

MISUNDERSTANDINGS REGARDING THE OPERATION OF THE BRITISH FLOYDFORCE AMONG YUGOSLAV PARTISANS

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ABSTRACT: *Floydforce was a British artillery force that landed in Yugoslavia in October 1944 together with its protection units. Its task was to provide artillery support to the Yugoslav Partisan army in combat against the German units retreating from Albania, Greece, and Yugoslavia. Together with the Partisans and the Balkan Air Force (BAF), Floydforce participated in attacks on the retreating German units, including operations Risan and Podgorica. The leadership of the Partisan movement kept a close eye on the activities of the British units in Yugoslavia because Tito was concerned that the Greek scenario would also play out in Yugoslavia and because, first and foremost, he wanted Yugoslavia to be liberated by the Yugoslav Partisans without the help of the Anglo-American Allies. Floydforce assisted the Partisans for the last time in the Mostar and Zadar areas, after which the Partisans began to reject British assistance. At the end of January 1945, Floydforce had to withdraw from Yugoslavia.*

KEYWORDS: Second World War, Allies, United Kingdom, Floydforce, Yugoslavia, Partisan army

Introduction

After the Axis powers attacked Yugoslavia on 6 April 1941, the Yugoslav government went into exile and sought British protection in emigration. Yugoslavia was divided by its victorious assailants into more pieces than any other country in Europe. Parts of Slovenia were annexed by Italy, Germany, Hungary, and Croatia. Slices of Serbian territory were apportioned to Hungary, Bulgaria, and Italy's protectorate Albania, with the rest coming under German military command. Italy occupied Montenegro and annexed its coastal region, and its southern strip was

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annexed to Albania. Yugoslav Macedonia was mostly annexed by its covetous Bulgarian neighbor, and its western regions were ceded to Albania. Croatia, shorn of its Hungarian-annexed eastern regions and Italian-annexed portions of Dalmatia, but enlarged with the addition of Bosnia and Herzegovina, became an Axis-sponsored puppet state under the fascist Ustasha party. The British established the first radio contact with the Yugoslav guerrillas in September 1941, and soon after that King Peter II gave his official blessing to the Chetniks. This was expected because the Chetniks represented the Yugoslav government in exile. They were led by General Dragoljub Mihailović, who was appointed Yugoslav Minister of the Army, Navy, and Air Force. Mihailović's troops pledged their loyalty and devotion to King Peter II. The British began to herald the Chetniks as the first organized underground in occupied Europe, urging all patriotic Yugoslavs to join this irregular army. British policy aimed to restore Yugoslav independence, to maintain the unity of Yugoslavia among Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, and to sustain this unity by means of propaganda. For their part, the Yugoslav government in exile accepted these aims, but doubts persisted about willingness or ability to do so, especially, in view of the serious internal nationality problems.¹

The Allies were also receiving reports of another Yugoslav resistance movement: the Partisans. Armed Partisan resistance against the Axis forces began in the summer of 1941, and this soon developed into a liberation movement with a clear political program: to ensure national liberation and bring about political changes (a communist revolution). Partisan leaders were convinced that resistance was the only possibility for achieving national freedom, and that combat was the only means of driving out the Axis forces. In their efforts they did not even enjoy political support because the Yugoslav government in exile, which represented the Axis-held and divided Yugoslav state. Instead, it supported its own resistance units led by Mihailović. The British were also receiving reports that some of Mihailović's units collaborated with the Axis forces and the Serbian quisling authorities; otherwise, in the military sense, Mihailović was more or less passive as far as attacking the Axis forces was concerned.²

By the autumn of 1941 evidence suggested that British military aid was being used in civil war between the Chetniks and the Partisans. British relations with Mihailović were never particularly easy partly because of the dissatisfaction with the level of supplies dropped to him; partly because of the unsatisfactory nature of Anglo-American propaganda in Yugoslavia; and partly because of constant allegations and counter allegations about collaboration with the enemy. By the summer of 1942, the British had begun to reevaluate Mihailović. They had not dropped their support for him, but they began to gather evidence about his inactivity and political leanings. The

