

Darko Gavrilovich

TWO QUESTIONS ABOUT CHETNIKS THAT CAN BE TAKEN AS POSSIBLE PATH FOR OPENING THE CONTROVERSIES ABOUT THE ROLE OF THE CHETNIKS IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR FROM THE 1941 TILL THE 1943.

Abstract: Author's approach is marked by the analysis of the features of the subjects of Chetnik – Allies relations. At the same time he establishes the role of other Southern Slav nations in Chetniks. Also, the author has reconstructed the role of the Chetniks between 1941. and 1943.

KEY WORDS: Chetniks, Partisans, Drazha Mihailovich, Yugoslav Government in exile, Great Britain, United States, Allies, Axis.

CHETNIKS WERE THE SERBS AND NOBODY BUT THE SERBS? - After the proclamation of the royal dictatorship in Kingdom of Yugoslavia in 1929, the extreme Croat nationalists went underground and founded the Ustasha fascist-style movement. After decades of Serbian supremacy (between 1918 and 1941 Serbs held the premiership and the most of the ministries), 'pure' nationalism gained the upper hand among the majority of Croats regardless of their political creed. In a very real sense the Ustasha regime, installed after the dismemberment of Yugoslavia by the Germans and Italians in 1941, was a bizarre culmination of the pure Croat chauvinistic trends, albeit its terroristic outrages gradually alienated significant segments of the Croat population, which initially was prepared to accept 'independence' even from the hands of Mussolini and Hitler. During the war the creation of a so-called Croatian nation-state under the aegis of the German and Italian occupiers contributed to the growing mistrust of the Croats by the Serbs, while the memory of the hundreds of thousands of Serbs, Jews and Gypsies murdered during this period was and has remained a political factor in the recent years.¹

In Independent State of Croatia, which was leaded by Ustashe, Serbs were organised their resistance mostly in two different movements - as Partisans and as Chetniks. But it was a myth that was spreaded during the last six decades that the only Serbs were the Chetniks. In this report I will present the several examples that are talking about the presence of the other nations in the Chetniks movement. In Drazha Mihailovich movement (widely known as Chetniks) there were also Croats, Muslims, Montenegrins and Slovenians.

For example, in Dalmatia (southern province of Croatia which was, during the war, mostly in the hands of Italy) Serbian and Croat majority gave support to the Allies and joined to the Partisans. One part of the Serbian population joined to the Chetniks. Even if the Chetniks from Serbia (at the beggining of the war) were on the side of the Allies, in Dalmatia, they were close to the fascist Italy and committed war crimes, not only against the Croats, but also against the Serbs who gave support to the Partisans. Beside the Serbs who were in Chetniks in Dalmatia there were also Croats who accepted their idea of the future Yugoslav unity² and they were standing still in fight with their Serbian comrades till the end of the war.

In Independent state of Croatia smaller part of the Muslims joined to Chetniks. In fact, following the establishment of the 'Independent State of Croatia' in 1941, there emerged mostly in two Bosnian-oriented movements in opposition: the People's Liberation Movement under the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, which in the form of the 'Partisans' waged a guerrilla resistance;

¹ Paul Lendvai, Lis Parcell, Yugoslavia without Yugoslavs: The Roots of the Crisis, International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs), Vol. 67, No. 2. (Apr., 1991), pp. 251-261.

² One of the most prominent political leaders of the Chetniks in Dalmatia was a Croat, Silviije Alfirevic. Also the Commander of the First Ravna Gora Corps was Croat, Zvonimir Vučković (his fathers name was Petar Prkić but after his death his mother got married again for Serbian lieutenant Aleksandar Vučković).

and the conservative Muslim autonomists, who sought to collaborate with the Germans, Italians, Chetniks and/or Partisans against the Ustashas. Both movements were ultimately in favour of some form of Bosnian self-rule; both opposed the Ustasha attempt to assimilate the Muslims into the Croat nation, as well as the Chetnik attempt to exterminate the Muslims.³

