getting from the Chetniks and... from the Partisans - [to show that there was] no activity against the enemy on the Chetnik side, [but] first-class activity on the Partisan side - [in order] to recall the missions from the Chetniks, and to give all support to the Partisans.

And the last stage... was to fight inside the organisation [for]... political recognition of the Partisans.<sup>15</sup>

Although Klugmann gave himself and his machinations credit for the shift in British policy as it related to the Partisans, Bailey was skeptical of this assertion. According to Bailey, the “key decisions in favour of Tito were taken well above the heads of SOE” and were based upon “important intelligence to which the SOE staff officers had little or no access.”<sup>16</sup>

Bailey’s dismissal of Klugmann’s significance was reflective of the increasing credence given by historians to the claim that the ULTRA intercepts were far more influential in the formulation of British policy toward Yugoslavia than were any

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<sup>15</sup> Roderick Bailey, “Communist in SOE: Explaining James Klugmann’s Recruitment and Retention,” in *The Politics and Strategy of Clandestine War: Special Operations Executive, 1940-1946*, ed. Neville Wylie (London: Routledge, 2012), 69-70. The “organisation” to which Klugmann referred was the SOE.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 71. “ULTRA” was the name given to the Anglo-American decrypts of German, Italian, and Japanese communications. In May 1943, the British and Americans agreed to a “full exchange and distribution of Signals Intelligence.” Martin Gilbert, *The Second World War: A Complete History*, rev. ed. (New York, NY: Holt Paperbacks, 2004), 429.

reports from the SOE.<sup>17</sup> Historian Heather Williams even suggested in *Parachutes, Patriots, and Partisans* that Brigadier Fitzroy Maclean, a member of British Parliament and also head of the SOE mission to Tito, possibly served as a cover to explain Churchill's decision to switch support to Partisans and mask Churchill's reliance upon ULTRA intercepts as the basis for the change in Yugoslav policy.<sup>18</sup>

Kirk Ford, Jr. made clear in *OSS and the Yugoslav Resistance* that communist influence was not limited to the SOE. According to Ford, the OSS headquarters in Bari, Italy gained the epithet of the "Little Kremlin" due to the influence of Partisan sympathizers such as Major Francis Arnoldy, chief of the OSS Secret Intelligence (SI) Yugoslav section.<sup>19</sup> Robert Joyce, one of Arnoldy's predecessors as chief of the Yugoslav section, recounted in his unpublished memoir that he was informed prior to assuming his post in Cairo that several of his employees were "probable communists or at least fellow travelers." This was of concern, as SI "was supposed to report objectively military and especially political developments for American military and political policymakers."<sup>20</sup> Joyce had assumed overall head of SI in Bari and was thus Arnoldy's supervisor. He eventually had Arnoldy transferred for not following State Department policy and for his unabashedly "pro-Partisan" activity.<sup>21</sup> It thus seems that the US personnel were cognizant of communist infiltration within the OSS and increasingly wary of and proactive in neutralizing such influences in comparison to their SOE counterparts. The awareness of American personnel of communist

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<sup>17</sup> John Cripps, "Mihailović or Tito? How the Codebreakers Helped Churchill Choose," in *Action this Day*, eds. Ralph Erskine and Michael Smith (New York: Bantam Press, 2001), 262-3.

<sup>18</sup> Heather Williams, *Parachutes, Patriots, and Partisans: The Special Operations Executive in Yugoslavia 1941- 1945* (Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), 168.

<sup>19</sup> Ford, *OSS and the Yugoslav Resistance*, 82.

<sup>20</sup> Robert Prather Joyce, "Chapter Twelve - Yugoslav Resistance 1941-1944," Robert P. Joyce Papers, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library, 3.

<sup>21</sup> Ford, *OSS and the Yugoslav Resistance*, 85.

infiltration at the time, combined with the recent recognition of the importance of the ULTRA intercepts, has increasingly led scholars to dismiss the impact of communist influence on the trajectory of US and British policy toward Yugoslavia during World War II.

Rather than crediting communist conspiracy as the driver of US policy-making, many historians have instead emphasized the role played by military exigency. As Walter Roberts stated in *Tito, Mihailović, and the Allies, 1941-1945*, “the United States had only military and strategic considerations in mind in the Balkans. It believed that if Tito was fighting and Mihailović was not, then Tito should be supported.”<sup>22</sup> While Roberts did mention communist propaganda, he attributed little significance to it. For instance, Radio Free Yugoslavia, broadcasting from the Soviet Union, began accusing Mihailović of collaboration in 1942. This accusation was then quickly picked up by the communist periodical, *The Daily Worker*, in the United States.<sup>23</sup> As Roberts noted, by late 1942, mainstream publications such as *The Saturday Evening Post* and *Time* began publishing articles that praised the Partisans and repeated the accusations of military inactivity and collaboration on the part of Mihailović. However, Roberts stated that “the US government... dismissed all of these charges and continued to credit Mihailović with all resistance in Yugoslavia.”<sup>24</sup> Instead, Roberts emphasized the impact of a report by Major Linn Farish, an OSS liaison with Tito, that FDR received immediately prior to the Tehran Conference. During this conference, the decision was ultimately made to switch full Allied support to Tito. Roberts claimed that the report “dramatically changed FDR’s view of the

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<sup>22</sup> Roberts, *Tito, Mihailović, and the Allies*, 184.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 75-6.

Yugoslav situation.” In describing this impact, Roberts paid particular attention to the portions of the report that deemphasized the communist character of the Partisans while extolling their dedication to fighting the Axis. Roberts also quoted Farish’s observations on the Četniks’ consistent failure to attack the occupiers and their preoccupation with fighting the Partisans.<sup>25</sup>

Ford, despite his previously mentioned description of communist infiltration of the OSS, also identified military concerns as the foundation of US decision-making on Yugoslavia and dismissed the notion that communists significantly influenced policy.<sup>26</sup> At the time of the Tehran Conference, “the current status of the war... dictated the necessity of according primacy to military over political matters” in the formulation of US policy.<sup>27</sup> Unlike Roberts, Ford dismissed even the impact of the Farish report and concluded that it “had little, or any, impact on the course of Allied policy.”<sup>28</sup> Instead, this report merely served as confirmation of the wisdom of FDR’s efforts to stay out of the Balkans and thus avoid becoming entangled with suspected British designs in the region with which the United States disagreed.<sup>29</sup>

The trajectory of the historiography, as outlined above, demonstrates an increased focus upon geo-political and strategic concerns with a simultaneous deemphasis of the historical significance of narratives as they related to American involvement in Yugoslavia. Also, as indicated by Roberts’ evaluation of the lack of impact that the US press had upon American policy, this historiographical trend belies the significance of the contemporary emotive valence of certain categorizations, such as

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 152.

<sup>26</sup> Ford, *OSS and the Yugoslav Resistance*, 183.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 181.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 12.

collaborator and resister or communist and reactionary. The largely discredited historiographical obsession with the influence of communist propaganda, whatever its faults, at least recognized the tendency of narratives to shape action. This recognition explains the preoccupation of those like Martin with the ways in which communist propaganda came to be repeated in the mainstream press and within governmental circles. This recognition also meant that those who fixated upon communist influence were often more attentive to the link between domestic discourse and international developments.

In the pages that follow, it is not my intention to resurrect the historiographical bogeyman of communist subversion, but rather to recenter the narrative as an historically significant factor in understanding US-Yugoslav relations during World War II. It is not my contention that these narratives served as the sole impetus for US policy. Instead, I argue that narratives represented a rhetorical and imaginative arena that served as the space in which policy regarding Yugoslavia was formed. The boundaries of this space were not fixed, and private citizens and governmental officials contended with one another in their attempts to circumscribe or expand them. This contest was informed by and appealed to the ideals, aspirations, preconceptions, and anxieties of its participants and audience.

According to historian Warren F. Kimball, World War II has increasingly been viewed “as little more than the origins of the Cold War,” but this context can be overemphasized as it relates to foreign policy and public opinion during World War



II.<sup>30</sup> Although George F. Kennan would not coin the term “containment” until 1947, curtailing Soviet expansion nonetheless weighed upon the mind of Roosevelt throughout World War II.<sup>31</sup> As I show in the chapters that follow, it also concerned members of the American press and the Yugoslav government-in-exile (YGE), as one area into which Soviet influence seemed to be encroaching was occupied Yugoslavia. However, this concern led some to subsequently confuse hindsight with foresight in explaining US decision-making regarding Yugoslavia during the Second World War. For example, diplomat Robert Murphy claimed that US knowledge of Tito’s Yugoslav nationalism meant that the US anticipated Tito’s eventual break with Stalin in 1948, thus presumably demonstrating the wisdom of the United States’ foreign policy during World War II.<sup>32</sup> However, as Partisan leader Milovan Djilas noted in his memoir *Wartime*, Tito never gave the Western powers reason to doubt his “ideological link with the USSR.”<sup>33</sup>

Instead of narrowing the historical lens to focus upon US concerns about the spread of communism, expanding the scope of historical inquiry regarding US-Yugoslav relations during World War II has the potential to identify trends within US foreign policy that transcend the Cold War context. According to historians Michael Patrick Cullinane and David Ryan, US foreign policy has often been articulated by juxtaposing the image of the United States against “an ‘other,’” that is “a simplified depiction” of the culture in question. Cullinane and Ryan also called attention to the

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<sup>30</sup> Warren F. Kimball, “The Second World War: Not (Just) the Origins of the Cold War,” in *War and Cold War in American Foreign Policy*, eds. Dale Carter and Robin Clifton (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 31.

<sup>31</sup> John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of Postwar American National Security Policy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 4.

<sup>32</sup> Robert Murphy, *Diplomat among Warriors* (New York: Pyramid, 1965), 249.

<sup>33</sup> Milovan Djilas, *Wartime* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1977), 348.

“notion of superiority and inferiority running through such discourse.”<sup>34</sup> Although the language used in this discourse has evolved from one “of racial hierarchies, civilization, and barbarism” to one of “development, modernity, and tradition... the hierarchy” has remained “the same.”<sup>35</sup> Despite the fact that there is a “government monopoly” on the formulation and execution of US foreign policy, political scientist Charles O. Lerche, Jr. noted that US policy must nonetheless take into account “the demands of the democratic public.”<sup>36</sup> In this way, defining “us” and the “other,” and determining what constitutes the proper relationship between these two entities, can be seen as a process engaged in by both the American government and public. The development of narratives related to occupied Yugoslavia exemplifies this process.

Methodologically, I utilize the narrative theory of Hayden White and literary theory of Northrop Frye.<sup>37</sup> I categorize the evolution of wartime narratives about Yugoslavia using the “modes of emplotment” identified by Frye and used as means of historiographical criticism by Hayden White: romance, tragedy, comedy, and satire.<sup>38</sup> I describe the characteristics of these narratives in detail at the beginning of each of the following chapters.

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<sup>34</sup> Michael Patrick Cullinane and David Ryan, introduction to *U.S. Foreign Policy and the Other*, eds. Michael Patrick Cullinane and David Ryan (New York: Berghahn Books, 2015), 2.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>36</sup> Charles O. Lerche, Jr., *Foreign Policy and the American People* (Englewood Cliff, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1958), 3.

<sup>37</sup> These theories can be found, respectively, in Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in 19th-Century Europe*, Fortieth-Anniversary Edition (Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014) and Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays*, 15th ed. (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000). In *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1986), Lynn Hunt demonstrates the usefulness of Frye’s categorization of narratives in charting the evolution of how French society understood the French Revolution. Specifically, she demonstrates the evolution of narratives about the revolution as they progressed from, according to the descriptions provided by Frye, comedy, to romance, and then to tragedy. Drawing upon Hunt’s utilization of Frye, James Krapfl also demonstrates the usefulness of Frye’s and White’s literary theories to cultural history in James Krapfl, *Revolution with a Human Face: Politics, Culture, and Community Czechoslovakia, 1989-1992* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013).

<sup>38</sup> White, *Metahistory*, 7.

The ways in which Americans spoke and wrote about occupied Yugoslavia, and thus contributed to the emergence and perpetuation of certain narratives, not only reflected their own evolving views and ideals, but also contributed to a wider discourse. The trajectory of this discourse, in turn, served as a call for a particular US policy of action or inaction in Yugoslavia.<sup>39</sup> Thus, an examination of these narratives has the potential to provide insight into not only the prevailing mentalité among different segments of US society that were concerned with the course of events in Yugoslavia, but also how these mentalités interacted with US foreign policy.

The sources that I use to identify the genesis and propagation of relevant narratives tend to be those generated by what historian Benjamin Alpers refers to as “cultural producers.” According to Alpers, this “heterogenous set of cultural elites” was able to define American views through either “access to the mass media [or] of having expert status.”<sup>40</sup> This included members of the mainstream and foreign language press, US and foreign government officials, and prominent citizens, such as Louis Adamic and Ruth Mitchell. As will be seen, communists played an outsized role as successful “cultural producers.” However, rather than focusing upon this success as the result of some insidious conspiracy, I instead place it within the context of competing viewpoints. When analyzed from this perspective, the significance of communist rhetoric was not that it contributed to the installation of a communist regime in Yugoslavia, but rather that Americans were more receptive and sympathetic

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<sup>39</sup> Hunt describes the rhetoric of the French Revolution as not merely reflective of “changes and conflict, but rather was itself transformed into an instrument of political and social change.” Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution*, 24. Narratives can also be an impediment to change. As Krapfl notes, “in satirical emplotments, human agency is an illusion and political action is therefore pointless.” Krapfl, *Revolution with a Human Face*, 22. Both of these observations are useful in examining the impact of narratives on the formulation of US policy toward Yugoslavia.

<sup>40</sup> Benjamin Alpers, *Dictators, Democracy, and American Public Culture: Envisioning the Totalitarian Enemy 1920's-1950s* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 2.

to the narratives they propagated in pursuit of these ends. In contrast, the narratives produced by Mihailović's supporters failed to either generate or maintain a similar degree of support because they did not resonate with either the American public or governmental officials to the same degree as those of their competitors.

In the first chapter of this thesis I examine the emergence of the romantic narrative that portrayed Mihailović as a paragon of European resistance to Nazi domination. I argue that the initial receptivity to this narrative was based upon established American notions about the fighting spirit of the heroic, but primitive, Serbians. I believe that this is a manifestation of what Maria Todorova termed "balkanism," which both served and then undermined the cause of Mihailović's American proponents.<sup>41</sup> I also provide an historical overview of US diplomatic and military involvement in Yugoslavia leading up to the emergence of organized resistance. This is important for establishing the wider context in which US narratives about Yugoslavia arose. In doing so, I attempt to ensure that in the process of emphasizing the significance of these narratives, I do not simultaneously decontextualize US foreign policy decisions from the very real strategic and geopolitical concerns with which American policymakers had to contend.

In chapter three, I examine the ways in which the heroic image of Mihailović was eroded through accusations that he was not only collaborating with the Axis, but that he was also a reactionary Serb chauvinist. As I show, these qualities increasingly came into conflict with the comedic narrative that was promoted by the US government to combat disunity within the domestic Yugoslav-American community, the YGE, and between Tito's and Mihailović's forces. I also examine how the competing romantic

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<sup>41</sup> Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 1.

narrative of Tito and the Partisans arose at the same time that Mihailović's heroism was being called into question.

Chapter four consists of an examination of the ironic and tragic narratives about Yugoslavia. I argue that Yugoslav disunity served to confirm American beliefs regarding the Balkans in yet another manifestation of balkanism, which in turn discouraged US involvement in Yugoslavia's internal political disputes.

## CHAPTER 1

### MIHAILOVIĆ ASCENDANT: THE ROMANCE OF RESISTANCE

The cover of the May 25, 1942 issue of *Time* magazine bore the image of a uniformed military man with a furrowed brow. He appeared to be middle-aged and wore a trimmed mustache but was otherwise clean-shaven. In the background stood the entrance of a cave, where an armed soldier looked out over a distant valley. While *Time* stated that this painting of Mihailović was rendered by one of his compatriots, it bore little resemblance to the 50-year old, bespectacled man with an unruly and greying beard who was currently waging guerrilla warfare within Yugoslavia. The cover's corresponding article, entitled "The Eagle of Yugoslavia," informed its readers that Mihailović was the leader of what was "probably the greatest guerrilla operation in history" and that "as a legend, Draža Mihailovich will unquestionably live as long as World War II is remembered." *Time's* visual depiction of Mihailović and the hyperbolic description of his exploits are representative of the way in which the majority of the rest of US press originally presented the story of Yugoslav resistance to the American public. Unfortunately for Mihailović and those within the United States that championed his cause, the reality of the Yugoslavian conflict and the activities and goals of the Četnik movement came into increasing conflict with this simplistic narrative of Serbian heroism.<sup>42</sup>

Among the "modes of emplotment" that White suggests are available to the

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<sup>42</sup> "The Eagle of Yugoslavia," *World Battlefronts*, *Time* 39, no. 21 (May 25, 1942), 22, accessed January 10, 2018, <http://time.com/vault/issue/1942-05-25/page/24/>.

narrator of historical events, the initial portrayal of Mihailović's resistance to Nazi occupation can best be described as romance.<sup>43</sup> According to Frye, the romantic narrative is based upon chivalric "knight-errantry."<sup>44</sup> Krapfl interprets romance as "a quest, a heroic struggle between good and evil."<sup>45</sup> In the romance, the heroic protagonist is capable of "marvelous" actions because the "the ordinary laws of nature are slightly suspended."<sup>46</sup> In this chapter, I first discuss preconceptions of the Balkans in general, and the Serbs in particular, as an explanation for the alacrity with which the US press adopted romance as the framework for its portrayal of Mihailović. I then provide an overview of American involvement in Yugoslavia leading up to the point of the Nazi invasion. After describing the impetus for the emergence of resistance in Yugoslavia, I look at the way in which Mihailović was initially presented to the American public. As will be seen, the romantic narrative and the specific components used in its construction were problematic as a framework for understanding, and establishing expectations of, the Četnik resistance.

According to Maria Todorova's concept of "balkanism," Western views of the Balkans were informed by and reflected in "a discourse of imputed ambiguity."<sup>47</sup> This

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<sup>43</sup> White, *Metahistory*, 7.

<sup>44</sup> Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays*, 15th ed. (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000), 34.

<sup>45</sup> Krapfl, *Revolution with a Human Face*, 15.

<sup>46</sup> Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, 33.

<sup>47</sup> As opposed to Edward Said's concept of "orientalism, which is a discourse about an imputed opposition" between East and West. Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, 17. One of the primary "channels and safeguards of balkanism as an ideal type" was the travelogue. *Ibid.*, 19. The very term "Balkan" as a geographic identifier within the English language can be traced to one such travelogue written by a British traveler in the late eighteenth century. *Ibid.*, 22. This genre continued to be an influential source of information on Yugoslavia through the outbreak of World War II. Perhaps the most significant of these works at the time of the war was Rebecca West's anti-German, pro-Serbian *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* (1941), which met with significant critical acclaim within the United States. An example of the many positive reviews of West's book within the US press can be found in Katherine Woods, "Rebecca West's Brilliant Mosaic of Yugoslavian Travel," *New York Times*, October

ambiguity stemmed from the Balkans state of liminality, or in-betweeness, in regard to its geography, culture, and racial makeup.<sup>48</sup> Sitting astride a civilizational crossroads, Yugoslavia was culturally and ethnically diverse. It included within its population predominantly Catholic Croats and Slovenes, Orthodox Serbs, and a substantial Muslim minority.<sup>49</sup> Developmentally, the Balkans had not achieved Western standards of modernity, but were instead in an “intermediary state somewhere between barbarity and civilization.”<sup>50</sup> While the relegation of the Balkans to such a comparatively primitive state bore with it ostensibly negative connotations, particularly in regard to a presumed propensity for violence, there could be ambiguity here as well. According to Eugene Michail, “Western attitudes” toward Balkan violence “changed according to cross-national and ideological or national and strategic priorities, producing a variety of images that competed, co-existed and alternated between different sections of the Western public.”<sup>51</sup>

The most visible US attitude toward the potential for Balkan bellicosity at the time of the German invasion of Yugoslavia can best be described as a manifestation of Serbophilia. Historian Ivo Tasovac traces this American Serbophilia to the Romanticism of the late nineteenth century, when Romantics developed a vision of

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26, 1941, accessed January 30, 2018,

<https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1941/10/26/99322995.html?pageNumber=52>.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 18. The term “liminality” was coined by Arnold van Gennep and developed by anthropologists, most notably Victor W. Turner, in their analysis of the transitional phase of rites of passage. Edward Muir, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe*, 2nd ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 21-22.

