

## REVIEWS

**Blaž Torkar.** *Mission Yugoslavia: The OSS and the Chetnik and Partisan Resistance Movements, 1943-1945.* Foreword by Božo Repe. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2020. vi + 185 pp. \$39.95 (pbk.). ISBN: 978-1-4766-8239-6.

Blaž Torkar offers a comprehensive, and almost encyclopedic, survey of all of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) missions that penetrated Axis occupied Yugoslavia, with a focus on occupied Slovenia. The OSS was the United States's first truly global intelligence agency, and the forerunner of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). It was involved in gathering intelligence on the U.S.'s Axis enemies, but also assisted resistance movements behind enemy lines. There have been very few studies in English on OSS activities in Yugoslavia and Slovenia. Most notable of them was Kirk Ford Jr.'s 1992 work (*OSS and the Yugoslav Resistance, 1943-1945*) that evaluated the OSS's activity among the Yugoslav resistance and questioned the commonly applied traitor-liberator trope used to describe General Draža Mihailović and his rival Josip Broz Tito. There have also been a number of autobiographical studies from former OSS agents in Yugoslavia, most significantly by Franklin Lindsay (*Beacons in the Night: With the OSS and Tito's Partisans in Wartime Yugoslavia* 1993) who traversed Nazi-occupied Slovenia alongside the Partisans in 1944. New works on the OSS in Yugoslavia have followed a predictable path, often appearing shortly after the intermittent release of new archival material. Ford Jr.'s book, for example, was based heavily upon OSS archives that were declassified in the 1980s and early 1990s. Torkar's work follows this pattern, as it is not only based upon previously opened OSS archives held at the U.S. National Archives in College Park, Maryland, as well as relevant documents on the

Special Operations Executive (SOE), the OSS's British counterpart, and other British government offices held in the National Archives in London, but it is also based upon documents concerning the OSS held in the Archives of the Republic of Slovenia. Of these, his analysis of previously unpublished documents by the Department for People's Protection (OZNA), Communist Yugoslavia's feared intelligence and security agency, reveal how OSS activities in occupied Yugoslavia were viewed as irredeemably hostile within the paranoid parallel ideological world which OZNA inhabited. Unlike most previous studies on the OSS, Torkar's language abilities have given him access to not only the intentions of the OSS and its agents, but also their reception by their Yugoslav and Slovene wartime hosts.

Torkar's work is initially organized in a chronological fashion. He offers a detailed but concise background to the creation of the OSS. For a nation that today appears obsessed about national security concerns, it is quite surprising that America's "first peacetime national intelligence agency" (11), under the leadership of William J. Donovan, was only officially established by a military order by President Roosevelt in 1942. Torkar then sketches out Donovan's dealings with Yugoslavia in the lead-up to and aftermath of the Axis invasion of April 1941, a full year before the OSS's formation. The Balkans, as Torkar makes very clear in chapter 2 (OSS in North Africa and the Mediterranean), was the primary responsibility of Britain and its SOE intelligence agency, with the U.S. and the OSS holding primacy over British intelligence in other regions of the world, especially in Japanese-occupied China and South-East Asia. Indeed, it was only in mid-1944 that the US was allowed to send independent OSS missions to Yugoslavia, having been part of and led by SOE missions until then. The OSS Yugoslav Section also crept closer to Yugoslavia geographically; by the fall of 1943 the section was able to relocate from Cairo to the Italian port city of Bari after the Allies had managed to liberate the region. Of particular interest is Torkar's fascinating reconstruction of the OSS practice of recruiting Yugoslavs held as Italian prisoners of war and training them to become OSS agents.

