

The Red Army in Yugoslavia, 1944–1945

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The Red Army's Second and Third Ukrainian Fronts (army groups) fought in Romania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Hungary and Austria during the last year and a half of the Second World War. The Soviet troops from these two fronts wreaked havoc on the civilian population in countries which fought against the Soviet Union, raping hundreds of thousands of women in each of them. In contrast, the number of women victimized by the Red Army in Yugoslavia was in the thousands rather than the hundreds of thousands.¹ While the Red Army's conduct in Yugoslavia, was still violent, it nonetheless had more in common with the behavior of other contemporary allied militaries than its well-known rampage in Germany.²

Practically all literature on the Red Army's encounter with Europe focuses on Germany and to a lesser degree on other enemy countries, marginalizing a significant part of the Soviet war experience. Yugoslavia was not an exception: it was the primary example of the Soviet encounter with a friendly country. The reception of the Red Army and its conduct was similar in Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia.³ The primary purpose of this article is to explain why tens of

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1. See this article's section *Circumstantial Factors* for a detailed discussion of the magnitude of sexual violence.

2. According to one estimate, Americans raped 17,080 women in all of western Europe including Germany, while a different source maintains that Americans subjected 190,000 German women to sexual violence. For a lower figure see J. Robert Lilly, *Taken by Force: Rape and American GIs in Europe during World War II* (Basingstoke, Eng., 2007), 11; for a higher figure see Miriam Gebhardt, *Als die Soldaten kamen. Die Vergewaltigung deutscher Frauen am Ende des Zweiten Weltkriegs* (Munich, 2015), 38. The number of rapes that the Americans perpetrated in France was likely in thousands, since according to one estimate, the Americans victimized 208 women in the department of Manche, discussed by Olivier Wieviorka, *Normandy: the Landings to the Liberation of Paris* (Cambridge, Mass., 2008), 329. The French and British behaviour in western European countries seems to have been even worse; see Antony Beevor, *The Fall of Berlin 1945* (New York, 2002), 192–93.

3. For Czechoslovakia see Rachel Applebaum, "Friends Forged through War? Memories of the Soviet Liberation of Czechoslovakia" (paper, Association for Slavic, East European, & Eurasian Studies, San Antonio, 2014); Rachel Applebaum, "The Friendship Project: Socialist Internationalism in the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia in the 1950s and 1960s," *Slavic Review* 74, no.3 (Fall 2015): 487–88; Aleksej Timofejev, *Rusi i drugi svetski*

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thousands of troops who perpetrated atrocities in enemy countries acted with more restraint in Yugoslavia, while also illuminating the motives of thousands of their comrades who murdered, raped and plundered. The second aim is to add to our knowledge of the Soviet military by focusing on its behavior and experiences in an understudied environment—that of a friendly country.

Political scientist Elisabeth Jean Wood argued that sexual violence is not an inevitable outcome of wars. She pointed out that in some armed conflicts sexual violence was remarkably absent, while in others it was systematic.⁴ The Red Army's conduct in Yugoslavia complicates the picture even further, as it shows that an army known for rampaging can behave differently under correct leadership policies and in a friendly national environment. As Red Army Major Boris Slutskii noted, the widespread sympathy for Yugoslavs led the Red Army collective to condemn rapists in its ranks.⁵ It is impossible to explain the greater Soviet restraint shown in the country without considering this overall atmosphere, which was less conducive to the proliferation of violence towards allied and friendly Yugoslavs than in enemy countries.

The pro-Yugoslav atmosphere within the Red Army was forged by a confluence of factors from above and below.⁶ The first section of the article discusses the magnitude of the sexual violence which the Second and Third Ukrainian Fronts committed in different countries. It also examines circumstantial factors, such as the number of troops in each country and the duration of their stay, in order to establish that these objective factors were not decisive in determining the troops' conduct. Second, it explores the Red Army's propaganda about Yugoslavia to assess the message which the frontline troops received about the country. Third, it discusses the Soviet high command's disciplinary policies, and the role that Yugoslav political and military leaders had in urging Soviet commanders to rein in their troops. Fourth, it analyzes the Soviet troops' attitudes toward the local population, which are central to explaining their behavior. Fifth, the Red Army committed too many rapes and other crimes to brush them off as isolated incidents, and this section seeks to explain the reasons for the violence which the Soviets perpetrated.

Three hundred thousand Red Army soldiers and officers entered Yugo-

rat u Jugoslaviji: Uticaj SSSR-a i ruskih emigranata na događaje u Jugoslaviji 1941–1945 (Belgrade, 2011), 225–26. For Bulgaria see this article's section: Circumstantial Factors.

4. Elisabeth Jean Wood, "Variation in Sexual Violence during War," *Politics & Society* 34, no. 3 (September 2006): 307.

5. Boris Slutskii, *Zapiski o voine: Stikhotvoreniia i ballady* (St. Petersburg, 2000), 127.

6. This article is based on the documents from the Red Army's depository, and the archive of the NKVD Army for the Protection of the Rear of the Red Army (The NKVD Army), which enforced discipline in the military's rear. The NKVD Army files are held in Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Voennyi Arkhiv (RGVA), while the Red Army collection is in Tsentral'nyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony Rossiiskoi Federatsii (TsAMO). The latter is usually inaccessible to foreigners, but I obtained a large number of documents from a Russian colleague while others were published in documentary collections. Moreover, this paper relies on Yugoslav military (Vojni Arhiv Srbije, VA) and party archives (Arhiv Jugoslavije, AJ), as well as the regional archives (Istorijiski Arhiv Subotice, IAS) and (Zaječar, IAZ). The article also uses personal sources such as diaries, letters, memoirs and interviews. The author conducted twenty-two interviews in Serbia with former Partisans and civilians of various political persuasions. These are used occasionally to illuminate Yugoslav encounters with Soviet soldiers.

slavia from Romania and Bulgaria in late September.⁷ Most of them had left Yugoslavia during December, although tens of thousands of Soviet soldiers continued to linger in the country afterwards, assisting the Yugoslav effort against Germans on the Srem Front, recuperating in hospitals in Northern Yugoslavia, or marching across northern Serbia on their way from central Europe to Romania. The vast majority of Soviet soldiers fought only in Serbia and headed north into Hungary instead of moving further west into Bosnia and Croatia. The Yugoslav communists deployed forty thousand fighters of the National Liberation Army of Yugoslavia (Partisans) in the battle for Serbia.⁸ The events described in this article occurred almost entirely on the territory of present-day Serbia, however, I tend to use the term Yugoslavs to describe the local population and Partisans.⁹

Circumstantial Factors

Estimating instances of sexual violence is notoriously difficult, while comparing figures from different scholars about the number of victims in various countries is even more challenging, since scholars use different methods to make their calculations. In Yugoslavia, based on two different citations of the official number of reported rapes that the Yugoslav authorities received, it can be estimated that during its stay in the country the Red Army victimized between 2,420 and 24,380 women.¹⁰ Regardless of which one of these two figures is closer to the truth, these instances of sexual violence did not enter Yugoslavs' social psychology, to borrow historian Norman Naimark's term to describe the widespread fear of rapes in Germany.¹¹ Like in Germany,

7. G. F. Krivosheev, ed., *Rossia i SSSR v voinakh XX veka: Poteri vooruzhennykh sil; staticheskoe issledovanie* (Moscow, 2001), 300.

8. Timofejev, *Rusi*, 188.

9. I employ the term Yugoslavs rather than Serbs because not all of the civilians and especially not all of the Partisans in Serbia were ethnic Serbs, while many who were would have identified as Yugoslavs. Furthermore, Serbs were citizens of Yugoslavia, so the term Yugoslavs is formally accurate in describing them.

10. According to Milovan Đilas, a leading Yugoslav communist, the Soviet troops committed 121 rapes in Yugoslavia, of which 111 were murder-rapes, as well as 1,204 cases of looting with assault, see Milovan Đilas, *Conversations with Stalin* (New York, 1962), 89. Vladimir Dedijer, an important Yugoslav official and Tito's official biographer, claimed that Soviet troops committed 1,219 rapes, 111 murders, and 1,204 robberies accompanied with physical violence, Vladimir Dedijer, ed., *Josip Broz Tito: Prilozi za Biografiju* (Zagreb, 1953), 441–43. Dedijer's document was subsequently added to Tito's files which were meant to prepare him for his meeting with Nikita Khrushchev in 1956, AJ KPR I-3-a 2/4 "Dokumenta o odnosima FNRJ-SSSR. Postupci sovjetskih vojnika prema narodu i imovini u FNRJ: prilog br30." According to both Đilas and Dedijer, their figures were based on reported cases. Robert Lilly, in his study of the sexual violence perpetrated by the American troops in Europe, multiplied reported cases of rape by twenty times to get at the more accurate number of actual rapes, Lilly, *Taken by Force*, 12. I use Lilly's formula to provide my estimate of the number of rapes committed by the Red Army in Yugoslavia based on Đilas' and Dedijer's figures.

11. Norman M. Naimark, *The Russians in Germany: A History of the Soviet Zone of Occupation, 1945–49* (Cambridge, Mass., 1995), 133.

rapes came to dominate the lives of Hungarians and Austrians during this period.¹²

The situation was different in Yugoslavia. Only a minority of people that I interviewed told me that they or women in their lives were afraid of going outside their homes because they feared the Red Army.¹³ Similarly, there is no evidence that Yugoslav women concealed their gender by dressing as men or that they tried to avoid the Soviet troops' unwanted attention by smearing their faces with dirt or jam, as women in enemy countries were forced to do.¹⁴ This is not to suggest that Yugoslavs were not generally aware that the Red Army committed many rapes. However, available evidence strongly suggests that Yugoslavs feared the Red Army far less than Austrians, Hungarians and Romanians.

The Second and Third Ukrainian Fronts' conduct was much worse in Axis countries, with the exception of Bulgaria. One scholar characterized the Red Army's behavior there, perhaps too optimistically, as "exemplary."¹⁵ Soviet attitudes towards Bulgarians and Yugoslavs were shaped by similar factors. Although Sofia allied itself with Germany, it never waged war against the Soviet Union. Bulgarians were also traditionally pro-Russian, and they generally greeted the Red Army joyfully.¹⁶ The Soviet soldiers and officers had very positive views of Bulgarians, while their most enduring impression was that Bulgarians would warmly address them as "bratushky" (brothers).¹⁷ Thus, the Red Army's experience in Bulgaria and Yugoslavia were quite similar.