<sup>49</sup> Stevan K. Pavlowitch, *Yugoslavia* (New York: Praeger, 1971), 55.

<sup>50</sup> Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, 130. An example of this view can be found in West’s explanation for what she perceives as Yugoslav ignorance regarding capitalism and trade unionism. This ignorance was an inevitable result of that fact that “when the industrial revolution had dawned on the Western powers, the Serbs were Turkish slaves; to this day eighty-seven per cent of Yugoslavs are agricultural workers.” Rebecca West, *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon: The Record of a Journey through Yugoslavia* (New York: Penguin Books, 1994), 494.

<sup>51</sup> Eugene Michail, “Western Attitudes to War in the Balkans and the Shifting Meanings of Violence, 1912-91,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 47, no. 2 (April 2012): 221, accessed December 11, 2017, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23249185>.



Serbian preeminence among the South Slavs that found sympathy and took root in an American society “that was going through its own romantic development of Anglo-Saxon racial nationalism.” Serbian participation in the Balkan Wars and World War I served to further entrench within the American imagination an image of the Serb as “an innately heroic person—natural, undisciplined, and in love with personal freedom.”<sup>52</sup>

### FROM CREATION TO DISMEMBERMENT

Although the United States supported the creation of Yugoslavia in the immediate aftermath of World War I and defended the nascent state against territorial encroachment by the Italians, this American flirtation with Wilsonian internationalism was not to survive the interwar years.<sup>53</sup> The negligible economic ties between the two countries undoubtedly contributed to the fact that Yugoslavia remained on the

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<sup>52</sup> Ivo Tasovac, *American Foreign Policy and Yugoslavia, 1939-1941* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1999), 11-13.

<sup>53</sup> Point XI of Wilson’s Fourteen Points made explicit mention of Serbia and Montenegro, both of which were ultimately to form a part of Yugoslavia. This same point also called for the establishment of Balkan states “along historically established lines of allegiance and nationality” and that “international guarantees of the political and economic independence and territorial integrity of the several Balkan states should be entered into.” Woodrow Wilson, “President Woodrow Wilson’s Fourteen Points,” *The Avalon Project: Documents in Law, History, and Diplomacy*, accessed December 20, 2017, [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th\\_century/wilson14.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/wilson14.asp). Wilson’s Fourteen Points were received with considerable enthusiasm by many South Slavs. This is indicated by the words of one Croatian writer who proclaimed that Wilson was “like Christ” in bringing “the good news first and foremost to the small and the weak.” Josip Horvat, *Politička povijest Hrvatske*, vol. II, (Zagreb: August Cesarec, 1991), 19, quoted in Misha Glenny, *The Balkans: Nationalism, War, and the Great Powers, 1804-2011* (New York: Penguin Books, 2012), 364. On February 2, 1919, the United States was the first of the World War I powers to recognize what was then called the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. Pavlowitch, *Yugoslavia*, 53. In exchange for joining the Allies in World War I, Italy was promised territory along the eastern Adriatic in what would become Yugoslavia. Wilson vigorously protested this as a violation of the principles laid forth in his Fourteen Points. However, this bought Yugoslavia only temporary reprieve from Italy’s territorial demands. In 1920, the Yugoslavs finally made significant territorial concessions to the Italians. Glenny, *The Balkans*, 369-377. Dissatisfaction over the denial of Italy’s territorial ambitions along the eastern Adriatic following World War I, in which over 600,000 Italians were killed, contributed significantly to Mussolini’s rise to power. MacGregor Knox, *Mussolini Unleashed, 1939-1941: Politics and Strategy in Fascist Italy’s Last War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 33.

periphery of US foreign policy concerns for most of this period.<sup>54</sup> US relations with Yugoslavia were also reflective of a more general trend within American diplomacy. The Great Depression and disillusionment regarding US participation in First World War had left Americans with little appetite for involvement in European affairs. If this was true for Western Europe, it was doubly so for the Balkans. As historian George C. Herring notes, the United States “scrupulously avoided the numerous, complex, and volatile issues that divided peoples and governments against each other.”<sup>55</sup> This policy dovetailed nicely with the prevailing isolationist sentiments in America at the outset of World War II.<sup>56</sup> However, with the Nazi conquest of France and the Low Countries in 1940, a realization grew among Americans that their own security was at risk and that direct US involvement in the war was increasingly likely.<sup>57</sup>

Axis aggression in the Balkans precipitated unprecedented American interest and involvement in Yugoslav affairs. In pursuit of his expansionist ambitions for

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<sup>54</sup> Robert McCormick, *Croatia under Ante Pavelić: America, the Ustaše and Croatian Genocide* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2014), 2-3. Yugoslavia was also in default on its \$62 million dollar war debt. Vladimir Petrov, *A Study in Diplomacy: The Story of Arthur Bliss Lane* (Washington, D.C.: Public Affairs Press, 1971), 104. The Johnson Act forbid the United States to grant any loans to governments that were in default on payments to the US Treasury. David M. Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear: The American People in Depression and War, 1929-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 390.

<sup>55</sup> George C. Herring, *From Colony to Superpower: U.S. Foreign Relation since 1776* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 462. For American diplomats in Yugoslavia, this meant that they were to act as “listening posts” while refraining from any interference in domestic issues. According to the biographer of the American minister in Belgrade, Arthur Bliss Lane, “years sometimes passed without a single [State] Department message to the legation.” The use of Belgrade as a listening post is dubious, as nobody had the interest to read or the expertise to interpret the significance of most of the messages coming out of Yugoslavia. Petrov, *A Study in Diplomacy*, 103-107.

<sup>56</sup> Ivo Tasovac, *American Foreign Policy and Yugoslavia, 1939-1941* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1999), 26.

<sup>57</sup> France fell to Germany in June 1940. That same month, opinion polls indicated that support for a peacetime draft had increased from 50 to 64 percent. Roosevelt then began supporting such a measure in public. Robert Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy, 1932-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 231-232. Also, in November, polls indicated that during Roosevelt’s re-election for a third term as president, voters would have preferred his opponent by a margin of 5.5 percent if there had been no war. However, they preferred Roosevelt by 18 percent if the United States were to go to war. This indicates that his victory was, at least in part, based not upon his continued promise that the United States would not enter the war, but was instead a result of the American electorate’s assumptions about the likelihood that the US would be drawn into the war regardless of the president’s assurances to the contrary. *Ibid.*, 231-232.

Mediterranean hegemony, Mussolini ordered the invasion of Greece on October 28, 1940.<sup>58</sup> While Hitler was not opposed to Italy's attack on Greece in principle, his approval for such an undertaking was predicated upon the assumption of its military success.<sup>59</sup> Instead, poor preparation, in which Mussolini's hubris undoubtedly played no small part, ensured that the invasion was a debacle. The Italian offensive almost immediately ground to a halt. Of even greater concern to Germany, the British, in keeping with their prior guarantee of Greek independence, responded to the invasion by providing military assistance to Greece.<sup>60</sup> The developing situation in Greece exposed Germany's southern flank and posed an unacceptable threat to the invasion of the Soviet Union that Hitler planned for the following year.<sup>61</sup> It thus became clear that Germany would have to intervene in Greece on Italy's behalf. Hitler informed the Italians that he would not be able to provide military relief until spring of 1941. In the interim, he embarked upon a campaign of diplomacy in the region in order to smooth the way for the swift deployment of German troops into Greece and minimize any impact this diversion might have on his plans regarding the Soviet Union.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> The attack on Greece was launched from Albania. In pursuit of empire, Italy had already invaded Albania on April 7, 1939 and then vacillated in its view of either Yugoslavia or Greece as the next potential target of invasion within the Balkans. Martin L. Van Creveld, *Hitler's Strategy 1940-1941: The Balkan Clue* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 7.

<sup>59</sup> Hitler unintentionally contributed to the timing of the invasion of Greece by not consulting with Italy on his decision to grant the request of Romania's leader, Ion Antonescu, for German troops to be sent to Romania. This resulted in a loss of face for Mussolini and also raised Italian concerns about Germany's domination of the Balkans, a region that Italy considered to be within its sphere of interest. In response to this "*fait accompli*," Mussolini declared that Hitler "shall learn from the newspapers that I have occupied Greece. Thus equilibrium shall be restored." Gerhard Schreiber, Bernd Stegemann, and Detlef Vogel, *Germany and the Second World War, vol. 3, The Mediterranean, South-East Europe, and North Africa 1939-1941* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 408-409. Though Hitler discouraged Italian designs on Yugoslavia, Creveld argues that, in early October, Hitler essentially gave Mussolini the "green light" to invade Greece. According to Creveld, Hitler believed that Axis-occupied Greece would serve Germany's strategic interests as a "bastion" within the eastern Mediterranean. Creveld, *Hitler's Strategy 1940-1941*, 179-180.

<sup>60</sup> Schreiber, et al., *Germany and the Second World War*, 454.

<sup>61</sup> Creveld, *Hitler's Strategy 1940-1941*, 181.

<sup>62</sup> Schreiber, et al., *Germany and the Second World War*, 456.

Hitler was increasingly concerned about Yugoslavia, which not only remained neutral and adamant in its refusal of the passage of German troops through Yugoslav territory, but was also being courted by the British and Americans.<sup>63</sup> While Hitler endeavored to create a crescent of Axis-allied states as a secure land route to Greece, the British worked to persuade Turkey, Yugoslavia, and Bulgaria to join together in a united Balkan front in order to resist further German intrusion into the region.<sup>64</sup> However, Yugoslavia entered into a nonaggression pact with Germany in early December. At approximately this same time, Mussolini requested that Hitler pressure Yugoslavia to sign the Tripartite Pact in order to draw Greek troops to the Yugoslav border and away from the stalled Albanian front. In turn, Nazi Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop instructed the German representative in Belgrade to inform the Yugoslavian government that the nonaggression pact was insufficient as a basis for the relationship with Yugoslavia that the Germans "envisaged."<sup>65</sup>

In order to aid the British in their effort to counter German overtures and stiffen the resolve of the Balkan states, the future head of the OSS, William Donovan, embarked upon a tour of the region in January 1941.<sup>66</sup> His visit with the Yugoslav regent, Prince Paul, on January 23, 1941 initially appeared to have succeeded in

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 459-461.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 457; J. R. M. Butler, *Grand Strategy, vol. 2, September 1939-June 1941* (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1957), 374.

<sup>65</sup> Dragiša N. Ristić, *Yugoslavia's Revolution of 1941* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1966), 51.

<sup>66</sup> Tasovac, *American Foreign Policy and Yugoslavia*, 80. Even though the United States remained ostensibly neutral, President Roosevelt took a number of incremental steps to aid the beleaguered British both diplomatically and materially. Donovan's tour can thus be seen as one way in which the president sought to assist the British via "methods short of war." Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear*, 420.

encouraging the formation of a regional alliance.<sup>67</sup> The State Department representative in Belgrade, Arthur Bliss Lane, reported on January 25 that

[Prince Paul] stated flatly Yugoslavia would refuse consent of the passage of German troops and would resist attack. In reply to questions as to what his country would do if German troops entered Bulgaria he said, "It is most difficult. I believe we will attack. [Germany entry into Bulgaria] encircles us. But my people are not all agreed. The time has come to act on principle, to abandon expediency." He still felt that Germany did not wish trouble in the Balkans. After discussion he said that the establishment of a Balkan line was necessary in order to finally defeat Germany.<sup>68</sup>

The British Foreign Office (FO) also reported to the State Department that Turkey was engaged with Yugoslavia in discussions over "common action" and asked that the United States' representatives in the respective countries "encourage the Yugoslav and Turkish Governments to follow up this initial effort."<sup>69</sup> Secretary of State Cordell Hull was noncommittal in his response to the British suggestion.<sup>70</sup> He also informed Lane that it was not the policy of the Department of State "to initiate directly such a policy" as the establishment of a Balkan union in opposition to Nazi aggression.<sup>71</sup>

Hull's response to his minister and the British may seem odd considering the apparent purpose of Donovan's visit to the Balkans at the president's behest. By all appearances, American foreign policy of noninterference in the Balkans had not changed. However, while Hull provided a veneer of diplomatic propriety, others such

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<sup>67</sup> Donovan was accompanied by a British military officer, Vivian Dykes, who recorded a daily summation of Donovan's activities in his diary. Alex Danchev, *Establishing the Anglo-American Alliance: The Second World War Diaries of Vivian Dykes* (New York: Brassey's, 1990), 40-41.

<sup>68</sup> Lane to Hull, January 25, 1941, in *Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers* [Henceforth *FRUS*], 1941: *Volume II, Europe*, (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1959), 939, <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1941v02>.

<sup>69</sup> The British Embassy to the Department of State, February 4, 1941, *FRUS, 1941: Volume II, Europe*, 940.

<sup>70</sup> "Memorandum of Conversation, by the Secretary of State," February 5, 1941, *FRUS, 1941: Volume II, Europe*, 941.

<sup>71</sup> Hull to Lane, January 19, 1941, *FRUS, 1941: Volume II, Europe*, 940.

as Donovan and undersecretary of state Welles engaged in what were, according to diplomatic norms, more questionable activities.<sup>72</sup> In addition to his meetings with the Yugoslav prime minister, foreign minister, and regent, Donovan met with the former Yugoslav chief of staff, General Dušan Simović, who was “all out to fight the Germans” and impressed Donovan “very favourably” according to Donovan’s British travel companion.<sup>73</sup> One way in which Simović may have impressed Donovan is suggested by Donovan’s biographer, Richard Dunlop:

Simović told Donovan that he believed concessions to Germany would be deadly and would destroy Yugoslavia’s chance to resist invasion. Certainly the Yugoslavs, tough mountain people with a knowledge of every pass and crag, would be able to make their rugged terrain an ally. Donovan and Simović talked over Simović’s plans for a coup d’état against the government of Prince Paul. The patriots would strike as soon as the government signed an agreement with the Axis and would place royal authority in the hands of 17-year-old King Peter, who agreed that Paul had outlived his usefulness.<sup>74</sup>

Donovan met with other members of the Yugoslav military as well. He also made promises of American material aid to Yugoslavia in a meeting with Yugoslav intelligence officers and asked them to make a list of their requests, despite the fact that he knew such a request would go unfulfilled.<sup>75</sup>

Any positive effect that Donovan had appeared to have on the Yugoslav government proved to be illusory. Hitler, concerned about reports of Yugoslav military mobilization, grew even less content with Yugoslavia’s neutrality and

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<sup>72</sup> Tasovac, *American Foreign Policy and Yugoslavia*, 57. According to Sherwood, “the State Department was compelled by twenty years of isolationism to operate on the principle that the Alpha and Omega of American foreign policy is to *keep out of war* [emphasis in original].” As such, its functions became “atrophied,” and Roosevelt increasingly looked to either bypass Hull or look outside of the department altogether in order to “get things done” on the international level. Robert E. Sherwood, *Roosevelt and Hopkins: An Intimate History* (New York: Harpers & Brothers, 1948), 135.

<sup>73</sup> Danchev, *Establishing the Anglo-American Alliance*, 41.

<sup>74</sup> Richard Dunlop, *Donovan: America’s Master Spy* (New York: Sky Horse Publishing, 2014), 259.

<sup>75</sup> Tasovac, *American Foreign Policy and Yugoslavia*, 85.

increased pressure on the country to enter into the Tripartite Pact.<sup>76</sup> Romania and Hungary had previously acceded to the alliance in November 1940. Bulgaria became a signatory in early March 1941.<sup>77</sup> With the exception of Greece, Yugoslavia was surrounded on all sides by members of the Axis alliance. Yugoslavia's geographic position and economic reliance upon Germany placed it in an unenviable position.<sup>78</sup> In a report to Secretary Hull on March 21, Lane described a meeting he had with Prince Paul in which Lane attempted to dissuade him from entering into an alliance with Germany, which now seemed imminent. To Lane's suggestion that continued neutrality would maintain Yugoslavia's "diplomatic integrity" and "reputation abroad," Prince Paul retorted that, "You big nations are hard, you talk of honor, but you are far away."<sup>79</sup> On March 25, Yugoslavia entered into the Tripartite Pact, though its membership in the Axis alliance was to be short-lived. On March 27, the military carried out a coup d'état, placing King Peter II on the throne.<sup>80</sup> General Simović, the architect of the coup, was promptly sworn in as prime minister.<sup>81</sup>

Although Yugoslavia's entrance into the Tripartite Pact was the occasion for the coup, Serbian dissatisfaction with the domestic policies of Prince Paul was one of its

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<sup>76</sup> A German attaché in Belgrade reported troop mobilizations in Macedonia in March 1941. Schreiber, et al., *Germany and the Second World War*, 472.

<sup>77</sup> Stevan K. Pavlowitch, *Hitler's New Disorder: The Second World War in Yugoslavia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 11.

<sup>78</sup> Yugoslavia provided raw materials to Germany in exchange for industrial goods and became increasingly economically reliant upon Germany as the war progressed. Schreiber, et al., *Germany and the Second World War*, 473. Germany was especially reliant upon Yugoslavia for mineral resources. This was particularly true of aluminum, of which Yugoslavia provided approximately one third of German demand, and tin, which was supplied in sufficient quantities to almost entirely meet German needs. Creveld, *Hitler's Strategy 1940-1941*, 4.

<sup>79</sup> Lane to Hull, March 21, 1941, *FRUS: 1941, Volume II, Europe*, 962-963.

<sup>80</sup> Pavlowitch, *Hitler's New Disorder*, 12-13.

<sup>81</sup> For a detailed account of the coup as it occurred, as well as the role that Simović played in leading it and forming the subsequent government, see Ristić, *Yugoslavia's Revolution of 1941*, 84-112.

primary underlying causes.<sup>82</sup> Chief among these offending policies was the *Sporazum*, or agreement, reached between the government and Croatian political leaders in 1939. Since Yugoslavia's creation there had been significant tension between the Croats and Serbs regarding the way in which their respective nationalities and territories would be incorporated into and governed within the newly formed country. These tensions could erupt in violence, as they did when a Montenegrin member of the Serb Radical Party opened fire on and killed multiple Croat colleagues within the Yugoslav parliament in 1928. In response, King Alexander abolished the parliament and established a dictatorship.<sup>83</sup> He also reorganized Yugoslavia administratively and created provinces that "ignored... historical and ethnic" boundaries.<sup>84</sup>

While Croats originally envisioned the establishment of an autonomous Croatian state within Yugoslavia, many Serbs believed that Croatia should simply be absorbed into the existing Serbian state and subordinated to its centralized rule.<sup>85</sup> Prince Paul acquiesced to Croatian demands and approved the *Sporazum*, which created the Banovina, or province, of Croatia and granted it a significant degree of autonomy and signaled the return to traditional, ethnically-based administrative borders. This agreement was met with resentment by many Serbs, who viewed it as a concession made at the expense of their deservedly dominant role within Yugoslavia and served to invigorate Serbian nationalism.<sup>86</sup>

Besides serving as the galvanizing force behind the coup, this nationalism also

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<sup>82</sup> Pavlowitch, *Hitler's New Disorder*, 14.

<sup>83</sup> Pavlowitch, *Yugoslavia*, 72-74.

<sup>84</sup> Dennison Rusinow, "The Yugoslav Peoples," in *Eastern European Nationalism in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Peter F. Sugar (Washington, D.C.: The American University Press, 1995), 376.

<sup>85</sup> Pavlowitch, *Yugoslavia*, 57-8.

<sup>86</sup> Pavlowitch, *Hitler's New Disorder*, 5-8.



revitalized the idea of a Greater Serbia. According to this scheme, Yugoslavia would bring in those Serbs who currently resided outside of its borders and rid itself of minority populations via “population exchanges,” thus allowing the Serbs to reassert their hegemonic position within the state.<sup>87</sup> This Pan-Serb ideology would come to have an understandably polarizing effect among Yugoslavia’s constituent ethnic groups. It would also come to be associated with Mihailović and many of his most ardent supporters within the YGE and Serb-American community.

The accessibility of the heroic Serbian image, and the positive view of its violent potential, among American journalists is apparent within their reports of the March coup and expectations regarding the subsequent invasion. For instance, a *New York Times*’ headline on April 6, 1941 proclaimed the “Balkans Aflame.” There was no trepidation about this conflagration. Rather, it was hoped that it would ultimately consume the Nazi invaders. The article went on to note that

the Serbs are a singing race. Many of their folksongs and war chants are centuries old. Last week Serbian voices raised in the streets of Belgrade and many of the singers were marching men.... Southward, in a mountain fastness, the Yugoslavs were expected to make their stand, and rely on their national tradition of guerrilla fighting. Such warfare, with its sudden forays on supply columns and on communications, might prove formidable, as in the World War, to the German military.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 55.

