

Ministry of Ungentlemanly Warfare in Yugoslavia: British Secret Services and Partisans in 1943-1944

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Abstract: This essay intends to shed light on the British perspective of their involvement in the Partisan war operations in Bosnia, especially around the town Drvar in Bosanska Krajina during 1944. Shifting their support from Mihailović's royalist to Tito's communist army, the British government brought forward a lasting impact in the post-war power balance in the Balkans and beyond. War memoirs of British officers and archival documents reveal their peculiar relation to domestic National Liberation Army - the Partisans and often admiration for their leader - Tito. The purpose of this work is certainly not the glorification of the Communist ideology, Tito's personality nor the British secret services but rather the aim is to portray one of the many facets of a decisive moment in WWII history on the Yugoslav soil.

Key words: SOE, MI6, Tito, Partisans, Drvar Raid, Second World War

The SOE and MI6

Ministry of Ungentlemanly Warfare, Churchill's Secret Army, The Baker Street Irregulars are all nicknames for the Special Operation Executive (SOE), a British World War II secret organization that existed between July 1940 and January 1946. This intelligence body was formed under Minister of Economic Warfare, Hugh Dalton, via amalgamation of three existing secret organizations representing a highly classified formation. The SOE was engaged in irregular warfare against Axis powers (sabotages and raiding operations), espionage and special reconnaissance in occupied Europe and, subsequently, in Southeast Asia. An additional special task it

performed, particularly relevant for Yugoslavia, was aiding local resistance movements.

It is worth noticing, nevertheless, that another British intelligence service operated as well across the occupied Yugoslavia, cooperating closely with the SOE on joint mission to win the war. The Secret Intelligence Service (SIS or MI6-Military Intelligence, Section 6)¹ was established in 1909 with the aim to safeguard British national interests from the perceived threat posed by Germany's imperial ambitions. It is a foreign intelligence service of the UK government designated chiefly for the covert overseas collection and analysis of intelligence. The SIS grew significantly in the Great War and even more so during the Second World War when it underwent a dramatic expansion in terms of both agents involved and differentiation of their assignments. Despite the immense work did by its agents during the wars including the evidently critical role this service had in the victorious outcomes, the MI6 did not officially exist until 1994 when the Parliament of the United Kingdom enacted the Intelligence Service Act thus publicly acknowledging it while establishing legal confiner for its operation nearly ninety years after its creation.²

“British Titophilia”

During the World War II, these two agencies were particularly active on Yugoslav soil after the capitulation of Italy, announced on 8 September 1943. However, as testimonies and released documents reveal, their agents were indeed present in Yugoslavia even before 1943, in some cases even overtly influencing events in Yugoslav history. Namely, as K. Jeffery suggests, both SIS and SOE were actively involved in the Belgrade coup of 27 March 1941, representing therefore a “tremendous British propaganda success” indorsing pro-Allied regime. Relying on signals intelligence, the British intercepted the German coded messages and on 5 April the chief of SIS, Stewart Menzies, prompted his agents to inform Yugoslav General

¹ See more on the history of this organization at the official web presentation of the MI6 <<https://www.sis.gov.uk/our-history.html>> (Accessed on April 17, 2019).

² For a more detailed inquiry of the Intelligence Service Act at <<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1994/13/contents>> (Accessed on April 17, 2019).

Staff: German attack will begin the following morning. Indeed, German invasion on Yugoslavia commenced at the dawn on April 6.³

Yugoslav Army was overwhelmed quite rapidly and surrendered on 17 April. Nonetheless, many local resistance movements and formations emerged throughout Yugoslavia, among which two most prominent: pro-communist Partisans led by Marshal Josip Broz Tito and pro-royalist Chetniks whose commander was Colonel Dragoljub Draža Mihailović. Until the autumn of 1943, the British government evidently supported Četniks, however at the Tehran Conference in November, Prime Minister Churchill announced to Stalin his decision to shift his support to Partisan forces.

From the British point of view it was a rather uneasy decision given the Partisans' ideological orientation towards the Soviet Union and high probability that they would take over the power once the war would be finished. Historical accounts mostly agree that Churchill's main reason were messages deciphered by codebreakers implying increasing collaboration of formations associated with the Chetniks' movement with the Axis powers, firstly with Italians and afterwards with the Nazis and Serbian quisling government incumbents against the Partisans.⁴ Furthermore, it was estimated that Partisan fight against the Nazis and their collaborators was far more efficient, producing more casualties to the enemy.

