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Grey Falcon and the Union Man
Miloje Sokić Collection of the Clippings from the American Press
1941–1945

Abstract: Miloje Sokić, a journalist whose family owned the *Pravda* newspaper, spent war years in the United States, where he gathered a collection of press clippings that illustrate well American attitudes towards the war in the Balkans. The collection reveals enthusiastic support for the Chetniks in the first two years of the war, and then the pendulum swung toward Partisans. In these clipping one can follow two immigrant groups. The one around Konstantin Fotitch, the Yugoslav Ambassador, nurtured the image of heroic Serbian resistance as illustrated by Rebecca West and Ruth Mitchell. The other, around Luis Adamić, presented Yugoslav Partisans as a piece of a progressive multi-cultural America in the Balkans. Adamić's strategy won because it was politically more astute, but also because the immigrants from the former Habsburg lands outnumbered those of Serbian origin at a ratio of 3 to 1.

Keywords: Miloje Sokić, Konstantin Fotitch, Luis Adamić, Ruth Mitchell, Rebecca West, Second World War, Resistance movements, American press, Royal Yugoslav Government in Exile, Partisans, Chetniks, image of women

Most historians are aware of the concept of public diplomacy, the effective communication strategies pursued by various branches of government and special interest groups, practiced in order to influence public opinion on foreign affairs abroad and at home. Public diplomacy often figures in influencing or preparing the ground for formal, official decision-making on subjects ranging from diplomatic initiatives and international agreements to military interventions. In recent years several studies have won recognition from specialists in the field of diplomatic history, such as Jon Davidann's, *Cultural Diplomacy in U.S.-Japanese Relations, 1919–1941*. This work, which traces changes in public opinion in the US and Japan before Pearl Harbor, was praised by the doyen of Asian diplomatic historians, Akira Iriye, who wrote that, "while there exist numerous studies of 'the origins of Pearl Harbor' and of mutual images across the Pacific, this book makes a new contribution by examining how these images influenced one another."¹ Such successes in writing on public diplomacy are often based on the discovery or use of document sets, particularly newspaper collections.

¹ Jon Thares, *Cultural Diplomacy in U.S.-Japanese Relations, 1919–1941* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

Recently, from a Serbian immigrant family here in the United States, I have received a dozen of flawlessly organized scrapbook volumes of press-clippings, all related to the course of the Second World War in the Balkans.² These volumes seem to have been organized in the same way in which intelligence officers would prepare newspaper clippings for government use. The press-clippings I received cover the whole course of the Second World War in the Balkans and even extend into the post-war era (1946), when the immigrant community was still hoping that the Communist victory was neither final nor irreversible. Covering the day-to-day news reports of the actions of the resistance movements, this collection presents a unique view of the war in the Balkans from the American perspective. The clippings include newspaper articles from the *New York Times* and *Post, Life* and *Time* magazines, extensive excerpts from the *Daily Worker*, the organ of the Communist Party of USA, as well as numerous articles from the local American press from Pittsburg and Chicago. All kinds of articles figure in the collection, including simple reports from the front, in-depth analysis pieces written by experts, gossip columns about the lives of princes and princesses, adventure journalism of Americans and British who ventured to visit the resistance fighters, as well as interviews and biographies of the protagonists. This unique resource lends insight into American views of a part of the world. For traditional historians, often obsessed with the meaning of every document which diplomatic historians study, this collection offers a different view of the war. It emphasizes the role of the Yugoslav immigrants in the United States and how they saw the events in the home country. I hope to present here this unique view of the chaotic mess that was the Second World War in the Balkans.

The author of this collection of newspaper clippings was the famous Serbian journalist and politician, Miloje Sokić (1897–1963). Sokić came from a large family which owned *Pravda* newspaper.³ There were seven Sokić brothers and three sisters, most of them active in the family newspaper whose first issue came out on September 1st, 1904. *Pravda* was a left-of-center newspaper, which during the period between the two world

² This collection is currently being catalogued by the Hoover Archives on campus of Stanford University in Palo Alto, California. The name of the collection will be *The Miloje Sokić Collection*. It contains 9 scrapbook volumes with glued clips from various national and local newspapers, chronologically organized for the period of 1941–46 and stamped with the date and the name of the publication. While the collection is being catalogued, scholars could check the press clippings directly from the news source cited.