The next two chapters of Torkar's work contains a concise directory of OSS missions in Yugoslavia, with chapter 3 focusing on OSS missions to the Chetniks and chapter 4 highlighting OSS missions to the Partisans. Torkar's focus is clearly on the OSS relationship with the Partisans, as chapter 4 accounts for one-third of the length of his book. Many OSS reports claimed that the Chetniks were not the traitorous collaborators that the Partisans painted them as, and that they were a more formidable force than was given credit, albeit passive. However, in the final analysis, for "British and American analysts the most important criterion remained which group was, or appeared to be, killing the most Germans" (39). And according to this criterion, it was the Partisans. Torkar's analysis of OSS missions operating with the Partisans emphasizes how the ideological bearing of particular OSS agents influenced their reporting. Captain George Wuchinich, a second-

generation American of Serbian parents from Pittsburgh and the leader of the OSS's Alum and Amazon missions, which deployed to the Partisans in the fall of 1943, was described by Lindsay as a "resolute communist" (62). His reporting clearly revealed an enthusiasm for the Partisans and he was accordingly given more operational freedom by the Partisans compared to other, less agreeable OSS agents. Wuchinich's pronouncements that Slovenia would become a democracy after the war and that the Communists would not "be extremists but prudent and realistic" (61), did not bear him out. Other OSS mission reports were more objective, noting the tight supervision the Partisans exercised over the OSS, which included prohibiting the OSS from independent intelligence gathering actions. The impression of many missions was that the Partisans were not as active against the Germans as they claimed, investing far more energy in preparations to eliminate their internal domestic enemies after the war. Lieutenant John Hamilton of the 1944 Hacienda mission to Croatia, who initially admired the Partisans, soured in his impressions as he spent more time in theatre. He concluded that Partisan liberated territory was "pure bunkum" (47), claiming it was only liberated because the Germans did not bother to use it. Major Lindsay's 1944 OSS Cuckold Mission to the Partisans in Styria (Štajerska) produced, according to Torkar, "highly esteemed" (67) intelligence. Lindsay, too, noted Partisan obstruction of Allied intelligence gathering, as well as insufficiently aggressive Partisan actions against the Germans in light of the considerable supplies they received from the Allies. He also observed that the Partisans had attempted to conceal the strength of the Slovenian anti-Communist camp to the OSS, "because they were aware that their post-war situation was not very stable" (72).

Chapter 5 offers a much-needed review of OSS and Anglo-American attempts to establish an anti-Nazi resistance movement in Austria. As in the previous two chapters, Torkar subdivides this chapter according to the various OSS missions sent to infiltrate Austria (many via Slovenia). All of the missions to penetrate Austria were unsuccessful, with some ending disastrously. OZNA did its best to scuttle them, as the agency feared any Allied-dependent parallel resistance movements in Austria that were untethered from Partisan influence, especially since Tito had post-war claims on Slovene-populated regions of southern Carinthia. Instead of concluding his mission-by-mission survey in chapter 5, which ends in Austria in the spring of 1945, Torkar's very short four-page chapter 6 abruptly jumps back in time to early 1944, and equally abruptly shifts geographic focus in order to briefly summarize OSS sabotage activities with the Partisans on the Dalmatian islands.

Torkar's narrative somewhat loses its footing in chapters 7 through 9, with two of them—chapter 8 (Vladimir Vauhnik and Connections with OSS) and chapter 9 (Allen Dulles and Connections with Yugoslavia)—composed of only three and two pages respectively. Chapter 7 (Slovenians in

the U.S. and Their Cooperation with OSS) begins promisingly, as it summarizes the activities of Slovene-Americans during the war, and the support they offered their homeland. Torkar comments on a number of relevant organizations of Slovene Americans—the Slovenian Section of the Yugoslav Auxiliary Committee, the American-Slovenian Catholic Union, and the Slovenian-American National Council, founded in 1942—and their role in fundraising for the homeland and advocating for the establishment of an ethnically united Slovenia at war's end. As in Slovenia, the emergence of the Partisans split Slovene-Americans between those who did and those who did not support the Partisans. The OSS and its Foreign Nationalities Branch monitored the activities of Slovene expats in the US, in part through information provided by their contacts within the Slovene-American immigrant community. Torkar then offers brief case studies of five Slovenes in the U.S. (Ivan Marija Čok, Louis Adamič, Franc Snoj, Ily Bratina, and Andrej Kobal) who cooperated with the OSS either in the U.S. or its overseas bases. The rationale behind focusing on only these five is never made clear, and as a result they appear a rather motley crew. Adamič, for example, immigrated to the U.S. in 1913 and was by the 1940s already a famous Slovene-American writer who had dined at the White House, while Ily Bratina, who only receives a brief two paragraph description, worked as a relatively lowly administrative assistant in the OSS's Yugoslav Section in Bari.