Additionally, one ought not to underestimate an additional circumstance that waged in favor of Tito's army. Specifically, a certain number of SIS and SOE operatives held leftist convictions and apparently were fascinated with the Tito's persona and Partisan struggle. These were Basil Davidson, James Klugmann, Kenneth Syers, John Ennals, James Millar, to name but a few. They served as liaison officers of the British secret services in Yugoslavia, having close contacts with Tito and his fellow Partisans. For instance, James Millar was declared "far too Tito-conscious" by his colleague Bowlby, who even complained that "pictures of Tito cover the walls" of Millar's office in Bari, suggesting that London should provide large photographs of King George VI and Queen Elisabeth instead. Be that as it may, some staunch anti-communist SIS and SOE agents would later admit that Millar constantly produced intelligence of "high quality" and even, at

³ Jeffery Keith, *The Secret History of MI6: 1909-1949*, London, Penguin Books 2011, 409. See also Sue Onslow, "Britain and the Belgrade Coup of 27 March 1941 Revisited", *Electronic Journal of International History*, no.8 2005, 1-57.

⁴ John Cripps, "Mihailovic or Tito? How the codebreakers Helped Churchill choose" in Michael Smith and Ralph Erskine (eds.) *Action This Day*, London: Bentam Press, 2001, 237-63.

one point, his information was vital for the success of the British mission in Yugoslavia.⁵



Colonel Deakin and Marshall Tito
(Source: Wikimedia Commons)

What is more, left-wing political beliefs of other officers raised suspicion in London as well. After all, even though their enemy at the time were the Nazis and their collaborators, they could easily predict that ideological conflict with the Soviets was to follow after the war. Kenneth Syers and James Klugmann unquestionable belonged to the aforementioned group. Syers was a journalist recruited into MI6 in 1942, he spoke fluent Serbo-Croat and served two times as a liaison officer with the Partisans, between August and November 1943 as well as between May and September 1944. His reports to the SIS were estimated as immensely valuable providing perhaps greater contribution than any other agent in the Mediterranean SIS station. However, when he returned to London, his left-wing political convictions became an issue. Valentine Vivian, a vice-chief of the MI6 at the time, considered that Syers, along with a number of

⁵ Keith, *The Secret History of MI6*, 544-5.

SIS officers, was “so far Left as to be scarcely distinguishable from the Communists”.⁶

The case of James Klugmann was even more “suspicious”. He was a member of the Communist Party of Great Britain from the early 1930s. As appointed officer of the Yugoslav Section of SOE in Cairo from February 1942 until August 1944, he was often accused of having a key role in sabotaging Chetniks cause while promoting exclusive British backing of Tito. Even though under constant surveillance as alleged Soviet spy, he rose to the rank of major staying devoted to his allegiance to the Communist Party until his death in 1977. There was much discussion about his involvement in espionage for the Soviets however he apparently was not a member of the Cambridge Five⁷ but participated in their recruitment.⁸

Furthermore, an evident British titophilia⁹ and sympathy for the Partisan cause spread even among those UK operatives who did not particularly appreciate Communist ideology. For instance, Colonel William Deakin, together with Captain William F. Stuart, led the first joint SOE-SIS Mission to the central command of the Yugoslav Partisans, *Operation Typical*, which began in the midst of the offensive *Case Black (Fifth Offensive, Bitka na Sutjesci)* on 27 May 1943. On that occasion, a cluster of bombs killed Captain Stuart while both Tito and Deakin were wounded.¹⁰ In his

⁶ Ibid, 545-6. Furthermore, the MI5, an internal British secret service, followed him to verify if he was a Soviet spy. They did not manage to verify this claim, however, they noted in one of these reports that Syers had a meeting with a “certain” young Communist Hobsbawm. This “certain” young man was actually Eric Hobsbawm, one of the greatest historians of the twentieth century.

⁷ The Cambridge Spy Ring, known as the Cambridge Five, were British intellectuals spying for the Soviet Union during the World War II and after. These were: Donald Maclean, Guy Burgess, Kim Philby, Anthony Blunt and John Cairncross. It remains unclear why none of them was ever prosecuted for espionage.