¹ John Keegan, *The Second World War* (London: Penguin Books, 2005), 155. Walter A. Roberts, *Tito, Mihailovich and the Allies* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1973), 20; Richard Harris Smith, *OSS: The Secret History of America's First Central Intelligence Agency* (Guilford: The Lyons Press, 2005), 118–119; Gregor Kranjc, „Collaboration, resistance and liberation in the Balkans, 1941–1945”, in: *The Second World War, Politics and Ideology, Vol. 2*, ed. Richard J.B. Bolsworth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 461–462.

² Zdenko Čepić, „The Character of World War II, Yugoslav Liberation Struggle and the Alliance”, in: *Together: Combat Comradship between the Slovenian Partisans and the Allies*, ed. Zdenko Čepić (Ljubljana: ZZZNOB, 2014), 11–12.

British began to lose enthusiasm for Mihailović as they gained respect for the Partisans. The British decision to switch the military aid to the Partisans as the main element of resistance to the Axis was occasioned by the routing of Mihailović's forces by the Partisans in the aftermath of a German offensive against the Partisans in 1943. In 1943 Churchill put Allied victory first. He saw that the Communist Partisans lay Britain's best chance of pinning down so many Germans in Yugoslavia that Allied war in Italy could proceed with far better odds. Backing Tito saved the British and Americans fighting the same enemy in Italy. The reports of military intelligence and specially the access to the ULTRA decrypts of German communications made the crucial difference to how Churchill and his Chiefs of Staff perceived the war in Yugoslavia.³

The Yugoslav Partisan Movement after the Conference of the Big Three in Tehran

The Yugoslav Partisan movement gradually gained the trust of the Allies, which ultimately led to its equal status in the antifascist coalition and the international recognition of the new Anti-Fascist Council for the National Liberation of Yugoslavia (AVNOJ). At the Allied conference held in Tehran from November 28th to December 1st, 1943, Churchill, Stalin, and Roosevelt decided to give full support to the Yugoslav Partisans. At the conference, Churchill stated that, in terms of fighting the German forces, Tito had done much more than Dragoljub Mihailović and hence the British were planning to give him full backing. Through this, the Yugoslav National Liberation Movement was recognized as a fellow combatant in the great Allied coalition and, soon afterwards, the British stepped up their efforts to reach a compromise between the Yugoslav government in exile and the National Liberation Movement. According to the British, Mihailović was the greatest obstacle to fulfilling their plans; he was still the minister of army, navy, and air forces in the Yugoslav government in exile led by Božidar Purić as prime minister. Because of this, the British wanted to get rid of Mihailović, but not the monarchy, and so they exerted pressure on King Peter II and the government in exile into eliminating Mihailović from the government. In May 1944, Purić's government collapsed, and the Allies identified the former ban of Croatia, Ivan Šubašić, who was in favor of the national liberation struggle, as a suitable candidate among the Yugoslav political emigrants to succeed Purić as prime minister in the Yugoslav government in exile. On June 1st, 1944, King Peter II then appointed Šubašić prime minister and the minister of all departments.⁴

The British supported the talks between Tito and Šubašić, who signed the Vis Agreement in June 1944. The agreement stipulated that the government of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia would be composed of progressive democratic people not compromised against the National Liberation Movement and that the government in exile would provide financial support to the Partisan army and recognize the

³ Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS), Vol. 4, 1944, Europe (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1966), 1333; Christopher Catherwood, *Churchill and Tito: SOE, Bletchley Park and Supporting the Yugoslav Communists in World War II* (Barnsley: Frontline Books, 2017), xvi; W. A. Roberts, *Tito, Mihailovich and the Allies*, 79.