In Montenegro in 1941 and 1942, Montenegrins fought in both sides, but it must be mentioned, that, same as in Dalmatia, Chetniks collaborated with Italian fascists. They used Italian weapons and munition.⁴ This struggle between Partisans and Chetniks divided Montenegrin nation. The war between them mostly broke out as a result of deep differences existing in Montenegro, whose roots lay in pre-war Yugoslav society and its social, economic and political contradictions. One of the main reasons for this conflict derived from different views regarding the best strategy for further struggle after the breakdown of the initial revolt. The Communists favored the strategy of offense, without regard to civil casualties and the Chetnik nationalists thought it wiser to observe the course of the war and await Germany's defeat on the East Front.⁵

The one of the main reasons why did some Croats, Muslims, Slovenians and majority of Montenegrins were in Chetniks was, in fact, that the Chetniks were supported of the Yugoslav government in exile, same as in fact that they had confidence and the propaganda activity of the British and American Allies. Even beside that, it should be mentioned that the Yugoslav government in exile had supporters among the all nations in ex Yugoslavia but mostly, of course, among the Serbs. The Slobodan Jovanovic Government (Yugoslav Government in exile) in London was closely related to the Mihailovich movement in the country. Jovanovich promoted colonel Mihailovich to general, appointed him Chief of the Army Headquarters and Minister of War, and worked hard in his favour, for which he was sentenced *in absentia* in post-war Yugoslavia to twenty years of prison at a trial at which Mihailovic was sentenced to death. Jovanovich's support for Mihailovich can be easily explained. The existence of a 'Yugoslav Army in the Fatherland' gave unexpected and welcome support to a government in exile, deprived of any real power. A Resistance movement in the country which, at least in 1941-42 and part of 1943, played some role in the war strategy of the Allies, helped to restore the declining prestige of the government abroad. Much as Jovanovic at first needed Mihailovich diplomatically, he needed him even more later on in the country itself, in order to prevent a socialist revolution, the aim pursued by the Yugoslav communists and partisans.

The army, now under Mihailovic, had as its task the defeat of communist revolution in order to secure the continuity and legitimacy of the Yugoslav social order and to fix Serbian frontiers in a future delimitation of Yugoslav nationalities. From the support offered to the Yugoslav government in exile and to Mihailovich in the first war years, the British government changed over to backing Marshal Tito's National Liberation Army during the last two years of the war. The reasons for this change are complex, resulting from inter-allied relations, British strategic goals in the Balkans, anticipations concerning post-war developments, and appraisals of internal Yugoslav affairs. Quarrels and friction among Yugoslav emigrants also contributed to the change. Jovanovich complained with reason that Yugoslav representatives in London had three foreign

³Marko Attila Hoare, Muslim autonomism and the Partisan movement, abstract for the Meeting in Seville.

⁴Major Z. Ostojić 6. juna 1942. godine odredio je majora Petra Baćovića za komandanta, a majora Rudolfa Pehineka za načelnika štaba jedinica koje je trebalo da vode operacije na desnoj obali Tare: "Od Italijana treba tražiti samo oružje, municiju i hranu a ne i trupe kako bi bili slobodni u radu. Pri akciji čišćenja, mora se zahvatati cela zona između Čehotine i Tare." Arhiv Vojno-istorijskog instituta, Četnička arhiva, 231-1-3, Kosta Nikolić, Građanski rat u Crnoj Gori 1941-1942, Jugoslovenski istorijski časopis, god.XXXII, br.1-2, str.199.

⁵ K. Nikolić, p.200.

policies instead of one: a Serbian, a Croatian, and Slovenian. The discordance aroused doubts concerning their capacity to restore Yugoslavia. There was a naive concept, especially among Serbian politicians, that England was eternally indebted to them for the Anglophilism expressed on 27 March 1941. Jovanovich quoted a Serb who complained to an Englishman after the war that England had forgotten what her government owed, on its own admission, to Mihailovich. The answer was that the British owed much more to Winston Churchill but in spite of this overthrew him at the first post-war election.⁶