⁸ Roderick Bailey, “Communist in SOE: Explaining James Klugmann’s recruitment and retention” in Neville Wylie (ed.) *The Politics and Strategy of Clan-destine War: Special Operations Executive, 1940-1946*, London, New York: Routledge, 2007, 66-8.

⁹ See more on the expression “British Titophilia” in Jim Evans, “Britain and the Yugoslav General Election of November 1945”, 1-16., in Andrew Hammond (ed.), *The Balkans and the West: Constructing the European Other, 1945-2003*, New York: Routledge, 2016.

¹⁰ F. W. D. Deakin, *Bojovna planina* (Beograd: Nolit, 1973), 39-40.; in original version see *Embattled Mountain*, London: Oxford University Press 1971, 17-8.

volume *The Embattled Mountain*, dedicated to this event, Deakin admits that he instantly connected with the Partisans stating:

Surprise came in retrospect, but with an understanding that, as a stranger, I had taken on by stages a binding and absolute identity with those around me.¹¹

As below-mentioned, in the war diary of Koča Popović, one of the most famous Partisan commanders, the feeling was quite mutual. Moreover, precisely Deakin would write a poignant and eulogistic obituary for Popović when he died in October 1992. Among the usual biographical data he stresses:

In May 1943 I led a British military mission which was parachuted into Montenegro with the task of identifying the central partisan command and report on its contribution to the Allied war effort. Early that morning we met the Yugoslav leaders: the first conversation was with Koca Popovic. He and I were together on many occasions in the following months. In frequent talks, between fighting, on marches, in pauses in the Bosnian forest and in other regions, I formed a lasting impression of the man.

Controlled by a sensitive and disciplined mind and power of will, Popovic was an intellectual soldier of outstanding talent. He was a lone wolf and a solitary man with rare unguarded moments. He had a touch of military genius and a hatred of war. He was wary of friendships and defended with devilish skill a total integrity of mind and heart. As a divisional commander with a sure instinct and comprehension of immediate situations, he sensed the weak spot in the German reign in Montenegro and was the immediate architect of our salvation by breaking out of the German encircling ring.

I grew to accept his contrived and polished sallies. Daring, with cool deliberation and secret by nature, he was the idol of his troops but few men knew him. His lack of fairness in private debate concealed, usually with success, a profound understanding of the reactionary

¹¹ Deakin, *Bojovna planina*, 43; *Embattled Mountain*, 22.

capitalist British¹² whom, he was amused to assume, we represented.¹³

Deakin's mission was absorbed into the following mission in September 1943, led by Brigadier Maclean. Fitzroy Maclean, head of the British SOE mission launched in September 1943 - the Maclean Mission (MACMIS), the first mission for liaison with Partisans having the full authorization of Winston Churchill, in his wartime chronicle reflects on Communism and his initial encounters with Tito:

How, I wondered, would he compare with the Communists I had encountered in Russia? From the members of the Politburo to the N.K.V.D. spies who followed me about, all had had one thing in common, their terror of responsibility, their reluctance to think for themselves, their blind unquestioning obedience to a Party line dictated by higher authority, the terrible atmosphere of fear and suspicion which pervaded their lives. Was Tito going to be that sort of Communist?...

One thing struck me immediately: Tito's readiness to discuss any question on its merits and if necessary, to take a decision there and then. He seemed perfectly sure of himself; a principal, not a subordinate. To find such assurance, such independence, in a Communist was for me a new experience.¹⁴

The list of those fascinated with Tito and the Partisan movement will not be complete without referring to another SOE officer: Basil Davidson. Davison was a journalist, later a pioneer of African studies who spent several months in 1943 with the Partisans, and following the footsteps of his SIS-SOE colleagues, also dedicated a book to them. His *Partisan Picture* begins with admiration to their war efforts from the very introduction:

In the beginning there had been two resistance movements in Jugoslavia, the chetniks and the partisans. The resistance of the chet-

¹² Deakin was right, indeed those were Koča's thoughts, as could be observed later in this essay.

¹³ See the obituary to K. Popović (see bibliography).

¹⁴ Fitzroy Maclean, *Eastern approaches*, London: Jonathan Cape 1949, 308.

niks had lasted only until the autumn of 1941, their leaders then going over to the enemy or returning to passivity.