<sup>88</sup> “Balkans Aflame,” *New York Times*, April 6, 1941, accessed February 1, 2018, <https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1941/04/06/85476325.html?pageNumber=98>. This use of mountainous imagery as an integral, and either implicitly or explicitly primitive, feature of the Serbian character, was emblematic of much of the reporting on Yugoslav resistance. An example of the many explicit uses of the word “primitive” in relation to the Serbs can be found in the *Life* magazine article that describes a Serbian guerrilla commander “leading large bands of well-organized troops in the primitive mountains of his nation.” Harry Zinder and George Maranz, “‘Invisible War’ in Yugoslavia,” *Life*’s Reports, *Life* (November 24, 1941), 24, accessed December 10, 2017, <https://books.google.com/books?id=UU4EAAAAMBAJ&lpg=PA3&pg=PA3#v=onepage&q&f=false>. Also, *The New York Times* reported on April 5, 1941 that “the Balkan peasant still lives in close partnership with nature. For centuries his mountains... have been his allies... you see that for them modern war is just primitive war—an affair of ambushes, guerrilla bands, mountain pass battles, physical endurance.” Anne O’Hare McCormick, “The Croats Play a Star Role in the Balkan Drama,”

This belief in the Serbs' fighting spirit was soon put to the test, and the immediate results were not in keeping with the expectation of either the US government or press.

Hitler, furious upon learning of the *coup*, ordered his military staff "to smash Yugoslavia militarily and as a state-form."<sup>89</sup> On April 6 the Nazis initiated the invasion of Yugoslavia with Operation 'Retribution,' during which the *Luftwaffe* mercilessly bombed the defenseless capital of Belgrade.<sup>90</sup> The ensuing ground invasion was a rout. On April 17, members of the Yugoslav military agreed to an unconditional surrender in the absence of King Peter and his cabinet, who had fled the country in the midst of the deteriorating military situation.<sup>91</sup> Hitler quickly set about dismantling the "creation of the hated Versailles system" and partitioned the country among his allies. In the words of historian Mark Mazower, Yugoslavia "was erased from the map."<sup>92</sup>

Two of the states that emerged from Hitler's reconfiguration of Yugoslavia were the Independent State of Croatia (NDH) and the residual state of Serbia. The NDH was headed by Ante Pavelić. Pavelić was the leader of the Ustaše, a fascist and separatist organization of Croat extremists that emerged following the establishment of the Yugoslav dictatorship and which directed the subsequent assassination of King Alexander in 1934.<sup>93</sup> General Milan Nedić was appointed as president of the

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*New York Times*, April 5, 1941, accessed February 1, 2018, <https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1941/04/05/85475459.html?pageNumber=16>.

<sup>89</sup> Ian Kershaw, *Hitler 1936-1945: Nemesis* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2000), 362.

<sup>90</sup> Schreiber, et al., *Germany and the Second World War*, 497.

<sup>91</sup> Jozo Tomasevich, *War and Revolution in Yugoslavia, 1941-1945: The Chetniks* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1975), 71-73.

<sup>92</sup> Mark Mazower, *Hitler's Empire: How the Nazis Ruled Europe* (New York: Penguin, 2008), 133.

<sup>93</sup> Pavlowitch, *Hitler's New Disorder*, 1-5.

collaborationist regime within the puppet state of Serbia.<sup>94</sup>

Many within the United States were shocked by and sought to explain the speed with which the Yugoslav army was defeated. Historian Ivo Tasovac assesses that the overestimation of Yugoslavia's military capabilities stemmed in part from the "unusual faith... in the Serbian willingness to fight the Germans" expressed by those like the US military attaché in Yugoslavia.<sup>95</sup> Before the campaign in Yugoslavia was even over, *The New York Times* reported that "hopes arose from American surveys such as that made by Colonel J. Donovan... that the Yugoslavs would fall back to their difficult mountain country, engage the Germans for a period, knock the Italians out of Albania and give Hitler his second great problem of the war." While the article concluded that the "Nazi air arm and ground machines upset this expectation," others looked to a more insidious explanation for Yugoslavia's humiliating performance.<sup>96</sup> According to some, the traitorous Croats were to blame.<sup>97</sup> This signaled the emergence of an anti-Croat propaganda campaign that would become intertwined with the romantic narrative of Mihailović.

## ENTER MIHAILOVIĆ

Following the invasion of Yugoslavia, the US government lost access to firsthand information about what was happening there. The US minister, Lane, left the country

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 58.

<sup>95</sup> Tasovac, *American Foreign Policy and Yugoslavia*, 114.

<sup>96</sup> Arthur Krock, "Balkan Developments React on Washington," *New York Times*, April 13, 1941, accessed February 10, 2018, <https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1941/04/13/85479156.html?pageNumber=89>.

<sup>97</sup> Tomasevich, *War and Revolution in Yugoslavia*, 264.

on May 17, 1941, and the consulate in Zagreb was closed in June.<sup>98</sup> From mid-1941 until the arrival of OSS in operatives in 1943, the US government was largely dependent upon sources such as the YGE, the Yugoslav émigré community within the United States, and the British government for information about the Yugoslav resistance forces and their activities.

For their part, the British were initially no better positioned than the United States to determine, let alone influence, what was happening within occupied Yugoslavia. The British apparently underestimated the rapidity and totality with which Yugoslavia would be defeated.<sup>99</sup> Historian Jørgen Hæstrop notes that the military collapse in Yugoslavia “came so suddenly that neither the SOE nor any other British authority managed to arrange for any contact in the country. Not so much as a radio transmission set was left behind, and when later a new fumbling start was made, it had to be from scratch.”<sup>100</sup> It was thus absent any British or American involvement that a general uprising began in early July, largely as a result of communist initiative.<sup>101</sup>

Organized resistance to Axis occupation first emerged in Yugoslavia following the German invasion of the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941. This “fundamentally altered the situation in Yugoslavia,” according to historian Simon Trew, as it put into

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<sup>98</sup> Arthur Bliss Lane, “Conquest in Yugoslavia,” *Life* (September 15, 1941), 112, accessed August 1, 2018, <https://books.google.com/books?id=q0wEAAAAMBAJ&lpg=PP1&pg=PP1#v=onepage&q&f=false>; McCormick, *Croatia under Ante Pavelić*, 84.

<sup>99</sup> David Stafford, *Britain and European Resistance, 1940-1945: A Survey of the Special Operations Executive, with Documents* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), 52.

<sup>100</sup> Jørgen Hæstrop, *European Resistance Movements, 1939-1945: A Complete History* (Westport, CT: Meckler Publishing, 1981), 190. The British Special Operations Executive (SOE) was created in response to the likelihood of Germany’s defeat of France. The British recognized in the spring of 1940 that a “special organization” would be needed to carry out the “major British strategic objective” of creating “widespread revolt in Germany’s conquered territory.” M.R.D. Foot, *SOE: An Outline History of the Special Operations Executive, 1940-46*, rev. ed. (USA: University Publications of America, Inc., 1986), 18. The SOE encouraged the *coup*, though Pavlowitch argues that, in doing so, they were “merely pushing an open door.” Pavlowitch, *Hitler’s New Disorder*, 14.

<sup>101</sup> Jozo Tomasevich, *War and Revolution in Yugoslavia*, 140.

play the two primary resistance groups, the Četniks under Mihailović and the Partisans under Tito. Prior to the open revolt that the invasion of the Soviet Union ignited, both groups had avoided engaging either one another or the occupying forces.<sup>102</sup> Although both leaders participated in the rebellion, the defeat of the Germans soon became a secondary concern for both Mihailović and Tito. Both men quickly came to believe in the inevitability of Germany's defeat and expulsion from Yugoslavia.<sup>103</sup> This belief led them to instead focus on ensuring that their individual and mutually-exclusive visions of Yugoslavia would prevail in the war's aftermath. Tito, as the leader of the Communist Party in Yugoslavia, saw the conflict as an opportunity to achieve political revolution. He also increasingly came to see Mihailović as a reactionary impediment to this goal.<sup>104</sup> Mihailović, a colonel in the defeated Yugoslav army, refused to recognize capitulation and wanted to maintain "the persistence of the Yugoslav state."<sup>105</sup> At least some historians have concluded that his ultimate goal was "to create a greater Serbia" that was to be "based on traditionalist principles."<sup>106</sup> Regardless of whether or not he was an adherent of Pan-Serbism, Mihailović saw himself as a representative and defender of the traditional Yugoslavian order. He thus quickly recognized Tito as the greatest threat to his vision of Yugoslavia's postwar future.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Simon Trew, *Britain, Mihailović, and the Chetniks, 1941-42* (New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1998), 9-10.

<sup>103</sup> Pavlowitch, *Hitler's New Disorder*, 146-147.

<sup>104</sup> Tomasevich, *War and Revolution in Yugoslavia*, 154.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>106</sup> Robert Gellately, *Stalin's Curse: Battling for Communism in War and Cold War* (New York: Vintage Books, 2013), 262. Pavlowitch asserts that it is not known what Mihailović thought of Pan-Serbism, but notes that "he was not politically minded, stuck to the Yugoslavia that he knew and served, and welcomed those non-Serbs that rallied to him." Pavlowitch, *Hitler's New Disorder*, 55. According to Aleksa Djilas, "Many [Serbs] did not consciously pursue hegemony but were simply unable to see Yugoslavia as anything but an extension of Serbia." Aleksa Djilas, *The Contested Country: Yugoslav Unity and Communist Revolution, 1919-1953* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 193, quoted in Rusinow, "The Yugoslav Peoples," 374.

<sup>107</sup> Tomasevich, *War and Revolution in Yugoslavia*, 145.

Although Mihailović's Četniks initially joined the revolt in cooperation with Partisans, the "uncertain *modus vivendi*," by which the two groups agreed to fight the Axis occupiers rather than one another, quickly collapsed.<sup>108</sup> Mihailović felt pressured into action lest the uprising, and any territory liberated as a consequence of it, fall entirely under communist control.<sup>109</sup> Considering that this was his primary motivation for entering the fray, it is unsurprising that it was difficult to maintain peace between the two groups. Cooperation was also undermined by the Četniks' and Partisans' "differences in tactics and between the aims of their movements."<sup>110</sup> Tito was much more willing to engage the occupiers and accept any subsequent reprisals against the civilian populace than was Mihailović, who wanted to postpone decisive action until the arrival of the Allies.<sup>111</sup> From Tito's perspective, violence contributed to a breakdown of society that was conducive to revolution.<sup>112</sup> As a result of these irreconcilable differences, the resistance activities of the Partisans and Chetniks soon devolved into internecine strife.

As word of the uprising spread, the YGE, which had established itself in London after fleeing Yugoslavia, officially recognized Mihailović as the leader of the resistance forces and promoted him from colonel to general.<sup>113</sup> Given the choice between recognizing and advocating for Allied support of either Mihailović or revolutionary communists, it is understandable that the YGE chose the former. Also, despite British awareness of the Partisans' participation in the fighting, the BBC

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<sup>108</sup> Pavlowitch, *Hitler's New Disorder*, 60.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 140.

<sup>110</sup> Tomasevich, *War and Revolution in Yugoslavia*, 141.

<sup>111</sup> Pavlowitch, *Hitler's New Disorder*, 187.

<sup>112</sup> Heather Williams, *Parachutes, Patriots, and Partisans: The Special Operations Executive in Yugoslavia, 1941-1945* (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), 60.

<sup>113</sup> M.R.D. Foot, *Resistance: European Resistance to Nazism, 1940-1945* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1977), 192.

originally attributed the uprising to the leadership of Mihailović, contributing to the rise of the romantic narrative in which he and his Četniks were hailed as the exemplars of anti-Axis resistance.<sup>114</sup> The US press quickly adopted this narrative as well.

The pervasive belief in the Serbs' fighting prowess was likely a contributing factor to the numerous reports of heroic feats that flourished following the recognition of Mihailović as the leader of the rebellion in Yugoslavia. For example, *Life* magazine assured its readers on November 24, 1941 that Mihailović's "army of Serb patriots today controls a quarter of Yugoslavia and most of the important railway lines."<sup>115</sup> Similarly, an article in the January 13, 1942, edition of the *Chicago Daily Tribune* announced that Mihailović, the "Serb 'Robin Hood,'" was in "absolute control of over 20,000 square miles" as a result of his "brilliant undercover campaign."<sup>116</sup> By August 12, 1942, *Yank* claimed that Četnik control had expanded to two-thirds of the country, marking the opening of "a second front."<sup>117</sup>

There were other reasons than just Serbophilia that contributed to the seeming credulity with which these fantastical tales about Mihailović's military successes were spread and consumed within the United States. This romantic narrative was at least in part a result of the lack of firsthand American reporting from the region that held true for not only the US government, but also for the US press. For example, Ray Brock of *The New York Times*, reported prolifically on Yugoslav affairs, but following the invasion he did so from Ankara. Therefore, he relied upon secondhand sources, such

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<sup>114</sup> David Stafford, *Britain and European Resistance, 1940-1945: A Survey of the Special Operations Executive, with Documents* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), 74.

<sup>115</sup> Zinder and Maranz, "'Invisible War' in Yugoslavia," 24.

<sup>116</sup> "Mihailovitch, Serb 'Robin Hood,' Named Minister of War," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, January 13, 1942, accessed January 10, 2018, <http://chicagotribune.newspapers.com/image/194736606/>.

<sup>117</sup> "The V Front Makes Ready to Join the Second Front," *Yank: The Army Newspaper*, August 12, 1942, 9, accessed January 10, 2018, <https://archive.org/details/YankMagazine12Aug42>.

as a Serbian “eyewitness” and “the intelligence staffs of several powers,” to provide the information used in composing articles like the one of February 1, 1942, which claimed that the Četniks had turned Yugoslavia into “one vast battlefield.”<sup>118</sup> Another factor that contributed to the dominance of this romantic narrative was that the initial outbreak of guerrilla warfare in Yugoslavia represented one of the few instances of concerted effort on the part of a conquered people to violently resist absorption into Hitler’s expanding empire. It would not be until 1943, following the German defeats at Stalingrad and El Alamein, that the aura of the *Wehrmacht*’s invincibility was diminished enough for a belief in the possibility of Germany’s ultimate defeat to emerge, with a concomitant spread of armed resistance to Nazi occupation throughout Europe.<sup>119</sup> Thus, as the Germans launched what seemed to be yet another successful *Blitzkrieg*, this time against the Red Army, during summer of 1941, the news of the Yugoslav uprising provided a uniquely positive development within occupied Europe on which the US press might report.

The Četnik successes against the *Wehrmacht*, a seemingly unstoppable juggernaut that had conquered much of continental Europe with alarming speed and disconcerting ease, undoubtedly seemed incredible. According to Paul Fussell the “the Second World War was a notably secular affair,” marked more by “skepticism” than superstition.<sup>120</sup> Though this would seem to preclude the preternatural heroism of the archetypal romance, it is hard to describe the above-mentioned exploits of Mihailović,

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<sup>118</sup> Ray Brock, “‘Either They Die or We Do’: That is the Cry of the Chetniks who Pour Hate on the Nazi Soldiers in Yugoslavia,” *New York Times*, February 1, 1942, accessed February 1, 2018, <https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1942/02/01/85514436.html?pageNumber=138>.

<sup>119</sup> István Deák, *Europe on Trial: The Story of Collaboration, Resistance, and Retribution during World War II* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2015), 107.

<sup>120</sup> Paul Fussell, *Wartime: Understanding and Behavior in the Second World War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 51.



or their myriad other permutations as reported by the US press, as anything but miraculous. They also bore little resemblance to the reality of the situation in Yugoslavia.

The atrocities committed under Axis occupation served as ample proof of the nature of Mihailović's enemies. An example of what the Yugoslavs were experiencing is suggested by a message that King Peter sent to FDR in July 1942:

General [Mihailović] reports on the crimes and massacres committed on the Serb population by Hungarians and Pavelić's regime. This report says that these crimes have now reached the point where city authorities of Belgrade have officially forbidden swimming in the Sava and Danube rivers, because their waters, flowing through the regions occupied by Hungary and Pavelić's government have been contaminated by the massacred human bodies floating in their course. In Belgrade alone during the month of May 760 persons have been executed by the Germans without trial, explanation, or any apparent cause.<sup>121</sup>

Notably, the victims of these and other atrocities were invariably identified as Serbian. The US press joined in spreading news of the Axis brutality toward the Serbs. One of the numerous examples of this can be found in *The New York Times* report that "reliable sources in Yugoslavia tell a tale of ruthless savagery and horror. In all parts of Yugoslavia that are inhabited by Serbs, Germans, Hungarians, and Bulgarians are said to be competing with each other in what reports declare are cold-blooded massacres aiming at extermination of the Serbian people."<sup>122</sup> The evil of Mihailović's adversaries, as evidenced by their treatment of the Serbs, added a Manichaean dualism to the romantic narrative of Mihailović's struggle.

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<sup>121</sup> King Peter II of Yugoslavia to President Roosevelt, July 22, 1942, *FRUS: 1942, Volume III. Europe.*, (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1961), 804, <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1942v03>.

<sup>122</sup> "Savage Treatment of Serbs Alleged," *New York Times*, May 20, 1941, accessed February 1, 2018, <https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1941/05/20/85495502.html?pageNumber=9>.

Proponents of Greater Serbia attempted to use these atrocities to further their agenda. That Yugoslavs in general, and Serbs in particular, suffered horribly under occupation is beyond question. The war would leave 1.75 million Yugoslavs, or approximately 11 percent of the population, dead.<sup>123</sup> Serbs suffered particularly harsh treatment at the hands of the Ustaše within the NDH, where it is estimated that between 300,000 to over 400,000 Serbs were killed.<sup>124</sup> Rather than emphasizing the culpability of Pavelić and his followers for these atrocities, those seeking to reassert Serbian hegemony in postwar Yugoslavia instead blamed Croats as a whole. Within the United States, the primary voice of anti-Croatian propaganda, as well as one of Mihailović's most vociferous promoters, was *Amerikanski Srbobran*, the foreign-language paper produced by the Serbian National Federation (SNF).<sup>125</sup>

Pan-Serbism had an auspicious beginning within the United States, particularly in regard to anti-Croat sentiment. Many members of the US press were ready to join the Pan-Serbs in painting the Croats as the traitors responsible for Yugoslavia's defeat. There were "traitors under every rock" according to correspondent Cecil B. Brown's account of his experience in Yugoslavia during the time of the German invasion. Besides having his vehicle stopped by a "Croat in Nazi uniform," he also observed "Croat fifth columnists" aiding in the identification of "suspiciously loyal Serbs and Bosnians," who were then "placed under guard." As Brown's interview of a Serb military commander in the field made clear, the Croats had betrayed Yugoslavia.

A tragic and majestic figure, General Nedelkovitch. Three days before, this rotund, heavy-faced, mild-mannered, fifty-nine-year-old general

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<sup>123</sup> Ben Shepherd, *Terror in the Balkans: German Armies and Partisan Warfare* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), 1.

<sup>124</sup> Pavlowitch, *Hitler's New Disorder*, 34.

<sup>125</sup> Tomasevich, *War and Revolution in Yugoslavia*, 267.

himself had been engaged in hand-to-hand fighting with the German invaders. Two of his four staff officers had been killed in bayonet battles with the Nazis. These men were Serbs, General Nedelkovitch had seen 40 per cent of his troops killed, and 50 per cent, all Croats, desert or refuse to answer the call to arms.<sup>126</sup>

Even FDR seemed to be swept up in the Serbophile fervor. According to the Yugoslav Ambassador to the United States, Konstantin Fotić, on December 20, 1941, Roosevelt responded to a memorandum that detailed Croat atrocities by assuring Fotić that “the Serbs will rise again as a great people.” The President then went on to question “how, after such horrible crimes, [the Serbs] could expect to live in the future in the same state with the Croats.”<sup>127</sup> Those that desired to see the creation of a postwar Greater Serbia were undoubtedly encouraged that the US press and government seemed to have adopted a sympathetic outlook on Yugoslav affairs.