CHETNIKS WERE THE COLLABORATORS OR ALLIES? - After Yugoslavia was overrun by the Axis in 1941, both the Partisans and Chetniks underground began their operations. Like its better-known Chinese counterpart, the Yugoslav revolution, with Partisans as their army, took the form of a peasant-based guerrilla resistance against foreign occupiers during World War II. Known initially as the Partisans and later as the People's Liberation Army, this movement was led by a Communist Party which consciously pursued dual goals of national liberation and socialist revolution, fighting against both foreign occupiers and forces representing the prewar government.⁷ Two main resistance movements which soon emerged would by the end of the 1941 be involved in a mixture of civil war, revolution, and resistance to foreign occupiers and their collaborators among all Southern Slav nations.⁸ There is no space here to go into the details of the controversy concerning the military offensive role of Mihailovich-led Chetniks and Tito-led Partisans in the struggle against Nazi occupation. What must be mentioned, however, is that the success of the Partisans and the failure of the Chetniks was in large part due to their respective positions on the nationality question. The Chetniks, in effect, were the carriers of the Serb ideal of Yugoslavia even if the some Montenegrins, Croats, Muslims and Slovenians also were the soldiers in the Mihailovich's Chetniks.⁹ As a consequence, their influence was limited both from an

⁶Dimitrije Djordjevic, *Historians in Politics: Slobodan Jovanovic*, *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 8, No. 1. (Jan., 1973), pp. 34 -36.

⁷The wartime history of Yugoslavia is enormously complicated. The country was dismembered and occupied by several Axis powers. The greater part of Serbia, including Uice region, was under direct German occupation. Many rural areas of Serbia were held through most of the war by Chetnik forces supporting the exiled prewar Yugoslav Royal government. Civil war in Serbia between Partisan and Chetnik forces broke out in 1941 and resumed in 1944. Histories of the war in Yugoslavia, written from various viewpoints, include: Avakumovic, 1964; Dedijer, 1953; Hoffman and Neal, 1962; Johnson, 1962: 156-75; Roberts, 1973. in Bette S. Denich, *Sources of Leadership in the Yugoslav Revolution: A Local-Level Study*, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 18, No. 1. (Jan., 1976), pp. 64.

⁸ Branko Petranović, *Subjekti jugoslovensko-sovjetskih odnosa 1941-1945*, *Zbornik Matice srpske za istoriju*, 39, Novi Sad, 1989, str.61. U fus noti br 11 stoji J.B. Tito javlja IK KI 28. septembra 1941. da je "Stvoren (je) sporazum sa jednim delom vojnih četnika da i oni stupe u borbu i zajedničku saradnju protiv nemačke i Nedićeve vojske."

⁹ Until October **1941** the government had not been able to obtain any precise information about events in the country, let alone exert any influence over them. When Colonel Mihailovich was first heard of during the summer, his movement was reported as consisting of officers resentful of the ministers and generals who had brought about the defeat and fled. The Yugoslav military in exile were quick to perceive the importance and the danger of Mihailovich. The generals needed to tie him to the government, in order to defuse the potential subversiveness of his movement, but also in order to make up for the capitulation and for the lack

ethnic and a territorial perspective. The Partisans followed a different course in appealing to all the nationalities of Yugoslavia. As Milovan Djilas pointed out in one of his essays: "It is incontestable that in the massacres going on between Serbs and Croats the Yugoslav state would have disappeared had not the Communists appeared on the scene. They had all the conditions for such a role: vision, organization and leadership. The Communists were impervious not only to the demoralization of the ruling classes, but also to the chauvinistic excesses. They were the only party that was Yugoslav [emphasis in original] in the composition of its membership, in its political practice and-interpreted narrowly- in its internationalism."¹⁰

Thus, the Communist-dominated Partisans saw the key to successful resistance against the Germans in trans-ethnic unity. Such unity could be attained only if the program and objectives of the Partisans were divorced from the narrow ethnic squabbles of the past.¹¹