The partisans had continued to resist, though with heavy losses to themselves. By the middle of 1943 they had grown from a large number of small and loosely organized fighting groups into a powerful irregular army. They had liberated large areas of their country. Their troops were battle-toughened and their leaders practiced in command. On five occasions the enemy had tried to annihilate them in large-scale operations; but from each of these offensives they had emerged stronger than before.¹⁵

However, these Partisan sympathizers faced with fierce critique back in the United Kingdom. Most of them were primarily concerned with the ideological unsuitability of the Tito's army while others, to distinguish the opinion of the renowned British author, George Orwell, disapproved the lack of objectivity of the British press. In his proposed preface to *Animal Farm* discussing the freedom of the press he notices:

In the internal struggles in the various occupied countries, the British press has in almost all cases sided with the faction favoured by the Russians and libelled the opposing faction, sometimes suppressing material evidence in order to do so. A particularly glaring case was that of Colonel Mihailovich, the Yugoslav Chetnik leader. The Russians, who had their own Yugoslav protege in Marshal Tito, accused Mihailovich of collaborating with the Germans. This accusation was promptly taken up by the British press: Mihailovich's supporters were given no chance of answering it, and 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 a similar reward for the capture of Mihailovich. The British press 'splashed' the reward for Tito, but only one paper mentioned (in small print) the reward for Mihailovich: and the charges of collaborating with the Germans continued.¹⁶

¹⁵ Basil Davidson, *Partisan Picture*, London: Bedford books, 1946, the introduction.

¹⁶ For the entire essay, see bibliography.



*Marshal Tito and Brigadier Maclean
(Source: Wikimedia Commons)*

British Reports: Raid on Drvar (Desant na Drvar)

Bosnian town Drvar holds a prominent place in the history of anti-fascist struggle having had an additional special feature: it was one of the rare corners of the Nazi-occupied Europe that managed to maintain its independency for more than two thirds of the war duration. In the first half of 1944 Partisan General Headquarters (Vrhovni štab) was already located in a cave near Drvar. For that reason precisely this would be the place of

the seventh and last great enemy offensive (25 May 1944 - 6 June 1944) whose failure was a clear sign of the declining Axis' power. An important aspect of the Partisan resilience in this area, before they received Allied support, was a generous assistance they had had from the local population. For the great sacrifice in human lives and fighting morale they showed, town of Drvar was decorated as People's Hero after the war.

LOST SECRET

OPERATIONS IN BOSNIA 25 MAY to 6 JUNE 44

1. The object of this report is to outline the events in BOSNIA from 25 May when the 7th German offensive started until 3 June when Marshal TITO and his staff were evacuated by air to DARI, and to draw attention to certain points which arose in connection with this operation. At Appendix "A" is a diary giving some details of events during this period.

The German Object

2. The German offensive appears to have had the following objects:-
 - (a) To capture TITO, his Staff, the Soviet and British Missions. By so doing the Germans no doubt hoped that the Partisan movement would peter out. It has completely failed in this object.
 - (b) To clear their communications in BOSNIA, for should there be an Allied landing in the BALKANS the fact that these roads were in Partisan hands would be a serious embarrassment to the Germans. They have achieved a temporary success in this object but it will be difficult and costly to them to keep these roads open for any length of time.

*Facsimile, part of the SOE report on Drvar Raid
(Source: The National Archives of the UK)*

Report of the British operatives estimated 3 major objects of the Raid on Drvar: to capture Tito, his Staff as well as both the Soviet and British Missions - the Germans completely failed, reports estimated; to clear Partisan communications in Bosnia, necessary for the free access of the Germans to these roads in case that there should be an Allied landing in the Balkans - only temporary success achieved in this matter; to capture Glamoč and Petrovac landing grounds thus cutting off a great quantity of

supplies delivered to the Partisans - also achieved only temporary success in this object.¹⁷

On 22 June 1944 British Military Mission to Yugoslavia forwarded a report "Operations in Bosnia 25 May to 3 June 1944", with the compliments of Brigadier Maclean, to Allied Force Headquarters¹⁸ in London. A memo attached to the document, most likely written by the Director of Military Operations and his deputy, stated that the report does not provide "any new facts of importance but contains a good deal of interesting local color". In addition, the Headquarters' officers marked with a red passages they found most relevant. Certainly, this document offers a glance at the British viewpoint of the Partisans as well as of the Soviet Mission that was also stationed in Drvar during the airborne raid carried out by the Nazis.