⁴ Božo Repe, *S puško in knjigo. Narodnoosvobodilni boj slovenskega naroda 1941–1945* (Ljubljana: Cankarjeva založba, 2015), 205.

achievements of the liberation movement. This was then followed by talks between Tito and various Anglo-American commanders, Churchill, and Šubašić in southern Italy, where both military and political issues were discussed. At these meetings, Tito promised Churchill not to use armed force to establish a communist regime in Yugoslavia. The British still sought to retain their influence, relying especially on anti-Partisan Serbia (as they assessed it). These meetings also gave rise to increasing disagreements and suspicions between the Anglo-American Allies and the Yugoslav Partisans, revolving especially around the Anglo-American landing and potential Anglo-American (non)intervention, the status of the monarchy and King Peter II, the establishment of a coalition government, the evaluation of the situation in Serbia, and intelligence activities.⁵

In the spring of 1944, the Allies sought to divert the Germans' attention to other parts of Europe, planning a major landing operation in Western Europe, in which they also counted on the Yugoslav Partisans' assistance. They planned to support the Partisans' subversive and sabotage activities against the German communication lines in Yugoslavia through their secret services, including the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) and the Special Operations Executive (SOE). In their joint operations *Bearskin* (June 1944) and *Ratweek* (September 1944), the Anglo-American Allies and Yugoslav Partisans performed successful subversive and sabotage campaigns against German rail and road communications, slowing down the German retreat from the Balkans and potential supplies to the German units in Italy. Some believe that, in parallel with the two operations, Tito took advantage of the situation to achieve major success in the civil war against the Chetniks. Throughout the war, the Allies were aware that the Yugoslav National Liberation Movement planned to seize power in Yugoslavia after the war. They also knew that the Partisan movement had a communist leadership, but what was important to them was to support the movement that was actively fighting the Axis powers—and those were the Partisans.⁶

After the Anglo-American Allies successfully landed in Normandy in June 1944 (operation *Overlord*) and Allied units were closing in on the Third Reich from the west and east, it became even more obvious to the Allies that the German forces wanted to withdraw from Greece, Albania, and Yugoslavia to the north as soon as possible and form a defense belt against the Allied forces. To avoid major engagement with the Germans retreating from the Balkans, the Allies began actively supporting the Yugoslav Partisans to stop the German units while still in Yugoslavia. In addition to supporting the Partisans in performing sabotage against the German communication lines and sending them military supplies and equipment, they planned to send certain military units to join the Partisans and help them fight the Germans. An Anglo-American landing on Yugoslav territory was also an option, but that was mainly Churchill's idea, which did not have sufficient support among the American Allies nor the leading British military and political circles. On August 13th, 1944, Tito agreed to collaborate with the Anglo-American units in northeastern Italy in the event of an Anglo-American Allied

⁵ B. Repe, *S puško in knjigo*, 319; Dušan Biber, "Jugoslovanski partizani in Britanci v 1944. letu," *Prispevki za zgodovino delavskega gibanja*, 25, no. 1/2, (1985), 78.

⁶ Gorazd Bajc, "Anglo-Američani in sabotaže slovenskih partizanov na južni železnici," *Acta Histriae*, 16, no. 3, (2008), 346, 347, 353.

landing; he also agreed for the joint Yugoslav navy to come under the command of the Supreme Allied Commander in the Mediterranean Theater.⁷

Floydforce's Operation among the Yugoslav Partisans

In June 1944, the Anglo-American forces in the Adriatic were reorganized, with aviation taking the leading role. The Balkan Air Force (BAF) was formed, and the land units, which assumed a less important role through the reorganization, were combined into Land Forces Adriatic. T

The main Allied base was on the island of Vis, but Anglo-American units also operated on other Dalmatian islands, in southern Dalmatia, and in Montenegro. On October 20th, 1944, a conference was held in Bari, Italy, between Tito's emissary, Colonel Vladimir Velebit, the commander of the Balkan Air Force, General William Elliot, and the commander of Land Forces Adriatic, Brigadier George Mark Oswald Davy. The British offered to help the Partisans prevent the withdrawal of the German forces from the Balkans, which Tito accepted. Support was to be provided by the British air force and smaller land force units.⁸

On October 24th, Tito allowed the landing of the Floydforce artillery unit, which was commanded by Brigadier Joseph Patrick O'Brien-Twohig. At the same time, Tito limited the number of British soldiers in Yugoslavia to five hundred, but these were later joined by approximately another two thousand without permission. In general, Tito agreed to Floydforce's landing in Yugoslavia but, according to Edvard Kardelj, he was aware "that these were the deciding issues determining our existence as a nation, deciding issues determining the further development of our revolution."⁹ On October 28th, Floydforce landed at Dubrovnik. It was composed of the following units: the No. 43 Royal Marine Commando, batteries from the 111th Field Regiment, and a Royal Engineers unit. Also landing at Dubrovnik were an antiaircraft unit of the Royal Airforce (RAF) and a unit of the Raiding Support Regiment. The British units quickly made contact with the 2nd Corps Partisan units, which were commanded by General Radovan Vukanović in the Dubrovnik area.¹⁰

The first major Partisan–British operation involved the destruction of German troops in the town of Risan. The town had already been reached by the German 21st Mountain Corps, which wanted to withdraw from Montenegro. It had

⁷ Dušan Biber, *Tito–Churchill, strogo tajno* (Zagreb–Belgrade: Arhiv Jugoslavije, ČGP Delo, OOUR Globus, 1981), 285–286.

⁸ The National Archives – Kew Gardens, London (TNA), War Office (WO) 204/8529, Floydforce (A Report of Mil Operations and Political Development in SE Yugoslavia during Oct–Dec. 1944 and January 1945, Feb. 26th, 1945, 2; WO 204/8484, Suggested layout of Comms for forces supporting JANL operations in Dubrovnik area, no date.

⁹ Edvard Kardelj, *Spomini: boj za priznanje in neodvisnost Jugoslavije 1944–1957* (Ljubljana, Belgrade: Državna založba Slovenije, Radnička štampa, 1980), 44.

¹⁰ TNA WO 204/1354, no date; WO 204/8485, Comd. Floydforce, Nov. 28th, 1944; 204/8529, Floydforce, Jan. 26th, 1945, 1–36; TNA WO 204/8529, Floydforce, Jan. 26th, 1945, 1–36. For more details on the operation of Floydforce and No. 43 Royal Marine Commando, see: Jenkins, William G. *Commando Subaltern at War: Royal Marine Operations in Yugoslavia and Italy, 1944–1945*. London: Greenhill Books, 1996.

only three routes available: through Kotor and Risan, through Danilovgrad and Nikšić, or via Kolašin. A special group called Finney Force was assembled on the British side. It was composed of 211 Field Battery and C Troop of No. 43 Commando. The force first scouted the area via Trebinje, Bileća, and Vilusi, ultimately reaching Podhan on October 29th, from where it had a clear view of the German targets in the town. The British and Partisan units began shelling the German units in Risan. Some German soldiers soon began to surrender to the British troops, hoping for better treatment of POWs and the wounded, but it had already been agreed that all POWs were to be handed over to the Partisans. By November 4th, the bombardment increased and there were even negotiations for a German surrender, but they failed. On November 7th, the first German fort was destroyed, followed by the second two days later. The Germans tried to send reinforcements to Risan from Kotor and Mostar, but their efforts failed because the Partisans blew up the roads that the Germans could use to supply their troops. By November 17th, the British and Partisan units gradually destroyed all the German forts at Risan, and the Germans surrendered, with forty-three dead, over seventy wounded, and 197 POWs.¹¹