The narrative of Mihailović’s valiant battle against the forces of evil demanded that the United States assist him. One of the many examples of this interpretation of America’s proper relationship to the Četniks can be seen in a message sent to FDR by his son, who was serving under Donovan in the newly created Office of the Coordinator of Information (COI), on November 24, 1941.

In the hills of [Yugoslavia], Colonel [Mihailović], a modern Marion, and 30,000 Serbs, Croats, and Greeks are fighting the Axis. They have wirelessly a desperate appeal for help to you and Mr. Churchill. The world is just becoming aware of this battle still raging in the interior of Europe. The struggle of the Serb guerrillas is as dramatic as the World War I fight of the Armenians against the Turks.... To aid these people, to let them know they have made contact with the outside world, to

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<sup>126</sup> Cecil B. Brown, “The Germans are Coming,” *Saturday Evening Post* 214, no. 8 (August 23, 1941), 59-61, accessed February 18, 2018, EBSCOhost.

<sup>127</sup> Konstantin Fotić, *The War We Lost: Yugoslavia’s Tragedy and the Failure of the West* (New York: Viking Press, 1948), 128-9.

show them their pleas have not fallen on deaf ears, we propose to send a bomber load of medical supplies....<sup>128</sup>

As evidenced by the above message, the romantic narrative of Četnik resistance resonated on an emotional level with at least some officials in the US government.

## CONCLUSION

The romantic narrative initially garnered significant American sympathy for the Serbs suffering within Yugoslavia and support for the Četnik cause. However, this sympathy and support was based upon a superficial understanding of Yugoslavia. Misinformation and preconceived notions about the Balkans and its inhabitants contributed to this understanding. This unsound foundation would not be able to bear the weight of the romantic narrative over time. The image of the Balkans was malleable, and as word of the conflict between the Četniks and the Partisans began to filter into the Western press, Americans would prove more than able and willing to abandon their positive view of Balkan volatility and violence. Also, the reach of Serbophilia within the United States had its limits, as would be discovered by the proponents of the Pan-Serb ideology.

Nonetheless, through 1941 and much of 1942, Mihailović was lauded as a hero by the American press and government officials. Unfortunately for him, US support was limited primarily to pledges of future aid. The near-term reason for this was a problem of logistics. This is indicated by a meeting that King Peter had with Donovan in the United States in November 1942. According to the king's memoir, he was

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<sup>128</sup> Captain James Roosevelt, "Memorandum for the President," November 24, 1941, FDR Library's Digital Collections, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Papers as President: The President's Secretary's File (PSF), 1933-1945, box 128, Coordinator of Information, 1941, accessed January 30, 2018, [http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/\\_resources/images/psf/psf000509.pdf](http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/_resources/images/psf/psf000509.pdf).

assured that aid for Mihailović “would be forthcoming as soon there were enough long-range bomber in the Middle East to permit it.”<sup>129</sup> There is no reason to doubt the sincerity of this assurance, as the United States did increase its material support to Yugoslavia considerably in the coming years. However, by that time the romantic narrative had, for many Americans, run its course.

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<sup>129</sup> Peter II, King of Yugoslavia, *A King's Heritage* (New York: Van Rees Press, 1954), 145.

## CHAPTER 2

### MIHAILOVIĆ: THE REACTIONARY AND RACIST COLLABORATOR

In 1944, the military intelligence staff of the Allied Force Headquarters in the Mediterranean Theatre published a confidential report detailing the activities of the Četniks that presented Mihailović in a far less flattering light than did the earlier romantic narrative. It focused on the ways in which Mihailović “placed in the forefront of his policy not the expulsion of the enemy invaders but the suppression of a group of his countrymen to whose aims he was inexorably opposed, and whom he regarded as his most serious rivals for power after the collapse of the Germans which he thought ultimately inevitable.” His view of the Partisans as his principal enemy led Mihailović to adopt “various measures of collaboration with the Axis which [had] been a serious factor in causing the Allies to withdraw support” from him.<sup>130</sup>

In addition to accusing Mihailović of collaboration, the military also concluded that the Četniks were Pan-Serb. The handbook went on to describe the group of “political figures” with “violently chauvinistic convictions” who attached themselves to the Četniks. As a consequence of these political figures’ influence,

the intense Serb nationalism which animated this group caused them to ascribe the military collapse of Yugoslavia... to Croat treachery and a myth of “stab in the back” was carefully fostered in a way similar to that which flourished in similar psychological conditions in post-1918 Germany... To this anti-Croat and Great-Serb trend was allied the hostility of [Mihailović] and the officer class towards Communism, coupled with the profession of undying loyalty to the King.... Of the

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<sup>130</sup> G-2, Allied Force Headquarters, *The Četniks: A Survey of Četnik Activity in Yugoslavia, April 1941—July 1944* (Printing and Stationary Services CMF, September, 1944), 11-12.

violent Great-Serb nature of Mihailović's early policy and propaganda there is ample evidence.<sup>131</sup>

While the handbook acknowledged that Mihailović was able to achieve a degree of unity across ethnic boundaries by appealing to anti-communist sentiments among conservative Yugoslavs, it argued that Mihailović's efforts to overcome the alienation that resulted from the Četnik's association with Pan-Serbism proved to be too little, too late.<sup>132</sup>

The military's findings on the Četnik resistance had parallels within the United States and were preceded by a discourse among American civilians and government officials about the nature of Mihailović's movement and what it meant for the future of Yugoslavia. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Krapfl described romance as "a quest, a heroic struggle between good and evil."<sup>133</sup> Mihailović enjoyed nearly universal support within the US when Americans understood the Četniks as being engaged in a generic struggle of good versus evil. In this chapter I discuss how many liberal cultural producers increasingly came to view the YGE and Mihailović as reactionary, dictatorial, and Pan-Serb.<sup>134</sup> None of these characteristics aligned with the liberal belief that the war was a "democratic revolution" based upon the principles

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<sup>131</sup> This "ample evidence" included reports from the initial SOE liaison to Mihailović, requests by Mihailović for the Allies to bomb the Croatian capital of Zagreb, "the official map circulated at [Mihailović's] HQ and showing [the] extent of Greater Serbia," and "a study of the early Četnik propaganda." Ibid., 12.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>133</sup> Krapfl, *Revolution with a Human Face*, 15.

<sup>134</sup> As Tom W. Smith notes, liberalism is difficult to define and "becomes more entangling and shapeless as one struggles" to do so. Nonetheless, he identifies certain liberal attitudes or beliefs that clarify why liberals might be critical of the perceived politics and ideology of Mihailović and the YGE. These include a tendency to be "reformist, opting for change and rarely satisfied with the status quo... democratic, favoring a maximization of electoral rights... libertarian, supporting full extension of civil liberties such as free speech and the right to assemble... [and] humanitarian, establishing a social welfare system for the care and protection of society in general and the lower class in particular." Tom W. Smith, "General Liberalism and Social Change in Post World War II America: A Summary of Trends," *Social Indicators Research*, 10, no. 1 (January 1982): 2-3, accessed April 3, 2018, <https://doi-org.uri.idm.oclc.org/10.1007/BF00287217>.

of the Atlantic Charter and the Four Freedoms.<sup>135</sup> FDR introduced the Four Freedoms during his annual message to Congress in 1941. In this message, he explained that his policies were meant to safeguard what he described as the “four essential human freedoms.” These consisted of “freedom of speech and religion, and freedom from want and from fear.”<sup>136</sup> The Atlantic Charter was agreed upon by FDR and Churchill in August 1941. Among the commitments of this agreement was the pledge “that the postwar order would respect the self-determination of nations.”<sup>137</sup> The Four Freedoms and the Atlantic Charter provided that ideological underpinnings of the US war effort. As historian Frank A. Warren notes,

From [FDR’s] Four Freedoms speech... to the editorials in *PM*, *The Nation*, *The New Republic*, *Common Sense*, and *The Free World*... liberal ideology, liberal rhetoric, and liberal assumptions permeated discussion of war. “Democracy,” “freedom,” the “common man,” the “people,” and the “people’s revolution” were the words and phrases which... did things in defining the meaning and purpose of World War II.<sup>138</sup>

The divergence of the perceived aims of the Četnik movement from liberal ideals, combined with the accusation of collaboration, all served to erode the romantic narrative of Mihailović’s resistance. Those that either contributed to or were persuaded by this reassessment of Mihailović’s “quest,” both in regard to its ends and means, called for the US to look elsewhere for a co-protagonist in its war against fascism.

In this chapter, I also describe the ways in which Pan-Serbism came into

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<sup>135</sup> Frank A. Warren, *Nobel Abstractions: American Liberal Intellectuals and World War II* (Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 1999), xviii.

<sup>136</sup> Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear*, 468.

<sup>137</sup> Susan A. Brewer, *Why America Fights: Patriotism and War Propaganda from the Philippines to Iraq* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 94.

<sup>138</sup> Warren, *Nobel Abstractions*, 1-2.



conflict with the US government's attempts to promulgate a message of unity. This message was continually reiterated by both the government and press and fit the mold of what White termed the comedic narrative. According to him, the comedy results in a "reconciliation of men with men, of men with their world and society... [and] seemingly inalterably opposed elements... are revealed to be... harmonizable with one another, unified, at one with themselves and the others."<sup>139</sup> Mihailović, the YGE, and the Yugoslav-American community were components of a larger metanarrative of global unity. This narrative called upon Yugoslav-Americans to unite with one another and US society as a whole, for the resistance forces in Yugoslavia to fight together, and for the YGE to overcome its internal political differences. This metanarrative was given form in the United Nations, which would win the war and ensure peace, stability, and American security in its aftermath.<sup>140</sup> Tito, rather than Mihailović, came to be seen by many as the likelier candidate to ensure Yugoslavian unity and postwar peace.

#### THE PROBLEMS WITH PAN-SERBISM

Throughout the war, Pan-Serb proponents within the Serb-American community attacked the Croats as a whole and attempted to link Croat-Americans to fascism and Pavelić's regime, often while simultaneously advocating for US support of Mihailović. An example of this can be seen in a letter sent to the State Department by

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<sup>139</sup> White, *Metahistory*, 9.

<sup>140</sup> The United Nations was adopted as the name of the anti-Axis alliance on January 1, 1942. "Declaration by United Nations," in *FRUS 1942: Volume I, General; the British Commonwealth; the Far East*, (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1960), 1, <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1942v01>. The declaration of this alliance, to which the YGE was a signatory, also professed a commitment to the principles of the Atlantic Charter. *Ibid.*, 25-6.

the leadership of a Serbian Eastern Orthodox parish in Steelton, Pennsylvania:

We Americans of Serbian descent... direct this protest... against the so-called "Croatian Congress" which is to be held in Chicago, Illinois... BECAUSE it is a Congress called by those whose nearest kin have declared war against the United States... That it might be called 'Pavelich's' Congress can be seen by this, that [its] president... was [accused of being] a Pro-Nazi.

The letter proceeded to express gratitude for the "aid given to General [Draža Mihailović] and his Serbian [Četniks], who in fact are keeping open the Second Front in Europe... [and] pinning down thirty of Hitler's divisions in the Balkans."<sup>141</sup>

Besides being encouraged by the pro-Serb sentiments expressed by members of the press and government, the Serb-Americans that made such accusations might have reasonably expected that domestic anxieties about disloyal citizens with foreign ties had produced an environment that was conducive to the propagation and acceptance of their message. In their eagerness to exploit America's wartime nativism, they apparently failed to appreciate that they wielded a double-edged sword.

Although the United States appeared to be working itself into a nativist lather over the threat posed by fifth columnists prior to its formal entrance into the war as a belligerent, these fears would largely be channeled toward combatting foreign influence and social discord. In 1940, the ubiquitous William Donovan co-authored a pamphlet, *Fifth Column Lessons for America*, published by the American Council on Public Affairs. In it, he made clear that Hitler's military success would not have been possible without the help of "Germans abroad and sympathizers in victim

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<sup>141</sup> St. Nicholas Serbian Eastern Orthodox Parish to Department of State, January 30, 1943, *Records of the Department of State Relating to the Internal Affairs of Yugoslavia, 1930-1944* [Henceforth *DoS IAY*] (Washington, D.C.: National Archives, 1982), reel 20, frame 87.

countries.”<sup>142</sup> Unfortunately, the tolerance of democratic societies like the United States allowed fifth columnists to “function most freely and effectively.”<sup>143</sup> This permissiveness allowed for them to spread divisive propaganda. “Hitler’s final weapon in this country would be... the creation of revolution” Donovan warned and quoted Hitler’s plan to “produce unrest and revolts in the United States.”<sup>144</sup> Members of the press also lamented that the US government had been too lenient in allowing fifth columnists to operate, as can be seen in a *Saturday Evening Post* editorial from August 3, 1940, that proposed “in common sense there are only a few words to be said about the Fifth Column... Every political organization subject to foreign influence should be outlawed. Any American citizen belonging to one... should be charged with treason.”<sup>145</sup>

One factor that likely helped to mitigate nativist backlash toward Croats in the United States was the memory of the regrettable treatment of German-Americans during the First World War. As State Department official Harry B. Hoskins wrote in 1942,

most of us will remember the unfortunate experience of World War I, when there was in many sections of the country an almost automatic tendency to classify as pro-German all who had German names or were of German descent. This bigoted assumption led to a kind of witch-hunting which did serious damage to our national unity... Yet it is a matter of record that, with a very small number of exceptions, our German and other foreign-born citizens during the last war were as

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<sup>142</sup> William Donovan and Edgar Mowrer, *Fifth Column Lessons for America* (Washington, D.C.: American Council on Public Affairs, 1941), 3, accessed January 10, 2017, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015006997707>.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>145</sup> “Fifth Column,” *Saturday Evening Post* 213, no. 5 (August 3, 1940), 28, accessed February 10, 2018, *EBSOhost*.

loyal and useful to the United States as any other citizen group.<sup>146</sup>

Possibly with this past manifestation of American nativism in mind, some members of the press rushed to the defense of the Croats even as others vilified them. For instance, in an April 1941 issue of *The New Republic*, M. W. Fodor informed his readers that “we have often read that the Croats are pro-Nazi. Fundamentally this is not true, since the Croat is just as liberty-loving and jealous of his independence as is the Serb.”<sup>147</sup>

Some Croat-Americans defended their Yugoslav kin as the victims of Serbian misrule. Immediately following the invasion of Yugoslavia, the *Chicago Daily Tribune* provided insight into the “Croatian point of view” regarding the establishment of the NDH in light of the historical treatment of Croats in Yugoslavia. According to a letter to the editor from a presumably Croat contributor, between “1918 and 1939,” the Yugoslav government had forced “the Croatians into submission by acts of brutality and savagery.” Because of these injustices, Pavelić was to be considered no more of a “terrorist” than was “George Washington.” While the defense of Pavelić was not a position that met with widespread American sympathy, the argument that traditional Yugoslav rule was unfair to non-Serbs and needed to be revised would be.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> Harold B. Hoskins, “American Unity and Our Foreign-Born Citizens,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 220 (March, 1942): 153, accessed December 30, 2017, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1022708>.

<sup>147</sup> M. W. Fodor, “The People of Yugoslavia,” *The New Republic* 104, no. 16 (April 21, 1941), 521, accessed January 2, 2018, EBSCOhost.

<sup>148</sup> “Croatian Point of View,” Voice of the People, *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 2, 1941, accessed February 3, 2018, <http://chicagotribune.newspapers.com/image/372288781/>. Immediately after the conquest of Yugoslavia, an article in Father Coughlin’s antisemitic *Social Justice* expressed sympathy for the plight of the Catholic Croats under traditional Yugoslav rule. The article claimed that Croats were subjected to “mass terror” by the Serbs and that “concentration camps” had been set up “throughout Croatia.” However, this particular magazine likely had little to no influence upon the

There was also a tendency among liberal cultural producers within the United States to link racism to Nazism. This can be seen in an article that appeared in the Autumn 1943 issue of *Common Ground*, which was co-authored by John Collier, the US Commissioner of Indian Affairs, and Saul Padover, Assistant to the Secretary of the Interior. The article explained that Hitler had started a global “race war” with the result that “everywhere race prejudice is endemic.” The authors expressed their belief that “race and ‘minority’ questions” had the potential to “wreck our democracy” if left unresolved. The solution to this threat was overcoming race “prejudice” and “arrogance” and the “establishment of a genuine equality for all peoples... [without which] there [could] be no lasting peace in the world.” The ideal course of action was to be modeled on the Soviet Union, which had “solved its racial and ethnic problems wisely—by preaching and practicing genuine equality of opportunity for all its citizens, regardless of their color or racial origin.”<sup>149</sup> As will be seen, Pan-Serbism came to be compared to Nazi race “prejudice” and “arrogance.” In contrast, the ethnic heterogeneity of the Partisan movement came to be portrayed in

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development of liberal and leftist criticism of Pan-Serbism. “Facts about Yugoslavia,” *Social Justice* (April 21, 1941), 11, accessed January 3, 2018, <http://www.unz.com/print/SocialJustice-1941apr21-00011/>. The magazine’s antisemitism is quite apparent in multiple articles within this same issue, including “Is Social Justice Anti-Semitic?” (yes) and “‘Anti-Semite’ on Town Hall Air.”

<sup>149</sup> John Collier and Saul K. Padover, “An Institute of Ethnic Democracy,” *Common Ground* (Autumn 1943), 3, accessed December 23, 2017, <http://www.unz.org/Pub/CommonGround-1943q3-00003?View=PDF&Text=%22Serbia%22+AND+%22race%22>. Collier and Padover were undoubtedly enamored with the Soviet Union’s solution in theory rather than in practice. In theory the Soviet Union was formed as a “voluntary association of peoples with equal rights,” and “national identity was viewed as an atavistic holdover from the past.” People within the Soviet Union could be arrested for “spreading ethnic hatred.” However, this was often used as a means of repression in order to prevent secessionist talk or other forms of “nationalist deviationism.” Stalin demonstrated his own form of ethnonational chauvinism with his declaration that Russians were “the first nation among equals.” He also oversaw the mass deportation of a variety of ethnic groups from Eastern Europe “to remote areas of Siberia and Central Asia,” with many people dying “en route or soon after their arrival.” Edward W. Walker, *Dissolution: Sovereignty and the Breakup of the Soviet Union* (Berkeley, CA: Berkeley Public Policy Press, 2003), 28-34. The Soviets were also not above conducting their own postwar antisemitic purge. Archie Brown, *The Rise and Fall of Communism* (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 2009), 100.

the same way that Collier and Padover favorably described the Soviet solution to race problems.

Following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the State Department expressed concern about not just the foreign influence exerted by the enemies of the United States, but foreign influence in general. On December 10, 1941, within days of the government's designation of Japanese, Italian, and German citizens in the United States as enemy aliens, the State Department issued a policy statement regarding political activities of "free movements."<sup>150</sup> The State Department recognized that "the United States is composed of citizens from many national backgrounds" and allowed that they might have "a natural interest in their country of origin." Regardless of such inclinations, it declared that "United States citizens of whatever background owe, and have, an undivided allegiance to the United States." It then went on to state that "the first concern of the United States must always be the unity of the country," and that US government would look with disfavor on "any attempt to enlist the support of American citizens of like racial background on the theory that they are 'fellow nationals.'"<sup>151</sup>

The threat that discord among Yugoslav-Americans posed to domestic unity was of serious concern to the US government, and the proponents of Greater Serbia were quickly identified as the ones who were primarily responsible for inflaming the

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<sup>150</sup> United States Department of State, "Proclamations on Policy Toward Enemy Aliens," *The Department of State Bulletin* 5, no. 129 (December 13, 1941): 520, accessed February 20, 2018, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uiuo.ark:/13960/t8w96rf2b;view=1up;seq=572>.