Specifically, the British expressed their opinion about four major partisan personalities: Marshal Tito, General Crni,¹⁹ General Arso Jovanović²⁰ and General Popović.²¹ The report reads as follows:

(a) Marshal TITO

The recent offensive has accentuated the fact that TITO stands out far and away above all other Partisan commanders and leaders. At no time was he rattled even in the most difficult circumstances. He always gave his orders clearly and quickly with no trace of excitement.

¹⁷ The National Archives of the United Kingdom (TNA): War Office 106/3284.

¹⁸ Allied Force Headquarters was an institution established in the United Kingdom in August 1942 with the aim to control all Allied naval, land and air operational forces in the Mediterranean and Middle East Theatre.

¹⁹ Sreten Žujović-Crni, a war veteran from both world conflicts, organizer of the Partisan uprising in Serbia and a member of Tito's Headquarters. After the war, he was appointed Finance Minister however he lost his party membership and positions when he supported Stalin against Tito in 1948.

²⁰ Arso Jovanović, reportedly one of the most experienced and well educated commanders in the partisan army. He was the Chief of the General Staff from 1945 until his death in 1948, when he sided with the Soviet Union in the Tito-Stalin conflict.

²¹ Konstantin Koča Popović, a surrealist philosopher and a writer, and a Communist activist from 1930s. Prior to participating in the Yugoslav partisan movement as one of the key military commanders, he fought as a volunteer in the Spanish Civil War. After 1945, he held several prominent positions in Yugoslav government: Chief of the General Staff (1948-53), Foreign Minister (1953-65), and Vice President of Yugoslavia (1966-67).

(b) General CERNI and General Arso JOVANOVIĆ

This officer is a member of TITO's staff.

He proved to be the one member of the staff who really functioned when things became difficult, and was far superior to General Arso JOVANOVIĆ (the Chief of Staff) who, although a brave man, is excitable and gives one little confidence.

(c) General POPOVIĆ

This officer is a commander of 1 Corps which protected Marshal's TITO's HQ throughout the operation. He has a great sense of humor, is never ruffled and is a fine leader in this type of warfare.²²

Furthermore, the document highlights the behavior of the Soviet Mission to Drvar. Supposedly, their relation to the British Military Mission was very cordial and during the Drvar Raid they had a very generous cooperation with each other. The Soviets even...

...came to rely on the British Mission for assistance to a considerable degree, for they have lost during their withdrawal from DRVAR almost all their equipment, and the only wireless contact which they had was an intermittent one with MOSCOW.²³

Subsequently it continues in a rather different tone:

It was also interesting to note that the Russians made no secret of the fact that they disliked this continual harrying by German troops, and stated that they considered they would be better employed outside the country. They realized that their large mission was an embarrassment to the Partisans for, unlike the British Military Mission, they were not in a position to assist the Partisans in any way. They decided two days before the general evacuation of TITO's HQ that their mission should be withdrawn as early as possible, and arranged through us for their aircraft to come in to pick them up. Later, as soon as they hear that TITO and his Staff were also to withdraw, they seized the opportunity to impress him by getting him on board the Russian aircraft which came in head of the British

²² TNA: WO 106/3284, p. 5

²³ Ibid, p. 4

aircraft and then, on arrival in BARI, whisking him away to the Russian Villa before the British were able to contact him.²⁴

This “competition” to impress Tito was promptly over since the following day Tito and his HQ (Head-quarters) decided to meet British representatives as well thus acknowledging significance of their missions for the Partisans.

Back to the report on Drvar Raid, it contained their assessment of the Partisan fighting ability as well. Again, it was quite favorable and in line with the opinions that many former participants in those British missions expressed in their own wartime recollections. It conveys:

The Partisans have shown that on equal terms, with neither side employing artillery, tanks or air force, they are a match for the Germans. Probably the thing they fear the most is the German Air Force although in actual fact this can do them little harm in the forests and mountains. The effect on their morale when the Allied Air Force drove the German Air Force out of the skies after the first two days fighting was quite remarkable.