³ “Sokići čekaju pravdu”, *Glas Javnosti*, Belgrade, July 30, 2001. This information was verified through the conversation with Miloje Sokić’s descendants currently living in the United States.

wars became associated with the Democratic Party of the popular leader Ljuba Davidović. Miloje Sokić, the person who had put this collection of scrapbooks together, was a member of the Yugoslav National Assembly. He entered the political life of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in the very difficult period after the personal rule of King Alexander, imposed from 1929 to 1931 after the blunt assassination of a prominent Croatian deputy in the National Assembly. On September 3rd, 1931, the King ended the constitutional vacuum and issued a new constitution, allowing for elections to be held. Old national political parties, such as Radicals, Democrats, and the Croatian Peasant Party, were prohibited from running. Only the super-national Yugoslav parties were permitted, and the democratic life in Yugoslavia took several years to recover. Two new Yugoslav political parties emerged: on the center-right there was the Yugoslav Radical Union (known as JeReZa—*Jugoslovenska Radikalna Zajednica*) and on the center-left the Yugoslav National Party. Official minutes of the Yugoslav National Assembly indicate that Miloje Sokić was elected representative both in the elections held in 1931 and in 1935 on the list of the Yugoslav National Party.⁴ His political role in this period was not very prominent. Miloje considered himself a journalist, first and foremost. In the post-war period, the Communist publications tried to present him as one of typically corrupt politicians in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia.⁵ Needless to say, such accusations were very hurtful to a patriot who was exiled, whose family newspaper, *Pravda*, was shut down and whose owners were not allowed to return to Yugoslavia after the war.

After the defeat of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in the April War of 1941, like many other prominent politicians and journalists, Miloje Sokić left the occupied country in order to continue resistance abroad, as this had been done during the First World War. After many detours Sokić ended in New York City, where the Royal Yugoslav Government had its information office. He could not know that he would never see his homeland again and would spend the rest of his life on the American East Coast, moving between New York, Pittsburg, Washington and Boston until his death in 1963. After the war, scarred by the imprisonment of his brothers in Belgrade by Tito's regime, Miloje stayed in the United States, even though he was entitled to return to Yugoslavia and to rejoin the National Assembly. Miloje then, after the Communist takeover in Yugoslavia, became the editor of *American Srbobran*, a Serbian newspaper based in Pittsburg, PA.

⁴ *Stenografske beleške Narodne skupštine Kraljevine Jugoslavije*, year 1, vol. 4 (Belgrade 1932) and year 4, vol. 1 (Belgrade 1935).

⁵ Zvonimir Kulundžić, *Korupcija i politika u kraljevskoj Jugoslaviji* (Zagreb: Stvarnost, 1968), 165–171.

The Yugoslav National Party, of which Miloje Sokić was a member, was a party created to foster Yugoslav unity in the aftermath of the bloody incident in the National Assembly. There was a good deal of resentment and animosity between the ruling Radicals (JeReZa) under Milan Stojadinović and the opposition Yugoslav National Party. In the United States, the traditional Serbian political parties, Radicals and Democrats, not the newly-formed Yugoslav parties, had their own independent organizations. Yet, because of the war, the traditional Serbian organizations in the United States, such as the Serbian National Defense Council or the Serb National Federation, together with the newly-arrived émigrés of 1941, began to work for the same cause, the cause of liberating the fatherland from Nazi occupation.

Contrary to the claims often made by many popular histories in the Communist Yugoslavia, the life of the Yugoslav émigrés during the war was not all fun and games.⁶ For the most part, Miloje Sokić's activities were actually dedicated to organizing help for the resistance movements in Yugoslavia and winning over public opinion in the United States. The newly-arrived emigrants were officially classified as immigrants "deriving from the enemy territory" and were thus fairly strictly followed and observed. All political figures, such as Sokić, were interviewed and observed by the Foreign Nationalities Branch, a part of the Office of Strategic Services (the future CIA).⁷ Yugoslav exiles even tried to organize military units from volunteers in the United States. This activity had to stop once the United States entered the war on December 8th, 1941.⁸ In fact, during this period between April and December of 1941, members of the Royal Yugoslav Government in Exile were only allowed into the United States after they first established residence in Canada which, as a part of the British Empire, had officially been at war with the Axis.⁹ There is a possibility that Sokić was putting together this collection of scrapbooks as a volunteer for the emerging intelligence services (Office of Strategic Services or the intelligence offices of the State Department). It is well known that during the war an army of immigrants-volunteers scanned the press regularly for the purpose of making the "best use of resources and the consolidation of victory."¹⁰ At this point I have not been able to confirm this intriguing suggestion.

⁶ E.g., Mihailo Marić, *Kralj i vlada u emigraciji* (Zagreb: Epoha, 1966).

⁷ Lorainne M. Lees, *Americans and National Security during World War II* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 6–12.

⁸ Bogdan Krizman, *Jugoslovenske vlade u izbeglištvu* (Zagreb: Globus, 1981), 147.

⁹ Constantin Fotitch, *The War We Lost: Yugoslavia's Tragedy and the Failure of the West* (New York: Viking Press, 1948), 115. Fotitch is the way the ambassador's name is spelled in the American press and I will use this form throughout the article.

¹⁰ Lees, *Americans and National Security*, 90.

