The Chetnik Movement and the Yugoslav Resistance

Milazzo, Matteo J.

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I. PRIMARY SOURCES

A. UNPUBLISHED

This book rests primarily on three major bodies of unpublished source materials—the records of the Italian and the German occupation forces in former Yugoslavia and those of the German Foreign Office. Together, they constitute the documentary base for any understanding of occupation politics and the course of the resistance in Yugoslavia during World War II. Because so many Chetnik groups undertook negotiations of one sort or another or even established regular ties with the German and Italian authorities, these records are particularly useful for following the development of the Mihailović movement.

In 1955-56 a group of American scholars, known as the Committee for the Study of War Documents of the American Historical Association, undertook the major project of classifying, cataloging, and microfilming a massive collection of captured German documents, consisting for the most part of the records of the German armed forces and several Reich governmental agencies. These microfilm rolls, which can be purchased from the National Archives, are listed and described in the Guides to German Records Microfilmed at Alexandria, Va. (Washington, D.C.: National Archives, National Archives Records Service, 1958ff.). At the present time, these catalogues include the rolls of the microfilmed military records extending from the German High Command to theater headquarters, army groups, armies, corps, rear area commands, and some of the divisions.
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For the purposes of this study, the most useful group of German military sources are contained in Microcopy T-501, Records of German Field Commands, Occupied Territories, and Others, where there is an extremely large amount of indispensable information, especially in rolls 250, 256, 264–68, 351, and 352, dealing with all aspects of the occupation and resistance movements from the headquarters of the Plenipotentiary Commanding General in Serbia (Bevollmächtigter Kommandierender General in Serbien), the German General in Zagreb (Deutscher General in Agram), and the Armed Forces Commander South-East (Wehrmachtbefehlshaber Südost).

The records of the Armed Forces and Army High Commands, although far less useful, are helpful in some instances. Microcopy T-77, Records of Headquarters, German Armed Forces High Command (Oberkommando der Wehrmacht/OKW), provides some interesting material, including intelligence reports on the Chetnik movement gathered by OKW/Amtsgruppe Ausland, in rolls 884–85. Daily reports of the South-East High Command (Oberbefehlshaber Südost) can be found in rolls 322 and 329 of Microcopy T-78, Records of Headquarters, German Army High Command (Oberkommando des Heeres/OKH).

The Records of German Field Commands, Army Groups, catalogued as Microcopy T-311, contain the records of Army Groups “E” and “F” (Heeresgruppen E, F) in rolls 175, 176, and 197, which were helpful for the latter part of the war. Similarly, the reports, war diary, and various communications of the Twelfth Army (AOK 12), which was later expanded to the South-East High Command and, finally, to Army Group “E,” are essential to this study. These can be found in rolls 425, 452, 460, 461, 466, 469, and 470 of Microcopy T-312, Records of German Field Commands, Armies.

Below the army group and army level the usefulness of the military sources proved very uneven. The records of the 15th Mountain Corps (XV. Gebirgs Korps), rolls 554–57, 559, and 560 of Microcopy T-314, Records of German Field Commands: Corps, were only moderately helpful, but roll 1457 for the 18th Mountain Corps (XVIII. Gebirgs Korps), also in Microcopy T-314, contains all the documents pertaining to Mihailović’s unsuccessful negotiations with the Germans in November 1941 and constitutes the basis of Chapter II.

Division-level sources produced practically no significant and new evidence. This holds true for the S.S. “Prinz Eugen” division (7. SS. Gebirgs Division), rolls 145–46 of Microcopy T-354, Miscellaneous S.S. Records, and for the 714th, 717th, and 718th Infantry Division (Infanterie Divisionen), rolls 2112, 2236–45, 2258, 2262, 2265–71, and 2281 of Microcopy T-315, Records of German Field Commands: Divisions. The Records of Reich Leader of the S.S. and Chief of the German Police (Reichsführer SS und Chef der Deutschen Polizei), catalogued as Microcopy T-175, does include some interesting reports on the Mihailović movement (roll 124) and information on developments in Serbia and within the Nedić government (rolls 126 and 140).

With the obvious exception of Serbia and, to a lesser degree, eastern Bosnia, the Italian military sources, catalogued in the three-volume Guide to Records of the Italian Armed Forces (Washington, D.C.: National Archives, National
Archives Records Service, 1967), are more helpful than the German records for evidence on the Chetniks' activities up to summer 1943. For the most part, the provenance of these records are the Italian High Command (Comando Supremo) and the Second Army Command (Comando 2. Armata). These sources are all classified as Microcopy T-821.