In October 1942, the civil war which had been going on in Yugoslavia since November, 1941, began to seem an extremely serious matter with grave international implications. Britain, the United States and the Yugoslav government-in-exile were behind Draža Mihailovich and the Chetniks, who were fighting against the Ustashe and Nazis but also against the Partisans (the Liberation Front) who, backed by Russia, were fighting the Axis, collaborators and Chetniks. It is important to mention that even if the Chetniks were on the side of Allies they committed serious war crimes against Muslim inhabitants, especially in eastern part of Bosnia, and against the Croat

of military contribution to the Allied cause. This led to his first promotion and to the first approaches to the British government for help. The news of the uprising in Yugoslavia was a great morale booster for the Allies at that time, and Mihailovich was soon being built up by Yugoslav and British propaganda into an Allied superman. The politicians no longer needed Simovich. In Mihailovich they had another figure to maintain the Yugoslav image. His second appointment, on **10 June 1942**, as chief of staff of the Supreme Command, transferred back to the occupied homeland, coupled with his third promotion in six months, to full general, resurrected the army of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and reduced to scale the awkward affair of the military in the Near East. There was no other instance of the leader of a resistance movement being taken directly into an exiled government while remaining in the occupied national territory. The territory from which Mihailovich operated appeared to have become important for the outcome of the war in Africa. The Yugoslav government could thus contribute his organization to the cause of the Allies, while it gained a military arm at home. More about that question in Stevan K. Pavlowitch, *Out of Context - The Yugoslav Government in London 1941-1945*, *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 16, No. 1, The Second World War: Part 1. (Jan., 1981), pp. 89-118.

¹⁰ Milovan Djilas, "The Roots of Nationalism in Yugoslavia," in *Parts of a Lifetime*, ed. Michael and Deborah Milenkovich (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975), p. 397.

¹¹ For a summary of these events see Theodore Schieder, ed., *Das Schicksal Der Deutschen in Jugoslawien in Dokumentation Der Vertriebung Der Deutschen Aus Ost-Mittel-Europa*, 5 vols. (Bonn: Oscar Leiner Druck K. G., 1961), 5:45E-59E.

habitants in Bosnia and Croatia, but they also committed crimes against the Serbian popularity who supported Partisans.¹²

Since the beginning of the war, Chetniks had support of the Britain and USA, but they also had support of USSR in 1941, surely only because of that the Chetniks had confidence of the Soviet Western Allies.¹³ In the same time, Chetniks in Dalmatia collaborate with Italy in attention to find the ally in fight against the Ustashe. They had their head quarters in Dalmatia who was in the hands of Fascist Italy. Mihailovich's primary power base was in Serbia and Montenegro. In the NDH his organization was underdeveloped, and remained so until the end of the war. Admittedly, there existed throughout Pavelich's Croatia assorted armed bands of anti-communist Serb nationalists, also known as Chetniks. They were especially strong in northern Dalmatia and eastern Herzegovina. These were local affairs, however, mostly independent from a centralized command and control structure. Their commanders, such as Momtilo Djujich in Knin, did not report to Mihailovich even in the most formal sense. These people were keen to co-exist with local Italian commands, which would enable them to live in peace, or to concentrate on their domestic enemies, Croat Ustasas and Tito's Partisans.¹⁴

So, it seems that Chetniks were on the both sides. While, they were fought against the Partisans, Ustashe and Nazis in the other parts of the ex Yugoslavia, in Dalmatia they desperately need ally who will help them to protect the Serbian popularity from the genocide that Ustashe committed during the war. They choose Italian fascists not Partisans even if the one part of the Partisans also were the Serbs, they had been in the eyes of the Chetniks more dangerous enemy than fascists.¹⁵ This standpoint had a two roots, one in pre-war political situation in Kingdom of Yugoslavia when the communists wants to desintegrate country for which the Chetniks were fought during the war, and the second, that the Chetniks tried to used Italian and Croat animosity about question to whom belonged Dalmatia, and in that sense they tried to be on side of the stronger side. Also, it is important to say that everywhere in ex Yugoslavia were the

¹² One of the eyed-witness of the Chetnik's crimes against the Serbs in Herzegovina was Darinka Gavrilovic. She said that the Serbian habitants of the village Sedlari were arrested by the Chetniks because theirs sons were joined to Partisans. Chetniks delivered them to Ustashe who arrested them into the concentration camp in Lika.

¹³ B. Petranovic, op.cit. 62.