The second major military campaign involving British units took place as part of the Podgorica Operation, in which the Partisan and British units tried to prevent the German retreat from Podgorica via Danilovgrad to Nikšić. The British contingent composed of a unit from the Raiding Support Regiment, a troop of No. 43 Royal Marine Commando, and No. 579 Field Company of the Royal Engineers gathered the troops and heavy artillery at Nikšić and prepared to demolish the 150-yard-long stone bridge nearby. However, this was later not necessary because the Partisans managed to enter Danilovgrad, thus preventing the Germans from retreating toward Nikšić. The German soldiers at Podgorica were thus only able to retreat along the only route left: via Kolašin. Part of the British units then moved onto Risan and Kotor, reaching Cetinje on December 9th. Just as they were preparing to continue onto Podgorica, they received an order to return all the way back to the village of Vilusi. The other part of the British units that remained at Nikšić focused on launching an artillery attack on Podgorica and the road to Bioče, which the German units used to withdraw toward Kolašin. Heavy shelling started, supported by the BAF, which lasted until December 19th, when Podgorica was freed. Soon after that, the Partisans rejected further British artillery support and, on their own, they continued to fight the German troops that had managed to break through to the Ibar Valley via Kolašin and join Army Group E. This was also the end of active intervention by British units on Yugoslav soil because, already the following month, they were ordered to leave Yugoslavia and return to Italy.¹²

The operation of the British and other Anglo-American units in Yugoslavia was also to be supported by the Fairfax air base near Zadar, now known as the Zemunik air base. The British arrived in Zadar without the Supreme Staff's approval, which aggravated Tito considerably. In addition, they suggested sending 21,000

¹¹ TNA WO 204/8485, Appreciation of the Situation, Nov. 1st, 1944, 1–2; Michael McConville, *A Small War in the Balkans* (Uckfield: The Naval & Military Press Ltd, 2007), 273–293.

¹² M. McConville, *A Small War in the Balkans*, 293–311.

pilots and support staff to the air base, which Tito did not agree to. It was only after successful negotiations with General Elliot and the main Anglo-American representative in the National Liberation Army's Supreme Staff, Brigadier Fitzroy Maclean, that the British obtained permission to send eight air force officers and twelve support staff members to the air base, of course under strict Partisan supervision. By November 11th, this number increased to sixty (or even to 3,700 according to some sources). This air base was planned to support the British air and land forces operating in Yugoslavia and the surrounding countries. British bombers could reach certain German targets in the Third Reich more easily from the Fairfax air base, which was the main British goal, but the air base never became fully operational due to Tito's opposition.¹³

Partisan Suspicions and Fears Regarding Floydforce's Operation

By the fall of 1944, Tito's mistrust in the Anglo-American Allies had only grown stronger. One of the reasons was the presence of a US intelligence mission with Mihailović, called Ranger, which Tito also protested about to Churchill. After strong protests from Tito and British interventions, evident from the correspondence between Roosevelt and Churchill, the US intelligence then left the Chetniks on November 1st, 1944, and the last US mission (i.e., the Halyard Mission), which evacuated shot-down US airmen, left the Chetnik staff on December 27th, 1944. In September 1944, Tito flew from the island of Vis to Moscow to meet with Stalin, without informing the British. On the way from Craiova, Romania, to Moscow, he was surprised to hear unconfirmed news on the radio about an Anglo-American landing in Yugoslavia and so, on September 30th, 1944, he requested that the Supreme Staff send him an urgent report on the Anglo-American landing on the Dalmatian coast and the situation in Slovenia and Croatia. The talks in Moscow also revolved around the potential Red Army intervention in Serbia, which surprised Tito. Namely, the Soviets wanted to enter Yugoslavia with their troops as soon as possible to attack southern Hungary from there and continue their campaign toward Austria. They ultimately agreed that, after the liberation of Belgrade, the Red Army would proceed to Hungary, which the Germans had occupied in March 1944.¹⁴

Churchill soon realized he had been neglecting the British influence in the Balkans and Eastern Europe, and so he also wanted to protect the British interests in Yugoslavia. In October 1944, he suggested to Stalin in Moscow that their spheres of influence in Yugoslavia be split 50:50; however, this no longer corresponded to the situation on the ground. This was followed by new negotiations between Tito and Šubašić regarding the establishment of a coalition government, which concluded with the Tito–Šubašić Agreements. The agreements specified the composition of the coalition government, and they stipulated that the government be appointed by

¹³ TNA WO 204/8475, Minutes of meeting held at Belgrade, Dec. 7th, 1944, 1–5; D. Biber, "Jugoslavanski partizani in Britanci," 82; Warren E. Kimbal, *Churchill and Roosevelt: The Complete Correspondence*, Vol. 3 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), 80; Jože Pirjevec, *Partizani* (Ljubljana: Cankarjeva založba, 2020), 601.