The most important microfilms of Comando Supremo records are rolls 21, 31, 125, 248, and 356, which include everything from summaries of high-level talks with the Germans on joint actions in Yugoslavia to reports on Italian sponsorship of the M.V.A.C. detachments and analyses of the Mihailović movement. The records of the Second Army Command, especially rolls 53, 54, 64, 66, 70, 285–90, 294, 297, 298, 395, 398–400, 410, 448, 474, 497, and 503, provided the foundation for the treatment of Italian policies in Yugoslavia in general and Italian relations with the Chetniks in particular.

Some of the Italian rolls are significant in rather special ways. Roll 232, for instance, consisting largely of Sixth Army Corps records, was invaluable for my understanding of the beginnings of the Serb armed resistance in Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1941. General Pieche's reports, important because Ambrosio usually read them, are mostly in rolls 247 and 347. Roll 347 is also valuable for a number of frames shedding light on Montenegrin Governor Pirzio Biroli's policies and attitudes toward the Chetniks. In addition, some of the Italian rolls have relevant German documents. An important German translation of an Italian summary of the Mihailović conference at Avtovac (July 1942) is in roll 252; a whole run of intercepted and decoded Chetnik radio messages, in German translation, appears in roll 356.

A separate body of Italian sources, the private papers of Mussolini, are classified as T-586. Rolls 405, 412, 488, 1019, 1285, and 1357, all containing records mainly from the Salò period, were of little use except for a few reports written in the fall of 1944 by Italian representatives in Belgrade on the disintegration of the Mihailović organization in Serbia.

Aside from the records of the Axis military authorities, the German Foreign Office sources, which are described in George O. Kent, *A Catalog of Files and Microfilms of the German Foreign Ministry Archives, 1920–1945* (Stanford, Calif.: Hoover Institution of Stanford University, 1966), vol. 3, are the major body of unpublished primary source materials. The microcopy number for all the German Foreign Office microfilm rolls is T-120.

Of these, the most useful, especially for German policies in Croatia, their relations with the Italians, Axis strategy for anti-Partisan warfare, and information on the Chetnik movement throughout the western half of former Yugoslavia, are the Kasche papers, found in rolls 1025, 1026, 1077, and 1088. These were supplemented by a large amount of pertinent diplomatic correspondence of the Foreign Office's state secretary (Staatssekretär) in rolls 197, 199, 200, 208, and 212, and the Ritter files, rolls 395, 402, 764, 780, and 2955. Occasionally, German intelligence and police reports, such as those found in rolls 348, 393, 1141, and 2908 (Abteilung Inland II) and roll 724 (Politische Abteilung I M), proved helpful.

Other papers bearing on Yugoslavia turned up in the records of the foreign minister (Reichsaussenminister) in roll 120, the under secretary of state (Unter-
staatssekretär) in roll 1369, the Reich Chancellery (Reichskanzlei), roll 1374, and Politische Abteilung IV, roll 1687. In addition, the Foreign Office correspondence dealing with trade and economic matters, especially the records of the Commercial Policy Section (Handelspolitische Abteilung IVa), rolls 744, 1127, 1174, and 1178, includes materials on the activities of the Chetnik officers. The MacKensen papers, rolls 101 and 102, and the state secretary’s files pertaining to relations with Italy, rolls 137, 140, and 141, are by and large of little help for my treatment of Italian policies in the Balkans.

B. PUBLISHED

1. Materials from the Chetnik Trials

Immediately after the war, Tito’s government held a number of trials of major captured Chetniks, culminating in the Mihailović trial of the summer of 1946. Obviously, the most helpful publication coming from these trials is the collection of documentary evidence used against the general.


2. Memoirs and Diaries

A handful of these are quite useful for shedding light on the activities of the Chetniks, especially because none of the writers can be called “pro-Mihailović” in the full sense of that expression.


Dapčević, one of Tito’s leading generals, offers a penetrating analysis of Mihailović’s failure to put together effective fighting units and contrasts this with the Partisans’ development of guerrilla strategy and tactics.


A fundamental source for Mihailović’s relations with Nedić and Ljotić in 1944–45.


As head of the British military mission with Tito from the fall of 1943 on, Maclean writes from a basically pro-Partisan point of view but does preserve a balanced attitude toward the Chetniks.