The Partisans have great stamina and can move long distances over very difficult country for many hours on and without food or water. During the course of these operations TITO's GHQ moved well over 100 miles in ten days, which was an achievement considering that much of it was through forests and over rocky hills which sometimes made movement in excess of one mile an hour impossible.²⁵

On the other hand, the Partisans had their own impressions about members of British mission, sometimes it was admiration, others – both ideological and cultural divide came between them. Excerpts from the wartime diary of the aforementioned Partisan General, Koča Popović, cast some light onto those relations.

14 February 1944

Today Major Churchill,²⁶ son of Winston Churchill, arrived.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid, p. 2

²⁶ Randolph Churchill, son of the British Prime Minister, parachuted to Drvar.

After dinner, we had a long conversation, that is, he spoke while we just occasionally answered or noticed something.

“We” spoke about many things, naturally, mostly about war and politics. Major Churchill has rather determined opinion about everything. (Along the way, he immediately mentioned he is the Parliament member.) Those determined opinions, are rather realistic, often rough and seldom profound, he exposes openly, directly, confidently - he exposes them as facts. One of those is a “fact” that the Englishmen previously had doubted in the Russian sincerity, which is understandable when it is known the Russians are Communists, and other “facts”, that there are a lot of feudal remaining and that it is an Asian country; further, even though the Soviets are modest and reasonable in their suggestions to the Poles, Polish government could not agree because any government agreeing with something similar would be overthrown instantly.

In all that there is some carelessness, I would say hereditary, imperial powerfulness...

He admits that our army is much better organized than he had expected, than people usually believe. Because of the name “partisan” majority contemplates some guerilla groups...

That’s how Major Churchill, son of Winston Churchill speaks. Many things are true, genuinely “allied”, makes us happy - but we are, in fact, strangers to each other, distant, completely different. The entire basis is divergent, tradition, history and psychology.

All of those we have seen here,²⁷ those more distinguished, they have strength, breadth and courageousness. It is enough to notice their parachuting into Yugoslavia! There is something sophisticatedly piratical and grandiose about it.²⁸

Conversely, Koča had some other, not so favorable remarks about members of Allied missions, emphasizing consciously or not their different ideological standings and cultural background. On 28 February 1944 he reports that Allies dropped some materials and parachuted a few American and English officers. Local peasants, including girls, children, men and

²⁷ Koča refers to all the British soldiers that the Partisans have met.

²⁸ Koča Popović, *Beleške uz putovanje* (Beograd: BIGZ, 1988); quote translated from Serbian by Ana Č. Pavlović.

“grandmas Halifax”²⁹ promptly helped gathering rather scattered packages. The same day, he will observe:

These Englishmen and Americans are nothing like us. Not only different race, one would note - different species. Incredibly cold... talk about hypocrisy? No. More it seems as a form of petrification, paralysis. Words, feelings are created in a less “cultural” period, signifying something known, convened, so they are still utilized - without any connection to a personal experience. A virtuous fossilization. They are endlessly less humans, less complete humans than us - no matter if they are smart, pragmatic.³⁰

The following day he proceeds with his analysis:

Only through this examples of species one would completely understand a “philosophy” of William James.

From all of them nobody came to fight for an idea, freedom, a national right. It is true what somebody remarked “they came as a travel salesman”. They are not fighting for democracy either - but for money or those most aware - for the empire. Even the adventure is not pure but “salaried, measured”. It applies as well, no doubt, to those who are most often killed: the aviators. Maybe things are different in the navy, where tradition is well alive.

One should wish to become a “Pan-Slavist”!

One should, nevertheless, put forward a reservation - because the spies and moral outcasts came here. But we left a benefit of the doubt also to the Germans, and nothing.

Their psychology is very similar to the German, with the difference that they are wealthy (generally) while the Germans are poor: they could not afford themselves even a luxury of “democracy”.

And yesterday - until the morning - Major of the Red Army Kovalenko was here. Like a brother. He smiles like us, and talks about everything, and has an interest in everything - which is common to all of us.

²⁹ It was his joke, denoting local peasant women always prepared to provide assistance to both Partisans and Allies.

³⁰ Popović, *Beleške*.

Nobody from those parachuted officers being here for two days, has asked a single question about our combat...