The Soviet troops' conduct in Romania can be most easily contrasted with their behavior in Yugoslavia because in the former the old local and military authorities continued to exist, allowing them to record the scale of the sexual violence. Based on the received reports of sexual violence, it can be estimated that the Soviet troops raped more than 355,200 women from 14 September to

12. For Hungary see Peter Kenez, *Hungary from the Nazis to the Soviets: The Establishment of the Communist Regime in Hungary, 1944–1948* (Cambridge, Eng., 2006), 41–42. For Austria see Jill Lewis, *Workers and Politics in Occupied Austria, 1945–1955* (Manchester, 2007), 40.

13. Interview, Anonymous (woman), April 17, 2012, Negotin; Interview, Božidar Stojanović, 24 April 2012, Negotin; Interview, Bratislav Filipović, March 13 2012, Belgrade.

14. For Romanian women see Blavatnik Archive (BA), "Lichnyi Dnevnik" 26.8.1944–31.5.1945. El'kinson Pavel Abramovich, 3. For Hungarian women see Andrea Petö, "Memory and the narrative of rape in Budapest and Vienna in 1945" in Richard Bessel and Dirk Schumann eds., *Life After Death: Approaches to a Cultural and Social History of Europe During the 1940s and 1950s* (Cambridge, Eng., 2003), 139. For Austrian women see Lewis, *Workers and Politics*, 69.

15. Naimark, *The Russians*, 70.

16. TsAMO, f. 413 (57A), op. 10372, d. 392, ll. 6–7 and P. A. Zhilin et al. eds., *Osvoboditel'naia missiia sovetskikh vooruzhennykh sil v Evrope vo vtoroi mirovoi voine: dokumenty i materialy* (Moscow, 1985), 106.

17. N. I. Zav'ialov, *Pod zvezdami balkanskimi* (Kiev, 1987), 52; BA, El'kinson, "dnevnik," 5; B. D. Presniakov, *Pod zvezdami balkanskimi* (Moscow, 1985), 21; A. P. Romenskii, ed., *Glazami i serdtsem soldata* (Moscow, 1979), 118; V. S. Vylitok, *Pod zvezdami balkanskimi* (Chişinau, 1984), 28.

19 October 1944.¹⁸ This staggering figure does not include the number of rapes which the Soviets committed in small part of Romania that they occupied in the spring of 1944. It also omits the sexual violence which the Red Army perpetrated between August 29 and September 14 when they overran most of the country, as well as the period after October 19 when the frontlines moved into Hungary proper and Yugoslavia but the Soviets continued to occupy Romania and inflict violence on a smaller scale. Taking these into account, it can be conservatively estimated that the Red Army raped at least half a million women in Romania.

There are no sources about reported instances of rape in Hungary and Austria, probably because the Red Army conquered these two countries and old municipal authorities escaped prior to the Soviet arrival. Unlike in Yugoslavia, however, there were no local communists ready to immediately set up their own authority, which could have recorded the magnitude of the Soviet rampage. The estimates for the number of rapes in Hungary vary greatly, from fifty thousand to eight hundred thousand.¹⁹ The lower estimates are probably inaccurate, because it is recognized by both contemporary Soviet sources and subsequently by scholars that Soviet conduct in Hungary was worse than in Romania.²⁰

The Red Army's rampage in Austria seems to have been more intense than in Hungary. According to one estimate, in Vienna alone, the Red Army victimized between seventy and one hundred thousand women, which is substantially more than the highest estimates for Budapest of fifty thousand victimized women.²¹ Slutskii, who was attuned to Soviet behavior and who was instructed by his superiors to investigate a breakout of mass rapes in Austria

18. Romanian authorities reported that 231 women were raped in the county of Arad in western Romania from 14 September to 5 October. They also noted that 213 women were victimized from 10 October to 19 October in the county of Iași. According to the report, the situation was similar in Romania's other forty counties. If we project the figures from the counties of Arad and Iași to Romania's other counties, then it could be concluded that Romanian authorities received complaints from 17,760 women that they were raped, Constantin Hlihor and Ioan Scurtu, *The Red Army in Romania* (Iași, 2000), 146–47. Applying Lilly's formula, it can be estimated that in just thirty-five days the Red Army victimized 355,200 Romanian women. I claim that the Soviets raped more than 355,200 women because there is no data for the period of October 6–9.

19. Andrea Pető, using medical and abortion records, claimed that the Soviet troops raped between fifty and two hundred thousand Hungarian women: Andrea Pető, "Atvonnulo hadszereg, maradando trauma. Az 1945-os budapesti nemi eroszak esetek emlekezete," *Tdrtenelmi Szemle* 41 (1999): 86, cited in Martvin Mevius, *Agents of Moscow: The Hungarian Communist Party and the Origins of Socialist Patriotism 1941–1953* (Oxford, 2005), 62. Krisztián Ungváry, based on the Wehrmacht's investigations into Soviet conduct following one of the Axis' counteroffensives in Hungary, maintained that in many towns the Soviet troops raped between ten and fifteen percent of the female population, Krisztián Ungváry, *The Siege of Budapest: One Hundred Days in World War II*, trans. Ladislaus Löb (New Haven, 2005), 354. According to historian Horvath Attila, the Soviets raped up to 20 percent of the female population or 800,000 Hungarian women, see the film *Silenced Shame*. Directed by Fruzsina Skrabski. Budapest, 2013.

20. Slutskii, *Zapiski*, 127 and Catherine Merridale, *Ivan's War: Life and Death in the Red Army, 1939–1945* (New York, 2006), 264.

21. For Vienna see Günter Bischof, *Austria in the First Cold War, 1945–55: The Leverage of the Weak* (Basingstoke, 1999), 33. For Budapest see James Mark, "Remembering Rape:

agreed that the Third Ukrainian Front committed the largest number of rapes in Austria.²² It is important to note that none of the figures cited above should be taken at face value, since they are all estimates. However, when all of the information is taken together, the numbers undoubtedly reveal that the Red Army behaved far more savagely in Romania, Hungary and Austria than in Yugoslavia.

Several circumstantial factors partially explained the differences in the scale of the sexual violence which the Red Army perpetrated. The Soviet command deployed 300,000 troops in Yugoslavia during the height of military operations. In contrast it had around a million troops in Romania.²³ This author estimates that the Soviet forces in Hungary numbered as many as 900,000 soldiers and officers.²⁴ At the height of the military operations in Austria, the Red Army deployed 638,200 soldiers and officers.²⁵ Soviet forces suffered 7,889 deaths in Yugoslavia versus 69,000 in Romania, 140,000 in Hungary and 26,000 in Austria.²⁶ The main Soviet military operations in Yugoslavia lasted for three months, after which the majority of frontline troops left the country. The fighting in parts of Romania started in March while the Soviets quickly overran the larger part of the country in September. In Hungary and Austria the active frontal operations lasted six months and a month and a half respectively.²⁷ Moreover, the Red Army stayed in larger numbers in enemy countries to carry out occupational duties after the war, while the Soviets never formally occupied Yugoslavia.

Thus, on the one hand, there were approximately between two and three times as many Soviet troops to rampage in enemy countries as compared to

Divided Social Memory and the Red Army in Hungary 1944–1945," *Past & Present* 188, no. 1 (August 2005): 134.

22. Slutskii, *Zapiski*, 127.

23. On the eve of the Iași-Chișinau Operation, which led to Soviet entry into the Balkans, the Second and Third Ukrainian Fronts had 1,314,200 troops, according to Krivosheev, ed., *Rossii i SSSR*, 297. However, immediately after the operation, on August 29, the general-staff in Moscow permanently recalled the Fifty-second and the Fifth Shock Armies from the Balkans, thereby diminishing the Red Army's manpower to around one million troops.

24. The Second Ukrainian Front had 580,000 troops in Hungary in late October, according to Kamen Nevenkin, *Take Budapest: The Struggle for Hungary, Autumn 1944* (Stroud, 2012), 57. The forces of the Third Ukrainian Front and Danube Military Flotilla, in Yugoslavia at this time, numbered 206,500 troops, again see Krivosheev, ed., *Rossii i SSSR*, 297. These units reached Hungary in December, bringing the total number of troops to 791,500. In addition, the Third Ukrainian Front was reinforced by the Fourth Guards Army in late November, RGVA, f. 32900, op. 1, d. 183, ll. 218–21. Thus, the total number of Soviet troops in Hungary was around 900,000.

25. Krivosheev, ed, *Rossii i SSSR*, 306.

26. For Yugoslavia see V.A. Zolotarev, et al. eds., *Velikaia Otechestvennaia voina 1941–1945 godov: v dvenadtsati tomakh*, vol. 3, *Krasnaia Armii v stranakh tsentral'noi, severnoi Evropy i na balkanakh: dokumenty i materialy 1944–1945* (Moscow, 2000), 184. For Romania see, *Ibid.*, 15. For Hungary see, *Ibid.*, 291. For Austria see, *Ibid.*, 602.

27. For Romania see TsA FSB Rossii, document reproduced in S. V. Stepashin et al. eds., *Organy Gosudarstvennoi Bezopasnosti SSSR v Velikoi Otechestvennoi Voine: Sbornik Dokumentov*, Tom 5, kniga 1 *Vpered na Zapad. 1 ianvaria–30 iunia 1944 goda*, (Moscow, 2007), 307. For Hungary see Zolotarev, et al. eds., *Krasnaia Armii*, 290. For Austria see *Ibid.*, 601.

Yugoslavia. In these countries, the fighting was more ferocious, leading to a higher degree of brutalization of the troops. On the other hand, active combat operations lasted longer in Yugoslavia than in Austria, but less than in Hungary. Regardless, none of these factors can explain the vast discrepancy in Soviet conduct. Similarly, circumstantial factors cannot explain why the Soviet rampage was worse in Austria, where the fighting was shorter and with less casualties than in Hungary or Romania. Clearly, conditions provide some explanation for why Soviet soldiers treated civilians in a certain way, but alone, they do not explain the entire story.