¹⁴ Srdjan Trifkovic, Rivalry between Germany and Italy in Croatia, 1942-1943, *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 36, No. 4. (Dec., 1993), p.882

¹⁵ It must be mentioned two reports that gave Italian officers. This reports are in article of Srdjan Trifkovic, *Ibid.*, 897,899,900. The main text is: „According to the testimony of Guido Lucich-Rocchi, an Italian officer who spoke Serbo-Croat fluently and served in the Dalmatian cities of Knin and Split during the war, the command of the Second Army was very Anglophile. It actively hoped for a link with Mihailovich and the British through their Serb 'nationalists'. The same impression was shared by General Umberto Salvatores who, then still a colonel, commanded 6. Bersaglieri Regiment in Lika and Bosnia. The atmosphere indicated that the British would not have been seriously resisted, had they landed in Dalmatia. The Italian military governor of Montenegro, General Alessandro Pirzio- Biroli, probably went further than any other Italian commander in the Balkans when he sent a message to Mihailovich already in late 1942, to the effect that he wanted a separate peace with the British. General Mihailovich duly passed the message on to London, but Eden - possibly suspecting a provocation subsequently wrote: ' I have decided against pursuing any of these contacts.“

Nazists had power Chetniks had a fight with Partisans because of the one more important reason, It layes in fact, that the Partisans did not care about German warning that for each killed German soldier will be killed 100 Serbs. So they decided to destroyed Partisan corps that were led by the communists. But if we want to speak about collective mind of Chetniks movement and about "strong body" in coordinating the corps in attention to make arrangements with Allies or Axies it is obvious that Mihailovich almost had no power over the Chetniks in other parts of ex Yugoslavia except in Serbia. Even beside that it must be mentioned that Chetniks in Dalmatia committed war crimes against Croats and Serbs who gave support to the Partisans and the same story was in Montenegro, where the Chetniks do the same thing because they thought that the Italians were the less dangerous enemy than Partisans.

Also it is important to say that the Allies from the West helped Chetniks not only with weapons but also with propaganda. Nor was the Anglo-American invasion helped by BBC, controlled by British censors, when it permitted the inner clique of the Yugoslav government-in-exile to broadcast outright propaganda to Yugoslavia all through 1942 and part of 1943. The British radio was daily urging Yugoslavs to join the army of Mihailovich.¹⁶

But it must be mentioned that before the winter of 1942-43, when the allies focused their attention and energies on repelling the German offensives in North Africa and Russia, neither the United States nor Britain exhibited much interest in Yugoslavia. Intelligence reports, of course, had kept both Washington and London informed of the activities of the Chetniks, the resistance movement that had formed following Germany's invasion of Yugoslavia in April 1941. Chetnik leader Dragoljub (Draza) Mihailovich., a Serb, colonel in the Yugoslav army, and later minister of war in the exiled Yugoslav government in London, had established contact with British officials in Cairo during the summer of 1941. Messages from the Special Operations Executive in Cairo, the supersecret intelligence service created in July 1940 to stimulate resistance to the Axis, suggested that Mihailovich was not vigorously attacking the enemy. Neither at this time nor, for that matter, later on did SOE perceive that Mihailovich's inactivity stemmed in part from his fear of provoking further German reprisals against the Serbs.¹⁷ In any event, preoccupied with the North African campaign, and influenced by the presence of the exiled Yugoslav government, officials in London screened out information that conflicted with their policy of support for Mihailovich and continued to supply the Chetniks with arms.¹⁸ At this stage of the war, Yugoslav affairs received scant attention from officials in Washington. In the first place, the Balkans did not figure

¹⁶ Louis Adamic, Yugoslavia and the Big United Nations: 1941-1943, *Slavonic and East European Review. American Series*, Vol. 3, No. 1. (May, 1944), p.5.

¹⁷ Mark Wheeler, The SOE Phenomenon, *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 16, No. 3, The Second World War: Part 2. (Jul., 1981), pp. 513-519. (op.aut.) p. 513. During the second world war it was Britain which, having been ejected from the continent, sought to set occupied Europe ablaze. The organization so charged was the Special Operations Executive (SOE). It provided a host of young and not so young men reared on Buchan's tales with the opportunity to serve their country while living out their fantasies. p.518. SOE foundered for a while, but eventually grasped its new role of assisting the generals to make use of active guerilla forces in the containment and deception of Axis divisions that might otherwise have been pressed into service on everbroadening Allied fronts. The consequences of this alteration of SOE's strategic priorities were, of course, to be unfortunate for Mihailovit's Cetniks and the secret armies of Poland and Czechoslovakia. But it paid rich dividends elsewhere.

