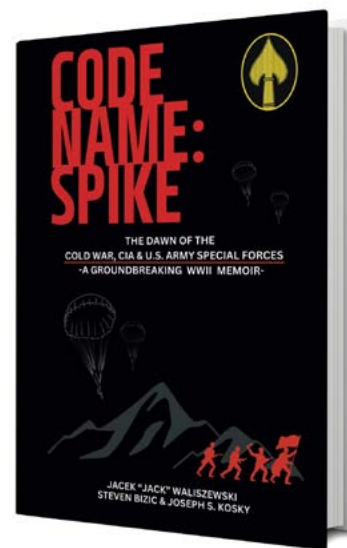


intelligence in public media

CODE NAME: SPIKE

*The Dawn of the Cold War, CIA
& U.S. Army Special Forces*

Reviewed by Kevin McCall



Author: Jacek “Jack” Waliszewski, Steven Bizic, and Joseph S. Kosky

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Reviewer: The reviewer is a former Marine and US Army paratrooper. He is now a member of CIA’s History Staff.

CODE NAME: SPIKE is a recently discovered, rare and valuable World War II memoir about an Office of Strategic Services mission in Yugoslavia. The memoir was originally written shortly after the war ended by two of the team’s members, Sgt. Steven Bizic and Cpl. Joseph S. Kosky. US Army Special Forces WO2 Jacek “Jack” Waliszewski discovered the manuscript, unpublished due to early Cold War sensitivities, in the US Army Heritage and Education Center archive.

In it, Sergeant Bizic, an immigrant to the United States, parachutes into Yugoslavia with three other SPIKE team members, including Corporal Kosky. The mission was the third OSS attempt to penetrate the area—the earlier insertions had been lost and unaccounted for. Team SPIKE was received by British Special Operation

Executive Team BURLESQUE. “Their primary mission is to reinforce and direct Yugoslav and Macedonian resistance operations, and gather vital intelligence against the Nazis.”

SPIKE’s area of operations is southern Yugoslavia—surrounded on three sides by Albania, Bulgaria, and Greece. In this corner of Europe, in addition to the Germans, SPIKE encounters Yugoslavs from competing parties of partisans and royalist Chetniks, Bulgarian soldiers, and Albanian fascists—any or all of whom may be hostile. The mountainous terrain is remarkably forbidding with steep slopes, narrow valleys, and fast flowing rivers—conducive to guerrilla warfare of the most grueling and difficult character—that physically challenge the hardiest of people.

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After insertion and link-up with the British team, SPIKE demonstrates its most valuable ability: calling in air-dropped supplies, some of which partisan leadership purloin for their own purposes. The reader is introduced to the overriding concept of the book: *Pokret*, a Serbo-Croatian term that translates into “Let’s move right now.” In a continuing effort to evade Albanian patrols and Bulgarian aircraft, the partisans of the SPIKE and BURLESQUE teams conduct a series of forced marches, some lasting up to 30 hours, throughout the mission. The narrative of being continually chased because of revelations by local informers and German radio-direction-finding reveals an oft-neglected truism: Although evasion is generally considered an individual skill for conventional forces and downed pilots, it is the sine qua non for unconventional armies. The ability to flee unheard and unseen from enemies and to outlast and “out suffer” them, tips the balance toward survival.

This account of the four-month mission reveals startling perspectives on guerrilla warfare and the savagery inherent to societies in dissolution and its impact on people, property, and social order. Previously amicable neighbors become brutal enemies by terror, loss, betrayal, and degradation. Burning, rape, torture, mutilation, and destruction of anything not transportable devolves into the commonplace—despicable and ubiquitous. Despite society’s previously civilized proclivities, the rationale of “kill or be killed” becomes paramount to even reluctant participants in guerrilla war, and local populations absorb the anger and reprisals of combatants.

CODE NAME: SPIKE also reveals the hazards of arming guerrilla forces—and thereby giving them the ability to fight common enemies *and* their other, additional enemies. While in the company of the guerrillas, paramilitary advisers may be allies, a source of protection and subsistence *and* the guerrilla’s “prisoners.” Their value as “hostages” varies according to the scenarios and dangers in which the guerrillas find themselves and whether or not the captors still require hostages. Paramilitary advisers are also at the mercy of political machinations well beyond their cognizance or control, as demonstrated by Allied abandonment of the Chetniks to support the Russian protégé—communist

partisan leader Josef Tito—in the name of Allied unity, as agreed upon in the 1943 Tehran Conference.

Of particular interest to intelligence officers and historians is an example of the developing “special relationship” between the OSS and its slightly elder cousin, the British Special Operations Executive. Much of OSS’s original training and doctrine was adapted from SOE early in the war. By dint of necessity, despite separate missions, the organizations often shared resources, worked together, fought together, and discreetly “looked the other way” when national decorum demanded. It was the operational establishment of a cultural affinity that has since been passed along to today’s US Special Operations and British Special Air Service as well as CIA and Britain’s Secret Intelligence Service (MI6).

In his rendering of the original manuscript, WO2 Waliszewski went the extra mile to research British archives for corroborating information. His efforts located SPIKE’s Morse code messages to OSS Headquarters, which he inserted throughout the book to validate its credibility. The narrative itself is buttressed with clear, well-drawn maps and a collection of photographs (courtesy of surviving family members) that help carry the story, clarify locations, and give the characters shapes, faces, uniforms, and humanity.

CODE NAME: SPIKE compares favorably to other prominent OSS memoirs of the 1940s such as Stewart Alsop and Thomas Braden’s *Sub Rosa: The O.S.S. and American Espionage* (1946), Corey Ford and Alastair MacBain’s *Cloak and Dagger: The Secret Story of the O.S.S.* (1946), and Elizabeth MacDonald’s *Undercover Girl* (1947). The volume’s detailed documentation of a behind-the-lines mission fills a niche left by such works published right after the war. It will take a rightful place in the libraries of OSS historians and aficionados. Moreover, *CODE NAME: SPIKE* should be required reading for aspiring Special Operations soldiers, their officers, and other paramilitary operators as a primer for understanding the nature, difficulty, and uncertainty inherent in their chosen profession. Its straightforward story will inspire future generations of “quiet professionals” to train, prepare, and steel themselves for the rigors of irregular war. ■