Propaganda

Virtually all historians agree that the Red Army's anti-German propaganda greatly inflamed popular hatred of Germans, thereby contributing significantly to the Red Army's atrocities once it reached enemy territories. One historian, notably, borrowed the famed author Mikhail Shokholov's term "school of hate" to describe the Kremlin's anti-German indoctrination.²⁸ Soviet propaganda about Yugoslavia drastically diverged from this narrative, as its goal was to forge positive views of the country and its people. Its most prominent themes were Pan-Slavism, Yugoslav suffering during the occupation, and the supposedly heroic Partisan resistance to the occupiers. Soviet propaganda persistently appealed to the troops to treat civilians correctly. The Red Army agitators from political departments developed these themes in thousands of lectures, meetings, pamphlets and newspaper articles, significantly contributing to the creation of pro-Yugoslav attitudes among the Red Army's frontline soldiers and officers.

Soviet propagandists delivered lectures to the rank and file which were, indicatively, titled: "Germans are the sworn enemies of Russian and all Slavic people. We will catch up to the fascist beast in its lair" and "the heroic fight of the Yugoslav people for their independence."²⁹ The Red Army's propaganda also utilized the fact that Partisans and Soviets fought shoulder to shoulder to create a sense of camaraderie with Yugoslavs. The Third Ukrainian Front newspaper *Sovetskii Voin* (Soviet Warrior) proclaimed: "the battle for Belgrade and the liberation of Yugoslavia from the fascist tyranny strengthened even more the friendship and brotherhood of the two heroic Slavic people."³⁰ The pan-Slavic theme in propaganda was obviously meant to encourage Soviet soldiers to view the Yugoslavs as a brotherly nation.

The Soviet indoctrination campaign also called attention to German war crimes against Yugoslav civilians to drum up hate for Germans among the troops. Soviet propagandists organized so-called meetings of revenge, where they would rile up the troops by telling them about the atrocities committed by Germans against Yugoslav civilians and Partisans. Afterwards, individu-

28. Jeffrey Burds, "Sexual Violence in Europe in World War II, 1939–1945," *Politics & Society* 37 (March 2009): 47.

29. For "Germans are" see TsAMO, f. 1512, op. 1, d. 91, l. 193. For the "Heroic fight" see TsAMO, f. 96 (68sk), op. 1, d. 242, l. 196.

30. VA, f. NOVJ, k. 96, f. 5, d. 1, l. 6, originally from TsAMO, f. 243, op. 250987, d. 16, no page number.

als or entire units would swear to give up their lives if necessary to take revenge against the Germans.³¹ In another instance, military newspaper *Zvezda Sovetov* (Soviet Star) discussed German war crimes against Yugoslav fighters and civilians. After the publication of these documents, political departments of all units, which were responsible for morale and propaganda, organized assemblies at which Soviet troops swore to destroy Germans and behave honorably on the soil of the Yugoslav people.³² In this way, propaganda stressed the common suffering of Yugoslavs and Soviets at the hands of the same enemy, encouraging troops to identify with civilian victims of Nazi terror.

The Red Army's propaganda also consistently implored the troops to treat Yugoslavs correctly and threatened severe punishments if they failed to heed the orders. Marshal Tolbukhin, the commander of the Third Ukrainian Front, saw to it that as they entered the country, all his soldiers were instructed to "be merciless towards marauders, rapists and the violators of order and discipline! Accept the love and respect of the Yugoslav people, whom you liberated. Respect their traditions, laws and families!"³³ Thus, Tolbukhin practically ordered the troops to take the initiative to punish the rapists. Thereafter, Soviet propagandists kept on reminding the troops to treat the civilians properly.³⁴ These threats were not in vain. When a soldier was executed for raping a woman, while another was given a ten year-sentence in the labor camps, the high command turned this into a teachable moment for the troops. It ordered that the rapists' fate be read out to all soldiers of the Fifty-Seventh army, with a warning that "atrocities on the territory of Yugoslavia in the future will be cruelly punished."³⁵ Thus, Soviet propaganda instructed the troops to behave properly towards Yugoslav civilians, even threatening them with strong punishments. When rapists were punished, other troops were informed of the harsh sentences to dissuade others from committing similar offences.

When a Red Army unit would enter Yugoslavia for the second time, after being on the territory of enemy countries, the soldiers were reminded of how they were supposed to treat the Yugoslavs. When the 233rd Division entered the Croatian part of Yugoslavia from Hungary in late December 1944, Soviet propagandists discussed with the rank and file "how soldiers of the Red Army should behave on the territory of a brotherly country."³⁶ In order to drive the point across that rapes and robberies were impermissible, officers from the widely feared and powerful counter-intelligence agency (SMERSH) participated in the propaganda campaign.³⁷ The Soviet command clearly employed SMERSH to scare the soldiers into behaving correctly.

Soviet propaganda practically always omitted information which could

31. Zav'ialov, *Pod zvezdami*, 83; TsAMO, f. 1512 (233sd), op. 1, d. 93, ll. 197–98.

32. S. S. Biriuzov and Rade Hamović eds., *Beogradska Operacija* (Belgrade, 1964), 124.

33. TsAMO f. 234, op. 2969, d. 28, ll. 43–44, document reproduced in I.V. Bukharin and S. Stoianovich, eds., *Otnosheniia Rossii (SSSR) s Iugoslaviei, 1941–1945gg: Dokumenty i materialy* (Moscow, 1998), 322–24.

34. TsAMO, f. 1512, op. 1, d. 91, l. 193.

35. TsAMO, f. 1512 (233sd), op. 1, d. 34, l. 150.

36. TsAMO, f. 1512 (233sd), op. 1, d. 93, l. 264.

37. *Ibid.*

bring into question the heroic image of the Yugoslav people that the high command was trying to present to frontline troops. There is no evidence that Soviet propaganda as much as hinted at the genocides that various belligerents of the Yugoslav civil wars perpetrated against different ethnic groups. Likewise, it never mentioned Yugoslav (Ustaša) participation as German allies on the Eastern Front in the Soviet Union. Although some soldiers and especially officers were aware that they operated in Serbian parts of Yugoslavia, propaganda always spoke of Yugoslavs and never of Serbs, to maintain the image of the country's unity. It seems that the only exception was one of Tolbukhin's instructions to the troops in which he briefly mentioned that the main Yugoslav collaborators and their formations were enemies of the people who assisted the Germans in their struggle against the Partisans.³⁸ Obviously, Soviet propaganda presented a grossly simplistic picture of wartime Yugoslavia with the intention of propping up its narrative of the heroic Yugoslavs.

The Red Army's Disciplinary Policies

According to one specialist on wartime rape, military leaderships' opposition to the sexual violence could have a decisive factor in limiting its scale, as long as the hierarchy was sufficiently strong to impose its will on the troops.³⁹ Most historians are dismissive of the Red Army command's attempts to rein in their troops in enemy countries, while some even suggested or implied that it was Soviet policy to allow the looting and mistreatment of civilians.⁴⁰ Although these claims are dubious, since they are grounded in non-Soviet sources, they are indicative of the officers' often lax attitudes towards their troops who looted and raped. In Yugoslavia, however, Soviet political and military leaderships, consistent with the propaganda campaign which they launched, were determined to root out rapes, although they lacked the capacity to fully control the troops' behavior.

It is important to note that the Red Army's laws remained consistent throughout 1944 and 1945. Soviet military tribunals and commanders operated under the same regulations, whether they were in the Soviet Union, in friendly, or in enemy countries. There is also no evidence that the Soviet high command increased the number of officers who staffed the Red Army's control mechanisms in order to make them more efficient. Instead, the disciplinary institutions operated differently in Yugoslavia for two reasons. First, the Yugoslav leadership utilized their close links with Moscow and Soviet command to complain about the Red Army's transgressions, which enabled the commanders to undertake specific measures to curb outbreaks of violence. Second, officers who staffed disciplinary institutions were sympathetic towards the civilians and it is logical that they were more likely to protect Yugoslavs from harm than enemy civilians.

38. TsAMO f. 234, op. 2969, d. 28, ll. 43–44, document reproduced in Bukharin and Stoianovich, eds., *Otnosheniia*, 322.

39. Elizabeth Jean Wood, "Armed Groups and Sexual Violence: When Is Wartime Rape Rare?" *Politics & Society* 37 (March 2009): 140.

40. Ungváry, *The Siege*, 344; Bischof, *Austria*, 37.

Tito and his Supreme Command were located in the Soviet-held Romanian city of Craiova near the Yugoslav border during the Red Army's offensive in Serbia. Tito, from Craiova, had contact with Stalin, the Red Army's general staff, the Third Ukrainian Front's staff, and Partisan units. As Soviet troops entered Yugoslavia, local Partisan commanders informed Tito of the crimes committed by the Red Army.⁴¹ Tito in turn repeatedly cabled Partisan commanders in the field to lodge complaints with Soviet commanding officers.⁴² He also requested names of victimized women and the names of Soviet officers with whom his officers interacted.⁴³ Clearly, the Yugoslav leader demanded that his commanders should forward to him as much information as possible so that his complaints with the Red Army's general staff in Moscow and the command of the Third Ukrainian Front would be more specific and effective.

Tito energetically confronted Soviet officers about the Red Army's conduct. After the liberation of Belgrade on October 20, a meeting took place between leading Yugoslav political and military leaders, including Tito, with Lieutenant-General Korneev, the head of the Soviet mission to Yugoslavia. Tito requested of Korneev to immediately undertake measures to at least minimize incidents of plunder, rape and violence.⁴⁴ Tito also complained to the head of the Red Army garrison in Belgrade about Soviet disorders and drunkenness in the city.⁴⁵ In another incident, he sardonically told a Soviet officer, "obviously, your political department is not working well, is it? I could strengthen your forces with our political workers."⁴⁶ Tito even wrote to Stalin to complain about the Red Army's seizure of German war booty which he wanted for the Partisans, as well as about Soviet disrespect for the nascent Yugoslav authorities and the victimization of women.⁴⁷ Although Stalin did not deny Tito's claims, he took issue with his supposed insolence, accusing him of being ungrateful for the massive support which Moscow was providing for the Yugoslav Partisans.⁴⁸

Stalin's jokes and dismissive remarks about rapes committed by the Red Army, which were reported by Milovan Đilas, one of leading Yugoslav communists who subsequently became a dissident, are mentioned in most studies which discuss the Soviet military's rampage in Europe.⁴⁹ However, historians usually overlook the fact that Đilas stated that Soviet officers reacted more forcefully to their soldiers' transgressions after the meeting with Korneev

41. VA, f. NOVJ, k. 191, f. 1, d. 11, l. 11.

42. For 17 October see *Ibid.*, l. 66. For 26 October see, *Ibid.*, 140. For 29 October see *Ibid.*, 14.

43. *Ibid.*, 9 and *Ibid.*, 66.

44. Đilas, *Conversations*, 88.

45. Slutskii, *Zapiski*, 94.

46. *Ibid.*

47. AJ, f.836–KMJ I–3-b/571, document reproduced in Bukharin and Stoianovich, eds., *Otnosheniia*, 361–62.

48. *Ibid.*, 363–64.

49. See Filip Slaveski, *The Soviet Occupation of Germany: Hunger, Mass Violence and the Struggle for Peace, 1945–1947* (Cambridge, Eng., 2013), 6; Anne Applebaum, *Iron Curtain: The Crushing of Eastern Europe 1944–56* (London, 2012), 31; Beevor, *The Fall*, 468; Naimark, *The Russians*, 71; Merridale, *Ivan's War*, 323; Ungváry, *The Siege*, 356.

and Stalin's subsequent involvement.⁵⁰ Similarly, Yugoslav commanders in the field believed that Tito's involvement had an effect, as they cabled him in Craiova that his interventions improved the situation.⁵¹ There is ample evidence to suggest that Yugoslav protests compelled the Red Army command to take more decisive action against the troops' criminal conduct, making it clear that the Soviet leadership wanted to firmly stomp out the abuses committed by their soldiers and officers.

On October 12, General Antonov, Stalin's deputy in the general staff, passed an order from Stalin to commanders of the Second and Third Ukrainian Fronts to instruct their forces to treat the Yugoslavs well since they viewed the Red Army as their liberators. Antonov also provided details of a specific incident where Soviet officers tried to rape Partisan women, and he ordered an investigation into this case, demanding that the culprits be firmly punished. Finally, he asked the two commanders to inform him about their measures in response to Stalin's order.⁵² Moscow's involvement in a single case of attempted rape indicates strongly that the Soviet leadership took seriously Yugoslav complaints about the Red Army's behavior. Stalin's order was restated eleven days later. On October 23, Korneev relayed to the Third Ukrainian Front's staff that Stalin had ordered every higher ranking Soviet officer to help their Yugoslav counterparts when they complained about the Red Army's conduct.⁵³ Moreover, other high ranking commanders of the Third Ukrainian Front intervened at different times to curtail the instances of looting and rape, including the Chief of Staff, a member of the council and the Chief Military Prosecutor.⁵⁴

Yugoslav protests also had an effect on lower-ranking Soviet officers. On November 1, Colonel Sidorenko, in charge of the 233rd Division, stated in an order to all units under his control that he had been receiving complaints from Partisans and higher ranking Soviet commanders that numerous soldiers and officers were engaging in drunkenness, plunder and rape. He instructed regimental commanders to introduce discipline "with an iron fist," and in this spirit, he issued several orders.⁵⁵ Sidorenko introduced bans on soldiers and officers leaving their units even temporarily. He ordered headcounts of all soldiers and officers to be carried out three times a day and the establishment of officers' patrols. He instructed the divisional prosecutor to speed up investigations into criminal acts and warned lower-level commanders that they would be held personally responsible for their soldiers' actions unless they immediately implemented his instructions.⁵⁶ Sidorenko's orders were specific

50. Dilas, *Conversations*, 89.

51. VA, f. NOVJ, k. 26, f. 8, d. 9, l. 8; VA, f. NOVJ, k. 191, f. 1, d. 11, ll. 13–14.

52. TsAMO, f. 48a, op. 3410, d. 14, l. 507, document reproduced in V. A. Zolotarev et al. eds., *Russkii Arkhiv: Velikaia Otechestvennaia. General'nyi shtab v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi voine 1941–1945 gg. Dokumenty i Materialy 1941–1945gg* 23.12 (4) (Moscow, 2001), 484.

53. VA, f. NOVJ, k. 181, f. 3, d. 41, l. 1.

54. For the chief of staff see RGVA, f. 32900, op. 1, d. 186, l. 153. For the member of the military council and the chief military prosecutor, *Ibid.*, 162.

55. TsAMO, f. 1512, op. 1, d. 35, l. 285.

56. *Ibid.*, 285.

and enforceable measures, which indicated his determination to put an end to abuse of civilians.

Further down the chain of command, at brigade, battalion and company levels, the information is scarcer about officers' reactions to their soldiers' misconduct. Thus, it is difficult to draw any definite conclusions, other than that officers' responses were unpredictable. In some instances they ignored Yugoslav protests, while on other occasions they entered possibly lethal altercations with their troops or comrades to protect Yugoslav property and women.⁵⁷ Beyond this, the preponderance of the evidence suggests that officers were more likely to intervene forcefully in Yugoslavia than in enemy countries against offending soldiers. This is most evident in cases of soldiers who committed routine non-violent crimes in Yugoslavia after arriving from enemy countries. Thus, a sergeant who entered Yugoslavia from Romania on his way to Hungary, in November 1944, was executed for stealing a horse from a Partisan, while another sergeant who reentered Yugoslavia from Hungary received a party reprimand and was summarily punished by his commander for stealing a pocket watch from a Croatian peasant.⁵⁸ Both offenders must have been surprised at their punishments, given that Soviet troops stole more than 254,465 horses in Romania and so many watches in Hungary that the Soviet obsession with them entered the local folklore.⁵⁹ Clearly, these offences were rarely, if ever, punished in Romania and Hungary, but the situation was evidently different in Yugoslavia.

Soviet officers and soldiers were sometimes genuinely outraged when their peers or subordinates mistreated Yugoslav civilians. Three artillery officers were stationed with Bratislav Filipović's family. On the Day of Artillery, a Red Army holiday, they all got drunk and another officer who did not live with them came to visit. Highly intoxicated and angry that Bratislav's father did not let him dance with his wife, he fired one shot at him. He missed, and the other three officers immediately jumped on their offending comrade, confiscated his gun, punched him several times, stripped him of his epaulets, and, evidently, reported the incident to the relevant authorities.⁶⁰ Although it was not unusual for Soviet troops who were billeted in European homes to protect their hosts, the vehemence of the three officers' actions, evident in their symbolic removal of the offender's epaulets, is indicative of their anger at their comrade's actions.

Given archival restrictions, we do not know the percentage of all marauders and rapists that were detained and investigated. Undoubtedly, only

57. For instances of when the Soviets intervened to protect the Yugoslavs see VA, f. NOVJ, k. 371, f. 6, d. 26, l. 1; *Ibid.*, 2. VA, f. NOVJ, k. 223, f. 13, d.1, l. 4; For when they neglected to enforce discipline see VA, f. NOVJ, k. 1919, f. 31, d. 6, l. 13; VA, f. NOVJ, k. 214, f. 6, d. 19, l. 1; RGVA, f. 32900, op. 1, d. 192, l. 146.

58. For executed sergeant see RGVA, f. 32900, op. 1, d. 183, l. 220. For his counterpart who stole a pocket watch see TsAMO, f. 1512 (233sd), op. 1, d. 93, l. 264. Summary punishment usually included ten days of house arrest or a service in a penal unit, but the document did not specify his punishment.

59. For horses see Hlihori and Scurtu, *The Red Army in Romania*, 116. For watches see Applebaum, *Iron Curtain*, 27.

60. Interview, Bratislav Filipović, 13 March 2012, Belgrade.

a minority of criminals were ever caught, but once a process against a soldier or an officer began, the sentences in Yugoslavia appear to have been relatively stiff. In general, non-violent criminals who stole and robbed were punished with terms in penal units, although they could also be executed, as was the case with the sergeant who stole a horse from the Partisan.⁶¹ Less often, the offenders simply received party reprimands.⁶² The rapists' most frequent punishment was a lengthy sentence in labor camps, without the possibility of serving their term in a penal unit.⁶³ More rarely, however, rapists could also be sentenced to death, service in penal units or they could simply be demoted in rank and assigned to less responsible positions.⁶⁴

The series of orders which Moscow and the Third Ukrainian Front's command issued to the lower-level commanders, accompanied by a relatively strict disciplinary regime, are an important reason why the Soviet troops committed fewer atrocities in Yugoslavia than in enemy countries. At the same time, these measures were insufficient to root out the violence to a larger degree because the military leadership was unable to completely impose its will on the frontline troops, which was evident in the sheer number of orders that repeatedly called for the correct treatment of Yugoslavs. Had these instructions been enforced consistently at all levels, the leadership would not have needed to repeat them so many times.

The Red Army command's inability to effectively control their troops was furthermore evident in the proliferation of over 15,000 stray soldiers and deserters in the rear of the regular military in Yugoslavia.⁶⁵ Desertion in the Red Army was one of the most severely punished transgressions, and from the perspective of the Stalinist regime, it was one of the most dangerous crimes that the leadership sought to control from the outset of the war through terror.⁶⁶ Yet, neither the constant propaganda against straggling and deserting nor the high command's orders for its suppression improved the situation.⁶⁷ The pres-

61. RGVA, f. 32900, op. 1, d. 412, l. 148; *Ibid.*, 168; RGVA, f. 32900, op. 1, d. 337, l. 47.

62. TsAMO, f. 1512 (233sd), op. 1, d. 93, l. 211.

63. TsAMO, f. 1512 (233sd), op. 1, d. 34, l. 150; Timofejev, *Rusi*, 229.

64. For death penalty see TsAMO, f. 1512 (233sd), op. 1, d. 34, l. 150.

For penal units see RGVA, f. 32905, op. 1, d. 211, l. 5. For demotions see RGVA, f. 32900, op. 1, d. 402, l. 325.

65. The NKVD Army for the Protection of the Rear of the Third Ukrainian Front's regular patrols detained 8,796 soldiers behind the frontlines in October, November and December 1944, the vast majority of them in Yugoslavia (for October see RGVA, f. 32900, op. 1, d. 172, l. 249; for November see RGVA, f. 32900, op. 1, d. 183, l. 179; for December see RGVA, f. 32900, op. 1, d. 220, l. 35). In three separate special operations aimed at deserters on the territory of Yugoslavia, in December 1944 and in August 1945, the NKVD Army detained an additional 1,821 soldiers (for December see RGVA, f. 32900, op. 1, d. 183, l. 118, and *Ibid.*, 132; for August see RGVA, f. 32900, op. 1, d. 220, l. 207). I did not find figures from the NKVD Army of the Second Ukrainian Front, which guarded the rear of the Forty-Sixth Army and the Fifth Air Army, nor the numbers from the command posts (*komendutra*) whose patrols also detained stragglers and deserters. Taking these into account, there were at least 15,000 stray soldiers on the territory of Yugoslavia who stayed behind the frontlines for anywhere between one day and ten months.