Especially important for the German-sponsored arrangements with several of the Chetnik commanders, like Djurisić, in late 1943.

Includes a justification of Roatta’s policy of using Mihailović’s troops against the Partisans despite the Italians’ knowledge of the Chetniks’ long-term anti-Axis aims.


Topalović, the principal organizer of Mihailović’s Sa. Sava Day congress at Ba, not only knows a good deal about the Chetniks, especially in 1944 and 1945, but does not hesitate to expose the shortcomings of the movement, mainly pertaining to the officers’ treatment of the Muslims and Croats.

The whole question of Italian policies in the Balkans, so important for the Mihailović movement, is supplemented by a number of published memoirs and diaries, although none of them say a great deal about the Chetniks except Roatta’s account. The main ones consulted are:


On the German side, the following supplement the material from the microfilmed diplomatic and military records:


Important for Tito’s negotiations with the Germans in the spring of 1943.


Includes a few interesting observations on the Italians’ lack of preparation for the campaign of April 1941.
Several Partisans wrote memoirs but only a few of them have anything of significance to say about the Chetniks. In addition to Đapčević’s previously cited account, which is exclusively military in focus, the most pertinent are:


Especially important for 1941 and 1942.


Very good for the anti-Chetnik offensive of early 1943.


This important work is actually a chronicle of all sorts of political and military events in Dalmatia and is particularly relevant to this study because it contains captured Chetnik documents.


Events immediately before and during the April war are treated in:


For British policy toward the resistance movements, which is treated in this book almost wholly on the basis of secondary works, one cannot overlook:


The only American memoir which sheds any light on Roosevelt’s policies, or lack of them, toward Tito and Mihailović is:


3. Official Publications, Military Records, and Correspondence

A number of other publications and collections provide indispensable information on both Axis and Allied policies in Yugoslavia and some material relating directly to the Chetniks.


This volume includes two messages from Eisenhower to General William Donavan, head of O.S.S. for the Mediterranean theater, which illustrate the former’s lack of enthusiasm in 1944 for an overt American intelligence link with Mihailović.


This volume, which includes the interrogation of Ribbentrop in April 1946, supplements all the other evidence on the tensions between the Germans and the Italians in 1943 over the Chetnik question.

Useful for following Hitler’s short-lived scheme to give Croatia to Hungary in April 1941.


This partial collection includes the correspondence between Hitler and Mussolini in February and March 1943 dealing with combined strategy for Operation Weiss.


An indispensable printed source for German military operations.


These two last volumes of the German diplomatic record supplement the microfilmed Foreign Office documents for the period up to 11 December, 1941.


This collection includes documents which place in clearer perspective both American and British policies toward the resistance in Yugoslavia in the latter part of the war.


This series, organized regionally and, in some cases, topically, is much more than the basic source for the Partisan side of the war. Several of the documents offer a great deal of information on Partisan clashes with Chetnik units, and some of these volumes reproduce Chetnik messages as well as Ustaši documents and Serbo-Croatian translations of Italian and German materials.

II. SECONDARY SOURCES

The literature on Yugoslavia during World War II is so vast that this survey of the secondary works necessarily is very selective and deals only with those items which proved of value for my treatment of the activities of the Mihailović movement and closely related themes. Also, in order to make the list more meaningful to the reader, this part of the bibliography is organized thematically rather than according to official histories, monographs, articles, etc.
Countless surveys dealing with Yugoslavia during World War II are available in Serbo-Croatian and in Western languages. Among the more useful, either because of the strength of the research or the presentation of an overall argument, are:


One of the first accounts in English, but still a useful source for information; Clissold includes a short treatment of Tito's negotiations with the Germans in 1943 but, on the whole, is neither pro-Chetnik or pro-Partisan.


Although hardly a history of World War II, this book must be mentioned because a good deal of it deals with the war. Dedijer was very close to Partisan headquarters in 1941 and 1942, and it was written as something of an "official" biography of Tito.


This English version is probably the best way for those who do not read Serbo-Croatian to examine a recent and intelligent exposition of the official Yugoslav point of view.


Leaning on extensive study of Mao's strategic response to the Japanese occupation, Johnson argues that the Chinese Communists and (in his final, less well-researched chapter) Tito's Partisans succeeded mainly because they were successful in mobilizing a rural patriotic revolution which emerged as a result of particularly brutal occupation regimes. The problem is admittedly very complex, but my own impression is that one is treading on rather dangerous ground by employing a concept like "peasant revolution," with all that implies, to analyze the situation in Yugoslavia.