<sup>151</sup> United States Department of State, "Policy Regarding 'Free Movements' in the United States" *The Department of State Bulletin* 5, no. 129 (December 13, 1941): 519-20, accessed February 20, 2018, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uiuo.ark:/13960/t8w96rf2b;view=1up;seq=571>.

dispute.<sup>152</sup> According to a report provided by British intelligence to the Foreign Nationalities Branch (FNB) of the OSS in December, 1941, “the chief danger to Yugoslav unity [in the United States]... comes from the Serbian National Federation [SNF] with its dangerous press and campaign of anti-Croat, non-Yugoslav, pro-Serb tendency.”<sup>153</sup> A State Department report from May 27, 1942 drew similar conclusions. It found that *Amerikanski Srbobran*, “the official organ of the Serb National Federation and the most influential Serb-language daily in the United States, opened the anti-Croat campaign” in early November. As a part of this campaign, the paper ran a front-page “account of the suppression of the Serbs... and accused the Croats as a whole of being [pro-Pavelić]. The indignant reply of the American Croats was to ask why the [*Srbobran*] omitted criticism of [Nedić], the Serbian counterpart of [Pavelić].” The State Department surmised that the purpose of SNF’s attack was to discredit “the idea of Yugoslavia itself, thus paving the way for a ‘Greater Serbia.’”<sup>154</sup> The same report also concluded that some of the most egregious perpetrators of anti-Croat hostilities included two individuals linked to the YGE: Archbishop Dionisije

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<sup>152</sup> The level of concern is suggested by historian Lorraine M. Lees observation that, within the archival record, “the largest single group of FNB [Foreign Nationalities Branch] files is on the Yugoslav-American community. The files on Italians and Germans, with ties to countries with which the United States was at war, are second and third.” Lorraine M. Lees, *Yugoslav-Americans and National Security during World War II* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 9. The FNB was a branch of the OSS that was charged with providing “a systematic reading, from the diplomatic viewpoint, of the foreign-language press in the United States.” It also maintained “contact with foreign nationality groups for whose use the foreign-language press is published,” studied “agitations” among these groups “on foreign political issues,” and made “contact with... foreign publicists and political leaders who [arrived in the US] as refugees [and] still hoped to promote their causes from American shores and to enlist... the sympathy of their American cousins and the support of American official influence.” DeWitt C. Poole, Chief of the Foreign Nationalities Branch, Office of Strategic Services, *The Study of Foreign Political Developments in the United States: A New Field of Political Intelligence* (United States Government Printing Office, 1945), 2, accessed November 10, 2017, <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/document/cia-rdp89-01258r000100010004-2>.

<sup>153</sup> FNB, OSS, “Yugoslavs in the United States: October-December 1941,” December 11, 1941, RG 226, entry 210, box 60.

<sup>154</sup> United States Department of State, “Regarding the Serb-Croat Dispute,” May 27, 1942, *DoS IAY*, frame 127, reel 20.

Milivojević, head of the Serbian Eastern Orthodox Church in North America, and the YGE's chief diplomatic representative in the United States, Minister Constantin Fotić.<sup>155</sup>

There were several other domestic factors that contributed to the government's particular concern over the ways in which Serb nationalism was being expressed within America and undermining the narrative of national unity. One of these was the large numbers of Yugoslav-Americans employed "in heavy industries in the East and Middle West," and thus the possibility that discord within this community might adversely affect war production.<sup>156</sup> Another factor was that Americans of Croat and Slovene descent significantly outnumbered the Serbs. According to a 1944 estimate, there were a total of one million first, second, and third generation Yugoslav-Americans. Of these, approximately 500,000 were Croats, 300,000 were Slovenes, and 200,000 were Serbs.<sup>157</sup> This meant that the majority of Yugoslav-Americans were understandably hostile to the idea of Greater Serbia and anti-Croat propaganda. This had potential implications for electoral politics if the majority of Yugoslav-Americans sensed that government policy favored the Serbs.<sup>158</sup> This was of particular concern in light of reports like the one sent by the COI to the State Department on May 27, 1942, that the apparent latitude granted to Fotić and Dionsije within the US had led many

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<sup>155</sup> Ibid., frame 130.

<sup>156</sup> Joseph S. Roucek, "Yugoslav Americans," *One America: The History, Contributions, and Present Problems of Our Racial and National Minorities*, eds. Francis J. Brown and Joseph Slabey Roucek (New York: Princeton Hall, Inc., 1945), 160, accessed February 20, 2018, <https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.73984>.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid., 161.

<sup>158</sup> According to Lees, "in 1938, the Democratic National Committee established twenty-six 'nationality divisions' to secure the ethnic vote; the Yugoslavs were among those represented." Lees, *Yugoslav-Americans and National Security during World War II*, 30. Also, policymakers were concerned about the influence that the US position on Yugoslavia might have on the 1944 presidential election, but "these ethnic quarrels" ultimately "did not affect the outcome." Ibid., 192.



Serbs and Croats to assume “that the movement against a confederated Yugoslavia and for a Greater Serbia had at least the tacit approval of the United States Government.”<sup>159</sup>

The issue of demographics was brought up in a meeting between Assistant Secretary of State Adolph Berle and Fotić on June 12, 1942, during which Berle tried to bring Fotić to heel. According to Berle, he expressed to Fotić that the government was “disturbed by the recrudescence of the Great Serbian Movement in the United States.” He pointed out to Fotić that the “majority of Yugoslav subjects in the United States... were not Serbs,” but Croats, and that it was his “distinct impression” that “the great majority” of them did not support Pavelić. Berle also revealed that he was aware that Fotić had “interested himself” in the “Serb-Croat controversy” and expressed his hope that Fotić “would exert his influence” in “reducing” these tensions.<sup>160</sup> If he hoped that this meeting would either alter Fotić’s behavior or quell the Croat-Serb dispute, Berle was to be sadly disappointed.

In September, 1942, Elmer Davis, the director of the Office of War Information (OWI), invited Berle to a meeting of the editors of the major Yugoslav foreign language papers in order to cajole them into assisting with the restoration of harmony in the Yugoslav-American community. According to Berle’s account of the meeting, the Serbs were “still making trouble for the Croats—probably with some help from” Fotić. Berle told the attendees that it would be “a complete perversion of [US] policy” to view the recent decision to upgrade the status of the Yugoslav legation to that of embassy “as a personal tribute to the” Pan-Serbs or Fotić. He also made clear that the

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<sup>159</sup> DeWitt C. Poole to Harold B. Hoskins, May 27, 1942, *DoS IAY*, reel 20, frame 112.

<sup>160</sup> “Serb-Croat Controversy,” June 12, 1942, *DoS IAY*, reel 20, frame 120-121.

US “had no interest in the politics of General [Mihailović], so long as he was fighting the Germans... This had nothing whatever to do with his political views or possible later aspirations.”<sup>161</sup> This would not be the only instance in which government officials distanced themselves from Mihailović’s political objectives.

If FDR had somehow remained unaware of the potential for public backlash in response to the perception of governmental endorsement of Pan-Serbism, this was remedied shortly after a speech he delivered on September 3, 1942. During this address, he made reference to the “fighting spirit” and “unconquerable peoples” of a number of occupied countries, to include “Serbia.”<sup>162</sup> *The New York Times* reported on September 12, that the President had been told “some concern had arisen... that he no longer recognized Yugoslavia.” The incident was explained away as “a slip... due to the fact that in former days [the President] used to see the name Serbia so much on the stamps he collected.”<sup>163</sup>

FDR’s *faux pax* caused an immediate international and domestic stir. The Vice Prime Minister of the YGE informed US Minister Biddle about the great esteem in which the Croats held the United States, their knowledge of what happened there, and how regretful it was that the President had failed to acknowledge their resistance.<sup>164</sup> According to the Washington, D.C. newspaper *The Evening Star*, Louis Adamic, “noted American author of Yugoslav birth,” sent a message to the White House,

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<sup>161</sup> Berle to Hull, September 18, 1942, *FRUS, 1942: Volume III, Europe*, 815-816.

<sup>162</sup> Franklin Delano Roosevelt, “Address to the International Student Assembly,” September 3, 1942, FDR Library’s Digital Collections, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Master Speech File, 1898-1945, box 68, accessed September 29, 2017, [http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/\\_resources/images/msf/msfb0043](http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/_resources/images/msf/msfb0043).

<sup>163</sup> “Puts Blame on Stamps,” *New York Times*, September 11, 1942, accessed January 3, 2018, <https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1942/09/12/85589472.html?pageNumber=14>.

<sup>164</sup> Biddle to Hull, September 29, 1942, *FRUS, 1942: Volume III, Europe*, 816-818.

informing them

that the President's saying "Serbia" disposes of Yugoslavia as a state, and that has caused an uproar among Yugoslavs and Yugoslv-Americans, whose number exceed 1,000,000, 90 per cent of whom are of Croatian and Slovenian origin. The matter involves the morale of hundreds of thousands of people (Croat-Americans) working in our war plants.

As evidence of the way in which Serb chauvinists might exploit the slip, the article recounted that, while speaking at a luncheon, Ruth Mitchell claimed "that the end of Yugoslavia has been conceded by the highest authorities." The article went on to explain the nature of the Pan-Serb ideology and the Croat-Serb dispute. It described the aim of "the Pan-Serb movement" as the creation of "post-war Serbian domination over the other nationality groups" in Yugoslavia. It also informed its readers that the State Department, OWI, and the OSS

have all sought to discourage the men who are active in the attempt to arrange that Serbs shall be supreme in Yugoslavia over the Croats and Slovenes after Axis withdrawal. Officially, this is regarded as a denial of the thesis of the Atlantic Charter, which implies equality of nationality groups.<sup>165</sup>

Despite official claims that the United States was uninterested in Mihailović's politics, the government kept informed about them throughout the war, and there was substantial reason to believe that the Četniks were a reactionary force that fought for the creation of a postwar Greater Serbia. In September, 1942, the British Secret Intelligence Service (SIS) provided the OSS with an assessment of the situation in Yugoslavia, to include the political character of Mihailović's resistance movement. According to the report, Mihailović was "primarily concerned with Serbia and the

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<sup>165</sup> Blair Bolles, "Author Fears Error in President's Talk May Hurt Yugoslavia," *Evening Star*, September 10, 1942, accessed February 28, 2018, <http://infoweb.newsbank.com/resources/doc/nb/image/v2:13D5DA85AE05A305@EANX-1487DD6AC26A853E@2430613-14878D250C01C1DC@49?p=WORLDNEWS>.

Serbs.” He also regarded the Partisans as “the most dangerous enemy of his ideal of ‘Srpstvo,’” a term that, according to Adis Maksić, “roughly signifies a quality of being a Serb, and is often translated as ‘Serbdom’ or ‘Serbianism.’”<sup>166</sup> SIS believed that Mihailović’s overall policy was “to destroy these internal enemies and to build up an organization that will be in a position to establish an authoritarian Pan-Serb regime (under King Peter II).”<sup>167</sup> An OSS report from November 26, 1942, that was based upon information provided by “Russian sources” confirmed these findings, noting that while Mihailović was “non-political,” he had “the reputation of a chauvinist with ‘Great-Serb’ ideals and a distrust, if not hatred, for the Croats.”<sup>168</sup> Similar concerns were reported by Anthony Biddle, the US ambassador to the YGE. In a message to the Secretary of State in January, 1943, Biddle reported on the belief among the Croat, Slovene, and Serb-Democrat members of the YGE that Mihailović had been instructed “to pursue the Pan-Serb line of policy” within Yugoslavia.<sup>169</sup>

Pan-Serbs were identified as chronic spoilers of unity within the YGE and were blamed for its failure to adopt of a “liberal forward-looking policy.” Mihailović was seen as a party to this dispute due to his suspected adherence to Pan-Serbism and appointment as Minister of War. Biddle actively encouraged the YGE to declare “a post-war policy envisaging equal economic, social, and political opportunities for all.” Although such a policy was supported by Serb Democrat, Croat, and Slovene

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<sup>166</sup> FNB, OSS, “The Position within Yugoslavia,” September 19, 1942, RG 226 entry 210, box 60. This description of the meaning of “*srpstvo*” can be found in Adis Maksić, “Priming the Nation for War: An Analysis of Organizational Origins and Discursive Machinations of the Serb Democratic Party in Pre-war Bosnia-Herzegovina, 1990–1992,” *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 35, no. 3 (September 2015): 342, accessed August 1, 2017, EBSCOhost.

<sup>167</sup> FNB, OSS, “The Position within Yugoslavia,” September 19, 1942, RG 226 entry 210, box 60.

<sup>168</sup> OSS, “Memorandum on Yugoslavia,” November 26, 1942, RG 226, entry 210, box 68.

<sup>169</sup> Biddle to Hull, January 2, 1943, *FRUS, 1943: Volume II, Europe*, (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1964), 962, <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1943v02>.

members of the YGE, it was opposed by “Serb Extremists.”<sup>170</sup> For example, Biddle reported on December 5, 1942, that while the development of a “forward-looking policy” was being discussed at a recent YGE cabinet meeting, the Radical Serb Party member and Minister of Education, Miloš Trifunović, “urged the formation of a purely Serbian front, limited to Serbs from Serbia.” In response, a Croat member of the cabinet “emphasized his earnest hopes for the reestablishment of Yugoslavia along democratic lines: a federated state under the King, wherein all would enjoy equal rights politically, economically and spiritually.” Biddle noted that the “scheme” to increase the postwar strength of the Serbs vis-à-vis the Croats by including Bosnia within Serbia was supported by Mihailović, whose involvement presaged “a vigorous debate before [the US] may expect this question to be ironed out.”<sup>171</sup>

On December 20, 1942, Secretary of State Hull wrote to Biddle that he was to continue his “informal efforts” at “bringing about a better understanding” among the factions within the YGE. He also made the point that “aspects” of the “Yugoslav question” were of “direct concern to a considerable element of the American people” and that Serb-Croat dispute was having “a deplorable effect on” the United States’ “national unity.” Although he recognized that Fotić bore “a considerable degree of” responsibility for this discord “through his apparent support of the Pan-Serb element,” he nevertheless thought that it was best that he remain as the YGE’s representative within the United States. He expressed regret that the Mihailović-Partisan controversy had “gained some prominence in the American press,” but insisted that the US government maintained “full confidence” in Mihailović, as “statements about to be

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<sup>170</sup> Biddle to Hull, October 19, 1942, *FRUS, 1942: Volume III, Europe*, 827-830.

<sup>171</sup> Biddle to Hull, December 5, 1942, *DoS IAY*, frames 38-40, reel 20.

made” would make clear. In Hull’s opinion, “the most effective” charge against Mihailović was that he had “lost respect for his own Government’s belief in Yugoslav unity.”<sup>172</sup>

## MIHAILOVIĆ ACCUSED

If viewed in isolation, the message that Secretary of Hull recommended be sent by General Dwight D. Eisenhower to Mihailović on the eve of 1943 suggested that the romantic narrative about the Četnik leader continued unabated.

General Draža Mihailovich... the American forces in Europe and Africa send greetings to their comrades in arms the resourceful and gallant Yugoslav military units under your splendid leadership. These brave men banded together on their native soil to drive the invaders from their country are serving with full devotion the cause of the United Nations. May the New Year bring them full success.<sup>173</sup>

However, *Time* drew attention to the fact that the contents of the message were not released by Eisenhower’s headquarters, but instead by the YGE. This was seen as a possible sign that the US government did not know “enough about the complexities” of the Yugoslav conflict “to justify a clean-cut commitment.”<sup>174</sup> The YGE released the message to the press on January 11, 1943. According to *The New York Times*, “a spokesman said that the message was definite evidence that the United Nations were backing General [Mihailović] and threw down various recent attempts to discredit him and his efforts.”<sup>175</sup> Central to these “attempts to discredit” Mihailović was the

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<sup>172</sup> Hull to Biddle, December 30, 1942, *FRUS, 1942: Volume III, Europe*, 838-840.

<sup>173</sup> Hull to Stimson, December 30, 1942, *FRUS, 1942: Volume III, Europe*, 840.

<sup>174</sup> “In Noble Spirit,” *Foreign News, Time* 41, no. 4 (January 25, 1943), 38-40, <http://time.com/vault/issue/1943-01-25/page/40/>.

<sup>175</sup> “Eisenhower Sends Note of Praise to Mikhailovitch,” *New York Times*, January 12, 1943, accessed February 2, 2018, <https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1943/01/12/88509620.html?pageNumber=3>.

suggestion that one of the ways in which his “gallant” forces had been “resourceful” was by collaborating with the Axis occupiers.

The initial accusation of Mihailović’s collaboration followed shortly after the Germans launched their summer offensive against the Red Army on June 28, 1942.<sup>176</sup> In anticipation of this offensive, the Soviet foreign minister traveled to London a few weeks prior in order to encourage the opening of a second front on continental Europe. Churchill explained that, for the moment, this was impossible.<sup>177</sup> The Soviets had borne the brunt of German hostilities for the past year and it looked as if 1942 would be no different. On July 28, a communist newspaper in New York, *The Daily Worker*, ran an article repeating the claims of Radio Free Yugoslavia that Mihailović was “a Fascist and a traitor.”<sup>178</sup> Radio Free Yugoslavia was based in the Soviet Union and Walter Roberts argues that it could not broadcast such claims “without the consent of the Soviet authorities.”<sup>179</sup> This marked a sharp break with earlier Soviet policy, when the Comintern had dismissed Tito’s complaints of Četnik collaboration and encouraged him “to achieve a true united national front” against the Axis occupiers.<sup>180</sup> In light of the failure of the Soviet Union’s Western allies to provide satisfactory succor, the Soviets most likely decided to encourage fighting where it existed.<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> Michael Howard, *Grand Strategy, vol. 4, August 1942-September 1943* (London: Her Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1972), 31.

<sup>177</sup> Churchill originally suggested that a second front might be opened by August or September at the earliest. However, on August 12, 1942, he traveled to the Soviet Union to deliver the news in person that there would be no second front until 1943. Williams, *Parachutes, Patriots, and Partisans*, 84-85.

<sup>178</sup> Sumner Welles, “Memorandum of Conversation, by the Under Secretary of State (Welles),” August 5, 1942, *FRUS, 1942: Volume III, Europe*, 806-808.

<sup>179</sup> Roberts, *Tito, Mihailović, and the Allies*, 62.

<sup>180</sup> Milorad M. Drachkovitch, “The Comintern and the Insurrectional Activity of the Community Party of Yugoslavia in 1941-1942,” in *The Comintern: Historical Highlights*, eds. Milorad M. Drachkovitch and Branko Lazitch (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Publishers, 1966), 206.

<sup>181</sup> Newspaper correspondents surmised as much at the time. According to *New York Times* reporter Harold Callender, it was “pointed out in diplomatic quarters that Russian support and propaganda for the Yugoslav partisans approximately coincided with Russian demands for a second front against

In August 1942, Fotić presented Welles with a series of telegrams from Mihailović in which the general explained his actions in Yugoslavia. According to Mihailović's messages, he could not "give a serious blow" without adequate "arms and supplies." He also stated that he was instructed by the British to prevent "a Communist uprising for Soviet Russia," that "the Communists are hated by the people," and that "the people have been provoked by the incredible terror of the Communists who had killed thousands of Nationalists."<sup>182</sup> This was undoubtedly a move to counter the accusations in *The Daily Worker*, which Fotić also addressed. He complained that "this article had immediately been republished in the [communist-inclined] portions of the Croatian press in the United States."<sup>183</sup> Considering the demonization that the Croats experienced following the invasion of Yugoslavia, it is not surprising that they seized upon the opportunity to slander the Pan-Serbs' hero.

While the mainstream press was not initially receptive to the communists' accusations, its defense of Mihailović grew muddled over a very short period of time. Through October, 1942, *The New York Times* dutifully reported the YGE's "utmost confidence" in Mihailović and described the Partisans as a group of "criminals, renegades, bandits, and dissident Croats and Moslems."<sup>184</sup> By November 20, *The New*

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Germany to relieve pressure upon Russia... In the eyes of Moscow... [Mihailović] was moving too slowly." Harold Callender, "Yugoslavia's Rift is Laid to Russia," *New York Times*, December 22, 1942, accessed February 10, 2018, <https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1942/12/22/85621857.html?pageNumber=12>.

<sup>182</sup> Welles, "Memorandum of Conversation," 806-808. While it was true that the British did not wish to see a communist takeover of Yugoslavia, Mihailović's claims were misleading. The initial SOE liaison with Mihailović quickly recognized the counterproductive nature of the Četnik-Partisan dispute and suggested that supplies to Mihailović be halted until Mihailović ceased fighting the Partisans. Williams, *Parachutes, Patriots, and Partisans*, 61.

<sup>183</sup> Sumner Welles, "Memorandum of Conversation, by the Under Secretary of State (Welles)," August 5, 1942, *FRUS, 1942: Volume III, Europe*, 806-808.