¹⁴ J. Pirjevec, *Partizani*, 563–580.

a council of three regents that would represent the king until a decision was reached on Yugoslavia's future system of governance. Most government members would come from the ranks of the National Liberation Movement, and the decisions made by AVNOJ would be accepted. However, Tito's mistrust in the Anglo-American Allies continued to grow. On November 19th, 1944, he requested that the Partisan navy command report how many British forces were present at Dubrovnik and who had allowed them to enter the city. He had been receiving reports of the British protecting Ustasha and Chetnik criminals, and of their seeking to undermine the Partisan authorities in Dubrovnik. This information only added fuel to the flames, which increased the tensions between the British and the Partisan movement. Tito then ordered that one division be in constant readiness to intervene in the event of an incident. He emphasized that the British units could help the Partisans if they received their prior approval. He did not allow the British to perform any independent operations without being previously approved and coordinated with the Partisans. The Floydforce Commander, Brigadier O'Brien-Twohig, also regularly reported on the Partisans obstructing the operation of British units, their constant supervision, and their shooting and abusing German POWs.¹⁵

After the successful Partisan–British engagement with the German units, news began to spread about an increasing British involvement and even a British occupation of Yugoslavia, which was also fueled by the BBC. This is why Tito ordered the 2nd Dalmatia Brigade to leave for Dubrovnik immediately to prevent any provocations from the enemy. He then ordered that all the divisions of the 8th Corps occupy the coast, and that no British unit take part in fights against the Germans and Ustasha at Lika. However, after talking with Lieutenant-Colonel Maxwell, he ordered on November 26th, 1944, that the Anglo-American artillery unit continue to operate on Yugoslav territory and that the Anglo-American patrol that the Partisans had arrested at Stolac be released immediately and the matter reported to him. On December 10th, 1944, Tito issued a new order restricting the use of the British units. The order specified that British collaboration in fights north of Podgorica and at Berane did not make sense and was harmful. He demanded that the British units be excluded from these operations and that, in doing so, the Partisans not refer to the orders from the Supreme Staff.¹⁶ Tito's restrictions on the British operation at that time must have also been influenced by the strategic military and political situation, including the military intervention against the communists in Greece that the British had started a few days earlier. In addition, Tito was worried about the situation in Italy because the new Italian government openly disagreed with the Yugoslav territorial claims. In a new order issued on January 1st, 1945, Tito insisted that the collaboration of the British artillery in operations in the direction of Mostar was not necessary; this was to be appropriately communicated to the British. Nonetheless, using Floydforce at a later point at an unspecified place was still discussed as late as January 3rd, 1945.¹⁷

¹⁵ D. Biber, "Jugoslavanski partizani in Britanci," 81; TNA WO 204/8532, PY/SG, Nov. 30th, 1944, Dec. 2nd, 1944.

¹⁶ J. Pirjevec, *Partizani*, 600; D. Biber, "Jugoslavanski partizani in Britanci," 81.

¹⁷ D. Biber, "Jugoslavanski partizani in Britanci," 81.