Included here because it is one of the best-informed and probably the most balanced treatment to come from a Yugoslav émigré.


An excellent one-volume survey by two leading Yugoslav historians.


A good short summary.


This book offers a solid analysis of a very important theme. There is some
evidence, though, that at least in the first half of the war the Partisans had their share of problems recruiting successfully among Croats and Muslims, and I do not feel Shoup places proper emphasis on this.


Despite its medium length, this is certainly the best treatment of the problem in English. Tomasevich, who uses unpublished German sources extensively, plans to publish a larger monograph on the same theme in the near future.


This work includes some interesting details on the political activities of the western Bosnian Chetniks. From another perspective, it throws light on some of the tensions among Yugoslav historians of World War II by arguing a discernibly “Croatian” point of view on questions like the national composition of the Partisan movement.

B. DIPLOMATIC BACKGROUND AND AXIS INVASION

Among the works which helped fill in the background are:


The most complete treatment of the Belgrade coup, employing the unpublished diary of General Simović.


Analyzes the role of Balkan affairs mainly in the context of German-Soviet relations and places a very strong emphasis on Stalin’s designs in this area, which had a great deal to do with the erosion of Hitler’s willingness to prolong the Non-Aggression Pact.


An exhaustive history of the Yugoslav diplomatic tangle preceding the Axis invasion, the book concludes that Prince Paul’s policy of “appeasement for a price” was the only realistic course of action. Very critical, therefore, of the officers who led the coup of 27 March 1941.


Spells out in precise terms the possible advantages of an accommodation with the Axis Powers in 1940–41.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Useful because of information on Mussolini’s sponsorship of the Ustaši émigré group in Italy during the 1930s.

For a closer look at one aspect of the Axis invasion of April 1941, there is:


C. THE AXIS POWERS AND YUGOSLAVIA DURING THE WAR

1. General


Deakin, the most enthusiastically pro-Partisan of the British liaison officers in Yugoslavia during the war, has written an exhaustive history of Italo-German relations which is probably the best starting point for any study of particular issues confronting the Axis Powers.


Disappointing because Herzog confines himself exclusively to the territorial and jurisdictional aspects of the occupation administration without dealing with the substance of German policies.


The article by Elizabeth Wiskemann on Yugoslavia gives a concise summary of occupation politics.


The only detailed treatment of German policies in Yugoslavia. Unfortunately, this book, although full of information, proves little more than the length to which some Germans will go to find justifications for their actions in occupied Europe.

2. Special Problems

A handful of Yugoslav specialists have made scholarly contributions on the Italian activities in Yugoslavia.


In a carefully written but not altogether convincing article, Kljaković advances the very official argument that the resistance compelled the Italians
to commit so many troops to Yugoslavia that Mussolini had to postpone repeatedly his plans for an even earlier and larger contribution to the war against the Red Army.


A good example of the increasing willingness of Yugoslav historians to point out the very serious strains between the Italians and the Pavelić regime and their beneficial results for the Partisan movement.


Provides background material on the disintegration of the Chetnik movement in Montenegro throughout 1943.


The only treatment of this theme.

Pavelić’s Ustaši movement, which had so much to do with the growth of the Partisan and Chetnik revolts in Croatia, is treated in:


This is the most serious study of the puppet Croatian state. Perhaps my only general criticism is that it leans too heavily on German primary sources and neglects the Italian side.


Includes a lengthy discussion of the Ustaši period.


A startling account of the Ustaši’s anti-Serb terror.

For the Nedić administration in Serbia and its relations with the Chetniks, there is very little except Kostić’s memoirs. A few others to be mentioned are:


A pro-Nedić view.


Illustrates how cautious the Germans were about arming and constituting Serb detachments regardless of how reliable the leaders were.
D. THE ALLIES AND THE RESISTANCE GROUPS IN YUGOSLAVIA

When discussing the role of British and American policies and military operations and their influence on events in Yugoslavia, I used secondary works very extensively, many of them official histories. Obviously, the literature on Allied strategy and military operations in the Mediterranean as well as on their policies toward the resistance movements is vast and often of very high quality. For military questions the major works are:

Includes a good analysis of American objections to operations in the eastern Mediterranean.
The whole problem of the British shift of support from Mihailović to Tito in 1943 has been dealt with carefully in three articles in the Yugoslav historical journal Jugoslovenski Istorijski časopis:
Deakin has recently published a work which carries ahead his research on Britain's relations with the Yugoslav resistance and leans heavily on the unpublished records of their liaison officers: The Embattled Mountain. New York: Oxford University Press, 1971. Also, mention should be made of Walter Roberts' recent Tito, Mihailović and the Allies (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1972).