66. Mark Edele and Michael Geyer, "States of Exception: The Nazi-Soviet War as a System of Violence, 1939–1945," in Sheila Fitzpatrick and Michael Geyer, eds., *Beyond Totalitarianism: Stalinism and Nazism Compared* (Cambridge, Eng., 2009), 385–87.

67. For propaganda see RGVA, f. 32900, op. 1, d. 412, For orders see RGVA, f. 32900, op. 1, d. 174, l. 8.

ence of so many shirkers in the ranks, which from the leadership's perspective was a graver crime than sexual violence because it directly sapped the army's fighting capacity, illustrates that the high command could not easily and completely control the frontline troops even on issues that it viewed to be of utmost importance.

The Yugoslav-Soviet Encounter and Soviet Views of Yugoslavs

The high command could help forge the positive attitudes through propaganda and it could try to control the troops' behavior through disciplinary policies, but ultimately, how the Red Army treated the civilians was up to the frontline soldiers and officers. It is therefore crucial to understand their perception of Yugoslavs. The scholarship's focus on Germany and other enemy countries gives the impression that Soviet troops' defining—if not the only—attitude to European civilians was thirst for revenge.⁶⁸ The situation was different in Yugoslavia. Undoubtedly, the Red Army's subculture was extremely violent, misogynistic, and nationalist. As soldiers and officers, who were a product of this environment, entered Yugoslavia, they were bombarded with pro-Yugoslav messages from above. More significantly, official propaganda was affirmed from below when the troops witnessed civilians who welcomed them warmly as liberators and by their encounter with staunchly anti-German and pro-Soviet Partisans. Soviet popular attitudes toward Yugoslavs were a mixture of these two factors; although the Soviets were undeniably sympathetic towards the local population, they also expected subservience from them.

The traditional Serbian pro-Russian attitudes, reinforced by the Axis dismemberment of their country and the brutality of various occupational regimes, resulted in the local population warmly welcoming the advancing Soviet soldiers. The overjoyed Yugoslavs all over the country came out into streets to celebrate the Red Army's arrival and the departure of the Germans, variously throwing flowers at the Soviets, presenting them with gifts, hugging and kissing them and inviting them to their homes to feed them.⁶⁹ Yugoslav civilians, often spontaneously but sometimes under Partisan orders, actively assisted the Red Army by helping rebuild roads and bridges and by escorting troops through difficult to navigate mountainous roads, while offering them-

68. Even internationalist intellectuals in the Red Army wanted revenge above all on the territory of the Third Reich, Oleg Budnitskii and Susan Rupp, "The Intelligentsia Meets the Enemy: Educated Soviet Officers in Defeated Germany, 1945," *Kritika* 10, no.3 (Summer 2009): 632.

69. For Belgrade see VA, f. NOVJ, k. 96, f. 1, d. 17, l. 18 and Đorđe Lobačev, *Kad se Volga ulivala u Savu: Moj životni roman* (Belgrade, 1997), 124; Subotica—IAS, f. 176, k. 10, "Rad i referat antifašističkog fronta žena u Subotici," 1. Knjaževac—TsAMO, f. 243, op. 32283, d. 12, ll. 409–12, document reproduced in Zolotarev, et al. eds., *Krasnaia Armia*, 245; Topola—V. F. Tolbuko, N. A. Baryshev, and V.F. Chizh, *Ot Vidina do Belgrada: istoriko-memuarni ocherk o boevykh deistviakh sovetskikh tankistov v belgradskoi operatsii* (Moscow, 1968), 39; Zaječar—S. S. Biriuzov, et al. eds., *Beogradska Operacija*, 219; Novi Sad—Timofejev, *Rusi*, 193; Požarevac—Zav'ialov, *Pod zvezdami*, 111; Negotin—Zhilin, et al. eds., *Osvoboditel'naia missiia*, 335–336; Vratarnica—TsAMO, f. 413, op. 10381, d. 16, l. 183, document reproduced in Zolotarev, et al. eds., *Krasnaia Armia*, 225.

selves as scouts in battles.⁷⁰ In more exceptional circumstances, they joined the Soviets in fighting the Germans by desperately attacking them with batons and stones, while entire villages offered to join the Red Army.⁷¹

The Serbs' positive image of Russians was eventually undermined by acts of raping and looting, as even Tito, the Red Army and the NKVD conceded.⁷² Nonetheless, Soviet soldiers' and officers' attitudes toward Yugoslavs were largely formed by these first encounters with civilians. Pavel El'kinson, a scout in the Red Army, raved in his diary about Yugoslavia and its people on October 8, 1944, a day after he entered the country from Romania:

Such a people—freedom loving, patriotic, loyal and friendly—cannot be found anywhere else. One is not sorry to fight and die for such a people. You feel that that you are fighting for a people who respect you. Pursuing the enemy, we entered a village at ten at night. To our great surprise, the streets filled with people who greeted us with joyful exclamations. They immediately surrounded us. Then they hugged us, placing white towels around our necks. They said that they had been waiting for us for a long time. Their language is understandable . . . In short, they are a wonderful people . . . The people did not disperse all night. They sang, danced, without relaxing, and they did not let us relax.⁷³

Similarly, numerous soldiers spoke enthusiastically of the Yugoslavs' hospitality.⁷⁴ Because of their positive experiences in the country, some Soviet troops compared Yugoslavia to a heaven, while others claimed that Belgrade, the flat expanses of northern Serbia and mountains of southern and eastern Serbia, were beautiful.⁷⁵ They also committed illegal violence against enemy

70. For roads and bridges see A. G. Khorkov, *Osvoboditelnaia missia sovetskikh voozrzhennykh sil na Balkanakh* (Moscow, 1989), 179 and I.S. Anoshin, *Na Pravyi boi* (Moscow, 1988), 121. For escorting troops see TsAMO, f. 1512 (233sd), op. 1, d. 91, l. 201. For scouts see, N. I. Iashchenko, "Druzhba, rozhdeniia v boiakh," recollections reproduced in *73-ia gvardeiskaia: Sbornik vospominanii, dokumentov i materialov o boevom puti 73-i gvardeiskoi strelkovoii Stalingradsko-Dunaiskoi Krasnoznamennoi divizii*, ed. A. K. Morozov et al. (Alma-Ata, 1986), 193.

71. For batons see Tolbukho, Baryshev and Chizh, *Ot Vidina do Belgrada*, 203–04. For stones see TsAMO, f. 32, op. 11309, d. 230, ll. 169–76, document reproduced in Zolotarev, et al., eds., *Krasnaia Armia*, 122. For villages seeking to join the Red Army, see TsAMO, f. 1512, op. 1, d. 93, l. 192.

72. For Tito see AJ, KMJ I–3-b/57, document reproduced in Bukharin and Stoianovich, eds., *Otnosheniia*, 363–64. For the Red Army see TsAMO, f. 1512 (233sd), op. 1, d. 93, 212. For the NKVD see RGVA, f. 32900, op. 1, d. 220, l. 102.

73. BA, El'kinson *Dnevnik*, 9–10.

74. Aleksandrov Nikolai Filippovich, interview by A. Petrovich, Ia pomniu, vospominaniia veteranov VOV, April 4, 2011, iremember.ru/memoirs/voditeli/aleksandrov-nikolay-filippovich/ (last accessed May 4, 2016); Ivanov Mikhail Nikolaevich, interview by N. Choban, Ia pomniu, vospominaniia veteranov VOV, May 3, 2012, <http://iremember.ru/memoirs/artilleristi/ivanov-mikhail-nikolaevich/> (last accessed May 4, 2016).

75. For comparisons between Yugoslavia and heaven see Petr Mikhin, *Guns against the Reich: Memoirs of a Soviet Artillery Officer on the Eastern Front* (Mechanicsburg, 2011), 144; and Shop Solomon Gershevich, interview by G. Koifman Ia pomniu, vospominaniia veteranov VOV, April 20, 2008, iremember.ru/memoirs/saperi/shop-solomon-gershevich/ (last accessed May 4, 2016); for Belgrade see Nadezhda Vdovina, "Sećanje crvenoarmejske na oslobođanje Beograda," *Vesti Online*, May 9, 2013, at www.vesti-online.com/Vesti/Srbija/311930/Secanje-crvenoarmejske-na-oslobođanje-Beograda (last accessed on January 18,

soldiers on grounds that they terrorized the local population, revealing that they viewed themselves as Yugoslavs' avengers.⁷⁶ The strongest evidence of the troops' attachment to the local population is the fact that in a fifteen day period in October, they sent more than thirty-thousand letters to civilians in Bulgaria and Yugoslavia, sometimes adding their photographs to be remembered by their acquaintances and friends. They did so even though it was illegal for Soviet military personnel to use civilian postal services in Europe.⁷⁷

There were three hundred thousand Soviet soldiers in Yugoslavia, and there were many instances when Soviet soldiers and officers' subjected Yugoslavs to sexual and physical violence, but the majority of soldiers in most encounters treated Yugoslav civilians properly. Three Soviet artillery officers were stationed in Bratislav Filipović's house. He reported that "they respected us, all three of them were correct . . . we lived like one family."⁷⁸ Nadežda Đurišić recalled that the Red Army organized a field-kitchen in her uncle's courtyard, and that they shared the food with Yugoslav civilians, which was the first time that she tried Russian *kasha*.⁷⁹ Živojin Ilić hid in forests and caves for days and nights with his fellow villagers while the Soviets and Germans battled over mountainous eastern Serbia. When they returned to their village after the fighting ended, Soviet soldiers embraced them warmly. They offered the hungry refugees food, while the civilians buried the fallen Red Army troops.⁸⁰ Ivan Protić, a Belgrade resident and a teacher, struck a deep friendship with a Soviet captain who saved his house from expropriation because his father was also an educator. The Soviet officer repeatedly visited his house throughout 1944 to dine with Protić's family. Their friendship continued even after the captain left Yugoslavia.⁸¹ The Red Army troops, in the view of some witnesses, often coddled and displayed paternal affection towards Serbian children.⁸²

For the Red Army, the encounter with forty thousand Partisans, and the camaraderie that the fighters from the two armies developed was also crucial

2016). For flat expanses see BA, El'kinson Dnevnik, 9. For mountains see N. M. Skomorokhov, *Boem živet istrebitel': Dokumental'naiia povest* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1975), 201.