<sup>184</sup> "Yugoslavia's Regime Backs Mikhailovitch," *New York Times*, October 6, 1942, accessed January 10, 2018, <https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1942/10/06/83889092.html?pageNumber=3>. "Mikhailovitch Story Denounced as False," *New York Times*, October 5, 1942,



*York Times* conceded that although the accusation of “‘traffic’ with the enemy” had gained “some verisimilitude,” Mihailović’s “defenders” explained that contact with Italians and Nedić was necessary in order to obtain supplies. In addition, Nedić was “after all... a Serb and... no Quisling.”<sup>185</sup> This was a distinction that few, if any, within the American government or press had made in the past or would make in the future. *The Nation* assured its readers on November 28, 1942, that although the rebuttals to the accusations made in *The Daily Worker* revealed that a “considerable civil war” was underway in Yugoslavia, the “charge that [Mihailović acted] in calculated collusion with [Nedić], the Serbian Quisling, [was] certainly unfounded.” Instead, Mihailović and Nedić had “made simultaneous, though wholly separate, moves against the partisans.”<sup>186</sup>

The trajectory of American reporting on Mihailović conflicted with the YGE’s portrayal, which continued to present the Četnik resistance in absolute terms. A memorandum that the YGE sent to the State Department in December insisted that Mihailović’s “activities... [had] not ceased for a moment” and that “allegations... that he [was] indirectly cooperating with the Axis” were false.<sup>187</sup> One reason that the YGE possibly felt compelled to continue presenting Mihailović in this manner is suggested by Paul Fussell’s observation about wartime categorizations:

If war is a political, social, and psychological disaster, it is also a perceptual and rhetorical scandal from which total recovery is unlikely.

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accessed January 10, 2018

<https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1942/10/05/88504923.html?pageNumber=2>.

<sup>185</sup> Hanson W. Baldwin, “Within Yugoslavia—II,” *New York Times*, November 20, 1942, accessed January 10, 2018, <https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1942/11/20/88112463.html?pageNumber=11>.

<sup>186</sup> Ralph Bates, “Mihailovich and the Partisans,” *The Nation* 155, no. 22 (November 28, 1942), 577-578, accessed November 10, 2017, EBSCOhost.

<sup>187</sup> The Yugoslav Embassy to the Department of State, December 16, 1942, *FRUS, 1942: Volume III, Europe*, 833-834.

Looking out upon the wartime world, soldiers and civilians alike reduce it to a simplified sketch featuring a limited series of classifications into which people, in the process dehumanized and deprived of individuality or eccentricity, are fitted.<sup>188</sup>

While the British were aware of Mihailović dealings with the Italians, and distinguished his behavior from “true” collaboration, the YGE was undoubtedly concerned that neither the American nor Yugoslav public would appreciate this distinction.<sup>189</sup>

Moscow was also sensitive to the problem of categorization as it related to Tito’s Partisans. In a series of messages in early 1942, the Comintern reprimanded Tito for allowing the Partisans to “acquire a Communist character” and instructed him not to “view the issues of [his] fight only from [his] own national standpoint, but also from the international standpoint of the American-British-Soviet coalition” and to demonstrate “political elasticity.”<sup>190</sup> In November, 1942, the Comintern gave Tito permission to form “a national liberation committee of Yugoslavia... with an all-national Yugoslav and all-party antifascist character” with the caveats that Tito would refrain from putting “it in opposition to the” YGE or “raise the question” of abolishing the monarchy. Thus, with Moscow’s blessing, Tito formed the Anti-Fascist Council

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<sup>188</sup> Paul Fussell, *Wartime*, 115.

<sup>189</sup> The British ambivalence towards Mihailović’s collaboration is reflected in a message sent by the SOE commander Lord Glenconner to London in March 1943, in which he noted that although the policies of the Axis and Mihailović appeared “to coincide, there [was] all the difference between a [true] collaborationist who [wished] to see the [Axis] win the war and [Mihailović] who... [would] do all he [could] to help in their ultimate defeat.” Lord Glenconner to London, March 4, 1943, “HS 5/966: Establishment of Communications with Tito and Mihailovic; Reports, Minutes and Appreciations, 1941-1944” in *Special Operations Executive, 1940-1946: Subversion and Sabotage during World War II Series Two: SOE Operations in the Balkans* (Marlborough, England: Adam Matthew Publications, 2007), frame 205, reel 19. In a message to London on April 16, 1943, Glenconner also addressed the view that collaboration between Mihailović and the Italians was seen in London “as an expediency that was not to [Britain’s military] disadvantage.” Glenconner to London, April 16, 1943, *ibid.*, frame 192, reel 19.

<sup>190</sup> Drachkovitch, “The Comintern and the Insurrectional Activity of the Community Party of Yugoslavia in 1941-1942,” 206-207.

of the People's Liberation of Yugoslavia (AVNOJ) in Bihać in November 1942.<sup>191</sup>

This would subsequently be hailed by many as evidence of the Partisans' democratic character.

Possibly spurred to a higher standard of journalistic integrity by the British decision to begin mentioning the Partisans in its propaganda broadcasts, the December 14, 1942, issue of *Time* magazine declared that Mihailović had been "eclipsed" by the Partisans.<sup>192</sup> According to the article, Americans had been so "misled by previous reports" about Mihailović that "many a *Time* reader nominated [Mihailović] for Man of the Year." *Time* revealed that, in fact, the Četniks had been militarily inactive, and that those who wanted "to continue active resistance" had deserted to the Partisans. The "impoverished peasants" of all nationalities within Yugoslavia showed "an increasing preference for the Partisans" over Mihailović, who fought "for a greater Serbia." In contrast to Mihailović, the Partisans had adopted "democratic methods almost unprecedented in the Balkans." Proof that the Partisans were neither "Communist" nor "bandit" could be seen in the political heterogeneity and respectability of the "National Constitutional Assembly" that had been formed in the Partisan "capital" of Bihać.<sup>193</sup>

Within days of the *Time*'s article, *The Saturday Evening Post* ran Adamic's "Mikhailovitch: Balkan Mystery Man," which was also critical of Mihailović and the Četniks. According to Adamic, Mihailović's "dilemma" was whether to choose to be

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<sup>191</sup> Ibid., 209-210.

<sup>192</sup> By fall 1942, officials within the British government realized "that the Partisans' anti-Axis struggle could no longer be ignored, and that their activities... might henceforth be praised over the BBC." On October 18, 1942, the BBC actually preempted the official change in policy by making "flattering references to the Partisans" in their broadcasts to Yugoslavia. Trew, *Britain, Mihailović, and the Četniks*, 165-166.

<sup>193</sup> "Mihailovich Eclipsed," *Foreign News, Time* 40, no. 24 (December 14, 1942), 48-53, <http://time.com/vault/issue/1942-12-14/page/48/>.

on the side of “democracy” and “revolutionary Communism” or on the side of “Fascism.” Unfortunately, “orders from the” YGE led Mihailović “necessarily closer to the Quisling apparatus” than to the Partisans. While Adamic allowed that “some people” in Yugoslavia were “anti-Partisan,” he claimed that the “majority” were not. However, he did express some apprehension about the Partisan’s revolutionary nature, reminding his readers of “the death of hundreds of thousands of people” as a result of Communist revolution in China.<sup>194</sup> He closed by asking what the situation in Yugoslavia meant for the fate of democracy.<sup>195</sup> As the Partisan-Četnik struggle continued, Adamic and other liberal and left-leaning writers would direct increasingly harsh criticism toward Mihailović and be far more reserved in bringing scrutiny to bear on the Partisans. Rather than signaling a complete narrative volte-face, these criticisms instead meant that the romantic narrative of Mihailović was now contested, and that reporting on Yugoslavia would no longer consist solely of hagiographical about Mihailović.

Perhaps none of Mihailović’s American supporters refused to go gentle into that good night more so than reporter Ruth Mitchell. Besides being the sister of General Billy Mitchell, she gained a measure of fame in her own right by joining the Četniks while on assignment in the Balkans. She then promptly fell into the hands of the Gestapo. After a year in prison, Mitchell was released by the Germans and returned to

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<sup>194</sup> The Chinese Nationalist Chiang Kai-shek seized power in 1928 with Soviet support and in alliance with the Chinese communists. However, Chiang Kai-shek turned on his allies, beginning with the slaughter of thousands of communists in Shanghai. Rana Mitter, *Forgotten Ally: China’s World War II, 1937–1945* (New York: Mariner Books, 2014), 44-50. Once established, his government then proceeded to engage in a number of human rights abuses, such as “assassinating political dissidents” and “extorting... farmers.” *Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>195</sup> Louis Adamic, “Mikhailovitch: Balkan Mystery Man,” *The Saturday Evening Post* (December 19, 1942), 85-86, accessed October 30, 2017, EBSCOhost.

the United States, where she advocated tirelessly on behalf of the Četniks.<sup>196</sup>

Mitchell's refutation of the accusations against Mihailović served as a precursor to the early historiographical focus on communist conspiracy as discussed in the introduction. As Krapfl notes, "romance can attribute failure only to a diabolical antagonist."<sup>197</sup> In the case of Mihailović, his diabolical antagonists were the communists, as Mitchell made clear in "General Mihailovich: The Story of a Frame-Up," in the July, 1943 issue of *The American Mercury*. In it, Mitchell traced the accusations of collaboration to the communist publications *The Daily Worker* and *New Masses*, from where their "echoes" filtered into the mainstream press. Of the "communists and their collaborators" that were running "wild... in inflating the performance of the 'Partisans' and in smearing" Mihailović, Ruth singled out the influence of Louis Adamic as particularly pernicious. According to Mitchell, Adamic wielded undue influence upon the OWI, spread "communist propaganda," and was "widely regarded as a Serb hater."<sup>198</sup> For his part, Adamic accused Mitchell of being on the payroll of the YGE.<sup>199</sup>

Mitchell was right to be concerned that the "vilification" of Mihailović had led many "to doubt and to wonder," as one of those that had started to doubt was Ambassador Biddle.<sup>200</sup> Initially, Biddle appeared to give little attention to the accusations of collaboration. He instead focused on resolving the disputes within the YGE and the Yugoslav-American community and persuading the Yugoslav

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<sup>196</sup> Mary Van Rensselaer Thayer, "Ruth Mitchell: American Chetnik," *The American Mercury* (January, 1943), 16-23, accessed January 3, 2018, <http://www.unz.com/print/AmMercury-1943jan-00016/>.

<sup>197</sup> Krapfl, *Revolution with a Human Face*, 27.

<sup>198</sup> Ruth Mitchell, "General Mihailovich: The Story of a Frame-Up," *The American Mercury* (July, 1943), 25-34, accessed November 20, 2017, <http://www.unz.com/print/AmMercury-1943jul-00025/>.

<sup>199</sup> "Slavs or Americans?," Editorial Page, *Pittsburg Press*, December 22, 1943, accessed February 27, 2018, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/147890221/>.

<sup>200</sup> Mitchell, "General Mihailovich," 25.

government to pressure Mihailović into brokering a truce with the Partisans. As he told the Yugoslav Prime Minister in January, “the most important point to stress,” both for the YGE and its embassy in the US, “was the establishment of unity.” This “unity amongst the Yugoslavs both at home and abroad” would also “overcome the opposition of the so-called Communist press.”<sup>201</sup> However, in April, 1943, Biddle reported his assessment of Mihailović’s denials of collaboration. He noted that Mihailović denied the “allegations in the first person,” which Biddle suspected was done in the naive hope of sweeping “aside the question of cooperation by [Mihailović’s] ‘lieutenants.’”<sup>202</sup>

A letter drafted by Elmer Davis in June 1943 to be sent to the president of the SNF indicated that his previous meeting with the foreign-language newspaper editors did not succeed in persuading *Amerikanski Srbobran*’s to adopt a more harmonious tone. It also demonstrated that members of the State Department were not the only government officials who were frustrated by the ways in which Pan-Serb activism was undermining unity. Davis wrote,

for some time, several branches of the United States Government , including the Office of War Information, the Department of Justice, and the Department of State, have watched with concern the policies of the “American Srbobran.” Its violent attacks upon all peoples of Croatian extraction, its strong anti-Catholic articles, and its veiled efforts to defend the Quisling [Nedić] who supports the Nazi regime in Serbia often have the effect of aiding the Nazi campaign of intolerance and race hate... The United Nations are striving for the strongest possible unity of all those who are opposed to the Axis. In Yugoslavia, and in the United States, we seek to unite all people of Serbian, Croatian, and Slovenian heritage who believe in freedom and democracy....<sup>203</sup>

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<sup>201</sup> Biddle to Hull, January 5, 1943, *FRUS, 1943: Volume II, Europe*, 966-967.

<sup>202</sup> Biddle to Hull, April 17, 1943, *FRUS, 1943: Volume II, Europe*, 1001.

<sup>203</sup> Elmer Davis to Adolph Berle, June 7, 1943, *DoS IAY*, frame 320-322, reel 20.

Notably, Davis drew a link between the anti-Croat propaganda of the Pan-Serb movement and Nazi “race hate,” an obsession that even drove the *Srbobran* to support a “Quisling.”

Elements of the mainstream press also took increasing notice, and expressed a dim view, of the Pan-Serb ideology and the émigré agitators that championed it. For example, in January 1943, an article in *Harper's* explained that

upon the outbreak of the war... the [SNF] organized the Serbian National Defense Committee. Highly Serbian-nationalistic, the Committee now spreads across the United States an inflammatory propaganda not against the obvious enemies of Yugoslavia—the Germans and Italians—but against the Croatians, the Catholic partners of the Orthodox Serbs in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, and against the Croat-Americans. The committeemen preach that Yugoslavia, established as a federation of three peoples, is dead, and that the Serbs are destined to become a Balkan [*Herrenvolk*], supreme and lordly over the Croats, who have 800,000 cousins in the United States, and the Slovenes, who have 250,000.<sup>204</sup>

The description of the Serb nationalists’ belief that they were “destined to become a Balkan [*Herrenvolk*]” blatantly compared the pursuit of Greater Serbia to Nazi race theory. The article blamed many of the same culprits for perpetuating the Serb-Croat dispute as had the State Department, including *Amerikanski Srbobran* and Ambassador Fotić. As a result of their agitations, “there raged a Balkan-minority war of words, emphasized furiously now and then by a monkey wrench flung at a Croat factory worker by a Serb on the same arsenal-of-democracy assembly line.”<sup>205</sup> This suggested that the heroic image of the fighting Serb was under revision now that it was exhibiting itself on US soil. Although the article took pains to specifically

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<sup>204</sup> Blair Bolles, “The Stew in the Melting Pot: How a Few Exiles Stir It,” *Harper's Magazine* (January, 1943), 183, accessed February 20, 2018, <https://harpers-org.uri.idm.oclc.org/archive/1943/01/the-stew-in-the-melting-pot/>.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*, 184-5.

disassociate Mihailović from Serb chauvinism, noting that “Croat guerrillas” fought under his command, the views it expressed did not bode well for his popularity should such a connection gain credence.<sup>206</sup> The article also expressed frustration over the “elements in the American government that encourage the most reactionary of the émigrés” despite the fact that the governments-in-exile knew “that changes [were] coming.”<sup>207</sup> It did not comment on the fact that these same émigrés were also Mihailović’s most vigorous defenders.

There was the potential for significant public backlash over the perception that the government was colluding with reactionary and collaborationist elements of occupied countries. This was demonstrated after the ceasefire that Eisenhower and State Department advisor Robert Murphy negotiated with the Vichy Admiral and Vice-Premier Jean François Darlan in North Africa. As historian John Lewis Gaddis remarks, “Despite its justification on military grounds, this arrangement with a notorious collaborator provoked violent criticism in the United States and Great Britain.”<sup>208</sup>

An article in *The New York Times* indicated that the government was sensitive to the accusation that its policy was “based upon ‘settled reactionary sentiments.’” In addition to the deal with Darlan, US support of Mihailović was cited as evidence for the existence of such sentiments. “Out of fear” that these accusations might “cause serious harm to united action both in this country and elsewhere,” Under Secretary of State Welles responded to these charges by clarifying that although the “first”

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<sup>206</sup> Ibid., 183.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid., 185-6.

<sup>208</sup> John Lewis Gaddis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1941-1947* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), 9.



objective of the war was “absolute victory... secondly” the United States had to “work to establish a just and lasting peace.” A critical component of this peace was for people to “choose freely the form of government they desire.” In accordance with this aim, Welles insisted that while the US might support Mihailović, this was not a result of “favoritism.” Rather, the US would “aid, to the full extents of [its] ability, any group which is fighting the common enemy. But that aid [would] not be in such form as to prejudice a people’s basic right, stated in the Atlantic Charter, to choose its own form of government.”<sup>209</sup>

By July, 1943, *The Nation* no longer defended Mihailović against the charge of collaboration. Instead, it described how Mihailović had “accepted the view of the partisans claimed by the Germans, Italians, [Ustaše], and separatist propaganda bureaus,” which led him to join with the Italians in attacking the Partisans. This meant that “not only had Croat” Ustaše killed “Serbs... but Serbian [Četniks] killed anti-fascist Serbs and Croats.” This directly challenged the Manichaeic dualism of the romantic narrative by calling into question the righteousness of the Četnik cause both in regard to Mihailović’s aims and methods, which no longer stood in stark contrast to those of the Axis. As the article went on to state,

the propaganda of Hitler and Mussolini, given impetus by [Dimitrije Ljotić], ideological leader of Serbian orthodox fascism, succeeded in convincing [Mihailović] and his political advisers that in the struggle between fascism and communism Serbia and its people must fight the Communist menace.<sup>210</sup>

The adherents of Pan-Serbism within the YGE eventually came to be seen as a

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<sup>209</sup> “Welles Explains African Dealings,” *New York Times*, April 11, 1943, accessed February 10, 2018, <https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1943/04/11/282535662.html?pageNumber=28>.

<sup>210</sup> Alvarez J. del Vayo, “The Balkan Gateway,” *The Nation* 157, no. 4 (July 24, 1943), 99-100, accessed December 30, 2017, EBSCOhost.

threat to Yugoslavia's existence as nation. In August, 1943, R. W. Seton-Watson, a Scottish historian who was instrumental in guiding the creation of Yugoslavia, provided Ambassador Biddle with a memorandum on the British assessment of the YGE's composition. According to the memorandum, the cabinet was "reactionary, [Pan-Serb], anti-Croat, anti-constitutional, and anti-Russian" and had "no backing anywhere." Mihailović's retention as Minister of War served as "an open *refus* to the Partisans and Moscow," and Seton-Watson suspected that Yugoslavs' perception of the YGE would lead the "great majority of patriots away from" Mihailović. This situation threatened the very "survival of [Yugoslavia] itself." Seton-Watson also admonished that "the Serb and Croat public" could "be excused for assuming that" the United and Britain tacitly approved of the YGE's "reactionary tendencies."<sup>211</sup>

In October 1943, shortly before the pivotal Tehran Conference where the decision would be made to switch full Allied support to Tito, Donovan provided FDR with a memorandum "on the Balkan situation" that, besides criticizing Mihailović's "relative lack of [military] activity," also stated that

the Government-in-Exile anticipates that [Mihailović], with assistance from the Allies, will reestablish the monarchy with the present cabinet and with Pan-Serbian inclinations. This is stated in confidence by General [Petar Živković], Deputy of the King as Commander in Chief, and by Prime Minister [Božidar Purić]. The Government is not representative of the population, and causes controversy between factions which frequently terminate in grave clashes. The people are irritated that the United States and Britain protect the Government-in-Exile... these people are also firmly against General [Živković], who, under King Alexander, was Dictator.<sup>212</sup>

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<sup>211</sup> Biddle to Hull, August 30, 1943, *DoSIAY*, frames 483-487, reel 20. R. W. Seton-Watson had always been an opponent of Greater Serbia and discouraged such a formation in the aftermath of World War I as well. Rusinow, "The Yugoslav Peoples," 371.

<sup>212</sup> William J. Donovan, "Memorandum for the President," October 28, 1943, FDR Library's Digital Collections, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Papers as President: The President's Secretary's File (PSF), 1933-1945, box 153, Office of Strategic Services - Reports - Donovan, William J., 1941-1943, accessed January 30, 2018, [http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/\\_resources/images/psf/psf000810.pdf](http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/_resources/images/psf/psf000810.pdf). Petar

As this memorandum suggests, Mihailović, the King, and the YGE were haunted by the specter of Yugoslavia's dictatorial past under the rule of King Peter's father, and the accusation of authoritarian ambitions was often leveled by the regime's detractors. An example of this can be seen in the November 1, 1943 issue of *The New Republic*, in which Heinz Eulau launched a blistering attack upon the YGE and Mihailović. According to Eulau, for "three years [the YGE's] clever publicity agents, with the aid of gullible English and American newspapermen, succeeded in attributing the exploits of" Tito to Mihailović. While it paid "lip-service to democratic ideals," the YGE actually continued to pursue "the reactionary, undemocratic, and Serbian-nationalist program" directed by the same group that "dominated Yugoslav politics ever since King Alexander established a dictatorship." Mihailović refrained from fighting so that he might "preserve his forces" and make Yugoslavia "a safe place for the exiled ruling clique to return."<sup>213</sup> Adamic did his part to undermine the YGE along similar lines in *The Bulletin* of the United Committee of South-Slavic Americans. In its first issue, Adamic provided a breakdown of the positions held by the YGE's constituent members. He listed Mihailović as the Minister of War and "perhaps chief candidate for the future military dictator."<sup>214</sup>

Amidst the concerns about Mihailović that were being raised within the press and among government officials, Roosevelt received a highly flattering report about the Partisans based upon the observations of OSS operative Major Linn Farish.