¹⁸Walter Roberts, Tito, Mihailovich and the Allies 1941-1945 (New Brunswick, N.I. 1973). 28. 70; Milovan Djilas, Wartime, (New York 1977). 94; Mark Wheeler, Britain and the War for Yugoslavia 1940-1943 (New York 1980). 65.

prominently in American military planning. Furthermore, the United States had never developed any significant interests in the region which is obvious from the propaganda that was shown on the movie "Chetniks, The Fighting Guerilla" (Louis King, 1942) where the Serbian customs, mentality, tendencies, even the language of the Serbs were often falsely represented, due to intentions of Hollywood studios to make them more exotic than they really were. However, even when Serbs were shown in that movie in better light, it was often within the frame of so-called Hollywood matrix, which systematically presented national stereotypes.¹⁹ More importantly, American policy-makers across the broad political-military spectrum were wedded to the belief that the tenets of the Atlantic Charter enunciated by President Roosevelt in 1941 heralded the millenium of a new world order. Optimistic expectations of a post-war world based on the principles of political self-determination, free trade, and the lawful resolution of international disputes pervaded the State Department. The elite corps of professionals General William Donovan recruited into the Office of Strategic Services, the American intelligence counterpart to SOE set up in June 1942, shared the State Department's commitment to the Atlantic Charter ideals. Having recognized the Yugoslav government-in-exile, the United States duly extended moral -but not material -support to Mihailovich. For the most part, however, policy-makers in Washington viewed developments in Yugoslavia with apollonian detachment.²⁰ Neither Washington nor London had any idea of Josip (Broz) Tito's existence before 1943, and only fragmentary knowledge of the resistance movement he had created. Called to arms by Moscow after the German attack on the Soviet Union, the Partisans had successfully incited anti-Nazi uprisings in Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia, and Herzegovina and Croatia. Unlike the Germans, who early on learned of Tito's identity and who sought to suppress the Partisan movement, the British and Americans tended to attribute all guerilla activity in Yugoslavia to the Chetniks. In January 1943, W. J. Gallman, the American minister to the Yugoslav government in London, identified the Partisans, 'who have come into prominence in the last six months', as leaderless guerilla bands operating in Croatia and along the Dalmatian Coast. Having learned from the British that they were also attacking the Chetniks, he concluded that the Partisans, 70 per cent of whom he believed to be communists, were acting with encouragement from Moscow.²¹ By the winter of 1942-43, the tide of battle in Europe had changed. The Anglo-American invasion of North Africa urged by Prime Minister Churchill turned back the German thrust into the eastern Mediterranean and paved the way for the allied landings in Italy. The Herculean Soviet defence of Stalingrad, the effects of a bitter Russian winter, and the Red Army's surprise counter-offensive produced equally gratifying results in the east. As the military situation improved, the British began to pay closer attention to Yugoslav affairs. On 25 December 1942, Colonel S. LV. Bailey parachuted into Yugoslavia to confer with Mihailovich. A former mining engineer in Yugoslavia, Bailey joined the congeries of bankers, businessmen, journalists, engineers, and armed forces volunteers who comprised SOE. Like his colleagues, he tended to be pro-Serb and anti-communist. Although Bailey did not have a high personal regard for Mihailovich, he sympathized with the Chetnik leader's predicament in fighting a guerilla war without adequate military support from Britain. No friend of the Partisan cause, Bailey did not contribute to the speculation voiced earlier in the year by some SOE officers over the issue of alleged Chetnik collaboration with the Italian fascists. Meanwhile, in London, tensions were building between the Foreign Office and the exiled Yugoslav

¹⁹ Aleksandar Novaković, *Slika Srba u američkom igranom filmu od početka ere zvučnog filma do raspada Jugoslavije: od 1927. do 1990.*, Godišnjak za društvenu istoriju, sveska 1, god.11, 2004, str.54.