76. Mikhin, *Guns against the Reich*, 146–47; BA, El'kinson Dnevnik, 9.

77. RGVA, f. 32900, op. 1, d. 402, l. 245. This document was written by the political department of the Third Ukrainian Front, which was alarmed at the fact that these letters revealed military secrets. The political department claimed that letters were sent to Romania, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia, all the places where the Third Ukrainian Front had a presence. However, considering the differences between the Romanian and Russian languages, the vast majority of the letters were almost certainly sent to Bulgarians and Yugoslavs.

78. Interview, Bratislav Filipović, March 13, 2012, Belgrade.

79. Interview, Nadežda Đurišić, April 17, 2012, Negotin.

80. Interview, Živojin Ilić, April 19, 2014, Štubik.

81. Interview, Divna Protić, May 31, 2012, Belgrade. They exchanged letters after the war, while the captain paid him a visit during one of the joint Soviet-Yugoslav celebrations on the anniversary of the liberation of Belgrade. Their children continued the relationship. The captain's daughter with her husband visited Protić and his daughter Divna. In 1972, Divna, who was eighteen in 1944, visited the captain and his daughter during her visit to Moscow. They lost contact after their fathers died.

82. Interview, Milica Novaković, April 4, 2012, Belgrade; Interview, Grgo Bačlija, May 16, 2012, Subotica; Interview, Živojin Gligorijević, Toronto, January 2014.

in defining their views of Yugoslavs. Soviet and Yugoslav soldiers marched together, they ate together, they shared their food with each other and slept side-by-side.⁸³ On the ground, Soviet and Yugoslav soldiers fought literally shoulder to shoulder. For instance, when Soviet tanks rolled into Belgrade they were loaded with Partisans.⁸⁴ Both Yugoslav and Soviet commands tried to reinforce the sense of camaraderie between their soldiers. They did this by awarding each other's soldiers with medals and honors. Three days after the liberation of Belgrade, a joint Red Army and Yugoslav military parade was organized by Yugoslav and Soviet commanders.⁸⁵

Soviet and Yugoslav soldiers also bonded over more sinister and illegal activities, committing rapes and robberies together.⁸⁶ Soviet officers in Hungary called for assistance from Yugoslav troops to punish what appeared to be a large group of Hungarian civilians who supposedly attacked the Soviets (or more likely, acted in self-defense).⁸⁷ Similarly, Soviet officers led Yugoslav Partisans into illegal cross-border raids into Romania where they disarmed Romanian troops (who were also ostensibly Soviet allies at the time), in order to provide the arms for the perennially underequipped Yugoslavs.⁸⁸ A Red Army colonel ordered the commandant of a Soviet prisoner of war camp to strip three hundred German prisoners of all their clothes. Apparently, the clothes were given to the Partisans after which the Germans were shot.⁸⁹ These illegal actions committed by the Soviets on behalf of the Partisans and/or together with them indicate that some Red Army officers genuinely accepted the Yugoslavs as their comrades.

The presence of the Partisans and the camaraderie which developed between Yugoslav and Soviet fighters led many Soviets to view the Yugoslavs as a courageous people. For example, Aleksandr Tverdyshev, rank unknown, heaped praise on Yugoslav fighters in a letter to his daughter:

I am in Belgrade—the capital of Yugoslavia. The most wonderful city, in which street battles are taking place now . . . the local Yugoslav Partisans will enter the history of the Fatherland war as wonderful knights (*chudobogatyri*). If without our help for three years they achieved surprising results, with our arrival, they are committing wonders. The entire population of the city, young women and men are fighting in real battles shoulder to shoulder with us . . . if God allows me to return home alive, I will be able to tell you so much about the Yugoslav partisans! They all admire the Red Army, but we in turn, admire their determination, selflessness and patriotism . . .⁹⁰

83. Interview, Božidar Stojanović, April 24, 2012, Negotin; Interview, Mihajlo Đurišić, 17 April 2012, Negotin; Skype Interview, Voja Čolanović, January 2014, Toronto-Belgrade.

84. VA, f. NOVJ, k. 28, f. 1, d. 1, l. 6.

85. Tolbuko, Baryshev, and Chizh, *Ot Vidina do Belgrada*, 226.

86. For rapes, see VA, f. NOVJ, k. 222, f. 1k, d. 20, ll. 1–2. For robberies see RGVA, f. 32900, op. 1, d. 186, l. 162 and IAS, f. 82, k. 95, “Spisi narodne milicije. Telefonski izveštaj primljen dana 4. juna 1945 god.”

87. VA, f. NOVJ, k. 222, f. 1k, d. 50, l. 2.

88. RGVA, f. 32900, op. 1, d. 188, l. 166.

89. TsAMO, f. 1512 (233sd), op. 1, d. 91, l. 201.

90. TsGA KAZSSR, f. 1660, op. 1, d. 196, ll. 19–20, letter reproduced in *73-ia gvardeiskaia*, ed. A. K. Morozov et al. (Alma-Ata, 1986), 228.

A Soviet captain, commander of an artillery squadron, wrote in a letter to his family that Serbs (his words) were remarkable people, considering their exceptional heroism and willpower to fight against fascism.⁹¹ The view of Yugoslav Partisans as courageous allies who passionately hated the common enemy was shared by high ranking officers such as Guards Lieutenant-Colonel Nikolai Zav'ialov (brigade commander), Colonel-General Biriuzov (the Chief of Staff and second in command of the Third Ukrainian Front) and Lieutenant-General Ivan Anoshin (the head of the political department of the Third Ukrainian Front).⁹²

There is little information which would illuminate Soviet attitudes to Serbian royalists and nationalists (Četniks). According to Slutskii, the Red Army's rank and file sympathized with Četniks, whom he described as extremely pro-Russian, when the Partisans mistreated them and subjected some to wild executions.⁹³ To the best of my knowledge, Soviet soldiers and officers never mentioned the Serbian collaborators, either in positive or negative light. This is probably because, as historian Aleksej Timofejev noted, the forces of the collaborationist Serbian authorities appear to have never engaged the Red Army on the battlefield, a contention which my research confirms.⁹⁴ Thus, the Serbs who were anti-communist (but were often pro-Russian), such as monarchists, collaborators and supporters of the pre-war parties, were not an important factor in shaping how the Soviets viewed the Yugoslavs.

The Red Army's soldiers and officers were treated brutally by their commanders, while they faced daily prospects of death on the frontlines. Moreover, from the time they entered Romania they felt an acute sense of isolation from the surrounding population. Romanian reactions to the Soviets ranged from fear to hostility, while the Soviet troops despised them.⁹⁵ It is not difficult to see why when Yugoslavs warmly embraced them, offered them food and often invited them into their homes—treating them essentially as heroes—the Soviet troops were genuinely moved. The Partisans were the first armed group which resisted the Germans from the outset of the war that the Soviets encountered, and it is likewise easy to understand why they respected the Partisan desperate resistance. Overall, the Soviet troops' experience in Yugoslavia provided them with evidence that their suffering had wider meaning. It showed that their hatred of the Germans was justified, since others hated them as well, and confirmed that they were not alone in the war.

Although the Soviet attitude was undoubtedly positive toward the Yugoslavs, it was pervaded by a sense of superiority toward them. These led many Soviets to look down upon their allies, as one Partisan report ruefully con-

91. Mart Aleksandrovich Stalin, *Vospominaniia o sobytiakh v moei zhizni v predvonnnye gody i vo vremia Velikoi Otechestvennoi Voiny (1937–1945)*. *V chetyrekh chastyakh s Prilozheniem "O moei perepiske s roditeliami vo vremia voiny,"* from personal family collection of Vladimir Ryzhkovsky. I would like to thank Vladimir for providing me with his grandfather's recollections and letters.

92. Zav'ialov, *Pod zvezdami*, 127–128; S. S. Biriuzov, *Surovye gody* (Moscow, 1966), 481; Anoshin, *Na Pravyi boi*, 133.

93. Slutskii, *Zapiski*, 91.

94. Timofejev, *Rusi*, 195.

95. BA, El'kinson *Dnevnik*, 7.

ceded after describing the Red Army's conduct following the liberation of Belgrade.⁹⁶ Soviet haughty attitudes reflected Moscow's imperial outlook, failure to fully acknowledge Yugoslavia's sovereignty and propaganda which stressed the Red Army's primary role in the liberation of the Balkans (correctly, it must be admitted). These views could also be explained by Stalin's and the Red Army leadership's general dismissiveness of the Partisans as inherently disorganized and potentially disloyal, attitudes which also shaped the regular military's relationship with Soviet partisans.⁹⁷ Therefore, it is unsurprising that the Soviets would also not fully accept a foreign guerilla force.

Soviet arrogance was evident at all levels of the Red Army, beginning with its commander in chief. Stalin told Tito at a meeting that the Bulgarian army (which switched sides in the war in September 1944) was superior to Partisans, praising the professionalism of its officers.⁹⁸ This was a pure provocation from the Soviet leader. The Bulgarians were Partisan wartime foes, and regardless of whether it was true, Stalin meant to put the assertive Yugoslav leadership in its place by insulting Tito's proudest achievement: his army. Furthermore, the Red Army's operational maps often excluded Partisan units, indicating the command's failure to even acknowledge that Yugoslavs played any role in the defeat of the Germans in the country.⁹⁹ Further below in the chain of command, Partisan commanders had to appeal to the Red Army's political departments to include in their public statements the fact that Belgrade was liberated jointly by the Red Army and Partisans and not just by the Soviets, as well as to cease treating the Partisans as unknowledgeable and as a second-rate army.¹⁰⁰

On the ground, artillery officer Petr Mikhin vividly illustrated Soviet arrogance, describing a Partisan leader whom he encountered in an expressly patronizing manner as cunning, pathetically emotional and excitable, surely all things that in Mikhin's worldview he and the regular Red Army soldiers were not.¹⁰¹ It is noteworthy that Soviet officers were just as patronizing to their Bulgarian comrades, whom they otherwise viewed as sympathetically as the Yugoslavs.¹⁰² Mikhin described an encounter with two Bulgarian officers whose troops were supposed to replace his unit on the frontline. The Bulgarian officers implied that Mikhin, who was only twenty-three years old, could not be an effective officer because of his young age. Mikhin wrote about this encounter:

. . . he had no moral or formal right to express even any doubts about the might of the victorious Red Army. After all, he was twice my age, but in essence, who was he in comparison to me? We had fought all the way from Moscow to this place, while they hadn't even tasted battle yet. I was a battle-hardened and experienced officer of a powerful army, while he was repre-

96. VA, f. NOVJ, k. 371, f. 6, d. 26, l. 4.

97. Kenneth Slepyan, *Stalin's Guerrillas: Soviet Partisans in World War II* (Lawrence, 2006), 288.

98. AJ, KPR I-3-a SSSR 2/3, Ad-3 "Gledanje Staljina na našu Armiju i naše kadrove."

99. Timofejev, *Rusi*, 224.

100. Slutskii, *Zapiski*, 95.

101. Mikhin, *Guns against the Reich*, 155.

102. Slutskii, *Zapiski*, 67–68.

senting the armed forces of a rump government, whose czar had fawningly served Hitler.¹⁰³

The Soviet arrogance was not caused by anything that Yugoslavs or Bulgarians did. Instead, the Red Army soldiers' and officers' dismissiveness of the Yugoslav contribution to their own liberation reflected the Soviet worldview according to which they were the dominant power. Therefore, the denigration of their allies' contribution to the anti-German cause served the purpose of affirming their own supremacy.