By all means, Floydforce's operation and a potential Anglo-American landing in Yugoslavia were also discussed at the highest level between Tito and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill in December 1944. As Churchill put it, they would land wherever they wanted, disembark whatever they wanted, and as much as they seemed necessary.¹⁸ In a dispatch sent to Tito on December 3rd, 1944, Churchill wrote that it was not clear to him how the Anglo-American Allies could achieve this without having the full liberty to send their marine, land, and air forces to any place in Yugoslavia where they could kill as many Germans as possible. He added that Tito's ambitions regarding the Yugoslav occupation of Italian territories in the northern Adriatic may have led him to view all military operations the British were launching against the Germans from the Yugoslav coast with suspicion and aversion, and that he probably did not have to point out how their mutual relations would have suffered if any of his batteries had intentionally fired at any of His Majesty's ships.¹⁹ However, Churchill's warnings did not have an impact on Tito. On December 7th, after having received Churchill's dispatch from Brigadier Maclean the evening before and after the start of the British intervention in Greece, he gave clear and firm orders to the navy staff to organize defense along the entire coast, install artillery at all strategic points, and set up a communications service. Tito expressly forbade the removal of defensive naval mines at the Bay of Kotor and other ports, and no Anglo-American soldier was allowed to land on Yugoslav territory without prior approval from and notification of the Supreme Staff. In December, two British warships, *Delhi* and *Colombo*, arrived near Split and, after receiving the sharply worded dispatch from Churchill, Tito allowed them to land on December 10th.²⁰

Tito only replied to Churchill's dispatch on December 21st, 1944. Among other things, he told him the following: "In the last paragraph of your letter you imply that I might be suspicious of your intentions regarding the landing of Anglo-American troops on Yugoslav territory or the territory that Yugoslavia is claiming for itself. I can assure you that is not true. We have no intention whatsoever to try and prejudice the peace conference decisions, and we are also confident that the position of our great Allies on this will not differ from ours. As regards the deployment of Allied troops on our territory, you surely cannot deny that it is completely natural that we want you to consult us about this as well as about any other matters concerning our territorial rights and national sovereignty."²¹

Tito favored the Soviet Allies, and hence the presence of British units in Yugoslavia increasingly bothered him. He wanted the Yugoslav Partisans to liberate Yugoslavia, without the help of the Anglo-American Allies. The Partisans and, first and foremost, the members of the Yugoslav Secret Police (OZNA) prevented the British from having contact with civilians, and there were also occasional incidents between the Partisans and the British soldiers, which caused increasing tension between the two sides.²²

¹⁸ D. Biber, *Tito–Churchill*, 375.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 384–385.

²⁰ D. Biber, "Jugoslovanski partizani in Britanci," 82, 90.

²¹ D. Biber, *Tito–Churchill*, 407–408

²² TNA WO 204/8485, Relations with JANL, Nov. 28th, 1944; Memorandum, Nov. 29th, 1944.

Conclusion

Floydforce left Yugoslavia on January 20th, 1945, after intervention from Tito, who no longer allowed British involvement in Yugoslavia's liberation. The British left the area dejected, disappointed, and angry,²³ which was also pointed out by Brigadier O'Brien-Twohig in his final report on Floydforce's activity. His criticism was primarily leveled at OZNA and the Partisans' military inactivity: "It cannot be denied that in leaving Yugoslavia, Floydforce did so with a certain sense of frustration. The Germans lived to fight on other fronts who, but for political influences would be lying dead on the soil of Montenegro, was a bitter pill to swallow. It was however fully realized that the ptzn [Partisan] actors in this drama, whilst likeable as individuals, were subject to powerful influences behind the scenes (not the least of which were the secret police of Col Nikolic) forcing them to override the dictates of their consciences, and restrict their mil actions."²⁴

At the end of January 1945, King Peter II signed a decision to transfer his powers to regency. After pressures from Moscow and London, as well as the Yalta Conference, negotiations between the government-in-exile and the National Committee for the Liberation of Yugoslavia (NKOJ) continued in February 1945 until finally a government of the Democratic Federal Yugoslavia was appointed by the regency council on March 7th. It included Tito as the prime minister and Šubašić as the foreign minister, and the AVNOJ was expanded to include members of the last prewar Yugoslav parliament that had not collaborated with the Axis powers. The provisional government was not really a coalition government; it was envisaged to pursue the program of the Unitary National Liberation Front, with the primary task of holding parliamentary elections.