²⁰ See Hugh De Santis, *The Diplomacy of Silence* ((Chicago 1980), ell. 4; also see R. Harris Smith. *OSS* (Berkeley 1972), ch. I .

²¹ Vladimir Dedijer, *Tito Speeches* (1 ondon 1953). 147; (Gallman to secretary, 5 January 1943, 860h.00/1435. National Archives, Record Group 59 (hereafter NA. RG 59). Milovan Djilas has stated that the Yugoslav communists would have begun to resist without Moscow's directive. See *Wartime*, 4-5.

government. Foreign Minister Anthony Eden, George W. Rendel, the British Ambassador to Yugoslavia, and others in the Foreign Office had grown weary of the incessant quarrelling among Yugoslav leaders and, a fortiori, of their inability to define any war aims. The British found the Yugoslavs 'rude, arrogant and absolutely uncooperative'. The Yugoslavs reciprocated this disaffection. The government of Slobodan Jovanovich complained to the Americans about London's insensitivity to its plight, which irritated the British all the more. At this point, however, the British were not prepared to disavow Mihailovich or his resistance movement simply because they held Yugoslav politicians in low esteem.²² Constantin Fotich, the Pan-Serb Yugoslav ambassador to the United States, provided the State Department with a steady stream of commentary on the exiled government's problems in London. For their part, American officials did not have to contend with the unremitting squabbles that exasperated the British. They were concerned, however, about the increasing friction between Yugoslav-Americans of Serbian and Croatian descent created by the stories of Ustashe (Axis supporters in Croatia who committed genocide of the Serbs, Jews and Gypsies) atrocities in Serbian-American newspapers and by articles suggesting that the Partisans, and not the Chetniks, were assuming the burden of fighting the Axis. The State Department found Serbian and Croatian propaganda harmful to the war effort and potentially damaging to American national unity. Cavendish Cannon, the Balkan desk officer, observed that one third of the American public was composed of first - or second - generation foreign stock, which made it dangerously susceptible to foreign propaganda. Officials in the department also suspected that the Partisans were receiving material assistance from the Soviets (though, much to their chagrin, the Partisans were not). No less anti-communist than their British counterparts, career diplomats strongly encouraged military aid to Mihailovich, in which effort they were buttressed by Fotich. 'Then there would be point in saying with emphasis to the USSR', noted Cannon, 'that we want one war, not two, in Serbia, and Mihailovich is its leader.'²³

Beginning in February 1943, when Churchill visited Cairo and met with SOE officials, British policy toward Yugoslavia entered the first phase of a metamorphosis that would culminate a year later in Tito's replacement of Mihailovitch as the beneficiary of British political and military assistance. During this phase, which extended through May, British policy-makers, while continuing to support the Chetniks, decided to establish a separate mission with the Partisans. This policy shift entailed considerable deliberation and reflected the lack of consensus that existed in London in support of the pro-Mihailovich policy.²⁴

Fundamentally, however, Churchill's decision to render aid to all resistance elements had more to do with his ad hoc style of policymaking. Psychologically, British foreign policy tends to be based on practical politics rather than logic, he had stated at the end of 1942, on trial and error rather than systematic planning.²⁵

²² OSS report 27302. 20 Sanuary 1943, National Archives. Record Group 226 (hereafter NA, RG226). See Wheeler, op. cit., ch. IV.

²³ Cannon memo to Atherton. 7 May 1942. 800h,OOB/72 1/2; Cannon memo to Dunn and Atherton, 25 June 1942, 800h00/1402 1/2 Cannon memo to Dunn and Atherton, 6 August 1942. 8OOh.00/1408, NA. RG;59. In Hugh de Santis, In Search of Yugoslavia: Anglo-American Policy and Policy-Making 1943-45, *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 16, No. 3, The Second World War: Part 2. (Jul., 1981), pp. 541-563.

²⁴ H. de Santis, op.cit.,544.

²⁵ Elizabeth Barker. Some factors in British Decision-Making over Yugoslavia. 1941-4'. in Auty and Clogg, op. cit.,21.