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Živković was appointed as Prime Minister of Yugoslavia after King Alexander abolished the parliament in 1929. Pavlowitch, *Yugoslavia*, 77.

<sup>213</sup> Heinz H. F. Eulau, "Europe's Exiled Governments," *The New Republic* 109, no. 18 (November 1, 1943), 614-617, accessed January 10, 2018, EBSCOhost.

<sup>214</sup> Louis Adamic, "The New Yugoslav 'Government,'" *The Bulletin* 1, no. 1 (September 7, 1943), 6, in *DoS IAY*, reel 20, frames 574-580.

According to this report, which Roosevelt subsequently shared with Stalin at the Tehran Conference, “the Partisan movement [was] of far greater military and political importance than [was] commonly realized.”<sup>215</sup> The Partisans had “created... a free community” consisting of Muslims, “Christians, Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, Communist Party members,” all of whom were allowed to practice “any religion or political belief” and freely “express” their opinions.<sup>216</sup> Mihailović and the other Četnik leaders, on the other hand, were “more concerned with their plans for themselves after the war... and thus commenced the bitter civil war which [had] become so savage” that Farish found it hard “to see how a reasonable understanding [could] be brought about.”<sup>217</sup> While the British had once defended Allied support of Mihailović based upon the belief that his organization offered the “best prospect of preventing chaos after the war,” Farish’s report accused Mihailović of actually being the cause of this feared chaos.<sup>218</sup>

FDR would not receive the report of Captain Walter Mansfield, a US Marine and OSS liaison with the Četniks, until April 7, 1944, but Farish’s counterpart did not offer a ringing endorsement of the unifying potential of the Četnik movement. His report confirmed that, while some Četnik officers “believed there should be a federation of independent states... under King Peter,” others wanted “a greater Serbia which will be the predominating influence in all” of Yugoslavia, and most favored at

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<sup>215</sup> Sherwood, *Roosevelt and Hopkins*, 784. “Report from the Office of Strategic Services,” October 29, 1943, *FRUS, The Conferences at Cairo and Tehran, 1943* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1943), 606, <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1943CairoTehran>.

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*, 606.

<sup>217</sup> *Ibid.*, 608.

<sup>218</sup> “Information Received from London on the Situation in Yugoslavia,” January 21, 1943, *DoS IAY*, frame 519, reel 20.

least an “independent Serbia.”<sup>219</sup>

Reporting in much of the American press mirrored Farish’s positive assessment of the Partisans. According to an article in the *Chicago Daily Tribune* from October 26, 1943, while the Partisans claimed to represent all of the Yugoslav “national groups,” the Četniks were “predominantly Serbian” and appeared “to be anti-Croat because of alleged Croatian treachery during” the Yugoslav-Axis conflict.<sup>220</sup> In December, 1943, *Life* informed its readers that the Partisans represented “a kind of New Deal for Yugoslavia.”<sup>221</sup> And although a later article in *Life* allowed that Tito was a communist, it quoted the remarks of “a British observer” that Tito was “a most uncommunistic Communist.” Examples of his “uncommunistic” behavior included the ways in which Tito protected “religion and private property.” The article also emphasized the inclusivity of the Partisans, noting that there were “bearded Serbian priests” among their ranks, and that “a whole row of respectable conservatives” were to be found within AVNOJ.<sup>222</sup>

An article titled “Balkan Time Bomb,” in the January 22, 1944 issue of *Collier’s Weekly* demonstrated the substantial revision that the perceptions of Mihailović and the Serbs had undergone over the course of 1943. The article claimed that it was “wrong to consider all [Četniks] as great patriots” and even “less accurate to identify [Mihailović] as a [Četnik], for he [was] eminently unproletarian and definitely from

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<sup>219</sup> Box 154, Office of Strategic Services - Reports - Mansfield Mission to General Mihailovic, August 1, 1944, [http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/\\_resources/images/psf/psf000816.pdf](http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/_resources/images/psf/psf000816.pdf)

<sup>220</sup> “Here is the Lineup of Rival Groups in Jugo-Slavia,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, October 26, 1943, <http://chicagotribune.newspapers.com/image/370232416/>

<sup>221</sup> “Tito’s Partisans,” *Life*, December 6, 1943, 88 <https://books.google.com/books?id=OFUEAAAAMBAJ&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false>

<sup>222</sup> Stoyan Pribichevich, “Tito,” *Life* February 14, 1944, 96, <https://books.google.com/books?id=X1QEAAAAMBAJ&lpq=PP1&pg=PP1#v=onepage&q&f=false>

the top drawer of Serbian society.”<sup>223</sup> While Mihailović “splattered” his proclamations with “assertions of his loyalty to ‘democracy,’” the article suggested that his “personal background” provided the “best clues” to his politics, and stated that

first of all, he’s a Serb, and the Serbs have always thought themselves the chosen people of the Balkans. They modestly admit that what Lord Gladstone once said of them is true. He described the Serbs as “a select, a noble and imperial race,” and the story of Serbia is a story of a vital, bellicose minority which tried for decades to impose its will—and its king—on its neighbors.

Under the subheading of “Feudalism in our Times,” the article described Yugoslavia’s “peasant population” as so benighted and poverty-stricken that “when foreign relief agencies” provided them with “cocoa, they didn’t know what it was” and used it to paint “their huts.” It ended by warning that although Yugoslavia was “remote,” if its problems remained unresolved, the reader “might just as well start getting ready for another war.”<sup>224</sup> The article left little doubt as to the likelihood that Mihailović was the solution to Yugoslavia’s problems.

After the withdrawal of the military mission to Mihailović, Roosevelt sent King Peter a message in May, 1944, in which he insisted that the “sentiments” of the United States had “not changed,” and that it remained “pledged to the liberation of Yugoslavia and... [hoped] again to see the union of its national elements under common government, democratic in form and fact, as the purposes for which” World War II was “being fought” required. However, he noted that

it is one of the misfortunes of the war that your country, battered and dismembered by the enemy, has suffered also from internal conflicts, which in turn have revived older antagonisms... You speak of the Government’s popularity with the people at home. I wish I could say

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<sup>223</sup> Frank Gervasi, “Balkan Time Bomb,” *Collier’s Weekly* (January 22, 1944), 13, accessed February 1, 2018, <http://www.unz.org/Pub/Colliers-1944jan22-00013?View=PDF&Text=%22mikhailovitch%22>.

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

that our reports from within Yugoslavia confirm this. On the contrary, they indicate that the people in Yugoslavia have sought, and still are seeking, a leadership which would have vision for dealing with the new social forces at work in the world today.... Let us not forget that the [Mihailović] question has become more political than military.

FDR went on to suggest the Mihailović, although he was a “fine soldier,” be relieved of his ministerial post. He also chided the King that “the Partisan movement is stronger, and has far greater popular support, and sympathy for it extends into larger areas, than your Government has been willing to acknowledge... Any fundamental approach to a solution of the unhappy civil strife in Yugoslavia must take this reality into account.”<sup>225</sup>

## CONCLUSION

While the romantic narrative of Mihailović never completely collapsed, it was sufficiently called into question to allow for the consideration of Tito as a viable alternative for US support. This rhetorical space, which allowed for the redirection of US policy, was in part created by casting doubt upon Mihailović’s politics. The fact that government officials assiduously avoided aligning themselves politically with Mihailović demonstrates the degree of this doubt. Their avoidance was an ominous sign for the perpetuation of the romantic narrative, because it signaled that the United States and Mihailović were in pursuit of different postwar ends. The US government insisted that these ends had to be subordinated to the primary aim of defeating the Axis. However, in this regard too, the romantic narrative was undermined by

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<sup>225</sup> Roosevelt to King Peter II, May 17, 1944, FDR Library’s Digital Collections, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Papers as President: Map Room Papers, 1941-1945, box 164, Naval Aide’s Files A-16 Balkan Countries, November 12, 1943-September 24, 1944, accessed July 30, 2017, [http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/\\_resources/images/mr/mr0846.pdf](http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/_resources/images/mr/mr0846.pdf).

accusations that, as opposed to fighting the Axis, Mihailović had aligned himself with them in his fight against communism. Considering the parallels that some Americans drew between the Pan-Serb ideology and Nazism, these accusations likely seemed plausible to those that believed that this was an accurate comparison.

Although historian Susan Brewer argues that Americans fought World War II “for survival, not ideals,” the concepts of security and ideals were not mutually exclusive as they related to American policy toward Yugoslavia.<sup>226</sup> American awareness of the civil war in Yugoslavia coincided with increasing contemplation of the postwar future. The liberal solution to the Yugoslav threat to postwar peace was a democratic Yugoslav government that was representative of its constituent nationalities. Tito’s movement seemed to promise the realization of this desired end state. Also, the emerging romantic narrative of Tito did not conflict with the US narrative of unity to the same degree as did the narrative of Mihailović. Tito’s movement appeared to have wide ethnic and ideological appeal, both within Yugoslavia and the United States. In contrast, the tenets of Pan-Serbism had alienated not only the majority of Yugoslav-Americans, but also liberals within the press and government. The romantic narrative of Tito complemented the US narrative of unity. These narratives combined to create the space in which the reformulation of policy might be considered. While FDR never appeared to completely jettison his pro-Serb sympathies, the narrative shift constricted his options, as continued support of Mihailović would have been seen by many as a repudiation of American ideals.

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<sup>226</sup> Brewer, *Why America Fights*, 88.



## CHAPTER 3

### THE SATIRICAL AND TRAGIC INTERPRETATIONS OF OCCUPIED YUGOSLAVIA

On July 8, 1944, William Donovan provided FDR with another report from OSS operative Linn Farish, the tone of which was markedly different than the one received by the President as he was en route to the Tehran Conference. Farish began his report by praising the OSS officers that had been assigned to both Tito and Mihailović, noting that they had all performed admirably within the “perplexing whirl of external and internal politics.” Farish had come to see that the “deep rooted causes of the internecine strife” in Yugoslavia were a result of “racial, religious, and political” disputations of “such long standing that the people themselves [did] not understand them.” Both the Partisans and the Četniks viewed the other as the other as their foremost enemy, and Farish believed that “both sides [were] speaking the truth” in that “they [were] their own worst enemies.” However, the “vast majority” of Yugoslavs were “neither Right, Left, Communist, Reactionary,” but instead were a “simple peasant type of people, strong willed, hot blooded, with tremendous powers of endurance and great personal courage,” who loved “intrigue,” and were “the most profound liars” that Farish had “ever met.”

Farish's report made it apparent that he believed that the US was, at least in part, responsible for the “terrible story of misguidance, of rape and death and destruction”

in Yugoslavia, for there was only “one great power” that Farish felt “might have prevented... or stopped it,” and this had “never been used.” He explained that

the United States of America is mentioned in the same breath with God in [Yugoslavia]. We were the one nation on earth to whom the people believed they could turn for unbiased, unpolitical aid and advice without having to pay something in return. I am speaking now of the common man, not Marshal Tito or General [Mihailović].... It would be difficult to express the utter helplessness and frustration which we felt in the face of such complete faith in the ability of our country to right the wrongs which were so evident on all sides.... They saw in us... the representatives of a powerful democratic nation in which people of all racial extraction, religions, and political beliefs live side by side in harmony, free to speak openly.... In comparison to their own pitiful condition... it is not hard to realize why [the United States]... has taken on a more rosy hue than it perhaps deserves.... How long can a great nation continue not to pay attention to the obligations contained in such trust and respect? How long can a great nation continue in this manner and still remain great?

Whereas he had worried “at one time” that the United States was not receiving “proper recognition for her participation in supply operations,” Farish now questioned the wisdom of wanting such recognition. This change in attitude was brought about by seeing “simple peasant boys” with “bullet holes in them... that resulted from American ammunition, fired from American rifles, dropped from American aircraft flown by American pilots.” Because of this, he no longer felt that he could “go on with the work in [Yugoslavia] unless... [an] honest effort... [was] made to put an end to the civil strife.”<sup>227</sup>

Among the modes of employment, Farish’s impassioned exhortations fall within the category of tragedy. The tragedy, as described by Krapfl, “is prompted by failure

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<sup>227</sup> Linn M. Farish, “Summary Report on Observations in Jugoslavia for the Period 19 Sept. 1943 until 16 June 1944,” June 28, 1944, FDR Library’s Digital Collections, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Papers as President: The President’s Secretary’s File (PSF), 1933-1945, box 153, Office of Strategic Services - Reports - Donovan, William J., March, 1944-September 20, 1944, accessed January 30, 2018, [http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/\\_resources/images/psf/psf000811.pdf](http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/_resources/images/psf/psf000811.pdf).

to achieve transcendence [and asks] what flaw of the protagonist's may have contributed to his fall.<sup>228</sup> According to Frye, one interpretation of the tragedy is that it results from "a violation of *moral* [emphasis in original] law."<sup>229</sup> The romantic narrative of Yugoslav resistance was a call for the US to aid the Yugoslav resistance and thus become a co-protagonist in the Yugoslav quest for freedom from Axis occupation and the establishment of a just postwar order. The tragic interpretation of US involvement in Yugoslavia claimed that the US had failed to assume this role by betraying its ideals and commitments. The tragic narrative called for a return to American ideals and for the US to take an active and constructive role in Yugoslavia. As I show in this chapter, the tragic narrative was ultimately unable to overcome the governmental inertia caused by the satirical interpretation of the Yugoslav conflict.

According to Krapfl, the satirical narrative, which is the "militant form of ironic employment" allows "virtually no freedom to the hero, and seeks explanations... only in social structures."<sup>230</sup> Rather than serving as a call to action, the satirical narrative portrays "human agency" as "an illusion," making "political action... pointless."<sup>231</sup> "The archetypal theme of irony and satire," Frye states, is "*Sparagmos*, or the sense that heroism and effective action are absent, disorganized, and foredoomed to defeat and that confusion and anarchy reign over the world." Notably, Frye defines "*sparagmos*" as "tearing to pieces."<sup>232</sup> Crucial to the rise of the satirical narrative was the reevaluation of the primitive, violent, and volatile nature of the Balkans. Rather than portraying these characteristics in a positive light, as was the case with the early

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<sup>228</sup> Krapfl, *Revolution with a Human Face*, 27.

<sup>229</sup> Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, 210

<sup>230</sup> Krapfl, *Revolution with a Human Face*, 31.

<sup>231</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>232</sup> Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, 192.

romantic narrative, the satirical narrative emphasized the view of the Balkans that gave rise to the term “balkanization.” This should perhaps not be surprising considering the similarities between the concepts of balkanization and *sparagmos*.

The tragic interpretation of American involvement in Yugoslavia was introduced almost immediately after the German invasion. However, it failed to gain prominence within either the press or government circles. In May 1941, Bess Demaree wrote an article for the *The Saturday Evening Post* that was highly critical of US encouragement of the coup. As she put it, “the Americans” were “chiefly responsible for the setting off” of the “explosion which blew apart” Yugoslavia. In doing so, “the Americans... accomplished everything which they set out to do.... They persuaded the fiery Serbs to defy the Germans and thus invite martyrdom on their country.” Even though the US knew “that thousands of [Yugoslavia’s] people” would be “slaughtered,” they put this “out of their minds” in pursuit of their “war politics.”<sup>233</sup> The United States took advantage of the “almost mystical faith” that Serbs “possessed” regarding the “the power and the benevolence of the American people,” knowing full well that “thousands of sea miles separated [it] from the Balkans” and that the US had neither sufficient supplies nor ships to aid the Yugoslavs in the battle that was inevitably to come.<sup>234</sup> Demaree concluded that, even though the US had not yet entered the war as a belligerent, the only way to “rescue” Yugoslavia would be through the use of “American soldiers.”<sup>235</sup> While this was certainly a call to action, it went unheeded. “American soldiers” would primarily be introduced into Yugoslavia

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<sup>233</sup> Bess Demaree, “Our Frontier on the Danube,” *The Saturday Evening Post* 213, no. 47 (May 24, 1941), 9, accessed December 1, 2017, EBSCOhost.

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid.*, 118.

<sup>235</sup> *Ibid.*, 120.

in the form of downed airmen supplemented by a limited number of OSS operatives and other military personnel.

The YGE and Mihailović were willing to blame the interference of outside powers for Yugoslavia's troubles, but mostly kept their fingers pointed away from the United States and toward the Soviet Union and Great Britain. As the Ambassador to the Soviet Union commented in a message to the Secretary of State on October 1, 1942, "the Soviet press" had stopped mentioning Mihailović and referenced "the activities of only the Partisans." Based off of conversations with the Yugoslav Minister, it was surmised that the Soviet support of the Partisans stemmed from the desire to ensure "that on the conclusion of the war Communists or persons sympathetic to communism [would] have dominating positions in Yugoslavia."<sup>236</sup> That the British were not above reproach was made clear in a speech that Mihailović ill-advisedly made in front of the head SOE liaison with Četniks. In it, he accused the British of pursuing "their own strategic purposes" and of attempting to "purchase Serb blood at the cost of a trivial supply of munitions." He could now see "that the Serbs were... completely friendless" and that the aim of "the western democracies... was to win the war at the expense of others."<sup>237</sup>

The press also noted the problem of outside interference in Yugoslavia and called for the US to take a more constructive role in forming a Balkan policy with its Allies. As *The New Leader* stated in an article titled "The Balkan Powder Keg," the US could "adopt the policy of an ostrich and pretend there was no difference between the Anglo-American bloc and the Soviet Union" and ignore the fact that Stalin had "long

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<sup>236</sup> Standley to Hull, October 1, 1942, *FRUS, 1942: Volume III, Europe*, 819.

<sup>237</sup> Biddle to Hull, March 30, 1943, *FRUS, 1943: Volume II, Europe*, 987.

been making preparations for domination of Eastern Europe and the Balkans.” The article predicted that “the Balkan tragedy [was] about to unfold itself in all its horror” in a battle between the West and the Soviet Union for “political domination.” It warned that “only those who [foresaw] the future [were] destined to govern.”<sup>238</sup> However, the United States had no desire to involve itself in such a contest.

The title of an article in *The Progressive* ominously asked “How Can We Avoid World War III?” and suggested that the spark for such a conflict was most likely to be found in Yugoslavia. According to the article, US was making “less and less visible effort to implement” the principles of “the Four Freedoms and the Atlantic Charter.” This was a result of the United States’ focus upon “physical involvement in the war” without thinking “about the world after the war.” This had led to a failure to reach “an understanding with the Soviet Union” about Yugoslavia. The cause of this cataclysm was to be the simultaneous invasion of the Balkans by all three of the Great Powers.<sup>239</sup> This joint invasion never materialized in large part because of the American reluctance to do so.

FDR initially seemed amenable to an invasion of the Balkans. As late as the Tehran conference he suggested that an Anglo-American force might cross “the Adriatic, for a drive, aided by Tito’s Partisans, northeastward into Rumania to effect a junction with the Red Army.”<sup>240</sup> However, his interest in this strategy waned over time. This can be seen in a message that the President sent to the Acting Secretary of

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<sup>238</sup> Leon Dennen, “The Balkan Powder Keg,” *The New Leader*, July 31, 1943, accessed March 1, 2018, [http://search.opinionarchives.com.uri.idm.oclc.org/TNL\\_Web/DigitalArchive.aspx?panes=2](http://search.opinionarchives.com.uri.idm.oclc.org/TNL_Web/DigitalArchive.aspx?panes=2).

<sup>239</sup> William Henry Chamberlin, “How Can We Avoid World War III?” *The Progressive*, February 22, 1943, accessed March 1, 2018, [http://search.opinionarchives.com.uri.idm.oclc.org/TP\\_Web/DigitalArchive.aspx](http://search.opinionarchives.com.uri.idm.oclc.org/TP_Web/DigitalArchive.aspx).