Chapter 10 is also very short, allowing for a mere peek into the OZNA archives. OZNA's analysis of Anglo-American missions operating in Yugoslavia was, in Torkar's estimation, "rather superficial and simplified" (140). One issue, which Torkar only hints at in chapter 10 and again in his conclusion, was the suspicion with which OZNA viewed Yugoslav-born agents who joined Anglo-American missions, even though some of them had joined with the permission of the Partisans. This distrust resulted in some of these agents, Torkar ominously notes, "suffer[ing] a tragic fate after the war" (157). Torkar's last chapter, like his opening one, widens the historical view once again, as he details the many visions that the OSS's Research and Analysis Branch received, mostly from émigré politicians, for what Slovenia should look like after the war. As the war drew to a close, the crisis over the Yugoslav border with Austria and especially with Italy consumed the attention of the OSS's Yugoslav Section. The OSS's subordinate role to British intelligence in the Balkans became apparent in 1945, as the OSS had to virtually establish from scratch a presence in the rapidly evolving situation in Trieste.

Torkar's conclusion once again reminds readers that despite the sacrifices and minor victories by the OSS in Yugoslavia, which included gathering important information on the Axis powers, rescuing Allied airmen, and organizing military aid to the Partisans, the OSS played only a "supporting role in the drama of events in Yugoslavia" (155). As for the many

mission reports about occupied Yugoslavia that were written by OSS agents and which Torkar scrupulously examines throughout his work, their conclusions did not play a critical role in the Allied decision to switch their support from Mihailović to Tito in late 1943. Rather, as Torkar notes, it was decoded German reports from the Balkans that played the decisive role in shifting Allied policy. Roosevelt's "main concern with the Balkans throughout the war"—and this is also apparent in U.S. indifference to the Tito regime's post-war summary executions of their opponents—"was how best to stay out" (155).

Torkar's understandable attempt to retain the historical integrity of each OSS mission by organizing his study mostly by mission rather than by an overall chronological framework leads to frequent jumping back and forth in time and across space. What gets lost in this approach is a better overall picture in the reader's mind that a number of OSS and SOE missions in occupied Yugoslavia were taking place at the same time. On the other hand, a more conventional year-by-year survey of the OSS in Yugoslavia would risk diluting the historical nuances and context of each mission. What is certain is that Blaž Torkar's work should be required reading for students and scholars interested in Anglo-American intelligence operations in occupied Yugoslavia, as well as for anyone interested more generally in OSS's global activities during WW II. As a corollary, Torkar's book also offers fascinating insights into conditions in occupied Yugoslavia, and especially the challenges and privations ordinary Partisans and OSS agents endured on a daily basis. Torkar allows the archives to speak, and the result is a book rich in historical details.

*Gregor Kranjc, Brock University*

**John P. Enyeart.** *Death to Fascism: Louis Adamic's Fight for Democracy.* Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2019. xii + 216 pp. \$99 (hardcover) ISBN 978-0-252-04250-8, \$25 (pbk.) 978-0-252-08432-4, \$19.95 (e-book) 978-0-252-05135-7.

John P. Enyeart, professor and chair of the Department of History at Bucknell University, claims that Louis Adamic's work is still relevant in the year 2020. His monograph aims to rediscover Adamic's work and claims that his novels speak volumes about the inherent fascist tendencies in imperialist (in Adamic's view) modern societies and offer a better understanding of Adamic's background and his hybrid identity.

Adamic was born in the Habsburg Monarchy in the countryside of what is now Slovenia. His identity as an intellectual was formed in the United