The American Embassy in London informed Washington of British plans to establish contact with the Partisans at the end of February. Anthony Drexel Biddle, the new American ambassador to the exiled government, pointed out in March that British actions aimed to impress on Yugoslav political leaders, now bitterly divided between those who favoured a federated Yugoslavia (such as the Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs Ilija Jukich) and the Pan-Serbs (such as Justice Minister Milan Gavrilovich), the importance of subordinating their differences to the cause of national unity. Though suspicious of Anglo-Soviet intrigues in the Balkans, and concerned about the potential repercussions of the Chetnik-Partisan controversy on Serbian- and Croatian-Americans, State Department and OSS officials in Washington preferred to avoid entanglement in Yugoslav internal affairs. Influenced in part by Fotich's impassioned representations to Roosevelt in May, they reaffirmed their support for Mihailovich and the Yugoslav government, even if its leaders were 'low-grade politicians'. Much more significantly, Washington policy-makers had formed a broad consensus in support of the Atlantic Charter ideals. Seduced by the vision of a peaceful, prosperous, and secure future world, they were predisposed to compartmentalize political divisions in Yugoslavia as temporary aberrations that would be reconciled by the allies at the end of the war. Even as the OSS, with the president's approval, decided in May to send liaison officers to the Chetniks and the Partisans, Washington remained committed to the Yugoslav government, pending its legitimation by the popular will, and to Mihailovich. Furthermore, so long as policy-makers perceived the Soviets to be faithful comrades-in-arms, reports of Moscow's putative aid to the communists in Yugoslavia, while not ignored, had little effect on America's globalistic policy of principle. The second and crucial phase of the British initiative in Yugoslavia extended from May to the Cairo and Teheran conferences in November. Deakin's reports had convinced SOE-Cairo and the British military that the Partisans were shouldering the brunt of the fighting in Yugoslavia. Deakin also gave substance to the rumours of Chetnik-Axis collaboration, which had a profound effect on British policy-makers in London, particularly since SOE officers attached to Mihailovich's forces had reported that the Chetniks were not actively engaging the enemy.

In the latter part of 1943 Churchill recognized that the Partisan forces of Tito "had established themselves without question as the leading elements of resistance in Yugoslavia."²⁶ Consequently he adopted a policy toward Tito intended to preserve British influence and encourage Tito's activities against the Germans. By offers of military aid and political concessions Churchill sought to wrest from Tito the commitment not to impose communism forcibly but to permit a free expression of the people to determine the political complexion and the fate of the monarchy after the war. The decision at Teheran in December, 1943, to extend maximum military support to Tito reflected this British policy. In May, 1944, the youthful King Peter finally granted Churchill's entreaties to dismiss Mihailovich and others in the exile government in order to smooth the way for an agreement with Tito providing for a composite provisional regime.²⁷ The new Prime Minister of the exile government, Dr. Ivan Subasic, had been the former governor of Croatia, had avoided party politics, had opposed both Serbian and Croatian separatism, and had expressed sympathy for the Partisan movement. The following August, in a Churchill-Tito-Subasic rendezvous in Italy, the two Yugoslav leaders agreed to work for an agreement leading to a united government, and Tito promised to permit free expression concerning the future regime of the country.²⁸

²⁶ Churchill, *The Second World War: Closing the Ring*, p. 467.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 461-78.

²⁸ Churchill, *The Second World War: Triumph and Tragedy*, pp. 88-94.

SUMMARY

The author has reconstructed the main problems that provoked the controversies about national structure and war activities of the Chetniks between 1941 and 1943. National stereotypes and communist myths created the false history where the Chetniks were pictured as collaborators since the beginning of the Second World War. Author faced the communist myths about Chetniks with documents and articles about role of Chetniks in period 1941-1943. Led by this literature author showed that Allies gave support to the Chetniks in that period and that the Nazis found them as enemies, but also, it is obvious that Chetniks tried to do not provoked Nazis because they knew that the Nazis made through all the Serbian land cruelty revenge to the people. Also, Chetniks knew that they have a less capacity to make the war with such powerful enemy, so they tried to stay aside. Also it is important to mentioned that the even if we are faced with the facts that the smaller part of Croats and Slovenians and much bigger part of Montenegrins were in Chetniks, this movement of resistance committed serious war crimes against all Yugoslav nations.