By looking at the Sokić Collection, the coverage of the Yugoslav resistance was very positive in the American press. However, further and more detailed analysis reveals the existence of two clear political, public relations, or even propaganda, strategies of the belligerent resistance groups. Both resistance movements, the Yugoslav Army in the Fatherland, commonly known as the Chetniks, and the People's Liberation Army, known as the Partisans, had a clear strategy of how to present themselves to the Allies. Underscoring this need was the ideological fracture lines and strategies which would come to define the two groups. The Chetniks were Yugoslav patriots, organized predominantly in Serbia, Montenegro, and Bosnia, politically supporting the Royal Yugoslav Government in Exile and the political order as it had been before the Second World War. The Partisans, however, were otherwise a reverse mirror-image of the Chetniks: left-leaning, dedicated to fighting the Nazis, but also planning for the future Socialist Yugoslavia, intensely loyal to Moscow, and operating primarily in Croatia and Bosnia, though also Yugoslav in orientation. The Partisans also included a large number of Serbs living in the so-called Independent State of Croatia, the population that was subjected to genocide by the Croatian Nazis called the "Ustashe" and eager to join any resistance movement. Relations between these two resistant movements were complex and mutual accusations abounded. The Chetniks accused the Partisans of cooperating with the Croatian Nazis, the Ustashe. The Partisans were accusing the Chetniks of cooperating with the Italian occupational authorities and the Serbian quislings. These two movements had their own American spokespersons, the Ambassador Konstantin Fotitch for the Chetniks and the Royal Yugoslav Government in Exile, and Louis Adamic, a Slovenian-American journalist, author and social activist, working for the Partisan movement. One can follow the duel between these two political campaigns being fought on a daily basis on the pages of Miloje Sokić's collection of scrapbooks. In that duel, the American press had to take sides, and it was often split down the middle.

The community of Yugoslav immigrants, that is, those who had already been in the United States, and the new émigrés, those who arrived after the April War of 1941, stood far apart. First there were the traditional ethnic divisions between Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, Bosnians, and others, which plagued the Yugoslav history from the creation of the state to its final destruction in the Balkan wars of the 1990s. According to the available estimates, the immigrants from the former Habsburg lands in Yugoslavia outnumbered the immigrants from Serbia and Montenegro by a ratio of 3:1.¹¹ It should not be forgotten that from 1903, *Unione Austriaca* had steamships running regularly between Trieste and New York and, for some time, also

¹¹ Fotitch, *The War We Lost*, 110.

between Trieste and New Orleans. Second there were political divisions. On the one side were the supporters of the Royal Yugoslav Government in Exile, under the leadership of Ambassador Fotitch. On the other side were the left-leaning elements, consisting mostly of the old immigrants. Louis Adamic (1898–1951) came to the United States in 1913, from Austria-Hungary. Adamic was actually expelled from high school and briefly jailed for his nationalist pro-Yugoslav activities and, running away from home, he simply boarded one of the *Unione Austriaca* liners to New York. Louis Adamic and Ambassador Fotitch were politically on the opposing sides of the spectrum, but they also belonged to a different social class. Fotitch was appointed ambassador by the government of the Radical leader Milan Stojadinović. He was a conservative, who naturally leaned toward the members of the Republican Party, but who, as a gentleman and a professional, also had many friends in the Roosevelt administration.

The man who directed the campaign of the National Liberation Front, Louis Adamic, was an old immigrant and his political leanings were far to the left. He saw himself as if he came out of the famous working-class immigrant novel by Thomas Bell *Out of This Furnace*. The novel depicts three generations of Slovak immigrants who penniless settled around the steel mills of Pittsburg, worked hard, made very little money, fought with the unions for better pay, endured the management retaliation over their union activities, and faced a good deal of discrimination from ordinary working Americans who had arrived to the steel mills before them. Similarly, arriving in the country at the age of fifteen, Adamic embodied the American Dream. He started as a manual laborer in California. Then he became an American soldier and fought in the First World War in France. After the war he became a professional journalist, working for many newspapers and periodical in the New York City area, including the famous left-leaning magazine, the *Nation*. All of his writings were colored by his labor experiences, even though he became and remained a noted journalist and writer, having a comfortable lifestyle of the American urban middle class. In a way, he was a typical immigrant from Central Europe; hard-working, patriotic, loyal to the local labor union and the local immigrant community. To this day he remains one of the darlings of the left in the United States.¹² During the war Adamic not only became the spokesperson of the Partisan Resistance in the United States, but a symbol of antifascist struggle of the western parts of Yugoslavia.

Overall, Adamic was much more successful in his efforts than the circle around Ambassador Fotitch to which Miloje Sokić belonged. Today

¹² Dale E. Peterson, "The American Adamic: Immigrant Bard of Diversity", *The Massachusetts Review* 44 (1/2), 233–250.

it is common to find an opinion, even among experienced State Department officials, that the Partisan Resistance was predominately supported by the antifascist Croats and Slovenes.¹³ Adamic knew how to play dirty and did not withhold some hits below the belt. For example, he often insinuated that Fotitch was in fact a Nazi sympathizer because he had a cousin who was related to the Serbian quisling General Milan Nedić. While it was hard to believe that the Yugoslav ambassador in Washington was a crypto-Nazi, Adamic repeated this accusation often. Adamic also claimed that the Yugoslav Government in Exile maintained secret contacts with the Nedić government in Serbia.¹⁴ Fotitch, on the other hand, never tired of insinuating that Adamic was a Communist sympathizer. These words, however, had a much more damaging effect after the war, during the McCartney era, than during the war.¹⁵