Still, Deakin was dissimilar: our joint sufferings made him softer, and he was too smart as not to endeavor to have our attitude and behave analogous to us. Maclean was also slightly adjusted, however outwardly, obviously. One should see them in such purity, when they fall from the sky, and realize their genuine, unrestrained, "natural" face.

One wonders could they at least fall in love with a woman or they do it like a broken record - predictable...

The breach between them and us is great, to such an extent as between capitalism and socialism.³¹

Few days later, Koča's diary entry reveals that R. Churchill was giving an impression of emotionally instable personality: he is only 32 years but looks as if he is 45. Likewise, he frequently made allusions to Randolph's inclination to alcohol, unrefined behaviour, and even wrote, not without his acclaimed sense of humor, that his father must have sent him there just to get rid of him.³² However, his opinion on the British soldiers significantly changed after the Raid on Drvar. His notes written in Bari, Italy disclose a reconsideration of previously established adverse image of them.

17 June 1944...

In the meantime, I saw parts of Italy, the power of Allied Army and - English Navy, that is, sailors doing their everyday tasks.

I have to boost the psychological profile of an Englishman. There I saw a deformation of a man, here his enormous strength (of the same internally crippled man). Wealth, organization, an inborn duty fulfillment; a great tradition of government and ruling. All the material assumptions for the victory are already given.³³

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

Conclusion

The British secret services, the MI6 and the SOE, worked jointly on occupied territories during the WWII, performing various tasks. Apart from espionage, intelligence gathering and sabotage, they also supported local resistance movements. Albeit several different resistance movements emerged in Yugoslavia, the British reports tended to oversimplify the situation taking into consideration only Partisans and Četniks. Even though not all agents were supporters of Communist ideology, apparently many of them had rather favorable opinions about Yugoslav Partisans thus sending reports to London glorifying Partisan struggle. Davidson, Deakin, Maclean, Klugmann and others gave them, especially Tito, a prominent place in their wartime memoirs. These operatives wrote books, some were even Tito's biographies,³⁴ praising incredible fighting morale of Partisans, the devotion of domestic population to them, Partisans' stamina and resilience to the lack of food and water, as well the ability to fight against all the odds.

Going beyond the usual narrative about secret services and conspiracy theories, the aim of this short essay was to provide an insight into the opinions of some participants of the British liaisons missions with the Yugoslav Partisans. Historical accounts mainly agree that Winston Churchill decided to support the Partisans instead of the Četniks based on the conclusions of these agents and on intercepted deciphered radio signals that supposedly indicated Četniks' increasing collaboration with the Axis against the Partisans. The aforementioned decision of W. Churchill undeniably facilitated the creation of socialist Yugoslavia and possibly Tito-Stalin subsequent split in 1948, since Tito, having had support from the West, was more self-confident to assume such a courageous move.

It should be underlined, nevertheless, that probably not all documents produced by British secret services in this critical period had been offered to the public in The National Archives of the United Kingdom, Kew-London. The absence of or rather few mentions of one crucial place in occupied Yugoslavia is striking. There are two possible explanations why their reports do not consider notorious extermination camp Jasenovac: either British operatives were not aware of the atrocities committed there or, more likely, these reports are yet to be released sometime in the future.

³⁴ See, for instance, Fitzroy Maclean, *The Heretic: The Life and Times of Josip Broz Tito*, New York: Harper 1957, as well as James Klugmann, *From Trotsky to Tito*, London: Lawrence and Wishart 1951.

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**Министарство нецентлменског ратовања у Југославији:
Британске тајне службе и партизани 1943-1944**

Намера овог есеја је да осветли британску перспективу учешћа у партизанским ратним операцијама у Босни, посебно око града Дрвара у Босанској Крајини током 1944. године. Одлука британске владе да подржи Титову партизанску војску уместо Михајловићеве четнике, довешће до трајних последица по послератну равнотежу снага на Балкану и шире. Ратна сећања британских оперативаца и архивска документа откривају њихов посебан однос са Народноослободилачком војском - партизанима и често њихово дивљење партизанском вођи - Титу. Сврха овог рада свакако није глорификација комунистичке идеологије, Титове личности нити британских тајних служби већ да прикаже једно од многих наличја одлучујућег момента у историји Другог светског рата на нашим просторима.