Relations between the Anglo-American Allies and Tito further deteriorated toward the end of the war. On April 11th, 1945, Tito signed a friendship and mutual assistance treaty with Stalin and Molotov in Moscow, which to Churchill was a clear indication that the agreement about the Soviet Union's and United Kingdom's equal spheres of influence in Yugoslavia would not be upheld. Relations then deteriorated even further because of Istria, Trieste, and the Slovenian Littoral, where the Anglo-American and Yugoslav forces met. Yugoslavia was forced to agree to a division of the liberated territory into Anglo-American and Yugoslav zones. However, despite the Cold War having already started, the alliance survived until the end of the war.²⁵

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²³ D. Biber, "Jugoslovanski partizani in Britanci," 80; Pirjevec, *Partizani*, 601.

²⁴ WO 204/8529, Floydforce, Jan. 26th, 1945, 36; W. Jenkins, *Commando Subaltern at War*, 36.

²⁵ B. Repe, *S puško in knjigo*, 324–325.

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MISUNDERSTANDINGS REGARDING THE OPERATION OF THE BRITISH FLOYDFORCE AMONG THE YUGOSLAV PARTISANS

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Summary

In 1944, growing misunderstandings and suspicions began to appear between the Anglo-American Allies and Yugoslav Partisans, revolving around Anglo-American landings and the potential Anglo-American (non-)intervention, the status of King Peter II of Yugoslavia and the monarchy, the establishment of a Yugoslav coalition government, assessments of the situation in Serbia, and intelligence. After the successful Anglo-American landing in Normandy in June 1944 and the Anglo-

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American units advancing on the Third Reich from the west and east, the Anglo-American Allies became increasingly aware that the German units in Greece, Albania, and Yugoslavia sought to retreat north as soon as possible to build a defensive belt against the Allied units. To avoid major conflicts with the Germans in the Balkans and to already stop the Germans in Yugoslavia, the Allies began providing active support to the Yugoslav Partisans. In addition to supporting sabotage activity against German communications and sending military aid to the Yugoslav Partisans, they also planned to send certain Allied military units to assist the Partisans in fighting German units. In June 1944, the Anglo-American forces in the Adriatic were reorganized, with aviation taking the leading role. The Balkan Air Force (BAF) was formed and the land forces, whose role became less important through the reorganization, were combined into Land Forces Adriatic (LFA). The main Anglo-American base was on the island of Vis, but the Anglo-American units operated not only on Vis and other Dalmatian islands, but also on the Yugoslav mainland in southern Dalmatia and Montenegro. The plan was to only provide assistance and support to the Partisan movement, with no major Anglo-American campaign or landing whatsoever envisaged. Anglo-American operations in Yugoslavia were also planned to be supported by the Fairfax air base near Zadar, but because of opposition from Tito it never became fully operational. With prior permission from Tito, a British artillery unit called Floydforce landed in Dubrovnik on October 28th together with its protecting units, and it soon established contact with the 2nd Corps Partisan units. Together with the Partisans and supported by the BAF, Floydforce participated in several attacks on German units, including operations Risan and Podgorica. The leadership of the Partisan movement and especially its secret police, officially called the Department for People's Protection (OZNA), kept a close eye on the activities of the British units in Yugoslavia because Tito was concerned that the Greek scenario would also play out in Yugoslavia. Tito placed greater emphasis on the Soviets as allies and, first and foremost, he wanted Yugoslavia to be liberated by the Yugoslav Partisans without the help of the Anglo-American Allies. Floydforce assisted the Partisans for the last time in the Mostar and Zadar areas, after which the Partisans began to reject Anglo-American assistance. Floydforce left Yugoslavia on January 20th, 1945, together with its supporting and protection units after intervention from Tito, who no longer allowed British units to be involved in Yugoslavia's liberation.

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