During the first half of the resistance struggle, between May 1941 and the middle of 1943, the Chetnik forces of General Mihailović were praised widely and at length. A legend of Mihailović was created, and eventually made into a major feature film, called *The Chetniks, the Fighting Guerillas* (1943). The image of Mihailović thus created was that of a comic book superhero, resisting the Nazis in the completely occupied Europe, a glimmer of hope and heroism in the darkest hour (fig. 1). While based on reality, the image was superficial. The troublesome tactics of Mihailović's forces on the ground, the difficulties of conducting resistance operations in the middle of occupied Europe, especially the brutal German retributions on the scale of one hundred executed civilians for every German soldier killed, were rarely, if ever, mentioned. In the early days of the war and throughout 1942 even the *Daily Worker*—the Communist organ—praised Mihailović.¹⁶ From that point Mihailović had nowhere to go but down.¹⁷

¹³ E.g., Philip J. Cohen an amateur historian published a book which was peer-reviewed by Texas A&M University Press in which he falsely claimed that, "Overall, from 1941 to 1945, the Partisans of Croatia were 61 percent Croat and 28 percent Serb." Philip J. Cohen, *Serbia's Secret War: Propaganda and the Deceit of History* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1996), 95. This book was then positively reviewed by Stephen W. Walker, a former State Department official.

¹⁴ Lees, *Americans and National Security*, 156–157.

¹⁵ Peterson, "The American Adamic", 233–250.

¹⁶ *Miloje Sokic Collection*, "Night and Day Slav Partisans Hit Back", *Daily Worker*, July 5, 1942.

¹⁷ This enthusiasm in the press and popular culture was of some concern even for ambassador Fotitch. See, Fotitch, *The War We Lost*, 165.

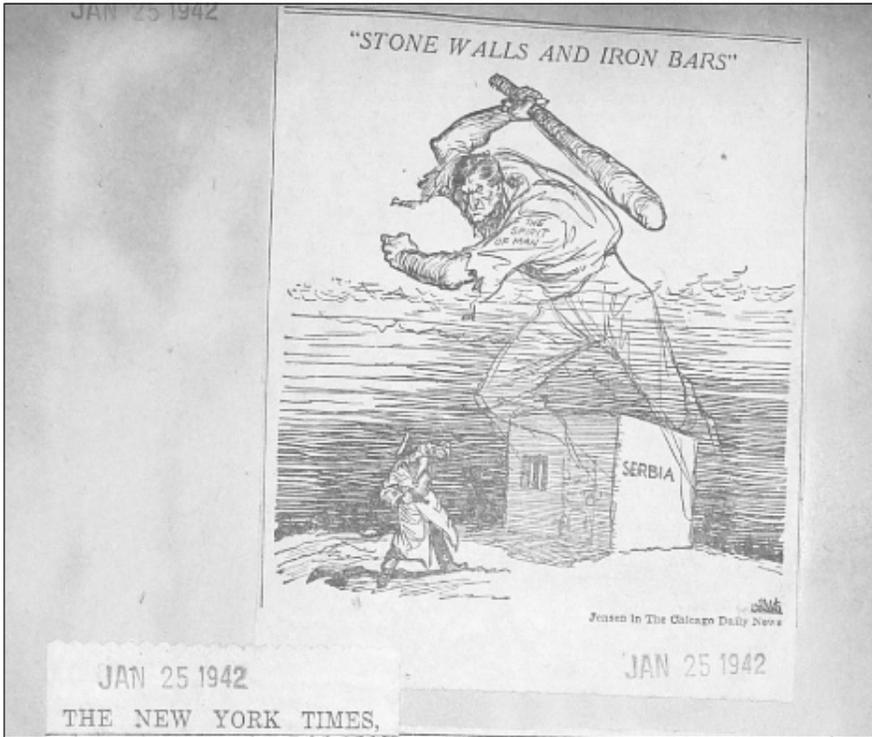


Fig. 1 Early depictions of the heroism of the Chetniks in *Chicago Daily News* of January 25, 1942

In mid-1943, especially after the Allied landing in Italy, western Yugoslavia of former Habsburg lands and its Adriatic coast became of a much greater strategic importance than relatively isolated, landlocked Serbia, either as a ground for a possible Allied landing in the Adriatic, or as a decoy for possible Allied landings elsewhere. Suddenly, media reports shifted their attention to the Yugoslav resistance in Croatia and Bosnia. Tito became the central heroic figure of the media narrative. At first a mysterious figure, this leader of resistance in Croatia was not even known by name. Eventually, an image as well as emerged. Tito was created as essentially an antifascist democrat, admittedly with some Communist leanings. He was not made into a super-human hero like Mihailović, but into a strong-willed but sensitive figure, who often played chess, very much in tune with the dreams and aspirations of modern America, especially the newly-liberated American women. In a style that would today be labeled as demeaning and sexist, the Partisan forces were depicted as full of beautiful, strong Partisan women, which would make any man wish to join the resistance (fig. 2).



Fig. 2 Tantalizing picture of Tito's female partisans in the *New York Sun* of August 8, 1944

The liberation of Yugoslavia, however, did not come as a result of the Allied landing in the Adriatic, but as a result of the push by the Red Army through Serbia. Once installed in Belgrade with the help of the Red Army, Tito changed his attitudes, and became much more aggressive toward the Western Allies, even threatening the Allied positions in northern Italy toward the end of the war. Warnings about Tito, present from the beginning, now filled the pages

of the press. Yet, the prevailing attitude was that of silent acceptance. There was rarely any regret expressed about the switching of allegiance, and of the betrayal of the ally Mihailović. That was swept under the rug. The pretense continued that Tito essentially was a man that America can do business with, although he was occasionally and often violently anti-Western. The unexpected way out from this unpleasant and, for journalists, challenging situation was offered suddenly in 1948, when Stalin criticized and excommunicated Tito. The press could again declare Tito as America's friend in the Balkans, ignoring any smoldering injustice that the political right saw him imposing on the Yugoslav people.

Thus a pattern appeared that was to remain true for the American media to the present day: those whom gods wish to destroy, they first make into a celebrity. Mihailović had that fate. Tito, on the other hand, while generally praised and occasionally virulently criticized, never achieved that superman status. At the height of their popularity, the Chetniks were featured in comic books, such as DC Comics' Captain Marvel (fig. 3).¹⁸ At the height of Tito's popularity, in 1944/45, newspaper articles entitled: "Tito:

¹⁸ DC Comics: Master Comics, no. 36 (Feb. 1943): "Liberty for the Chetniks" (Captain Marvel Jr.)



Fig. 3 Captain Marvel featuring the Chetniks. DC Comics: Master Comics, no. 36 (Feb. 1943)

The Cost of Our Yugoslav Blunder” were still very common.¹⁹

The media war waged over the Yugoslav Resistance had many dimensions. Political leanings of both sides were quite obvious. *Daily Worker* and *Picture Magazine* were firmly on the side of Tito’s Partisans, especially after 1941. Louis Adamic, the American “manager” of the Partisan PR campaign was a long-term contributor of *The Nation* magazine and other left-leaning newspapers mostly from the New York area. Konstantin Fotitch, the Royal Yugoslav Government’s ambassador in Washington, although on the right of the political spectrum, was a close personal friend of Sumner Welles, a staunch supporter of Roosevelt and the undersecretary of state

till 1943, when he was forced to resign from the State Department due to a homosexual affair. Although Welles was Fotitch’s main contact in the State Department, he was also his lifelong friend even after the Ambassador was replaced in 1944. Fotitch naturally had many friends and acquaintances among American politicians, and in general those tended to be from the Republican Party and from the upper crusts of society.

The issue of gender adds an additional dimension to the endless debates about politics. Ambassador Fotitch was in tune with the American society and several mostly upper-class American women feature prominently in the press-clippings. The image of Yugoslavia in American cultured circles, especially in the early part of the war when Mihailović was virtually the Allied only hero, were greatly influenced by the publication of Rebecca West’s *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon: A Journey through Yugoslavia*, which was published in May 1941. One can even say that the first description of the Yugoslav Resistance stylistically much resembles the pages of *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon*. This should not be surprising, since West was considered one

¹⁹ Miloje Sokic Collection, “Tito: The Cost of Our Yugoslav Blunder,” *Saturday Evening Post*, February 13, 1945.

of the greatest stylists of the English language and published regularly in the *New York Herald Tribune*, *New Republic*, and in many newspapers in her native London. Rebecca West's popular travelogue, even today one of the 100 most read books of the century, contributed greatly to the Balkan Myth, the image of the Balkans as a place of death, martyrdom, sacrifice. Though employing such imagery in describing resistance to the Nazis, West personally believed the Allies should "fight for life, not for martyrdom," and thus sought to present the Chetniks as fighters who rejected



Fig. 4 Fundraising in Yugoslav folk costumes

the idea of self-suffering, and embraced resistance to free themselves from the bondage of deadly European masochism of the early part of the war. This was what the anti-Nazi West needed to hear from the front, and the courage of Mihailović's rebellion, which started on May 17, 1941, immediately gripped American readers. Since there was little good news for the Allies in May 1941, the news of Yugoslav resistance received via West's writings was extremely popular. Given West's role, it is not surprising that there followed a Chetnik craze in the US, especially among upper-class women. One of the favorite social activities of the late 1941 and early 1942 was fundraising for the Chetniks carried out in colorful Yugoslav folk dresses (fig. 4).²⁰

Presented as "wild and free and fiercely untamed as eagles in their native Sumadia", Chetniks themselves were imbued with the stereotype of a Balkan man, rugged, patriarchal and patronizingly protective of women. That stereotype did not mean that no women ever appeared in newspaper clips about Chetniks—the abovementioned fundraisings were highly publicized. Yet, we rarely hear about women as *members* of the Chetniks, even though they existed, such as the famous Milka Baković Radosavljević, known as Milka Ravnogorka.

²⁰ *Miloje Sokic Collection, Tribune, June 7, 1942.*

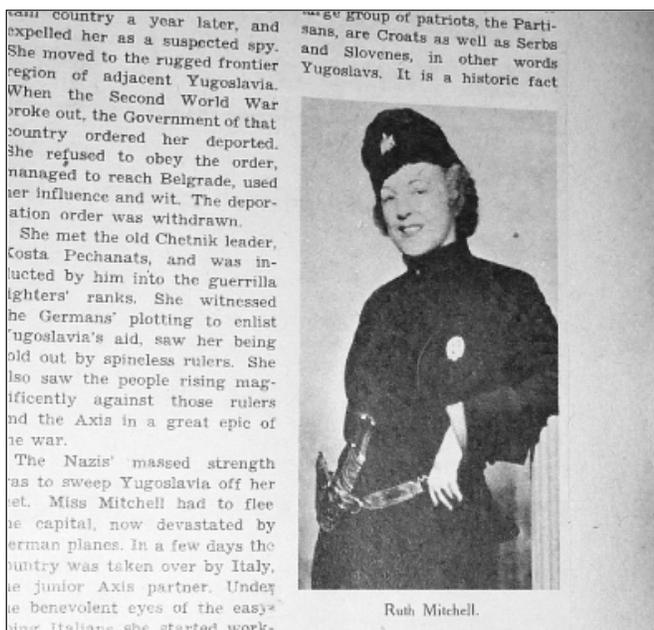


Fig. 5 Ruth Mitchell was often the "spokesperson" of the Chetniks in the American press

Particularly interesting in this regard is the case of Ruth Mitchell, sister of the controversial American general Billy Mitchell, a First World War hero and one of the creators of the United States Air Force. Ruth Mitchell was stationed in Albania with her husband Stanley Knowles, a British diplomat. After the Italian attack on Albania, she moved to Yugoslavia, and after the German invasion joined the Chetniks. She was captured by the Gestapo, and put on trial, condemned to death, but later reprieved, and sent to jail. Diplomatic wrangling accomplished her release in 1942, and Mitchell returned to the United States, where she devoted her life to supporting the war effort, and in particular the cause of the Serbian Chetniks (fig. 5).²¹

The case of Ruth Mitchell does not weaken, but actually reinforces the male image of the Chetnik forces. Women among the Chetniks were an exception that proved the rule, and Ruth's stories about how Chetnik commanders were extremely reluctant to accept her prove that she was able to join only after convincing Kosta Pećanac that she was as capable as any man. Ruth herself said that she was accepted only because she could "ride just about anything on four legs" and was ready "to die like a man." Other Chetnik women were expected to be at home, mistresses of their houses, taking care of the children, and supporting the war effort from that household position. In the movie, *Chetniks, the Fighting Guerillas*, Jelica Mihailović (nee

²¹ Miloje Sokic Collection, "Ruth Mitchell, Who Fought with Chetniks, 81, Dies," *New York Times*, Sunday, October 26, 1969.

Branković), the wife of the Chetnik leader Draža Mihailović, was presented as a typical middle-class American housewife, who cooks dinner and raises children, while her husband is at work. In the movie, Mihailović actually “pops in” for dinner almost on a

regular basis. Jelica Mihailović, mistakenly called Ljubica in the movie, actually spent most of her war years in a German concentration camp. Jelica no doubt was a strong woman, but she was not expected to leave the kitchen and go to the front line like—as we shall see—the Partisan women did.

Gender was defined very differently in the public relations of the Partisan movement. Stana Tomašević was a famous Partisan fighter and also a model, whose photographs appeared on the pages of many American newspapers.²² According to the British liaison to Tito’s Partisans, Fitzroy Maclean, the photographs of Tomašević contributed considerably to the positive opinion about Yugoslav Partisans. Stana Tomašević was not the only Partisan woman that was photographed, there were others, such as Mira Afrić, but their number was limited, and a few of the carefully staged photographs were widely circulated.²³ The impression that was conveyed to the public was that fighting women accounted for as much as a quarter of Tito’s armies. In many of her pictures Stana Tomašević was photographed professionally and with extensive preparation by the war photographer John Talbot. The fact that there were many women in Tito’s army was repeatedly emphasized in the press. Those women were not just helping and supporting the men, they were fighting. They left the kitchen for the front and there was no domestic life for them until the victory was won. We would say today, they also fought hard. In fact, Mihailović was often criticized among the Partisans for leaving his wife at home. Throughout the war, the



Fig. 6 Stana Tomašević, Tito’s Partisans’ top “photo model”

²² Miloje Sokic Collection, *Time*, October 9, 1944.

²³ Nebojša Tomašević, *Life and death in the Balkans: a family saga in a century of conflict* (Columbia University Press, 2008), 394. Also, Dubravka Žarkov, *The body of war: media, ethnicity, and gender in the break-up of Yugoslavia* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 253.

Partisans interpreted her internment in the German concentration camp as “collaboration with the enemy.”

At home, in Yugoslavia, gender relations among the Partisans were fairly patriarchal and even puritanical. In the traditional patriarchal society, such as Yugoslavia, it would have been a political disaster for a popular movement to advocate openly sexual liberation of women. This strategy was tried by the Communist movement in the 1920s with disastrous political consequences. Under Stalin in the 1930s and 40s, the gender policy of the Communists changed. Consequently, the Partisan movement advocated gender liberation for women, but under no circumstances it was for sexual liberation. The Partisan movement was not about free love, though this was often hinted in the press, perhaps due to the sensationalist value of the idea, which might boost circulation. Even romantic love was considered inappropriate during the war. It is interesting to note that the marriage of Yugoslavia's King Peter on March 20, 1944, while praised in the American press as ultimate romantic story of the war, was criticized both by the ministers of the Chetnik-backed Royal Government and by Tito's Partisans (fig. 7). These two bodies, the Government in Exile and the Committee for National Liberation could rarely agree on anything, but they agreed that it was inappropriate for the king to get married during the war. Tito, for example, hid his relations with his secretary Davorjanka Zdenka Paunović very carefully. Moreover, the news of Davorjanka's premature death in 1946 and the place of her burial were kept in absolute secrecy, even though by that time Tito and Davorjanka had been in a “steady” relationship for several years.

This, however, was not how Partisan women were presented to the world. In the press, the Partisan women not only fought hard, but played hard, one is tempted to say like a typical Bond girl. This comparison of the liberated and sexualized women of the 1960s with Tito's Partisan women of the 1940s is not just a useful comparative device. How these Partisan women were perceived in the West is clearly seen from many newspaper articles which repeatedly talk about men's excitement to be in the army with so many strong and beautiful women. This image of the Partisan woman was in many ways the impression of the British liaison commander to the Partisans, Fitzroy Maclean, and the creation of the sophisticated Partisan general Vladimir Velebit, who was the point person of the Partisans in charge of foreign relations. When Fitzroy Maclean died in 1996, the *Daily Telegraph* entitled his obituary “Sir Fitzroy, the Original James Bond is Dead.” The *Telegraph's* title just reflects the widespread speculation that the British liaison to the Partisans, and a long-time diplomat-adventurer in Stalin's Moscow, was one of the inspirations for Ian Fleming when he created James Bond. Both Fitzroy Maclean and Randolph Churchill expressed clearly their sexist admiration of the Partisan women.



Fig. 7 The story of the royal wedding was somewhat of an obsession for the American press

During the war, this new type of women, which the Partisans promoted, fitted well with the image of the new woman emerging during the New Deal period. Women were no longer members of the family, where the male was the head, but breadwinners themselves. They joined the workforce, first during the Great Depression, when the man was not able to provide enough, and then during the war, to help the war effort. Therefore, a stark contrast was drawn between the domestic upper-class women, who supported the Chetniks with their fundraising, and the determined and beautiful ordinary women, who joined the Partisans. In short, Vladimir Velebit and Louis Adamic hit the jackpot with the image of Partisan women in the American press. They presented that image at the right time for their cause, because the image of a free warrior woman would be eclipsed in American culture by the post-war image which saw “Rosie the Riveter” leaving the workforce and returning to the role of demure and domesticated householder.

The ultimate victory of the Partisan forces in Yugoslavia was also explained in a very romantic way in the American press. It all had to do with King Peter’s love for Princess Alexandra of Greece. As the Hearst Corporation’s *American Weekly* succinctly summarized it, “Another Crown Kicked Away for Love.”²⁴ Very simply, King Peter fell in love with a beautiful girl, Princess Alexandra of Greece. This was the “right” girl for a king to marry, but the

²⁴ Miloje Sokic Collection, “Another Royal Crown Kicked Away for Love”, *American Weekly*, March 12, 1944.



Fig. 8 "Another Royal Crown Kicked Away for Love", *American Press*, March 12, 1944.

timing was bad. Fierce male resistance warriors in Yugoslavia, following their non-romantic code of ethics believed that it was not appropriate for a king to marry while the liberation struggle was still going on. According to the *American Weekly*,

both Chetniks and Partisans resented the King's romantic love. When they heard the news of his marriage, the Chetniks who were thus far extremely loyal to the King simply could not stomach such an unmanly behavior and joined the Partisans in their rejection of the monarchy. One need not indicate how inaccurate and misled such a summary was, yet this view was repeated again and again in the popular press and became somewhat of an official version of the events. The summary actually fitted well with the American view of the Slavs in general and Serbs in particular as an extremely male-dominated culture, where there is no place for courtly love. In that sense one can understand why Tito kept his romantic escapades during the war a closely guarded secret.