<sup>240</sup> Sherwood, *Roosevelt and Hopkins*, 780.

State on February 21, 1944 in which he stated that he thought “it would be a great mistake for [the US] to participate in a military campaign against the Balkans at [that] time” and asked him to “take this up with the War Department.”<sup>241</sup> Historian Andrew Buchanan cites FDR’s suggestion of a Balkan campaign in his argument that the US did not suffer from “Balkan-phobia.”<sup>242</sup> In making such an argument, he set himself against historians such as Barbara Jelavich who argue that “the failure to formulate and carry through a clear and coherent policy in Eastern Europe... reflected the general lack of concern over the area among” Americans.<sup>243</sup> Both of these assessments are true. The United States did not originally suffer from “Balkan-phobia.” However, the image of the Balkans was subject to change, and government officials acquired this ailment over time. This in turn gave rise to the incoherency of US policy on the Balkans and the appearance that they did not care about the region. This aversion to becoming entangled in the Balkans demonstrates the power of the satirical narrative.

Reporting within the American press increasingly portrayed Yugoslav internal turmoil as an interminable and inherent feature of the Balkans and contributed to the spread of the satirical narrative. *The New York Times* explained that “the growing strife” in Yugoslavia was “a new expression of an ancient conflict that has long torn the Balkan peoples; parts of Yugoslavia are looking... toward Rome and the West, part toward Byzantium and the East.” While it acknowledged the certain individuals

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<sup>241</sup> Roosevelt to King Peter II, May 17, 1944, FDR Library’s Digital Collections, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Papers as President: Map Room Papers, 1941-1945, box 164, Naval Aide’s Files A-16 Balkan Countries, November 12, 1943-September 24, 1944, accessed July 30, 2017, [http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/\\_resources/images/mr/mr0846.pdf](http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/_resources/images/mr/mr0846.pdf).

<sup>242</sup> Buchanan, *American Grand Strategy in the Mediterranean during World War II*, 238-240.

<sup>243</sup> Barbara Jelavich, *History of the Balkans: Twentieth Century*, vol. II (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 304.

were guilty of fanning the flames of the conflict in their pursuit of postwar power, there nonetheless existed “great frictions” along “lines of natural cleavage” that were “racial, religious, and ideological.” The article concluded that “more than any other country in Europe, Yugoslavia poses the terrible nature of the reconstruction problems that the world will face after the war.”<sup>244</sup> *Commonweal* referred to “the anarchy that reigns in [Yugoslavia’s] primitive mountain regions,” and noted that even “in the face of an enemy as powerful and as hated as the” Nazis, the Partisans and Četniks nevertheless “engaged in bloody internecine strife.” However, this was perhaps to be expected, considering that “even... between the two big wars there was intermittent fighting between fierce armed bands.” The article suggested that although “the Big Powers have fished these troubled waters” in the past, there were now “more urgent problems for the peace than completely stamping out so chronic a flair for violence and disorder.”<sup>245</sup>

One significant aspect of the satirical narrative was its portrayal of the Yugoslav conflict as an ancient religious dispute. For instance, a previously mentioned State Department report on disunity within the Yugoslav-American community identified the contributions made by the clergy of the Orthodox and Catholic Churches to the Serb-Croat dispute, which it described as the manifestation of a “thousand-year old animosity.”<sup>246</sup> Even Farish, although undoubtedly unintentionally, lent credence to this interpretation of the Yugoslav conflict with his above-mentioned reference to the

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<sup>244</sup> Hanson W. Baldwin, “Within Yugoslavia—II,” *New York Times*, November 20, 1942, accessed January 10, 2018, <https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1942/11/20/88112463.html?pageNumber=11>.

<sup>245</sup> “Partisans and Chetniks,” *The Week*, *Commonweal* 39, no. 1 (October 22, 1943), 3-4, accessed February 10, 2018, [http://search.opinionarchives.com.uri.idm.oclc.org/Commw\\_Web/digitalarchive.aspx](http://search.opinionarchives.com.uri.idm.oclc.org/Commw_Web/digitalarchive.aspx)

<sup>246</sup> United States Department of State, “Regarding the Serb-Croat Dispute,” May 27, 1942, *DoS IAY*, frame 130, reel 20.



“racial, religious, and political” disputations of “such long standing that the people themselves [did] not understand them.”<sup>247</sup> As historian Ivo Banac argues, “because South Slavic cultural diversity is really religiously based, there have been numerous attempts to link the country’s divisions to religious intolerance.” He points out that World War II was one such instance of this. Even though “some of the massacres” that were committed over the course of the war “became religiously based, [these] occurred in the context of occupation... not of a [religious] or even civil war,” a term that Banac believes is “much misused.”<sup>248</sup> While it is arguably reasonable, if not unavoidable, to portray the violent struggle between collaborators and resistance forces as a form of civil war, this verbiage redirects the focus upon such a conflict’s causes.

Banac brings up a valid criticism of the use of the term “civil war,” in that this term emphasized the Yugoslav contributions to conflict as opposed to the significant destabilizing effect of outside interference, to include the activities engaged in by the United States. As previously discussed, these activities included the initial encouragement of the coup, which ultimately led to the invasion and occupation of Yugoslavia and set the conditions for the violent internal political struggle that followed. The US further destabilized Yugoslavia by supplying both sides of the Partisan-Četnik conflict. Although the US eventually ceased aid to Mihailović, it continued to supply Tito indirectly. In a message to FDR in September 1944,

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<sup>247</sup> Farish, “Summary Report on Observations in Yugoslavia for the Period 19 Sept. 1943 until 16 June 1944,” June 28, 1944, FDR Library’s Digital Collections, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Papers as President: The President’s Secretary’s File (PSF), 1933-1945, box 153, Office of Strategic Services - Reports - Donovan, William J., March, 1944-September 20, 1944, accessed January 30, 2018, [http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/\\_resources/images/psf/psf000811.pdf](http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/_resources/images/psf/psf000811.pdf).

<sup>248</sup> Ivo Banac, forward to Sabrina P. Ramet, *Balkan Babel: The Disintegration of Yugoslavia from the Death of Tito to the Fall of Milošević*, 4th ed. (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 2002), xii.

Donovan reported that the US had “made clear” to Tito and Mihailović that it would “not support either side in internal political strife.” However, he then reported that approximately “two thousand tons” of supplies, to include “military arms and equipment,” were being delivered to the Partisans monthly. Although the British acted as an intermediary, many of the supplies were of American origin. In summary he assured the President that the OSS had been “punctilious in keeping out of any... political controversy” and avoided “any entanglement in rivalry between [Mihailović] and Tito.”<sup>249</sup> This claim seems a bit farcical considering the use to which Tito was putting the equipment that he was receiving from the West.

The United States also contributed to the Yugoslav conflict by encouraging violent retribution for collaboration. For example, one American military liaison reported that he had succeeded in May 1944 in convincing a Partisan commander to agree “to issue an order stating that any peasant turning [US airmen] over to the Germans would be shot.”<sup>250</sup> While this may seem to have been a reasonable request based upon military imperatives, one is left to wonder what standards of evidence were used in determining guilt and meting out justice as a result of this order.

Ostensibly the US mantra of not becoming politically involved in Yugoslavia stemmed from the United States’ commitment to the Atlantic Charter and the right of people to choose their own form of government. This can be seen in memorandum from the State Department to the President on December 23, 1944, about British attempts to enlist the aid of the United States in convincing the King and Tito to agree

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<sup>249</sup> “Message from General Donovan,” September 1, 1944, FDR Library’s Digital Collections, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Papers as President: The President's Secretary's File (PSF), 1933-1945, box 153, Office of Strategic Services - Reports - Donovan, William J., March, 1944-September 20, 1944, accessed January 30, 2018, [http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/\\_resources/images/psf/psf000811.pdf](http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/_resources/images/psf/psf000811.pdf).

<sup>250</sup> Robin S. Nowell, “Report of Geisha Mission,” RG 226, entry 210, box 180.

on the particulars of forming a new Yugoslav government. The memorandum stated that “it was the hope of” the US government “that genuine efforts [would] be made to assemble representatives with sound claim to speak for the broad masses... without other influence” in their project of “governmental reform.” However, the memorandum went on to make clear that the true reason that the State Department wanted to avoid “the exercise of its influence” was that this “would involve responsibilities” that it “considered it should not take in the circumstances, as... the future of Yugoslavia may be so vitally affected.”<sup>251</sup> The satirical view of Yugoslavia’s future undoubtedly contributed to this noncommittal stance.

The British grew increasingly frustrated with the United States’ non-policy. On January 16, 1945, the Secretary of State was informed that the British were “preparing to ‘throw over’ King Peter.” It also stated that the British Ambassador “had been instructed to tell” the State Department that while “it was all very well and good for the United States to stall on [the] Yugoslav situation... [the British] could not afford to take [the] same ‘waffling’ line.”<sup>252</sup>

FDR needed little convincing about the questionable viability of Yugoslavia as a country. As will be recalled, he asked Fотиć how the Serbs “could expect to live in the future in the same state with the Croats” in late 1941.<sup>253</sup> While Fотиć’s reliability might be questioned in regard to this subject, as his account seemed to favor the Pan-Serb view, other sources confirm that the President believed this. According to Robert

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<sup>251</sup> United States Department of State, “Memorandum,” December 23, 1944, FDR Library’s Digital Collections, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Papers as President: The President’s Secretary’s File (PSF), 1933-1945, Box 53, Yugoslavia, [http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/\\_resources/images/psf/b-psfc000012.pdf](http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/_resources/images/psf/b-psfc000012.pdf).

<sup>252</sup> Kirk to Hull, January 16, 1945, FDR Library’s Digital Collections, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Papers as President: The President’s Secretary’s File (PSF), 1933-1945, Box 53, Yugoslavia, [http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/\\_resources/images/psf/b-psfc000012.pdf](http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/_resources/images/psf/b-psfc000012.pdf).

<sup>253</sup> Konstantin Fотиć, *The War We Lost: Yugoslavia’s Tragedy and the Failure of the West* (New York: Viking Press, 1948), 128-9.

E. Sherwood, while dining with presidential advisor Harry Hopkins and the British Foreign in March 1943, FDR “expressed his [oft-repeated] opinion that Croats and Serbs had nothing in common and that it [was] ridiculous to try to force two such antagonistic peoples to live together under one government.” Instead, Roosevelt “thought that Serbia, itself, should be established by itself and the Croats put under a trusteeship.” Eden “thought the President’s opinion... a little pessimistic” and believed that a united postwar Yugoslavia was possible.<sup>254</sup> Further evidence is found in a message from FDR to Churchill on May 18, 1944, in which the President asked the Prime Minister if he recalled FDR telling him “over a year ago about [FDR’s] talk with Peter, in which [FDR] discussed the possibility of three nations in place of the one, [King Peter] to be the head of a reconstituted Serbia.” According to Roosevelt, “The King, with real fire in his eyes, remarked that he was a Serb.” The President thought that he and Churchill “should bear some such possibility in mind in case the new government does not work out.” Even though FDR favored “a Yugoslavia,” he believed that “three separate states with separate governments in a Balkan confederation might solve many problems.”<sup>255</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The tragic narrative of Yugoslavia called for policy changes that would relieve the suffering of the Yugoslav people. Whereas the tragic narrative portrayed British and Russian influence as baleful, the United States was more often imagined as being

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<sup>254</sup> Sherwood, *Roosevelt and Hopkins*, 711.

<sup>255</sup> FDR to Churchill, May 18, 1944, FDR Library’s Digital Collections, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Papers as President: Map Room Papers, 1941-1945, Box 6, FDR to Churchill, April-May 1944, [http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/\\_resources/images/mr/mr0035.pdf](http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/_resources/images/mr/mr0035.pdf).

above the political fray. However, the United States' efforts to remain politically disinterested began to give the appearance that the US government was in fact politically uninterested in Yugoslav affairs. This apparent lack of interest resulted, at least in part, from the dominance of the satirical narrative. Viewing the Yugoslav conflict as satire was facilitated by Americans' preconceived notions about the Balkans. Whereas the perceived nature of the Balkans was viewed in positive light at the time of the Axis invasion, subsequent internal conflict evoked a pessimistic manifestation of balkanism. Conveniently, the adoption of this view of the Balkans also absolved the United States of responsibility for the contributions it had made to Yugoslav discord, as this narrative instead emphasized the inherent nature of the Yugoslavs themselves as the explanation for their country's internal turmoil. Most importantly, in regard to the formulation of policy, the satirical interpretation served as the foundation for the longstanding beliefs of President Roosevelt. As this interpretation gained credence, this diminished the will of the President or members of the State Department to engage in the seemingly Sisyphean effort of solving Yugoslavia's political disputes.

## CHAPTER 4

### CONCLUSION

As this paper has shown, an examination of the narratives about Yugoslavia that were adopted over the course of World War II provides insight into the factors that influenced US policy decisions. Each policy decision was preceded by the rise of particular narrative that called for a particular type of governmental action or inaction. The initial dominance of the romantic narrative called for support of Mihailović, which the US duly pledged. The attack upon this narrative, the rise of the romantic narrative about Tito, and the comedic narrative of unity, all encouraged a reexamination of the United States' pro-Mihailović policy. The tragic narrative demanded that the US be more proactive in resolving Yugoslavia's internal turmoil. This was countered by the satirical narrative, which encouraged the US to remain politically uninvolved in the Yugoslav affairs. While the US government adamantly adhered to its insistence that its decisions were based upon military considerations, these narratives created the space that determined the scope and direction of those decisions. While I do not claim that narratives were the sole driver of US policy, it is apparent that once particular narratives gained dominance, they guided policy-making toward a particular course of action and deterred consideration of alternative policies. This can be seen in the case of the comedic narrative, which emphasized Yugoslav unity and discouraged consideration of the postwar division of Yugoslavia.

It could be argued that particular narratives were merely adopted or instrumentalized in order to promote desired, predetermined policies. For instance, it is certainly the case that communists intentionally influenced the narratives about Mihailović and Tito in order to shift US policy and thus abet a communist revolution within Yugoslavia. However, narratives also served as a basis for why individuals perceived of a course of action or outcome as desirable. The initial romantic narrative about Mihailović's resistance served as an imperative for US support of the Četniks that went beyond the consideration of US interests. This can be seen in the emotional message sent by Roosevelt's son requesting aid to the Četniks. The dominance of the romantic narrative, with its emphasis upon the heroism and victimization of the Serbs, also explains why Roosevelt sympathized with the postwar aspirations of the Pan-Serbs. Linn Farish's later report, which epitomizes the tragic narrative, has no ostensible political objective. Rather, the tragedy of the Yugoslav conflict necessitated a change in US policy. An end to the tragedy, in and of itself, was Farish's desired outcome.

Each narrative presented a version of the "truth." Some narratives were truer than others in regard to historically verifiable facts. Mihailović's resistance, as far as can be determined, bore little resemblance to the way in which it was originally portrayed to American public. The Serbs were certainly heroic in resisting the Axis occupiers to the extent that they did. However, the romantic narrative of Četnik resistance could not withstand close scrutiny. This does not mean that narratives gained ascendancy or declined simply due to the emergence of new information. Far more important was how that information was interpreted. In the case of the romantic narrative, there were

numerous factors that contributed to this process of interpretation, all of which related to the way in which Americans viewed their own participation in the war and what they construed as the war's meaning. While the nature of Mihailović's political aims, or even if he had such aims, is disputed by historians, perhaps what is more relevant is that a significant number of America's liberal cultural producers came to see that the Pan-Serb ideology to which they believed Mihailović adhered was the antithesis of their own ideals. In this way, opposition to Mihailović and support for Tito tells us more about American society than it necessarily does about events within Yugoslavia.

The comedic narrative proffered by the US government is perhaps the most revealing in this regard. This might be viewed as the most artificial of all of the narratives in that it was more often used as an imperative for proper action than it was a description of reality. The preoccupation of many Americans with the Yugoslav threat to unity reflected their concerns about their own society, particularly as they related to the problem of race. While some acknowledged this American problem, others lashed out at Serb nationalists as if they were introducing a contagion amongst an otherwise healthy American public. The comedic narrative ultimately benefitted Tito as he seemed to offer the panacea to Yugoslav ethnic strife. And there seems to be "truth" to this interpretation as well, if only in hindsight, in that Tito did hold the country together throughout his life as the postwar leader of Yugoslavia.

The tragic narrative might be viewed as the least effective of the narratives as it did not seem to meaningfully impact government policy in the ways that those who adopted this narrative hoped. However, the tragedy of US involvement in Yugoslavia would have a prolific postwar life. The historiographical preoccupation with



Communist influence can be viewed as a form of tragedy, wherein the United States betrayed its ideals and obligations to Mihailović and the YGE due to its naïveté about the nature of Tito's aspirations.

As an examination of the rhetoric of government officials makes clear, the satirical narrative both reflected and likely shaped US perceptions of Yugoslavia. This narrative emphasized another questionable "truth" informed by what can be seen as a manifestation of balkanism. There seemed to be facts upon which to base this narrative. The dispute within Yugoslav did have an ethnic and religious basis. It was also based upon historical grievances. However, in emphasizing these aspects of the conflict, this narrative simultaneously deemphasized the role that the US had played in creating and perpetuating Yugoslavia's internal conflict. This allowed for the US to eschew political involvement in Yugoslavia and wipe its hands of responsibility for a conflict that was ancient and intractable. This does not mean that the satirical narrative was opportunistically adopted in order to free the US from an obligation to intercede on behalf of the Yugoslav people. FDR had an apparent genuine interest in and sympathy for Yugoslavia. This interest diminished over time. The nature of the satirical narrative explains, at least in part, this decline and why FDR abandoned his stated consideration of a US military incursion into the Balkans. It also explains why his Serbophile sympathies were not translated into a coherent policy.

Unfortunately, the satirical narrative would again become ascendant within the United States as Yugoslavia descended into civil war in the 1990s, and once again it engendered American inaction. As former US ambassador to the United Nations Samantha Power wrote in her study of American policy and genocide in Yugoslavia

during the dissolution of the state in the 1990s, Hillary Clinton reportedly “gave her husband a copy of Robert Kaplan’s *Balkan Ghosts*, a deftly written travel book that portrays people in the Balkans as if they were destined to hate and kill.” It is suspected that, after reading this book, President Clinton came to see Yugoslavia as a potential “quagmire” and thus desired to avoid US involvement, such as military intercession on behalf of Muslim Bosnians who were being slaughtered by Serb nationalists.<sup>256</sup>

This thesis can be seen as a cautionary tale about the policy-making process related to US foreign intervention. US policy was informed by simplistic understandings of Yugoslavia. The dominance of the archetypal forms of the discussed narratives reflected these simplistic understandings. The adoption of certain narratives was undoubtedly facilitated by preconceived notions regarding the Balkans and its inhabitants. This is most apparent in the romantic narrative of Serb resistance and the satirical narrative of Yugoslavia’s ancient ethnic and religious hatreds. While these narratives served as easily understandable conceptual frameworks, their lack of complexity undermined the development of an accurate or predictive analysis related to Yugoslavia. For instance, the romantic narrative served as a basis for US expectations of the Serbs’ willingness and capability to fight the Axis. This faith proved to be misplaced in regard to the initial invasion and subsequent resistance. It also did not take into account the implications of the political aspirations of the Serb nationalists and the ways in which these aspirations might alienate members of both the Yugoslav and American public.

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<sup>256</sup> Samantha Power, *A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2007), 302.

While it is beyond the scope of this thesis, the relationship between narratives and foreign policy has the potential to explain the trajectory of other instances of US foreign intervention. For example, the United States initially supported the anti-communist government of Ngo Dinh Diem in Vietnam. However, similar to Mihailović's suspected Pan-Serbism and the YGE's questionable commitment to democracy, Diem's repressive rule alienated much of the Vietnamese population and united communists and non-communists in resisting his rule. The US eventually saw the folly of its policy and "stood aside and gave its blessing to a military coup" that resulted in Diem's assassination.<sup>257</sup> Also like Yugoslavia, Vietnam would descend into civil war and eventually come to be viewed by Americans as a quagmire. The application of narrative theory might serve as an explanatory model for further scholarly research on the course of US policy in not only Vietnam, but also places of current US military involvement, such as Iraq and Afghanistan.

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<sup>257</sup> Thomas J. McCormick, *America's Half-Century: United States Foreign Policy in the Cold War and After*, 2nd ed. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 147-151.

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