

are not really in that class. A typical example is found on page 314, where we read that in Stanislav Rostotsky's 1972 production, *A zori zdes' tikhie*, "the director's attitude towards this melancholy literary story of a woman's unit on the Soviet front turned it into a socialist-realist disaster." I saw the film and beg to differ. In my opinion, it is not overly tendentious as war films go and it is noteworthy for its acting, its human interest, its conveying of emotions, its incorporation of folkloric elements, and its moments of humor. The authors have every right to disagree, but their product suffers from being overly cramped. The subject they have chosen is huge, and they have tried to squeeze too much material into too little space, thereby precluding justification of their claims in every instance. A further comparison with Mirsky comes to mind: whereas the distinguished literary critic could handle English admirably, the Liehms and their translator, unfortunately, cannot. One has the distinct feeling when reading the book that it was written by a foreigner, as it indeed was. In their introduction, the Liehms tell us that they wrote the book in Czech and that it was translated into English by Káča Poláčková-Henley. The English renderings are irksome rather than disastrous, but they mar the final product and bother the careful reader nevertheless.

On the positive side, it must be said that the authors approach their subject with obvious enthusiasm. Although their claim to have seen 90 percent of all the films mentioned in the book may be dubious, one can easily believe that they have seen many of them and that they have done a good bit of research in an area about which little has been written in English. Western film critics habitually harbor the notion that East European film consisted of and died with Eisenstein; they would do well to have a look at this volume and discover otherwise. Eastern Europe has given us more than Pola Negri, and the rich detail of its heritage can be found in this compendium. The book may not be the final authority, but it is a good reference work for those who can afford it. The illustrations are well chosen throughout and make one want to view the films. An appendix on Socialist Realism and a short but useful bibliography follow the text.

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## LETTER

TO THE EDITOR:

I have read with interest the article "SOE and British Involvement in the Belgrade Coup d'état of March 1941" by David A. T. Stafford in the September 1977 issue of *Slavic Review*. May I be allowed to say that I was one of the organizers of the said coup d'état. Winston S. Churchill in his book *The Grand Alliance* mentions me as well as my brother Živan L. Knežević. I see from Dr. Stafford's article that "in the SOE's view, it was Knežević [myself] who took the initiative in fomenting a coup, and his were "the brains behind the conspiracy" (p. 412, footnote 48). This judgment no doubt has been taken from the June 24, 1941 report of the SOE's activities in Yugoslavia written by Colonels Taylor and Masterson, now found among the Dalton Papers at the London School of Economics and Political Science. Therefore, I feel all the more obliged to make some remarks about Dr. Stafford's article.

I concur heartily with his conclusion: that "whatever persuasion the British exercised, it is still clear that the initiative came from the Yugoslavs, and only by a stretch of the imagination can the British be said to have planned or directed the coup d'état" (p. 419).

In Dr. Stafford's excellent article there is an allegation, however, about me to which I must take exception. He asserts that the links of the SOE "with the air force conspirators, led by Bora Mirković, were only indirect—through Trifunović and Radoje Knežević on the Yugoslav side, and through the air attaché's contacts with Mirković on the British side" (p. 412). Let me say that, in this respect, I have had an exchange of letters with Dr. Stafford. In my letter to him, dated February 28, 1978, I said that his "assertion about me conveys the impression that, in some manner, I have been in connection with the SOE people then in Belgrade." I impressed upon him that "as a matter of fact, while in Yugoslavia, I have never heard the names of the SOE or SIS people. I didn't even know a single Englishman living then in my native country." I asked him to let me know what prompted him to state that I had been a link between SOE people and General Mirković. Dr. Stafford replied on March 13, 1978. He said that "a normally highly reliable informant, whose name I am not at liberty to divulge, told me that Masterson saw you prior to the *coup*."

On April 8, 1978, I sent the following response to Dr. Stafford: "Whoever that person may be, a He or a She, that person has told you a deliberate lie. It was certainly not someone of SOE people: those I had come to know later in the summer of 1941 were all honest men and they would not stoop to a lie. I suspect it could be someone from among the followers of Prince Paul. The aim of most of them has been throughout the years to denigrate the men who had prevented Yugoslavia in March 1941 from siding with Hitler. The story of my 'several meetings' with Colonel Masterson was invented twenty years ago by D. Cvetković, Prince Paul's Prime Minister and the signatory of the Tripartite Pact, in his booklet 'Dokumenti o Jugoslaviji' (Paris, February 1958). After I rebuked him in the London review 'Poruka' (March 1958), Cvetković and his acolytes kept mum about it. Now, your 'normally highly reliable informant' repeats the lie to you. Did you do something to ascertain the veracity of your informant? And why should you keep Him or Her hidden in anonymity? I would ask you to reveal the name of that 'normally highly reliable informant,' in order for me to deal with Him or Her in an appropriate manner. It would be in the interest of the historical truth, to which we are both attached."

I have waited for his response up to this day, to no avail.

May I add that in my letter of April 8, 1978 to Dr. Stafford I also stated the following: "There is nothing in your letter that would support your claim that in 1941 I have been an indirect link between SOE people in Yugoslavia and General Mirković. Your assertion about it is utterly inaccurate."

I would like to state this again most emphatically.

R. L. KNÉJÉVITCH  
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#### PROFESSOR STAFFORD REPLIES:

If I was incorrect in assuming that Mr. Knéjévitch was among the leading members of the Democratic Party in 1941, and therefore, on the evidence of SOE's own account, one of their many contacts, then I regret the error and any personal offense this may have caused. My assumption appeared to be confirmed by the recollections of an informant, but I accept that after thirty-five years such recollections may be in error. I am grateful to Mr. Knéjévitch for placing his own views on record.

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