Overall, one can say that the battle of Yugoslav resistance groups was not won in the American press and it is more the case that the press was controlled by the government than the other way around. Nonetheless, the image of Yugoslav resistance clearly documented not only American popular opinion of the Balkans, but also attitudes and preferences of American wartime society. In the Roosevelt era, the image of a strong, independent woman was more popular than the image of a safe or even adventurous upper-class woman. The bourgeois sophistication of Ambassador Fotitch, of his friends and associates, was more of a drawback than an asset, because it was out of touch with the new American egalitarian sensibilities developed

during the New Deal period. In that sense Tito's Partisans were more successful in gauging the spirit of the times. Yet, one can say that both groups, the Yugoslav Government in Exile and the Partisans, approached the issue of the press presentation with great sophistication.

The Royal Yugoslav Government, even before the war started, paid special attention to its relations with the United States, in no small measure because of the large immigrant community that could have substantial influence on the policy of the United States toward Yugoslavia. Ambassador Fotitch was especially active in this regard, establishing contacts with many influential politicians, as well as working on a more popular level, such as talking at the opening ceremony of the World Exhibition in New York in 1939.²⁵ Adamic, on the other hand, had an advantage of understanding the American mentality better. He came to the United States when he was fifteen and was familiar with all levels of society, from a poor immigrant fisherman village in California to a cozy dinner for journalists in the White House. He was also more aware of American prejudices against the Slavs in general, and the fact that they knew very little about the difference between various Slavic ethnic groups, but often simply assumed that if Russia became communist, other Slavic nations would be following suit enthusiastically very soon.

One can even say that the struggle between the two immigrant groups was not primarily an extension of the political struggles that were going on during the time of resistance in Yugoslavia, but that it was a struggle of two cultural images in American Psyche. On the one side there was an image of *Homo Balkanicus*, which was in no small part created by Rebecca West in her book, *Grey Falcon and Black Lamb*. This was the image that persisted ever since the Enlightenment, an image of a savage man among the civilized.²⁶ In Rebecca West's novel, it is the savage men that teach the civilized how to find and use the moral compass. This was the romantic image of Serbia which was nurtured in the West since the First World War, and it was very natural for the Serbian émigré community to fall into this trap. This was the role that Mihailović played in the dark days of 1941. In those dark days, the defeated West needed the image of Grey Falcon, the symbol of the Kosovo defeat in Serbian oral poetry, to remind the West, that the wild *Homo Balkanicus* keeps faith in the ultimate victory even in the darkest hour of defeat. This is something that the wild East was able to offer to the civilized West.

²⁵ New York Public Library, New York World's Fair 1939 and 1940 Incorporated records, Mss. Col. 2233.

²⁶ Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 39-42.

On the other side of the spectrum was the image of Slavic laborer, the union man in the United States. These images of Slavic working class came out of reality. They could have been seen and experienced by many Americans who worked in the steel mills of Pittsburg, Youngstown, Cleveland, and Chicago. Adamic used these images in his novels. That is why he is considered as one of the creators of the genre of ethnic novel, describing the immigrant experience in the United States. Adamic was one of the few writers who openly talked about the relations between immigrants and a society that was predominately Anglo-Saxon in its prejudices. Adamic believed that Americans coming through Elis Island were as dignified as those that came by way of the Plymouth Rock.²⁷ He was not afraid to admit his union and socialist orientation, because that was what many working class immigrants were. He imagined that America was to become Socialist and the nation of nations, as was the title of one of his most successful books. In a way, he wanted to see America become a multiethnic socialist utopia, and that was exactly how he saw the purpose of the Yugoslav liberation struggle. His dream of socialist America, which he projected to the Yugoslav Partisans, turned out to be a much better propaganda strategy. Successful in public affairs, this strategy, however, did not work in Adamic's private life. Under pressure from McCarthyism on the one hand, and the rigid Stalinist ideology of the many among the New York City left-leaning intellectuals on the other, he took his own life in 1951. Perhaps he was disappointed that his idea of America as nation of nations, of brotherhood and unity between the Slavic workers and the Anglo-Saxon managers fell apart in the 1950s.

Finally, I need to make a disclaimer. One has to bear in mind that newspaper clippings, no matter how young or old, are actually not primary sources for the events they depict. For example, it would be wrong to treat these clippings as primary sources for the resistance struggle in Yugoslavia. For that kind of information one needs to go to archives. That being said, such newspaper collections—ever more possible via the efforts of publishers to offer access to massive digital newspapers collections—constitute a valuable primary source for studying how the views of international events and policies are shaped and the (changing) values they reflect. In a multi-polar age when a number of forces intervene in or try to influence civil conflicts managed locally by increasingly media-savvy actors in almost every corner

²⁷ Review of *From Many Lands* by Louis Adamic in *Journal of Educational Sociology* 16/6 (February, 1943), 399–400. Also Rudolph J. Vecoli, “Louis Adamic, 1898–1951: A Retrospective View and Assessment Thirty Years Later”, *International Labor and Working-Class History* 20 (Fall 1981), 62, writes, “Adamic became the outstanding spokesman for ‘new Americans,’ the immigrants and their children, and an advocate of a new synthesis of America in which Elis Island would be as important as Plymouth Rock.”

of the world, it is becoming more and more important to study the relationship between the media and the public, and the way in which foreign actors seek to shape the views of the international community.

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