The Soviet Union recognized Tito's nascent government and the Red Army was not formally an occupying force in Yugoslavia, nonetheless, some encounters between the Soviets and Partisans revealed that the former could not accept that the latter had any authority in their own country. One Red Army officer declared himself to be the commandant of the city of Novi Sad to General Kosta Nađ, the Partisan commander in northern Serbia. When Nađ retorted that Novi Sad was ruled by the Yugoslav military and civilian authorities, the Soviet officer responded that he did not care and that he would shoot anybody who refused to obey his orders.¹⁰⁴ A SMERSH major crashed an official gathering in the town of Arandelovac which was attended by a Yugoslav and Soviet officers. The intruder ordered everybody to disperse. When the Yugoslavs refused to obey him, he entered into an argument with a Yugoslav colonel. Eventually, the Soviet major was escorted out, but not before he managed to disperse part of the assembly.¹⁰⁵ In another incident, a major proclaimed in the city of Smederevo that the Red Army was an occupational force and that Yugoslavia was an enemy country, banning gatherings and public announcements.¹⁰⁶ Although the latter incident stemmed from the major's mistaken belief that Yugoslavia was formally an enemy country, these and other incidents reflected the Soviet imperial outlook which denied autonomy to the Yugoslavs in their own country.

Reasons for the Rapes Committed by the Red Army

The Red Army may have committed considerably fewer atrocities in Yugoslavia than in enemy countries. Nonetheless, too many soldiers perpetrated sexual violence and other crimes to attribute them simply to a criminal minority in the ranks, which was what Stalin implied in his response to Tito's complaints about the Soviet conduct, writing that "It is not hard to understand that there is no family without freaks, but it would be odd to insult the entire family because of one freak."¹⁰⁷ Instead, the primary reason for the Soviet troops' atrocities stemmed from how they perceived the Yugoslavs. Linked with the

103. Mikhin, *Guns against the Reich*, 174.

104. VA, f. NOVJ, f. 1919, k. 31, d. 6, l. 13.

105. RGVA, f. 32900, op. 1, d. 412, l. 176.

106. VA, f. NOVJ, k.1919, f.31, d.6, l. 13. Tito subsequently highlighted this incident as an example of a major irritation when he complained to Stalin about the Red Army's conduct, AJ, f.836–KMJ I–3-b/571, document reproduced in Bukharin and Stoianovich, eds., *Otnosheniia*, 363.

107. AJ, f.836–KMJ I–3-b/571, document reproduced in Bukharin and Stoianovich, eds., *Otnosheniia*, 363.

dismissive attitude toward the Yugoslavs, Soviet soldiers and officers felt a keen sense of entitlement for their role in the liberation of the country, believing that they deserved a tribute from the local population.

The most frequent form of tribute which the Soviets exacted was looting. According to one Yugoslav report, peasants near the town of Mladenovac feared going to the town market due to the frequent robberies committed by the troops who seized their produce and cattle.¹⁰⁸ The local authorities in Petrovaradin reported that the passing troops committed hundreds of robberies. The authors of the document added that the looting and widespread destruction of property resulted in the state of near-anarchy, while they feared that the shortages could eventually lead to crisis and famine.¹⁰⁹ The breakdown of food supplies and the looming threat of famine shows that the Soviet soldiers plundered on a large scale.

Although most troops were content with seizing goods, many also believed that they had a right to sex. The Red Army had a hyper-masculine and misogynist subculture, and the gang rapes which some troops committed were meant to cement their own friendships and relations.¹¹⁰ The soldiers' identity included a focus on their sexual potential and their right to intercourse.¹¹¹ Therefore, even women who served in the Red Army faced a predatory environment at times.¹¹² These attitudes were ingrained in the troops' ethos and they invariably shaped their interactions with local women, whom they harassed and pursued brazenly, but often without resorting to outright violence. Mitra Mitrović, Đilas' wife and a high ranking official, proclaimed: "A fat tank crew member approaches me and tells me, 'so, darkie [she had a dark complexion], will you come with me or what?'"¹¹³ Soldiers and officers were proscribed from marrying non-Soviet citizens, but the troops dangled the prospects of marriage to entice them into sexual relations.¹¹⁴ Yugoslav women were not safe from unwanted soldiers' approaches and harassment even in their own homes.¹¹⁵ Soviet soldiers and officers in large numbers solicited prostitutes and they often went on crime sprees together.¹¹⁶

In thousands of instances, Soviet soldiers and officers employed direct violence to obtain sex, which they often justified by asserting that they had a right to Yugoslav women's bodies because they liberated them from the Germans. Two intoxicated Soviets who claimed to be colonels tried to rape two Yugoslav Partisan women. When they were confronted by a group of Parti-

108. VA, f. NOVJ, k. 1919, f. 31, d. 6, l. 13.

109. VA, f. NOVJ, k. 214, f. 5, d. 21, ll. 1–2.

110. Merridale, *Ivan's War*, 272–75.

111. Kerstin Bischl, "Telling Stories: Gender Relationships and Masculinity in the Red Army 1941–1945," in Maren Röger and Ruth Leiserowitz, eds., *Women and Men at War: A gender Perspective on World War II and its Aftermath in Central and Eastern Europe* (Osna-brück, 2012), 119.

112. Roger D. Markwick and Euridice Charon Cardona, *Soviet Women on the Frontline in the Second World War* (Basingstoke, 2012), 79.

113. Slutskii, *Zapiski*, 78.

114. *Ibid.*, 180.

115. Interview, Vera Protić, March 13, 2012, Belgrade.

116. IAS, f. 83, "Mesnim narodnim odborima Pov. Br 145/45 dana 20.IX.1945."

sans, they left, taking with them the Yugoslav flag.¹¹⁷ Their attempted rape combined with the demonstrative removal of the Yugoslav flag indicates that in their mind there was a clear link between their role as the main liberators and the Yugoslav subordinate role for which Yugoslav female fighters needed to pay with their bodies. On October 25, 1944 a Soviet officer entered a Partisan encampment in Belgrade seeking Yugoslav women. When asked what he wanted, he said that the Soviets sacrificed during the liberation of the Yugoslav capital and that they had the right to do as they pleased.¹¹⁸ On that same day, in a different part of the city, three Soviet officers tried to rape a Partisan woman, with one of them shouting, “bitch, you will sleep with me.”¹¹⁹ Subsequently, they seized three young civilian women from their mothers, explaining: “we fought for Belgrade.”¹²⁰ These actions and quotes by rapists directly reveal that some Red Army soldiers and officers believed that they were entitled to sex, and that they were willing to commit violence to exercise this perceived privilege.

In addition, the vast majority of the Red Army’s crimes were committed by intoxicated soldiers, and it is extremely difficult to disentangle the excessive alcohol consumption from sexual violence. Soviet troops drank methyl alcohol from a depot in the Bulgarian city of Burgas, on the eve of their entry to Yugoslavia, which led to forty-two deaths, while six soldiers went blind.¹²¹ The drinking continued in Yugoslavia to such a degree that on October 14, 1944 Tolbukhin named drunk driving as the main reason for sharp increase in car and truck accidents.¹²² After the liberation of Belgrade, the Soviet troops seized two thousand kilograms of sugar which they drank after mixing it with water.¹²³

The Soviet leadership tried to curtail the drinking habits of its troops, while the Yugoslav authorities tried to ban and even criminalize the sale of alcohol to Red Army soldiers.¹²⁴ However, considering the East Slavic culture of binge drinking, none of these measures were effective.¹²⁵ Moreover, alcohol was bountiful in Yugoslavia with most peasant homes producing wine or potent rakia which were routinely offered to guests. Refusing to do so could

117. TsAMO, f. 48a, op. 3410, d. 14, ll. 507, document reproduced in Zolotarev et al. eds., *General’nyi shtab*, 483–84.

118. VA, f. NOVJ, k. 371, f. 6, d. 26, l. 1.

119. *Ibid.*, 3.

120. *Ibid.*, 3.

121. RGVA, f. 32900, op. 1, d. 337, l. 27.

122. RGVA, f. 32900, op. 1, d. 341, l. 108.

123. VA, f. NOVJ, k. 371, f. 6, d. 26, l. 2.

124. RGVA, f. 32900, op. 1, d. 341, l. 108; For Zaječar, see IAZ, f. Sreski Narodni Odbor Zaječar godina 1944, k.2, “Sreski narodni odbor u Zaječaru dana 25 novembra 1944 godine doneo je sledeće.” Zaječar municipal authorities revoked the license from a local tavern owner for repeatedly violating the ban on the sale of alcohol to soldiers. I have found three separate attempts to impose similar restrictions in Subotica, the last order threatening repeat offenders to six months of forced labour, IAS, f.68, k.1521, “8 marta 1945 god. Gradskom Narodno Sslobidlačkom Odboru grada Subotica. Od šefa odeljka narodne milicije, kapetan Stevanović.”

125. Naimark, *The Russians*, 113.

be extremely dangerous. In one instance, a Soviet soldier shot a peasant for refusing to serve him alcohol.¹²⁶ Doubtlessly, the Soviet troops would have committed considerably fewer atrocities in Yugoslavia had not so many soldiers and officers drunk alcohol to such an extreme degree.

Finally, the contribution of 15,000 stragglers, among whom were thousands of deserters, to the overall violence that the Red Army committed in Yugoslavia must be taken into account. These soldiers were the worst behaved among the Soviet troops according to testimony by some Hungarian civilians, while Romanian and Yugoslav authorities' reports make it clear that stragglers were particularly prone to mistreating civilians.¹²⁷ Of course, not all stragglers and deserters were rapists, but at a minimum, they had to procure food on their own from the civilian population through violence or threat of violence. Moreover, they were beyond the sight of the Red Army's disciplinary institutions or the peer pressure of the majority of their frontline comrades who would have been more opposed to the abuse of the civilian population, and thus, they were freer to engage in criminal conduct. Stray soldiers proliferated behind the frontlines in enemy countries as well, more so than in Yugoslavia, given that the Red Army had more troops there and fighting was heavier, which encouraged shirking. In view of the overall more restrained Soviet conduct in Yugoslavia, the actions of stray soldiers and deserters had a proportionally greater impact than in enemy territories.

The vast majority of the 15,000 stray soldiers were caught by regular patrols of the NKVD Army for the Protection of the Red Army's Rear (The NKVD Army), which typically enforced discipline behind the frontlines by following regular troops in two echelons of thirty to sixty kilometers.¹²⁸ Most of these soldiers did not wander in the rear for more than one or a few days. Thus, they had a limited amount of time to loot and rape. However, the NKVD's regular patrols did not detain all stray soldiers. Therefore, the NKVD Army periodically also launched special operations aimed at deserters in areas where they proliferated in large numbers. Two such operations in northern Serbia in December 1945 netted 1,345 soldiers, and one operation in the same area in August 1945 resulted in detention of 476 soldiers.¹²⁹

Soldiers that the NKVD Army detained in special operations in December 1944 and August 1945 were effectively all deserters. Often, individuals or small groups united into larger gangs that committed robberies and rapes.¹³⁰ The General Prosecutor of the Third Ukrainian Front wrote to Tolbukhin that

126. TsAMO, f. 1512 (233sd), op. 1, d. 93, l. 258.

127. For civilian testimonies about the conduct of stray soldiers in Hungary see interview with Ujj Miklosne at 00.51 in *Silenced Shame*. Directed by Fruzsina Skrabski. Budapest, 2013.

For Romanian government's analysis see Hlihor and Scurtu, *The Red Army in Romania*, 145. For the Yugoslav police analysis of the contribution to the growth of criminality by stray Soviet soldiers see IAS, f. 83, k. 23, "Mesnim narodnim odborima Pov. Br 145/45 dana 20.IX.1945."

128. RGVA, f. 32900, op. 1, d. 218, l. 43

129. RGVA, f. 32900, op. 1, d. 183, l. 118, *Ibid.*, 132; RGVA, f. 32900, op. 1, d. 220, l. 207.

130. RGVA, f. 32900, op. 1, d. 220, l. 102.

soldiers who were caught in the summer of 1945 “had been in state of desertion for a long period of time. These individuals commit various crimes, robberies, thefts, murders and rapes . . .”¹³¹ Although precise numbers of soldiers involved in crimes are impossible to know, there is little doubt that 476 such troops who rampaged for up to ten months, 1,345 soldiers who behaved likewise for up to three months until detained in December, and almost ten thousand other stray soldiers who were caught by regular NKVD patrols, committed a meaningful portion of all the rapes that the Red Army perpetrated in Yugoslavia.

The partial loss of control in the rear by the high command was most vividly illustrated by the emergence of what could best be characterized as commandant usurpers. These were Soviet deserters who illegally proclaimed themselves to be in charge of villages or towns on behalf of the Red Army. In some instances, they managed to order around municipal Yugoslav authorities and to recruit Soviet soldiers into their fake garrisons for weeks or months before getting caught.¹³² On one occasion, a fire fight broke out between the usurpers for the title of the commandant of a village, leading to death of one of the pretenders.¹³³ In the meantime, they plundered and drank excessively, and although none of the documents stated it explicitly, they likely committed rapes.

Susan Brownmiller has noted that liberating armies treated women better than their conquering counterparts.¹³⁴ This argument may seem cruel given that the Red Army raped thousands of Yugoslav women, however, it is undeniable that the scope of the violence was more limited than in other countries in the region. It is important to note that the existing literature on how Soviet soldiers viewed and treated civilians in enemy European countries does not illuminate their perceptions and treatment of Yugoslavs. If hate and a deeply-held desire for revenge contributed to the wreaking of havoc in Axis countries by Soviet troops, than the manner in which Soviet troops identified with Yugoslavs acted to prevent the outbreak of violence on a comparable scale. However, even though Soviet soldiers and officers were not hostile to the Yugoslavs, they still viewed them as outsiders who were indebted to the Red Army for delivering them from the Germans. This aspect of the Soviet attitude toward the Yugoslavs is central to understanding why many rapes and other acts of violence did take place.

There was nothing unusual or contradictory in the fact that Soviet troops simultaneously sympathized with and expected subordination from the population they liberated. Soviet attitudes toward the Yugoslavs, as well as their interactions, resembled the American army’s experience in France. Americans were also indisputably liberators from a common enemy; they admired the courage of the local resistance movement but were dismissive of its con-

131. *Ibid.*, 210.

132. RGVA, f. 32905, op. 1, d. 128, ll. 44–45; RGVA, f. 32900, op. 1, d. 220, l. 104;

133. *Ibid.*

134. Susan Brownmiller, *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape* (New York, 1975), 64.

tribution to France's own liberation and they expected subservience from the French, including sex from French women.¹³⁵ This is not to suggest that there were no differences between the Red Army and the US military. On the one hand, American propaganda and leadership implicitly encouraged the rapes, by urging their soldiers to fantasize sexually about French women to motivate them to fight, which stood in sharp contrast to the Soviet correct line about Yugoslavia.¹³⁶ On the other hand, Soviet soldiers were overall worse-behaved, since they committed a similar number of rapes in Yugoslavia as the Americans did in France, even though there were many more GIs in France.¹³⁷ Finally, it appears that the Americans engaged less in binge-drinking than their Soviet counterparts and the American army produced significantly fewer stragglers and deserters, which helps explain why the Soviets committed more rapes than their American allies in a friendly country.¹³⁸ Nonetheless, the Soviet popular views and treatment of Yugoslavs is best understood in this bigger context of the literature on liberating armies committing rapes.

The Red Army's conduct in Yugoslavia may be characterized as contradictory. Soviet soldiers and officers treated the Yugoslavs with much more restraint than civilians from the countries that fought against the Soviet Union. Nonetheless, they still committed thousands of rapes and other crimes in the country. The existing scholarship offers at best limited insights on the Red Army's experience in Yugoslavia and other friendly countries such as Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria, which when taken together, represent an important part of the overall Soviet encounter with Europe. The historiography's focus on Soviet behavior in enemy countries is understandable, given that the Soviet troops perpetrated mass sexual violence there, which of course deserves an explanation. Scholars' usual explanations of the rapes in the countries that fought against the Soviet Union, however, such as soldiers' and officers' desire for revenge and the military and political leadership's indifference to the plight of civilians, does not illuminate either how the troops viewed the Yugoslavs or the leadership's policies in the country.

The Kremlin and the high command played a constructive role in trying to ensure that frontline soldiers and officers behaved properly in Yugoslavia. They did so by depicting the country in an extremely positive light to the frontline troops and by imploring and threatening soldiers to treat the Yugoslavs

135. Mary Louise Roberts, *What Soldiers Do: Sex and the American GI in World War II France* (Chicago, 2013), 7 and 95–96.

136. *Ibid.*, 7–9.

137. According to one estimate, the Americans victimized 208 women in the department of Manche, see Wieviorka, *Normandy*, 329. This would indicate that throughout the country there were thousands of victims.

138. For how American and Soviet soldiers consumed alcohol see Naimark, *The Russians*, 113. Forty thousand American soldiers deserted in France, and around 10,000 were absent without leave (stragglers), Kenneth D. Rose, *Myth and the Greatest Generation: A Social History of Americans in World War II* (New York, 2008), 67. This contrasts sharply with the fact that more than four million Soviet troops were charged with straggling and deserting, while undoubtedly millions more were returned to their units without being officially charged, Roger R. Reese, *Why Stalin's Soldiers Fought: The Red Army's Military Effectiveness in World War II* (Lawrence, 2011), 20.

correctly. At the same time, the leadership pursued a relatively strict disciplinary regime, subjecting troops to stricter punishments than in enemy countries. Additionally, Yugoslavs' frequent complaints about the troops' conduct allowed the Red Army's commanders to take specific measures to curb the incidents before they escalated. As numerous instances of rape show, however, the leadership's policies were not sufficient to ensure the entirely correct treatment of civilians. This does not mean that the high command could not shape the behavior of the rank and file. Arguably, without the leadership's interventions, the troops would have committed more acts of violence. Yet, the will of the high command alone was clearly insufficient to ensure the correct treatment of civilians.

Moreover, the manner in which Red Army soldiers and officers identified with the Yugoslavs helps explain why they did not unleash violence against the local population as in the enemy countries. Yugoslavs generally welcomed the Red Army as a liberating force, and the public celebrations at the Soviet arrival was a crucial factor in forging positive impressions among Soviet troops of the country and its people. Red Army soldiers and officers also respected the Partisan resistance to the Germans and they developed comradely relations with Yugoslav fighters. In these circumstances, many soldiers and officers who looted, raped and murdered in Romania, Hungary and Austria acted otherwise in Yugoslavia.

Yet, Soviet soldiers and officers were generally convinced that as warriors they needed and had a right to sex. These impulses were reinforced in Yugoslavia by the fact that they liberated the country from Nazi clutches, and by an accompanying atavistic belief that as victors they were entitled to a tribute from the local population, which for some troops included Yugoslav women. This was the primary reason why the Red Army committed thousands of rapes even in a friendly country such as Yugoslavia. An additional reason is Soviet soldiers' penchant for excessive consumption of alcohol. It is very difficult to say whether the heavy drinking fueled or caused the atrocities, but there is no doubt that vast majority of rapes and murders were perpetrated by heavily inebriated soldiers. Finally, thousands of soldiers abandoned the frontlines, preferring to roam in the rear either temporarily (stray soldiers) or for weeks and months (deserters). Many soldiers from this group of troops committed multiple robberies and rapes, significantly contributing to the overall violence which the Red Army perpetrated in Yugoslavia.