Other works which proved helpful are:
Plenča, Dušan. Medjunarodni Odnosi Jugoslavije u Toku Drugog Svjetskog
A very well-researched version of the official Yugoslav point of view. Plenča provides a great deal of useful information on the political activities of the Chetniks and the monarchic émigré government.

An equally official British survey.

E. MILAILOVIĆ AND THE CHETNIKS

Yugoslav historians have begun to do some serious work on the Milhailović movement, and, although they all adhere to the official line and the research in this area is still very spotty, some of their efforts merit serious consideration. Also, some of these articles and monographs use the Milhailović archives, which, of course, are unavailable to Western scholars.

Although Kačavenda makes a bit too much of the "crisis," this article is an excellent contribution, employing otherwise unavailable Chetnik messages.

Leković, Miso. "Planovi Draže Milhailovića za Uništenje Partizanske Države u Zapadnoj Bosni u drugoj polovini 1942 godine" (Džaža Milhailović's plans to crush the Partisan state in western Bosnia in the second half of 1942), Jugoslovenski Istorijski Časopis 1 (1966): 79–100.
Supplements Kačavenda's article and the evidence on Chetnik plans in 1942 from the unpublished Italian sources.

The Chetniks failed to raise an armed movement in Slavonia more because Ustaši policies had practically eliminated the Serbs than because of competition from the Partisans.

A fascinating account, based largely on Lukačević's testimony at his trial in 1945, of the disintegration of the officers' movement in 1944 and the partial swing over to the Partisans.

F. REGIONAL STUDIES OF THE RESISTANCE

A staggering number of case and special studies on the resistance have appeared in Yugoslavia. By listing a handful of those which aided my treatment of the Chetniks, I am barely scratching the surface.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


An account of Svetomar Vukmanović-Tempo's activities during the war, useful for the section on his eastern Bosnian mission of early 1942 where he confronted the Dangić Chetniks.

Three works on the Sandžak and Montenegro are helpful:


Includes some information on the splits between the pro-Mihailović and Federalist Chetniks in western Montenegro.

The standard work on the beginnings of the resistance in Serbia in 1941, much of which discusses the Chetniks and which serves as an invaluable background for Chapter II of this book, is:


As Communist charges of Mihailović's collaboration and treason gained a wider audience, a number of pro-Chetnik figures rushed to his defense both before and after his trial. Among the more interesting apologies are:


Fotich was King Peter's ambassador to Washington during the war; an outspoken Greater Serbian and pro-Chetnik he attempted to influence American policy in an anti-Tito sense.


Significant mainly because it includes the testimony of Colonel MacDowell.


A collection of first-hand accounts of Mihailović's subordinates. Particularly useful for the Chetnik point of view regarding strategy in Serbia in 1941.


Wildly pro-Chetnik.

Denies that Mihailović instructed his subordinates to collaborate with the Italians.


For the sake of balance, I might mention two anti-Mihailović polemics, written from very different perspectives:


One of the first pro-Tito accounts, written by the major Partisan publicist in the United States.


A violently anti-Serb tract which gives the point of view of the Ustaši émigré community.

For Slovenia, see:


Unfortunately, this excellent work, which is based on extensive research in Italian documents, deals almost entirely with 1941 and says nothing about Mihailović's later efforts to gain a foothold in Slovenia through his delegate-officer Major Novak.

Developments in Albania and Kosovo-Metohija, as well as the Chetniks' fear that the Italians were playing the Albanian Muslims off against the Serbs in Montenegro, make more sense after reading:


A fine supplement to the picture of the Herzegovinian revolt of the summer of 1941 presented by Italian Sixth Army Corps documents is:


G. THE FINAL PHASE OF THE WAR

A number of studies of military operations in 1944 and 1945 fill in the rather scanty German record on the collapse of the Chetnik movement at the end of the war:


The official Yugoslav interpretation of the anti-Chetnik measures employed by the Partisans, especially in Slovenia, in 1945.


A pro-Chetnik version of the same events.

Provides some details on the retreat of a few scattered Chetnik groups.

Two Soviet accounts are helpful for operations in Serbia in September and October 1944:

