

lorries by throwing sand into petrol tanks and by slashing tyres. 'The *saltadori* achieved particular notoriety by jumping on to moving lorries carrying food and throwing large amounts of produce to their pals who were strategically placed along the route.'⁹ Small beer it may have been, but it was a signal of the infinitely greater violence to come.

In late May 1942, a few men gathered around a barn near Sperkiades, just below the southern tip of the Pindus mountain range in the interior of Thessaly. The numbers were not as impressive as Anathasias Klaras had hoped. Nonetheless, the men were armed and willing, and so the group headed off to the mountains. These new *andarte*, the descendants of the *klepht* guerrillas of the Liberation War,^{*} left their names and identities behind them. Klaras, the quiet communist functionary, was buried that day and resurrected immediately as Aris Velouchiotis, the *Archigos* (leader) of the first unit of ELAS, Ellenikos Laikos Apeleutherotikos Stratos (Greek National Liberation Army). It was an inauspicious start. To avoid the attention of the real *klephts*, bandits whose numbers had increased dramatically since the food shortages began, and in order to win the affection of the peasantry, Aris banned his men from plundering: 'Thus the "People's Liberation Guerrillas" concealed themselves during the day and gathered berries and roots at night. The discovery of a tortoise is considered a rare piece of fortune. Hunger, cold and depression reduced the band to five men.'⁹

Aris improvised a new strategy. He led his tiny band of men to the village of Domnista, deep in the mountains of central Greece, and called a meeting of the locals. 'Patriots! I am Aris Velouchiotis, Colonel of Artillery. Starting today, I am raising the banner of revolt against the forces occupying our beloved country. The handful of men you see before you will soon become an army of thousands. We are just a nucleus.'¹⁰ Notwithstanding his militant atheism, Velouchiotis bent to kiss the hand of the priest and swore allegiance to the elders. In return for protecting the village, the ELAS men were guaranteed food and accommodation. Greece had taken a first step on the road to civil war. This movement was destined to

* See chapter 1.

become an army of thousands, as Aris had predicted. To the north in Yugoslavia, it was by then already possible to see how a complex mixture of resistance, civil war, ethnic and class conflict could provoke utter mayhem in a Balkan country.

Bloody Fairy Tale: Serbia and Bosnia

Henceforth one hundred prisoners or hostages are to be shot for every soldier killed and fifty for every one wounded. Every regional garrison to arrest as many communists, nationalists, democrats and Jews as possible without endangering combat capability thereby. Announcement in public of operation aims and to arrested and their relatives.

Order telexed on Monday, 13 October 1941 from the German High Command to the 718 Infantry Division of the *Wehrmacht*, detailing new measures to be taken in response to the widespread guerrilla activity in Serbia.¹¹

Nothing on the Balkan peninsula was as shocking during the war as the fate of Yugoslavia and its peoples after the Germans and Italians sent in their troops to prise open the route to the Aegean in April 1941. What had been a single country was now chopped up into at least nine units (although few of these were stable). Slovenia was split in two; Italy annexing the south-west, including Ljubljana, and Germany grabbing the plum industrial areas in the north-east. As part of the deal which saw the Ustaše come to power in Croatia with Italian help, Italy seized Dalmatia, the Adriatic islands and a large part of Istria. The Independent State of Croatia (*Nezavisna država Hrvatska - NDH*) included all of Croatia, Slavonia, Bosnia and Hercegovina, but it was also divided into Italian and German military zones. Montenegro lost part of its territory to Albania and became an 'independent' province under Italian protection. The Italians also used the Albanians to annex part of Kosovo and western Macedonia. The Germans occupied the Banat; the Hungarians took Vojvodina while Bulgaria reclaimed Macedonia and small areas of southern Serbia. Serbia itself was under direct German military rule, although in August 1941 a puppet government under General Milan Nedić was established, which drew support from Serbia's fascist movement, the Zbor.

In almost every part of the country, the establishment of a new authority was accompanied by the settling of old accounts and the opening of new ones. Governance was replaced by state terror on a horrifying scale. The Ustaše turned their territory into one great slaughterhouse. The Germans in Belgrade lost no time in drawing up their lists of Jews, Gypsies and subversives while in northern Macedonia, Bulgarian soldiers and secret policemen were torturing suspected Serb sympathizers and hanging their mutilated bodies from street lamps. Those who found themselves in Italian occupied zones were the least unfortunate. Yet uniquely in occupied and fascist Europe, armed resistance organizations mounted a challenge to the Nazis' New Order from the very beginning. There were several reasons why this happened in Yugoslavia and why Serbia and the Serbs were the focus of this resistance.

The speed with which the Royal Yugoslav Army had been defeated and dispersed surprised everybody – the Yugoslavs themselves, the Axis powers and the Allies. Large numbers of officers and soldiers evaded capture, however. They withdrew with their weapons into the mountains and forests, chiefly in Bosnia and Montenegro but also in Serbia. These men would make up the core of the Chetnik resistance loyal to Colonel Dragoljub ('Draža') Mihailović and the London-based government in exile.

At their headquarters in Belgrade, a rival resistance inspired by a very different ideology was taking shape. Members of the Politburo of the Yugoslav Communist Party (KPJ) under the leadership of the energetic Josip Broz Tito decided to spread out across the country. Their task was to activate the KPJ's highly disciplined underground network (a fortunate by-product of many years of illegality) and develop a strategy for guerrilla warfare. These men and women were the first Partisans.

In Croatia, the terror unleashed by the Ustaše against the Serbian villages of Croatia, Bosnia and Hercegovina drove Serbs into the arms of the Chetniks and the Partisans. These peasants had a choice – to be incinerated or butchered in their homes by the Ustaše, or to fight. Many of them had family traditions of military prowess as they inhabited what had been the *vojna krajina*,* or Military

District, of the Habsburg Empire. The Ustaše created so many and such troublesome enemies that the German military and civilian authorities in Zagreb repeatedly attempted to bring Pavelić's genocidal campaign against the Serbs to a halt. They were not moved by the victims' plight,* but were concerned that the terror was forcing tens of thousands of Serbs to flee to Serbia, Montenegro and contested areas of Bosnia where they often took up arms. Relatively large numbers of Serbian and Croatian Jews also joined the Partisans.

The Germans had not expected any resistance in Yugoslavia. As soon as the army surrendered, Germany redeployed most of its own troops in Serbia to the Russian Front. Hitler retained a minimal force to keep open the main north-south trunk route from Belgrade to Bulgarian-occupied Macedonia, but this left large areas of eastern, central, western and north-western Serbia exposed to Partisans and Chetniks.

In September 1941, Tito established his headquarters in Užice in western Serbia. Wherever they went (and they developed into an extremely mobile fighting force), the Partisans first set about building an administration and trying to ensure an adequate local economy and a varied social life. Hampered too often by a sectarian devotion to Leninism and Stalin, the Yugoslav Communists nonetheless recognized that an unhappy warrior was an unreliable one. In contrast to the Chetniks, the KPJ leadership devoted much energy to propaganda and to ensuring that morale remained as high as possible in often catastrophic conditions. In the Užice Republic, as their first base became known, the Communists set up a functioning postal system and a railway over 145 kilometres long. Schools were open normally, as were cinemas and the dance halls. The newly founded newspaper, *Borba* (*The Struggle*), appeared every other day. A weapons factory in the vaults of Užice's bank turned out 400 guns a day and valuable quantities of ammunition.

Cheek by jowl with the Užice Republic was Ravna Gora, Draža Mihailović's mountainous operational centre. Mihailović did not

* Germany's military representative in Zagreb, General Edmund Glaise von Horstenau regularly expressed his disgust at the gruesome behaviour of the Ustaše, although as a pre-*Anschluss* Austrian Nazi, he could hardly claim to be morally spotless himself.

* See chapter 1.

preside over a community as the Partisans did in Užice, but support for the Chetniks among the peasantry of central Serbia was much greater than it was for the communists. The two groups watched each other uneasily but, for two months at least, they were content to live as neighbours with distant but correct relations, according to the slogan, *Једна земља а два господара* - ONE COUNTRY, TWO MASTERS.

Aside from the occasional territorial skirmish, neither side was inclined to force the central issues dividing them: leadership, tactics and ideology.

The leadership question was straightforward: who would head the resistance to the Germans? The two men met to discuss their differences on 19 September and Tito offered Mihailović the post of Chief of Staff of all resistance forces in Yugoslavia. Smelling a rat, the Chetnik leader turned this down, aware that Tito was happy to sacrifice military control if the KPJ retained political control. So they remained as divided on the leadership question as they did on the matter of military strategy.

The Partisans were proving more effective as a fighting machine than the Chetniks because they used better tactics. They aimed to liberate broad swathes of territory and place them under the political supervision of the KPJ. Partisan troops were not attached to any specific region and would obediently go wherever the leadership told them to. This meant that in the event of the Germans reoccupying territory, the Partisans would effect a tactical retreat and attempt to establish new liberated territory elsewhere in the country.

The bulk of Chetnik forces, on the other hand, were attached not just to specific districts but to individual villages. Their tactics were defensive, aimed at maintaining local freedom of action. As such, the Chetniks were not highly organized or flexible; although most played lip service to Mihailović as their leader, they did not consider themselves bound to him: if they did not feel like leaving their villages on a mission, they would not do so.

The KPJ orchestrated the Partisans according to the Leninist principle of 'democratic centralism'. Tito and the Politburo arrived at decisions which the rank and file were supposed to carry out unquestioningly. To disobey orders was to risk one's life. In contrast, there was no single Chetnik organization. Not only did village units wield

considerable operational autonomy, but the Chetniks were drawn from a large spectrum of pre-war political parties - they were not driven by a single ideology. One group of Chetniks were known from the start as the 'legal' Chetniks, who cooperated openly with the Germans, Italians and the quisling régimes in Serbia and Montenegro. Some of Mihailović's officers were implacably anti-German and demanded that the Chetnik movement cooperate with the Partisans. Others regarded the Partisans with contempt, and were bent on wiping them out as agents of Moscow. Broadly, however, the Chetniks fought on behalf of the old royal régime, which put them at odds with the Partisans, whose aim was to replace a discredited bourgeois system with a socialist order based on the Soviet model.

Ideological divisions between the Chetniks and Partisans were often hard to untangle from their differences in military tactics. Tito approved guerrilla hit-and-run tactics as a means of provoking retaliation against local civilians. The more cruelly the Germans acted, reasoned the KPJ, the more new recruits for the Partisans. Resistance was only one part of the Partisans' programme. The second part was the preparation for socialist revolution.

Mihailović's main war aim, by contrast, was the 'biological survival' of the Serbian people and the creation of a homogeneous Greater Serbia. In the most widely distributed Chetnik manifesto of 1941, one of Mihailović's supporters argued that 'transfers and exchanges of population, especially of Croats from the Serbian and of Serbs from the Croatian areas, is the only way to arrive at their separation and to create better relations between them, and thereby remove the possibility of a repetition of the terrible crimes that occurred even in the First World War, but especially during this war, in the entire area in which the Serbs and Croats live intermixed, and where the Croats and Moslems have undertaken in a calculated way the extermination of the Serbs'.¹² The Chetniks' conviction that they were fighting for the survival of the Serb race was, of course, an exaggeration. But in the light of Serb experiences during the Great War; in light of the Ustaše's genocidal policy against Serbs in Croatia, Bosnia and Hercegovina; and in light of the ruthless behaviour of the Nazis, the Chetniks may be forgiven for thinking that there did exist a plan to liquidate all Serbs. For this reason, Mihailović and his commanders were most reluctant to provoke the Germans for fear of reprisals against civilians.

The Chetniks were rooted to areas where Serbs lived; the Partisans appealed to all Yugoslav nationalities. Croats and Muslims could not join the Chetniks, but they were welcome in the Partisans. When Chetnik bands came into contact with Croats and Muslims, one side usually ended up being massacred. Chetnik leaders who supported the old order of royal Yugoslavia suspected that the KPJ's policy of equality for all Yugoslav nations was a way of subordinating Serbian interests to those of Croats, Slovenes and Muslims.

During the early autumn of 1941, tension between the Chetniks and Partisans in western Serbia grew as the communists attempted to expand their 'liberated territory', often at the expense of their rivals and by using force against the Germans. Mistrust between Chetniks and Partisans spilled over into serious armed conflict in October. By this time, even Hitler realized the uprising in Serbia was serious, because it was disrupting his north-south communications. He redeployed an infantry regiment from Greece to Serbia and an entire division from France to Serbia in early September. He now had four and a half divisions in the country. A month later, he issued his notorious order that one hundred Serbs would be killed for the death of a single German and fifty if a German was wounded.

German intelligence failed to identify the growing rift between Partisan and Chetnik. The *Wehrmacht* was even convinced that Mihailović and Tito were deepening their collaboration. General Franz Böhme, the German commander in Serbia, prepared to meet the uprising in Serbia with decisive force.

In the middle of October, a joint Partisan-Chetnik force laid siege to the 2,200-strong German garrison in the small town of Kraljevo. During the course of the fighting on 17 October, the Germans were shot at from inside the town. The commandant issued orders for the arrest and summary execution of 300 Serbs. But he did not stop there. Over the next few days, eye-witnesses reported how *Wehrmacht* patrols went from house to house, seizing all men from the ages of fourteen to sixty, and herding them into a makeshift camp at the local rolling-stock factory. Their papers were checked and their names entered into a ledger. When the camp was full, the Germans took a group of one hundred, and placed them in front of open graves and machine-gunned them. The soldiers then examined the bodies. If a victim showed any signs of life, he was finished off with a bullet to the temple. After the first group had

been exterminated, the Germans went back to the camp for the next 100.¹³ And so it went on, until all the men were dead.

According to the official records of the 717 Infantry Division, 'altogether 1736 men and 19 communist women',¹⁴ were killed that day, which also saw twenty Iron Crosses, 2nd Class, conferred upon members of the units responsible for the massacre.

The killing went on for another seven days as the *Wehrmacht* fanned out around Kraljevo, burning all the neighbouring villages and killing indiscriminately; but there was worse to come. At the very end of September, the Partisans launched an attack on Gornji Milanovac, a town of some 3,000 people, situated in a verdant central Serbian valley. Milanovac had barely existed at the turn of the century and had grown by attracting disparate, isolated outsiders from other villages and towns. There was little sense of a local patriotism and its inhabitants adopted a cautious attitude towards the Chetniks, Partisans and Germans alike. Without informing the Chetniks, Tito's headquarters in Užice dispatched a Partisan unit to attack the small German detachment stationed in Milanovac's newly built school. The Partisans stood little chance of actually taking the German garrison which was heavily defended. But this was not the point: the Partisans anticipated that the disruption and fighting would generate new recruits. Zvonimir Vučković, the twenty-four-year-old district Chetnik commander, learnt of the Partisans' intentions and hastened to Milanovac to join in the operation, even though he thought it suicidal. 'There was no doubt that we Chetniks would have suffered a significant loss of prestige at that time if we had just washed our hands of the operation and stood to one side', he later wrote. 'The powerful propaganda machine of the Partisans would have had no difficulty persuading the locals that they were the only real fighters for freedom.'¹⁵ As so often, competition between Chetniks and Partisans led to the use of reckless tactics. Vučković worried that once the joint resistance force had seized the town, it would not be able to hold on to it. Instead, it would become a battleground where civilians would become the main victims.

At three o'clock one morning, the Partisans led the charge against the Germans holed up in the school. Although the attackers succeeded in disabling the German sentry posts, the occupiers' modern weaponry, particularly their heavy machine guns, soon neutralized

the assault. In the first hour and a half of fighting, ten Germans were killed and twenty-six wounded, relatively small losses. Yet this was a demoralized unit on the very edge of German-controlled territory. A week earlier, the German garrison commander had radioed regional headquarters in a vain request for food and ammunition. Vučković, the Chetnik leader, and his Partisan counterpart judged that flushing out the Germans would cost too many casualties and too much precious ammunition, so Vučković suggested negotiating with the Germans instead. To everyone's surprise, the German commander agreed to surrender almost immediately. Vučković took the men into custody and handed them over to the Chetnik command at Ravna Gora. Franz Egger, an officer with the company, escaped and reported to Belgrade all that had happened at Milanovac and that the German prisoners in captivity 'were being decently treated'. When General Böhme heard of the case, however, he decided it warranted retaliation.

Kragujevac, a town of 10,000, lay 37 kilometres to the east of Gornji Milanovac and was the regional headquarters of the *Wehrmacht*. On instructions from Böhme, the district commander, Baron von Bischofshausen, ordered the arrest of all suspected communists and male Jews on 18 October 1941. They were held for two days without food. Then, without warning, on the evening of the 20th, German troops entered the barracks and courtyard where they were being held and started firing at random. The prisoners scattered and ran but were all eventually picked off like fleeing animals, the first victims of the Kragujevac massacre. At the same time, *Wehrmacht* units entered the town's main secondary school, removing entire classes of schoolchildren aged fourteen and upwards. Workers from the local factories (including hundreds of men engaged in vital military industries) were also brought to the Stanovija Field, the barracks of a former motorized battalion. Troops seized priests and monks from Kragujevac's churches. Every single man was then registered and his belongings noted meticulously.

At precisely 7 o'clock the next morning, the pattern established at Kraljevo was repeated. Fifty men were taken from the barracks and made to stand in two rows in front of the small river which ran behind the barracks. They were then mown down with a heavy machine gun. For seven hours, groups of between 50 and 120 men and boys were led to the same spot. After the war, at least thirty-one

mass graves were discovered. According to German statistics, the *Wehrmacht* (which concluded the day's work by organizing a celebratory parade through the town centre) killed 2,324 men in retaliation for the ten dead and twenty-six wounded in the attack on Milanovac. One hundred and forty-four secondary-school students were killed, often in groups comprising an entire class with their teacher standing at their head. 'It was in a land of peasants', wrote Desanka Maksimović, one of Serbia's greatest postwar poets in *Krvava bajka*, 'Bloody Fairy Tale', 'In the mountainous Balkans / Where a little class of students, learned their lesson of death'.¹⁶ The murdered children included five twelve-year-olds.

Four days after the Kragujevac massacre, Colonel Bill Hudson, the first SOE operative to reach Yugoslavia, arrived at Mihailović's headquarters after a tiring journey made by submarine, donkey, truck and on foot. In his baggage he carried confirmation that the British government was prepared to extend recognition to the Chetnik leader as the only legitimate resistance force in Yugoslavia. In a matter of months, the Allied press had mythologized Mihailović as an invincible hero, defying the Nazis in the face of incredible odds. On the other hand, the role of the Partisans, who had done most of the fighting against the Germans, was barely recognized. One American journalist claimed that Tito was not a person but an acronym for a shadowy, ineffective conspiracy – the Third International Terrorist Organization!

Hudson's news of Allied recognition for Mihailović soured still further the relations between Chetniks and Partisans. The atmosphere was already thick with mutual recriminations about moral responsibility for the Kraljevo and Kragujevac massacres. Mihailović resolved to address the Partisan question once and for all. 'This attack which I am going to launch on the partisans, and my relations with them', he warned Bill Hudson, 'is entirely a Yugoslav affair and I am the legitimate representative of my government.'¹⁷

Vicious clashes between Partisans and Chetniks broke out in November 1941 just as the *Wehrmacht* finished preparations for a massive air and infantry assault on both the Partisans' Užice Republic and the Chetnik headquarters at Ravna Gora. The plan for destroying the Chetnik base went ahead despite an offer of cooperation from Mihailović to the Germans. The Chetnik leader had suggested a truce in exchange for arms, which he would use against the Partisans. These

brief negotiations failed. Nonetheless, Mihailović had taken a first step on the treacherous road to collaboration.

By early December, the Partisan army found itself in disorganized retreat from Užice into the Sanjak and south-eastern Bosnia. The sedentary Chetniks, in contrast, melted back into their villages. Mihailović escaped the German assault on Ravna Gora and continued to direct offensive operations, but mainly in eastern Bosnia.

The outbreak of civil war between the Serb Chetniks and the predominantly Serb Partisans completed the panorama of murderous chaos that now filled the Yugoslav canvas. When the Partisans arrived at their new base in Foča in eastern Bosnia, they discovered that the violence had already reached a terrible pitch of intensity. According to the Nazi carve-up, Bosnia was now a part of Pavelić's Independent State of Croatia (NDH), a Croatia, as the saying went, *sve do Drine* (all the way to the Drina). However, the government in Zagreb did not have the forces to control such a large territory. Pavelić adopted the Croat nationalist theory that regarded the Muslims of Bosnia and Hercegovina as 'Croats of the Muslim faith', brothers in the struggle against the Serbs who were subject to the same rights and responsibilities as Catholic Croats. The new state was always able to find a group of Muslims, usually influential traders and landowners, willing to work with the Ustaše. The first task of the new administration in Bosnian towns was the rounding-up and execution of the most important local Serbs. In just one incident, the Ustaše slit the throats of Serbs over a large vat until the vessel was overflowing with blood. Very quickly, as the rumours spread, the Serbs in Hercegovina and eastern Bosnia began to organize themselves into Chetnik units to take revenge against the civilian population, most of whom were Muslims not Croats. In early December 1941, Chetniks from Pale, Rogatica and Višegrad, led by a white Russian émigré, Sergei Mihailovich, stormed Foča, and the reprisals began:

When they took us to the railway bridge one of the thugs shouted: 'How come you've brought so few?' The second answered that these 16 were merely a taster for the next 84 they had rounded up. After this they began the slaughter. They killed like this. One Chetnik fell to his knees, holding a huge knife in his left hand. Every victim had to lie down under the

knife and if he refused to do so, he was hit with the butt of a gun until he collapsed on the ground. Another Chetnik would then drag him until he was in position under the knife. After each killing, they would search the victim and take anything of even the slightest value. They would then disembowel the body and throw it in the river. This went on until it came to my turn. I can still see all the others who were killed in front of my eyes like this. But just before I was due to die, my Chetnik guard turned away and I was able to escape... Despite being shot at I reached the Drina river. As I swam for my life, the body of my brother Jusuf floated by me.¹⁸

Between two and three thousand Muslims were killed in the town of Foča alone, including children and women, many of whom were routinely raped beforehand. When the Partisan army finally entered Foča, Milovan Djilas noted that those who had survived, regardless of their nationality, were so traumatized by the events in the town that they exhibited 'no ray of warmth or curiosity in their expressions, which remained apathetic, dull, inhuman. They were emaciated and yellowed, and dressed in rags.'¹⁹ This pattern of slaughter, counter-slaughter and trauma could be found in most corners of Bosnia and Hercegovina, and several regions of Croatia, from the summer of 1941.

Genocide – the Balkan camps: Romania, Croatia, Bosnia and Serbia

A year after the establishment of Jasenovac, independent Croatia's largest concentration camp, one government-controlled newspaper wrote that 'Jasenovac is no sanatorium, but neither is it a torture chamber. It is a work camp.' Jasenovac offered its inmates the opportunity to integrate into Croatian society by using their skills in building 'the great industrial complex' on the Sava river 97 kilometres south-east of Zagreb. 'Jasenovac is at the same time a college which genuinely seeks to cure the "political internees" of their poisonous views and ideology so that they might return to public life as useful members of society and proud sons of the fatherland.' Jews would regrettably need to stay in the camp until the war's end in order to prevent them from fraternizing further with the enemies of

succeeded in sabotaging Crematorium No. 4 with explosive devices. Erika felt pride rising in her breast when she heard that Greek Jews had played a major role in the attack. 'Greeks!' she exclaimed to herself. 'Our people had held their heads up high. I could hardly believe it and yet it was true! I was so proud of them: they obviously wouldn't make it but what a beautiful death! They chose the death that they wanted.'⁵³

Erika Kounio was spared only one horror at Auschwitz - Block 25 and the gas chambers. In January 1945, she took part in the Death March when tens of thousands were forced to transfer to other camps in Germany by foot. After that she and her mother survived weeks of misery at the women's camp at Ravensbrück. Despite losing twenty-two relations in Auschwitz, all of Erika's immediate family survived - the only Jewish family from Salonika to return from Auschwitz with all its members alive.

Liberation: death of the peasantry - Romania

In September 1943, Italy capitulated to US and British forces. The two Allies were obliged to consult the Soviet leadership on all decisions relating to the Italian occupation but in the event they systematically excluded Moscow. Two years before the war's end, the western Allies had thus marked out the first 'sphere of influence' in Europe, a policy which would have an early and substantial impact on the Balkan peninsula. At this stage, the United States and Britain were not yet working together to counter a perceived threat of Soviet expansionism; the relationship between Roosevelt, Stalin and Churchill was more complicated. On occasion, Roosevelt would confide his dislike of British imperialism to Stalin. The Soviet dictator sometimes sought Churchill's advice on dealing with the Americans if they were behaving inflexibly. None of the Big Three had a clear idea of its own country's war aims and only the fuzziest picture of what the other two were thinking. In an effort to prepare for an Allied victory, they formed the European Advisory Council in 1943. The EAC was charged with developing a strategy of cooperation which could be implemented as soon as the Germans signed an armistice. The resourceful American diplomat, George F. Kennan, was appointed as American delegate to the EAC. 'So far as I could learn from my superiors in the department', he later wrote,

'their attitude toward the commission was dominated primarily by a lively concern lest the new body actually do something.' The State Department was particularly nervous 'lest the American delegation, through overeagerness or inadvertence, contribute to so unfortunate an occurrence'.⁵⁴ Although the need for strategic coordination was pressing, the tactical requirements of the battlefield rendered futile any attempt to establish a coherent vision of Europe's future. The Red Army liberated the Balkans before it reached central Europe. As a result, this is where first Britain and later the United States began dividing up Europe with the Soviet Union.

Soon after Italy's surrender, an argument broke out between Britain and the United States about a possible invasion of the Balkans. Britain was keen to move swiftly into the western Balkans with the aim of pushing the Nazis back behind the Alps. Despite encouraging intelligence reports, the Americans stalled, insisting instead on driving up through difficult Italian terrain in preparation for Operation Dragoon, the seaborne assault on southern and western France. 'I still don't understand', noted General Rendulic, the man coordinating the *Wehrmacht's* struggle against Tito, 'why the Allies gave up their drive across the Balkans after they had taken Sicily in August [1943]. Instead, they sustained many losses over a period of months as they squeezed their way through the narrow roads of the Italian peninsula before finally landing on the West coast of France, far away from all the strategic theatres of war. I am convinced that by giving up an assault on the Balkans in 1943, the Allies have postponed the end of the war by a year.'⁵⁵

Eden attributed this American strategy to a reluctance to become involved in the Balkans. The Foreign Secretary concluded that 'the President shared a widespread American suspicion of the British Empire'. In consequence, 'he was always anxious to make it plain to Stalin that the US was not "ganging up" with Britain against Russia... The outcome of this was some confusion in Anglo-American relations which profited the Soviets.' During the war, the Americans treated the British obsession with the Balkans as an example of London's anachronistic imperialist urge. After the Yalta Conference in February 1945, and Harry Truman's accession to the presidency in April that year, the United States hastily borrowed the mantle of chief warrior against Stalinist expansion in Europe and Asia from Britain. The fate of the Balkans had long since been

decided by the overwhelming presence of the Red Army, a reality which the Americans had been unable to grasp in 1943. When Eisenhower dismissed Britain's plan for intervention in the Balkans, he inadvertently guaranteed Russia's dominance over much of the peninsula. The Red Army was the source of political authority in Romania and Bulgaria just as the British army, and later the American military, was the arbiter of power in Greece.

For the Balkan peoples, this was merely part of a familiar pattern whereby their political orientation was decided in the distant capitals of great powers. The Allies would argue that they had earned the right to interfere in the Balkans by dint of sacrifices made on the battlefield. (This was also the reasoning employed by Soviet generals to justify their soldiers' pillaging of central Europe and the Balkans.) It is true that people in the Balkans contributed little to their own liberation. The impact of the Chetniks in Serbia on Germany's military capability has never been properly assessed. Chetnik units controlled most of the Serbian countryside by 1944 but it would seem that the Germans were not unduly troubled by them. In Bosnia and Croatia, the Partisans kept up to thirteen Axis divisions (not all German) busy, but they spent most of the war fleeing and evading pitched battles with the *Wehrmacht*. Tito's men were heroic, but not necessarily effective.

One Balkan political drama certainly had a big impact on the course of the war in Europe. On 20 August 1944, Red Army troops stationed north of Iași in western Moldavia and south-west of Tiraspol launched their major push into the Balkans against joint German-Romanian forces. Three days later, Marshal Antonescu visited King Michael (1940-47) to recommend that Romania seek an armistice immediately. In response, the King announced he was sacking the government. He promptly arrested the Marshal. Michael and his advisers had discovered that Antonescu's agents had been holding talks with the Soviet ambassador to Stockholm, the old Bolshevik feminist, Alexandra Kollontai, about armistice terms. The new rulers in Romania wanted to hold armistice talks with the British in the hope of securing more favourable terms. Russians still inspired warmth in some Slav hearts, especially the Bulgarians and the Serbs, but the Romanians viewed their imminent arrival with despair. The armistice negotiations opened in Cairo but as the nearest British troops were almost 1,600 kilometres from Romania and

the Red Army was already inside the country, the talks soon transferred to Moscow. Despite all this, had Romania not decided to switch sides and seek an armistice, 'the losses of the Western armies in France would have been higher and so would those among the civilian population in Great Britain and the Netherlands from V-bombs. To the whole of Europe and to Rumania, as well, the final defeat of Germany would have brought greater destruction.'³⁶

Unfortunately for the Romanians, the Red Army intended to extract the maximum concessions from the surrender. The deeper Soviet troops penetrated Romania, the more complete Moscow's control would be over the territory. In the event, King Michael's offer of an armistice to the Soviets was not actually taken up. Nor had Hitler finished with Romania. He felt personally betrayed by the *coup* against Antonescu, and issued orders to crush the conspirators and restore the Marshal to power. A day after the *coup*, Romania was attacked simultaneously by German and Soviet troops. At 11 o'clock in the morning of 24 August, 150 Luftwaffe bombers and dive bombers appeared in perfect formation over the Romanian capital, which had already suffered devastation in Allied air raids since April. To the east, Soviet forces were taking tens of thousands of Romanian prisoners. They were also ripping up all rolling stock, requisitioning every motor car and, in some cases, dismantling entire factories for export to the Soviet Union. It was not long before the Germans were expelled. In September 1944, the armistice was finally signed and the looting came to an end. Romania was now obliged to start paying reparations of \$300 million.

In the baggage of the Red Army came the hitherto insignificant Romanian Communist Party (RCP). Returning from her exile in Moscow, Ana Pauker, the future Foreign Minister and show-trial victim, admitted frankly that the RCP had about 1,000 members in the entire country. Within less than three years, it had over 200,000. In the north-east and in Transylvania (which the Soviets restored to Romanian sovereignty), the communists swiftly filled the power vacuum. In these regions, the Party was dominated by Jews and Hungarians, which made it still less attractive to Romanians. In Wallachia and southern Romania, the old parties were still strong. The tens of thousands now streaming to join the RCP included some who were disaffected by the old parties but the majority were not signing up out of ideological conviction, and the RCP was not

choosy: 'Though themselves willing to admit former Iron Guardsists to their ranks, they raised a storm when other parties did the same.'⁵⁷ The converts felt the powerful new wind blowing from Moscow and regarded the RCP as the best place to find shelter. Gradually, RCP members began filling local councils and the police force throughout the country. However, Russophobia and the peasantry's stubborn resistance to change meant that communism encountered more difficulty establishing itself in Romania than anywhere else in the Balkans.

King Michael struggled to keep a non-communist national government afloat, in the hope that the Americans and the British would put pressure on the Russians. Had the King and his adviser, Ion Maniu, been apprised of discussions in Moscow during October 1944, they might have spared themselves the effort. In an attempt to solve the Polish and Balkan problems, Churchill had visited Stalin:

'Let us settle about our affairs in the Balkans. Your armies are in Rumania and Bulgaria. We have interests, missions, and agents there. Don't let us get at cross-purposes in small ways. So far as Britain and Russia are concerned, how would it do for you to have ninety per cent predominance in Rumania, for us to have ninety per cent of the say in Greece, and go about fifty-fifty about Yugoslavia?' While this was being translated I wrote out on a half-sheet of paper:

Rumania	
Russia	90%
The others	10%
Greece	
Great Britain (in accord with U.S.A.)	90%
Russia	10%
Yugoslavia	50-50%
Hungary	50-50%
Bulgaria	
Russia	75%
The others	25%

I pushed this across to Stalin, who by then had heard the translation. There was a slight pause. Then he took his blue pencil

and made a large tick upon it, and passed it back to us. It was all settled in no more time than it takes to set down.⁵⁸

Europe was divided at Yalta at February 1945. But by then the postwar fate of the Balkans had long been sealed. As relations between the Soviet Union and the West steadily deteriorated in the mid-1940s, the division of Europe became inevitable as Moscow sought to strengthen its *cordon sanitaire* in eastern Europe and the Balkans. The British and the Americans disapproved of Russia's political monopoly in Romania and they issued sporadic protests. But as practitioners of great-power *Realpolitik*, they understood the logic of Stalin's actions. 'The Russians have been in undisputed control from the beginning', Roosevelt observed to Churchill in March 1945, 'and with Rumania lying athwart the Russian lines of communications it is moreover difficult to contest the plea of military necessity and security which they are using to justify their action.'⁵⁹ The alternative was war between the Soviet Union and the West which neither side was willing to risk. In the Balkans, there were still adjustments to come in Yugoslavia and Hungary (largely in Stalin's favour), but after the Moscow summit Romania and Bulgaria fell under exclusive Soviet influence, while Britain would have a free hand in Greece.

In both Romania and Bulgaria, the communist parties were committed to fashioning a state based on the revolutionary potential of the working class. But the proletariat was scarce in both countries, overwhelmed in a sea of peasants, most of whom favoured private ownership of land, and for whom the idea of 'collectivization' was anathema. The CP leaderships understood the need to woo the peasantry whilst neutralizing its popular leaders. Their attempts to do so were alternately comical and vicious. Romania's first communist-dominated government was led by Petru Groza who headed the Ploughman's Front, a tiny organization of rural fellow travellers. Groza's cabinet ordered several thousand tractors from the Soviet Union which would be sent to the 320 newly established Agricultural Machine Centres. The order was duly submitted but the tractors never arrived. Romania and Bulgaria found themselves in the company of a powerful ally whose economy was in shreds. The revival of industry and agriculture in both countries proved exceptionally difficult, particularly in Romania where the Soviet

Union imposed punitive demands. Not only were Bessarabia and northern Bukovina annexed to the Soviet Union, but Romania's entire oil production, a unique economic asset in the Balkans, was turned over to the Soviets.

There was little cooperation between the opposition and the communists in Romania and regular outbursts of violence. The future First Secretary, Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, commanded the loyalty of the country's largest group of workers, the railway men, and organized them into paramilitary bands, which were frequently called upon to 'restore order'. During 1945 and 1946, Britain and the United States attempted to pressurize the Soviet Union into allowing broader participation in the Romanian government. This coincided with western measures to exclude the communist parties of Italy and France from government, leaving Stalin with a watertight excuse to behave in a similar fashion in the Balkans. On 19 November 1946, 'the Rumanian people went to the polls in an election in which every fraudulent, violent, and unscrupulous device ever used in the Balkans was brought into full play'.⁶⁰ The communists were now in total control.

Liberation: Death of a peasant - Bulgaria

The Soviet occupation was initially more tolerable in Bulgaria than in Romania. Americans, Britons and Bulgarians all agreed that the Red Army behaved with some discretion and deference. Russian officers did not stay 'in the best hotels and . . . were seldom in the best restaurants or the best shops. They looked like strangers from a long way off.' Elizabeth Barker, the perceptive Reuters correspondent in the Balkans, contrasted this behaviour with the situation in Greece where 'the British occupation . . . was far more conspicuous and outwardly irritating. The British had all the best hotels in every town where there was a garrison . . . They walked the streets as though they were patrons or colonisers; their clean khaki drill uniforms and white belts and pink faces stood out loudly against the Greek background.'⁶¹ Bulgaria had resisted Hitler's demand to declare war on the Soviet Union. True, Moscow did declare war on Bulgaria just before crossing from Romania in September 1944; but it was Europe's shortest war - the hostilities only lasted a few hours before the Bulgarian surrender was accepted.

There was much less looting, rape and expropriation in Bulgaria than elsewhere. In general, Bulgarians welcomed the liberating troops with polite enthusiasm. The Soviets found the local Communist Party larger and better-organized than its Romanian counterpart.

The communists lost no time in settling old scores by establishing special tribunals, known as People's Courts. Throughout 1945, thousands associated with the wartime régime were summarily tried. In the space of six months, 2,138 people were executed and as many again received life sentences. The accused included opponents of the communists who had refused to collaborate with the pro-German régime. The most prominent victim of this first wave of postwar repression was the leading figure of the left-wing Agrarians, G.M. Dimitrov, who was known either as 'The Doctor' or plain GM, to distinguish him from his namesake, Georgi Dimitrov, the undisputed leader of the Communist Party who was still directing operations from his exile in Moscow. The persecution of G.M. Dimitrov, who had returned from exile during 1945, revealed that while promising a new dawn, the Communist Party also drew on an important tradition from the interwar years - that of state terror. People quickly learnt to fear the People's Militia, whose officers patrolled the towns and villages in their distinct uniforms of khaki with magenta piping. A lawyer who defended the Agrarians, when asked the difference between the new People's Militia and the pre-war police, remarked, 'on the whole they are just the same, except that they take less trouble. In the old days, the police held the prisoners until the prison doctors had managed to heal the scars so that they didn't show much. Now the Militia turn them out without bothering about that sort of thing.'⁶²

Such carelessness led the Militia to return the body of Mara Racheva, GM's secretary, to her mother after days of interrogation in early 1945. Officially, she had committed suicide by throwing herself out of a fourth-storey window. In an embassy memo, the American military attaché, Colonel S.W. Bailey, reported his conversation with the doctor who examined the corpse at the mother's request. '[T]he following injuries - difficult to explain by the effect of a fall even from the fourth floor window - were established, in addition to the bullet and knife wounds. 1. All the nails on both feet had been torn out. 2. Three fingers of the left hand had been hacked

off at the second joint. 3. Both ears cut off. 4. Right breast excised. 5. Tongue torn out and all teeth extracted. 6. Flaying of a strip of skin about two inches wide through one quadrant of the waist. Demands for the preparation of a protocol setting out these facts were, somewhat understandably, refused.⁶³

GM fled the country with American assistance and Nikola Petkov assumed the leadership of the Agrarians. Petkov was no stranger to political violence. In 1907, his father, Dimitri, then Prime Minister of Bulgaria, was assassinated minutes after emerging from a Cabinet meeting at the parliament, the Sübranié. His brother, Petko Petkov, Stamboliiski's most effective lieutenant, was shot dead in 1924 by one of the fascist General Vülkov's agents.* Until his brother's death, Nikola Petkov had been studying law in Paris, a *bon vivant* with no interest in politics. But after this second tragedy, he resolved to rebuild the Agrarians, working closely with GM in the 1930s. Unlike GM, who went into exile in 1941, Petkov stayed in Bulgaria throughout the war to organize the Agrarian underground resistance. This led to two spells of imprisonment. Talented and charming, Petkov's political record and courage were unimpeachable.

In the summer of 1945, the Agrarians and the Social Democrats fell victim to the communists' celebrated salami tactics. To weaken opponents, the Communist Party would entice key members of rival parties to split off from the main leadership and establish a competing organization. These communist-backed groupings remained in the Fatherland Front while the old Agrarians and Social Democrats left the coalition. Over the next two years, they fought a losing battle to prevent a communist dictatorship. But Petkov, the most popular politician in Bulgaria, refused to give up without a fight.

The Agrarian leader proved adept at drawing American and British representatives on the Allied Control Commission into domestic Bulgarian politics. He also maintained friendly contacts with elements in the Fatherland Front leadership who were open to political compromise. In August 1945, his persistent manoeuvring paid off: the communist Interior Ministry had sanctioned such blatant intimidation against the opposition during the campaign that

* See chapter 6.

the British and Americans dug their heels in, demanding a postponement. Irritated by Petkov's success, Moscow ordered the deployment of its most powerful political weapon - Georgi Dimitrov.

Dimitrov was born into a family of working-class revolutionaries. He became a political organizer as a thirteen-year-old print worker. Within two decades, he had risen through the hierarchy of the 'Narrows', Bulgaria's equivalent of the Bolsheviks, to become one of the two most influential communists in the country. His siblings died in the Balkan Wars or at the hands of the police forces of Russia and Bulgaria. During Vülkov's White Terror in the 1920s, Dimitrov chose exile. He found himself in Germany when Hitler came to power. Arrested by the Nazis for suspected involvement in the Reichstag fire, Dimitrov seized the imagination of a world audience at his trial in Leipzig. His verbal demolition of Göring, acting as prosecutor, earned him deserved renown. After his acquittal he took out Soviet citizenship, and Stalin rewarded him for his Leipzig performance by placing him in charge of the Communist International (the Comintern).

When the Fatherland Front assumed power in Bulgaria, Dimitrov remained in Russia. Nonetheless, he hovered

over Sofia in his absence. A twice-life-size statue of him in rough plaster, wearing a long-frock coat, carrying a scroll in one hand and looking noble in the style of Beethoven, towered before the gateway of the disused royal palace... Photographs of him, with a flowing Edwardian moustache, and books about him were in the main shops. Portraits of him and banners hailing him as founder of the Fatherland Front were carried in all processions... It was impossible to be in Sofia for forty-eight hours without feeling his brooding presence.⁶⁴

On the evening of 8 November 1945, Dimitrov returned to Bulgaria for the first time in two decades. The National Theatre was packed with dignitaries who were joined by a throng outside in the rhythmic chant 'Di-Mi-Trov'. But the Lion of Leipzig was old, living by all accounts a joyless life since his only son had been killed in the war. Instead of enjoying this triumphant reception, he gave a speech replete with personal bitterness. He angrily attacked the pre-war

régime for having refused to invite him back to Bulgaria during the Reichstag trial and spoke of how his homecoming had been blighted when he saw 'the filthy rags of the opposition' on sale in Sofia. Dimitrov was not carrying a brief of reconciliation.

Immediately, the newspapers of the Fatherland Front began accusing Petkov of enriching himself and building a large house on the proceeds. In fact, the Agrarian leader lived in a small house in the centre of Sofia which was frequently crowded with peasants from the countryside who had travelled to the capital to ask the great man's advice. Dimitrov in contrast appropriated a villa, surrounded by a huge wall topped with barbed wire. At night four searchlights lit up the building, giving it the appearance of a prison. Haughty and distant from ordinary people, Dimitrov was always surrounded by bodyguards and rarely made public appearances. He was the first Balkan member of the New Class that the Yugoslav dissident, Milovan Djilas, was to anatomize a decade later.

In 1946 and the first half of 1947, leading members of all opposition parties who refused to collaborate were tortured, put on trial and, in some cases, executed. But it was not until the British and American governments finally recognized the postwar Bulgarian state in early summer 1947 that Dimitrov felt sufficiently confident to move against Petkov. On 5 June, People's Militiamen walked into the debating chamber of the Sübrante. They forced their way through dozens of opposition MPs and dragged Petkov off. He was charged with treason in a show trial which included features soon to become familiar throughout the Balkan 'people's democracies' – forced confessions, counterfeit documents and a preordained sentence of death, which was carried out in his case on 23 September 1947. Mass demonstrations demanding the death penalty were held throughout the country. The Sofia miners' union, a backbone of the Communist Party, declared that the death sentence would give its members 'an incentive for harder work and greater achievements in the production field'.⁶⁵

In his last remarks to the court, Petkov, who had signed no confession, declared, 'I am not afraid of whatever fate awaits me, nor am I perturbed by shouts of "traitor." For both my father and my brother were murdered in the streets of Sofia, denounced as traitors, only to be recognized as heroes by the Bulgarian nation afterwards.'⁶⁶ (Fifty-three years later, I witnessed a mass demonstration

in front of a plinth where a statue of Dimitrov had stood until the previous year. The crowd had gathered to honour the memory of Nikola Petkov.)

In 1933, the Bulgarian Section of the League of Human Rights had organized a campaign in protest against the trial of Dimitrov in Leipzig. After his acquittal, Dimitrov sent his personal thanks to the President of the Bulgarian Section, Nikola Petkov. A year after Petkov's trial, Dimitrov admitted that he had directed the judge to pass the death sentence. 'Of course, if they had not intervened from abroad, and if some had not ultimately attempted to dictate to our sovereign court, Petkov's head could have been saved. The death sentence could have been commuted to some other punishment. But when I came to the question of blackmailing the Bulgarian nation and infringing on the right of our sovereign people's court, the death sentence had to be executed.'

'The sentencing of Petkov', commented the French weekly, *Une Semaine dans le monde*, 'is yet another episode in the general offensive launched against the peasant parties of central Europe and the Balkans, the offensive of the Red International against the Green International.'⁶⁷

Liberation: the black sheep – Yugoslavia

From 1943 onwards, revolutionary movements were gaining momentum in two other Balkan countries, Yugoslavia and Greece. Both movements had matured in the harsh environment of Nazi occupation, and both were engaged in fighting ruthless civil wars against supporters of the interwar monarchies and local fascists. Their aim was to combine liberation with the establishment of a new socialist order. The source of their authority was not the Red Army but their struggle against the occupier. This lent them both mass support and an unrivalled militancy that did not fit well into the Allied plans for 'spheres of influence'.

In their percentage agreement of October 1944, Churchill and Stalin divided influence equally in Yugoslavia. Yet although Tito had persuaded Churchill to switch his support from Draža Mihailović and the Chetniks to the Partisans, he had no intention of allowing the British into the country after the war. Tito told Stalin that if the British landed on the Dalmatian coast, the

Partisans would attack them. But far from encouraging the Partisans' anti-British stance, Stalin ordered Tito to tone down his revolutionary zeal. The West, the Soviet leader warned, would assume that Tito was operating on Moscow's explicit instructions. Stalin sincerely wanted to cooperate with the West and to avoid any impression that he was undermining the delicate negotiations of the Big Three. The revolutionary paraphernalia of Tito and the Yugoslav communists, which had played such an important role in the Partisan struggle, was little more than a provocation as far as Stalin was concerned. 'What's all this nonsense I hear about you wearing red stars on your caps?' he demanded angrily, 'Form isn't important. What you actually achieve is important. And you prance around with - red stars! My God, the last thing we need is red stars!'⁶⁸

The leadership of the new Yugoslavia made some formal concessions to the Big Three. They invited Ivan Šubašić, Prime Minister in the royal government in exile, to become Foreign Minister, to show that the new régime enjoyed a broad democratic base. On the ground, however, they imposed a harsh revolutionary justice. As German troops streamed out of Yugoslavia, the Croat fascist leader, Ante Pavelić, and 1-200,000 Ustaša troops and civilians set off for the Austrian border on 7 May 1945, with Partisan forces in hot pursuit. They got as far as Bleiburg, a small Austrian border town, before being surrounded by British troops to the north and Partisans to the south. With RAF Spitfires buzzing overhead, about 30-40,000 soldiers, including Pavelić, managed to disappear into the surrounding woods and then deep into Austria. But the remainder were taken prisoner by Partisan forces amid scenes of carnage. Some 30,000 Ustaše were killed on the four-day march towards the Slovene town of Maribor. On 20 May, near the village of Tezna, 50,000 Croat soldiers and about 30,000 refugees, mainly women and children, were executed over a five-day period... A macabre end to the "Independent State of Croatia."⁶⁹

In Serbia, the Chetniks fared little better even though many had fought bravely against the Germans. Mihailović, the Chetnik leader, led a small band of fighters into the mountains of eastern Bosnia. He was eventually caught, tried and executed in 1946 as an alleged war criminal. But thousands of Chetniks became fugitives in a twilight world. Many were secondary-school pupils when they joined

the resistance. Now, they were hunted in villages and towns throughout Serbia. Thousands hid from the secret police in Belgrade, moving at dusk from one safe place to the next. Occasionally, they would risk capture by visiting their families. In place of the bright adolescent who had left three or four years before, mothers and fathers now saw a 'tall, grim-looking young man... who appeared... on their doorstep with one hand always clutching something in the pocket of his raincoat and whose eyes were ringed with dark circles'.⁷⁰

Arrested by the Gestapo during the war, Dimitrije Djordjević, a young Chetnik leader, survived Mauthausen only to fall into the hands of the Gestapo's communist successor when he returned to Belgrade. 'Both [organizations] had in common the violence with which they imposed their authority. The Gestapo destroyed the body; Ozna raped the soul. The Gestapo killed by shooting and by imprisonment in death camps; Ozna engaged in brainwashing, demanding repentance for sins not committed and self-abnegation. The difference was one of physical as opposed to spiritual annihilation.'⁷¹

OZNa, *Odsjek za zaštitu naroda* (Department for the Protection of the People), modelled itself on the Soviet secret police, the NKVD. But during the war, under the dour leadership of Aleksandar Ranković, the Communist Minister of the Interior, it matured independent of Soviet control. Ranković built a network of informers and a devoted political police whose efficiency gave birth to the popular Orwellian rhyme, *Ozna sve dozna* (Ozna finds out everything).^{*} He aimed to make OZNa omnipresent, recruiting 'in every block of flats, in every street, in every village and in every bar-rack room'.⁷² The Nazi and Ustaše camps throughout Yugoslavia were turned over for use by the communists. Tens of thousands of people were executed in 1946-7 while hundreds of thousands were interned. In 1947, there were so many men in camps or prisons that the penal system started to buckle under the strain. The mass arrests had removed so many young men from the labour market that the economy was being disrupted. Against Ranković's better judgement, the Party was forced to declare amnesty for tens of thousands.

^{*} OZNa's name was soon changed to UDBa - *Uprava državne bezbednosti* (Office of State Security) which also had its own phrase UDBa - *tvoja sudba* (UDBa - your fate).

Thanks chiefly to OZNa, the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (*Komunistička Partija Jugoslavije* - KPJ) was able to neutralize all political opposition soon after the elections of November 1945, which were comprehensively rigged. The communist monopoly on power took hold in Yugoslavia much earlier than anywhere else in eastern Europe. But OZNa had another significant historical role beyond the imposition of domestic order through terror. Notwithstanding the Yugoslav leadership's unrivalled devotion to Stalin, problems between Moscow and Belgrade cropped up early in the postwar relationship. Even before the war had ended, Milovan Djilas, Tito's lieutenant in charge of propaganda and the press, had protested to the Soviet military command in Belgrade about the behaviour of the Red Army: 'There were so many serious incidents perpetrated by individuals and groups of Red Army soldiers on civilians and members of the Yugoslav military that this became a political problem for the Communist Party . . . There were 1219 rapes including 111 murders and 1204 cases of looting - figures which are not so insignificant given that the Red Army only operated in the north-eastern part of Yugoslavia.'⁷³

Stalin personally upbraided Djilas for daring to question the honour of the Red Army and further accused the KPJ of spying on Soviet representatives in Belgrade. OZNa and the NKVD were indeed becoming rivals. Both gathered material not only on the opposition in Yugoslavia but on each other as well. OZNa's investigations during 1946 and 1947 revealed how industrious the Soviet secret police had been in penetrating the Yugoslav Party and military: NKVD agents were present in the highest organs of the Yugoslav state apparatus.

Tensions between Moscow and Belgrade were further exacerbated by difficulties in economic relations. Yugoslavia turned down the Soviet offer to establish joint-stock companies. These companies were the Russians' preferred way of extracting as many resources as possible from its satellite countries in order to revive the Soviet economy. The Yugoslavs rejected the joint-stock system, but also unveiled an ambitious five-year plan for economic development, well before any other east European country. Such bold behaviour might have been mistaken for impudence: a five-year plan implied ideological parity with the Soviet Union. Stalin was disturbed by the Yugoslavs' militant zeal. The KPJ accepted

communist dogma at face value and had not yet grasped that it was a mere tool used by Stalin to legitimize his personal power and the new Russian imperialism.

As Soviet influence spread through eastern Europe, Stalin took care not to alarm Britain and America. But the Balkans presented some strategic problems both for Stalin and for the Yugoslavs. 'The mountain barriers of the Balkans', observed one contemporary historian, 'form a natural obstacle which separates Russia and north-eastern Europe from the Mediterranean. Existing communications provide only three important gaps in the barrier - the north-east corner of the Adriatic and Fiume, the Vardar valley leading down to Salonika, and the Black Sea Straits passing Constantinople. It is no accident that Trieste, the Straits and Macedonia are the three danger-spots of south-east Europe.'⁷⁴

In April 1945, Yugoslav forces raced to Trieste ahead of New Zealand troops advancing from the Po under overall British command. The port had an Italian majority and a Slovene minority although the surrounding countryside was predominantly Slovene. The Yugoslavs desperately wanted to annex the town to give them easy access to the Adriatic. But under western pressure, the army reluctantly evacuated the city and fell back to an agreed line, leaving Trieste under Allied occupation. Britain had insisted on the Yugoslav withdrawal in part because it feared that the Yugoslav claim was really a Soviet attempt to establish a warm-water naval base. In fact, true to his policy of cooperation with the West on strategic issues, Stalin pointedly refused to back Yugoslav claims to Trieste.

In Macedonia, the Yugoslavs hoped to gain access to Salonika by supporting the revolutionary war being waged by the Greek communists, EAM/ELAS, against the Athens government and British forces. But Stalin had granted Britain a free hand in Greece in exchange for his control over Romania and Bulgaria. The Soviet dictator had no intention of going back on his word, and so the Yugoslavs and Soviets pursued diametrically opposed policies towards Greece.

The perception in the West that Stalin would expand his empire wherever he could obscured the tensions between Moscow and Belgrade. Indeed, Yugoslavia's uncompromising line on Trieste and the Greek civil war strengthened the belief that Belgrade was

Moscow's most faithful ally. Yet it was its very militancy which made Stalin suspicious of the Yugoslav leadership. He found it impossible to corrupt an indigenous Yugoslav Stalinism whose leaders placed both revolutionary purity and Yugoslav national interests above Soviet strategic requirements.

In March 1947, President Truman outlined his celebrated 'doctrine' to the US Congress. The President promised support to both Greece and Turkey against communist encroachment. The United States assumed the role of chief imperial backer of the Greek government against the insurgents of EAM/ELAS. In the case of Turkey, Washington was prepared to use its military might against Soviet attempts to establish a presence in the Straits or annex parts of eastern Turkey to which Moscow had recently laid claim.

In the wake of the Truman doctrine, Stalin increased pressures on the people's democracies to obliterate opposition to communist rule. As a consequence, Yugoslavia's ideological purity appeared to gain in importance. Amongst the other East European parties and the French and Italian communist parties, the largest in the West, the Yugoslav leadership was seen as a hammer wielded by Stalin to smash opposition. At the founding meeting of the Communist Information Bureau (Cominform), held in the south-western Polish town of Szklarska Półka in September 1947, Milovan Djilas led the charge against Togliatti and Thorez for their 'rightest' deviation from the general line.

Stalin's East European and Balkan policy in 1947 and 1948 was thus two-pronged: there was to be no provocation of the West by going beyond the boundaries of Yalta; and the East European allies were expected to subordinate their domestic and foreign policies to Soviet interests. Djilas repeatedly assured the Soviet leader of the Yugoslav leadership's loyalty and good intentions. 'And what greeted those good intentions?' he later reflected. 'The arrogance and rejection typical of a great power towards a small power – the strong towards the weak.'⁷⁵ There was little to distinguish the Stalinist and Tsarist attitudes to the Balkans.

It was not intransigence in foreign policy which finally provoked Yugoslavia's excommunication from the Church of Moscow. The heresy began with the idea of a Balkan federation or confederation, a project promoted by both Tito and the Bulgarian leader, Georgi Dimitrov, albeit in different forms.

In 1947, the Albanian leaders, Koçi Xoxe and Enver Hoxha, agreed that their country would be absorbed as a seventh republic into Yugoslavia. Tito then planned to invite Bulgaria into the Yugoslav federation as an eighth constituent republic. But while Dimitrov supported the idea of federation, he preferred Bulgaria to preserve its own state identity and join Yugoslavia in a confederation.

To outmanoeuvre the Yugoslavs, in January 1948 Dimitrov announced his ambitious plan for a Balkan/Danubian confederation. This would not only include all the people's democracies but Greece as well. The Bulgarian leader had neglected to consult Moscow before dropping this bombshell which, by including Greece, directly contradicted Stalin's policy of avoiding confrontation with the Americans in southern Europe. Dimitrov probably believed that as the former chief of the Comintern, and hence the most authoritative figure in the people's democracies, he was still in a position to take foreign-policy initiatives. On 29 January, *Pravda* disabused him of any such notion: 'The editors of *Pravda* believe that these countries have no need of any sort of more or less dubious or artificial federation, confederation or customs union.'⁷⁶ Stalin immediately interpreted the confederation plan as an attempt by his allies to organize independently of Moscow.

Summoned to Moscow with the Yugoslav leadership, Dimitrov mounted a feeble defence of his actions before publicly criticizing the whole idea. The Yugoslavs, however, were not so willing to renounce their right to an independent regional policy. In a series of letters, Stalin accused Tito and his 'clique' of heresy, demanding immediate obeisance. In February 1948, *Le Figaro* reported that Tito's portraits had been removed from public places throughout Bucharest. But nobody in the West or the East appreciated how serious the issue was until a meeting of the Cominform, which the Yugoslavs refused to attend, published its famous Resolution on 28 June 1948 (the date was chosen because of its historical resonance for Serbs and Yugoslavs, being the anniversary of the battle of Kosovo in 1389, the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand and the promulgation of the first Yugoslav constitution). The Yugoslav Party stood accused of slandering the Soviet Union. It was denounced as having 'abandoned the Marxist theory of classes and the class struggle', an especial irony, as the victims of Yugoslavia's class terror could testify. Finally, the Yugoslavs were

solemnly accused of constructing a bureaucratic system which left the Party bereft of 'inner party democracy... elections... criticism and self-criticism'. In a clumsy racialist reference to Balkan history, the Resolution described OZNa as having imposed a 'disgraceful, purely Turkish terrorist' régime in Yugoslavia.

The Soviet Union and the people's democracies froze all cooperation with Yugoslavia. Stalin was convinced that he could bring the country to its knees in a matter of days. According to Khrushchev, he mocked that he only had 'to lift [his] little finger' and the Yugoslavs would be begging for mercy. The disruption caused by Stalin's economic blockade was indeed severe. The Soviet Union and people's democracies supplied Yugoslavia with most of its raw materials, including almost all its oil. Truman and the Americans were alert to Yugoslavia's dilemma and devised a policy 'to keep Tito afloat', as a potential ally in the global war against Soviet communism.

Yugoslavia did establish trade links with the West but in domestic affairs the KPJ remained true to its Stalinist practices. Denunciation and political persecution, never far from the surface, were revived: this time, however, it was the supporters of the Soviet Union who were on the receiving end. Up to 50,000 so-called 'Inform Bureauists' were locked away in camps. With the aid of UDBa (formerly OZNa), Tito resisted Stalin's bullying by mobilizing a new spirit of Yugoslav nationalism (the first and last time that Yugoslavism was warmly embraced by the masses as a unifying ideology). The Yugoslav Communist Party and the Titoist leadership survived expulsion from the Soviet fold – but the Cominform Resolution delivered a fatal blow to another revolution.

Liberation: the Greek Civil War

The *Wehrmacht* began its hurried retreat from Athens towards the end of September 1944. When the last troops left, the Greek capital bubbled in 'a ferment of Dionysiac joy... Demonstrations and counter-demonstrations, slogans and counter-slogans in red and blue paint, political songs of all complexions, often set to the same tunes, propaganda and counter-propaganda through megaphones at street corners, all these had violently broken out.'⁷⁷ Grigori Popov, the chief of the Russian Military Mission, was driving through the centre of town when the joyous crowd physically lifted his car and

marched it to the centre, shouting 'Long Live the Soviet Union! Long Live Stalin!' Popov, who held Greece's popular movement in contempt, remained stony-faced. For several days and nights, the people of Athens impatiently awaited the triumphant entry of the communist army, ELAS. Churchill and his network of agents inside Greece admitted that if ELAS and its two political sponsors, the Popular Front (EAM) and the Communist Party (KKE), had wanted to take over Athens and thereby assume absolute control of Greece nothing could have stopped them. EAM/ELAS was already master of four-fifths of the country.

Streaming down from the peaks of the Pindus range in anticipation of the event were thousands of ELAS warriors, known collectively as 'the Mountain'. The power and mystique of ELAS lay in a fusion of the *klephtic* traditions of the mountainous interior and more recent communist-organizing techniques. 'It was not the easy-going peasants who started the resistance to the Germans', remarked Monty Woodhouse, the most perceptive SOE agent in Greece. 'That was the last thing they wanted: they had hardly seen a German, or noticed the slightest difference in their way of life, until the talkers from the towns arrived with exhortations to take arms against the invader... He was obliged to choose between the alternative leaderships offered to him: to become either a collaborator or a Communist or a republican or whatever it might be, unaware that these alternatives were not exhaustive; often only dimly aware that they were mutually exclusive.'⁷⁸ The KKE's strength lay in urban areas, especially in Athens and the towns of Thessaly. But many of the men and women who were sent to organize the peasantry were themselves first- or second-generation immigrants from the countryside. They carried with them a Romantic notion of struggle that was often reflected in the pseudonyms they adopted – Ares (the God of War), Orestes, Hermes or Pericles. Moreover, they understood how to mould rural codes of honour with the iron discipline of their Stalinist training.

The successful recruitment of this peasant army may be ascribed to the KKE's organizing ability. Discipline was maintained by the systematic use of terror both by ELAS commanders and, more ominously, by OPLA, the nascent communist secret police whose acronym spelt out the Greek word for 'weaponry'. But, like the Partisans in Yugoslavia, EAM/ELAS invested money and effort into

alleviating the considerable hardships which ordinary Greeks had suffered since the German occupation. In a society notoriously divided by wealth and run by fractious elites for their own benefit, the impoverished population of towns and villages supported the resistance in great numbers. By the end of 1944, membership of EAM has been estimated at about two million, an astonishing figure in a country of seven million. They had been drawn to the movement because it established rudimentary health and education facilities, food supplies where necessary and, above all, a sense that for the first time the peasantry actually mattered to the men and women of the cities. The stage was set for victory in Athens where the KKE held enormous popular appeal. But the order to march on the city was never issued.

For reasons not yet comprehensible to the *kapetanoi*, ELAS commanders, the leadership of the KKE had signed the Caserta Agreement in Italy on 26 September with the British, with representatives of the royalist government in exile and with General Napoleon Zervas, the commander of EDES. The latter was the only remaining non-communist resistance movement loyal to King George II. It established its stronghold in the north-western province Epirus. A settlement in February 1944 had ended a struggle between EDES and ELAS which bore similarities to the Partisan/Chetnik fighting in Yugoslavia. Now, the Caserta Agreement effectively placed under British control all military units in Greece.

Since his arrival in Greece at the end of July 1944, Colonel Popov had impressed on the KKE leadership the importance of cooperation with the British. The Party was to join a government of national unity, sponsored by the British and including all manner of politicians. On Molotov's instructions, Popov warned the KKE that the Soviet Union did not support an armed takeover, nor would it be sending any weaponry to ELAS. As the British were prepared to sell out Romania, the one country in the Balkans where there was absolutely no support for a communist régime, the Soviet Union was quite happy to reciprocate in Greece where the communists enjoyed overwhelming popular backing. The deal was then enshrined in the Churchill/Stalin percentage agreement of October 1944.

But when General Ronald Scobie, the commander of British

forces in Greece, installed himself in Athens with the vaguest comprehension of conditions inside Greece, he overplayed his hand. With Churchill's explicit support, he demanded a demobilization of ELAS on conditions which proved too humiliating for its commanders and provoked a split in the KKE Politburo. Negotiations between the KKE and the British-backed Prime Minister, Giorgos Papandreou, broke down at the beginning of December before the British had established a major military presence in southern Greece. When the KKE called a mass demonstration in Constitution Square in the centre of Athens on 3 December the stage was set for what is known as the Second Phase of the Greek Civil War.

On that freezing Sunday morning, a bright low sun lit endless columns of people heading towards the centre of Athens from all directions. The mood was jubilant as thousands upon thousands jammed into Constitution Square in front of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Encouraged by the boisterous crowd, a young man 'surged from the front ranks and . . . began a wild dance. He leapt high in the air once, twice. Suddenly, he doubled up and fell to the ground, his chest covered with blood.'⁷⁹ From atop the official buildings in the square, the police, many of whom had worked throughout the Axis occupation, began firing machine guns indiscriminately into the crowd. Twenty-eight were killed and over a hundred injured as foreign journalists looked on in horror from the safety of General Scobie's headquarters, the Hotel Grande Bretagne.

The following day a general strike was proclaimed throughout the country. ELAS units descended upon Athens, laying siege to all police stations although careful not to provoke the few thousand British troops in the capital. Within days all but one of Greater Athens' 130 square kilometres were in the hands of ELAS. Only the very centre, which was referred to as 'Scobia', was held by the British and loyalist forces. In the wake of ELAS came the OPLA units, scouring every district for suspected collaborators and class enemies, not to mention class traitors, who fell victim to OPLA's 'revolutionary justice' along with hundreds of innocent refugees and hostages caught up in the fighting.

By mid-December, Greece lay at the feet of the KKE and ELAS as it had done two and a half months earlier. Once again, the KKE leadership hesitated, torn between the parliamentary tactics recommended by Moscow and the revolutionary movement

represented by ELAS. Markos Vafiadis, the gritty *kapetanios* directing the resistance in Aegean Macedonia, was ordered with three divisions to join Aris Velouchiotis in a final assault on General Zervas's EDES forces in Epirus. Both *kapetanoi* were astonished at the directive. Until it came, Vafiadis had hemmed in the British army's India Division at their quarters in Salonika. When the ELAS troops left for the offensive against Zervas, the India Division took ship for Piraeus to relieve Scobie's embattled forces in the capital. This crucial military error later came to symbolize the KKE's failure.

The collusion of the British and the Russians during the battle for Athens presented ELAS with difficult obstacles. Yet this in itself was probably not sufficient to prevent the communists from seizing power. American public opinion was clearly sympathetic to EAM/ELAS and, in Britain, Churchill's bitter determination to defeat EAM/ELAS came under sustained assault in the pages of *The Times* and the Manchester *Guardian*; the House of Commons, too, rang with criticism. Indeed, Churchill's government came close to collapse because of the Prime Minister's desire to restore George II to the Greek throne. Had the KKE acted decisively by seizing Athens and proclaiming a government, the British could only have restored the monarchy by mounting a full-scale invasion of Greece, calling on much greater political and material resources than they could easily have mustered.

Instead, the British were able to prise open the harbour at Piraeus and divert troops from both the Ardennes and Italy to Greece. After holding out in Athens for another three weeks, the understrength ELAS units agreed to an armistice in early January 1945 and withdrew 150 kilometres north and west of the capital.

Athens was in a state of shock. Thousands had been killed in a month of revolution and civil war. Whole districts had been strafed by RAF fighters; there was no electricity, and food supplies had dried up. Bodies littered the streets, most of them victims of the fighting; but in the weeks that followed ELAS's and OPLA's withdrawal, the cost of bloody retribution emerged: mass graves containing up to seven or eight thousand corpses, including women and children.

The Varkiza Agreement, signed on 9 February, led to the disarming of ELAS. In exchange, the transitional government headed by

General Plastiras promised an amnesty for political crimes and the disbanding of the right-wing formations that had collaborated with the Nazis. EAM/ELAS continued to control the Greek interior and much of Macedonia. Plastiras's government enjoyed little support and the General was unable to administer the entire country; yet in Attica and the Peloponnese, the Government was at least the nominal power. As the communists receded, the brutal killers of χ , a right-wing paramilitary organization, and other anti-communist groups, roamed the Athenian walkways and the mountains and coasts of the Peloponnese. White Terror was eager to prove that it was more than a match for Red Terror.

Popular support for the communists waned after the Varkiza Agreement. Their behaviour during the December uprising had alienated many ordinary Greeks, not only because of the murder of hostages. In Aegean Macedonia, they had fought with the SNOF, the Titoist Liberation Front representing tens of thousands of Slav Macedonians still living in Greece. EAM had permitted the publication of Slav newspapers and encouraged cultural autonomy for the Slavs which many Greeks considered a real threat to the country's sovereignty. The economy, ravaged by inflation and shortages, had taken a further hammering during the rebellion.

The Right was in contrast bolstered by the Varkiza Agreement. Over the next twelve months, the National Guard, the police and the army expanded rapidly to a strength of almost 200,000 well-armed men. In areas like the Peloponnese and Epirus, where monarchists and rightists drew their traditional strength, these forces were swift to exact revenge on the communists. The authorities were unable to prevent the lumpen fascists of χ from infiltrating the security forces. Inside the Army's officer corps a new conspiracy, the Sacred Bond of Greek Officers (IDEA), disseminated its anti-communist and expansionist philosophy. With their allies in the government, IDEA members weeded out suspected liberal or left-wing sympathizers from the officer corps.

The absence of war improved the material circumstances of most Greeks, who benefited from a heroic effort made by United Nations Refugee and Rehabilitation Agency (UNRRA). The British presence curbed the more extreme political violence in the major towns and introduced a greater professionalism into the police force. But as one bumbling administration after another fell, it was hard to

disguise the fact that the British troops were propping up a sordid coalition of unforbearing nationalists and businessmen intent on reviving the hugely exploitative interwar economy. The elections called under American and British pressure in March 1946 were boycotted by the KKE, who rightly objected to the atmosphere of violence and intimidation created by the police and army. In retrospect, it is tempting to draw parallels between the electoral process in Greece and those in Bulgaria, Romania and Yugoslavia. The populist administration which was swept into office redoubled the repression against communists and their sympathizers. Pressure for action mounted in the ranks of ELAS, emboldened by the return of veteran fighters from Yugoslav camps. When King George was welcomed back in September 1946 after a dubious plebiscite restoring the monarchy, chaos was come again.

The winter of 1946-7 was particularly severe in Britain. The country was threatened with a fuel crisis and its people had grown tired of privation. Hugh Dalton, the Labour government's Chancellor of the Exchequer, resented having to devote a large chunk of his budget to the operation in Greece. 'Nor, even if we had the money, was I satisfied that we ought to spend it in this way', he complained to his Prime Minister, Clement Attlee. After two months of badgering the Cabinet to 'put an end to our endless dribble of British taxpayers money to the Greeks',⁸⁰ Dalton won his argument. At the end of February, the British told the Americans that their support for the Greek government would come to an end.

The atmosphere in the State Department in early 1947 had changed dramatically in the two years since its officers had deprecated the British intervention during the December uprising. There was a growing realization that the Middle East was of enormous strategic value to the United States in the postwar period. Washington had clashed bitterly with Moscow over the communist takeover in Poland and in 1946 it detected a Soviet attempt to expand southwards into Turkey and Iran. In the opinion of George Marshall, the Secretary of State, and his energetic team of crusading advisers, the days of cosy chats between the President and Stalin were long gone. It was necessary to confront and contain Soviet expansionism. The news that Britain was pulling out from Greece came not as a shock but as the call to action for which they longed. Truman needed little convincing. But Republican leaders of

Congress, who had won the 1946 elections on an isolationist programme, would need persuading if they were to sanction a military adventure to prop up a tottering Balkan régime. Truman called on an aide he later dubbed his 'top brain man', Dean Acheson, Undersecretary at the State Department, to launch the offensive. 'Like apples in a barrel infected by the corruption of one rotten one', Acheson warned, 'the corruption of Greece would infect Iran and all to the East... Africa... Italy and France... Not since Rome and Carthage had there been such a polarization of power on this earth.'⁸¹ By the time Truman presented his 'doctrine' in March, he had understood exactly how to embarrass the parsimonious Republicans into giving him the money he wanted for Greece and Turkey. 'The world is essentially divided in two. On one side are totalitarian and the enslaved peoples. On the other side are the free peoples.' He looked at the Republicans and said, 'Which side are you on? If you are on the side of the free peoples, give me the \$400 million dollars.' The money was granted within weeks. The Cold War was destined to start in the Balkans.

The Americans had not fully appreciated what they had committed themselves to doing. In October 1946, ELAS had reformed itself into the Democratic Army of Greece (DSE) under the leadership of Markos Vafiadis. As British support for the monarchists faltered, the DSE began successfully mobilizing its support in villages throughout the country. Government forces were in steady retreat throughout 1947 although the DSE did not possess sufficient fire power to sustain assaults on well-fortified towns even in areas like Thessaly where they controlled most of the countryside. Despite numerous appeals to the 'fraternal states' for arms, Stalin blocked all supplies. In February 1948, when the power of the DSE was at its peak, Stalin was categorical in a conversation with Edward Kardelj, a member of Tito's politburo:

'The rebellion in Greece must be crushed. Do you believe in the victory of the Greek rebellion?' he said, turning to Kardelj.

Kardelj answered: 'Yes, provided that foreign intervention isn't stepped up and they don't make any crass political or military mistakes.'

Stalin continued: 'No. They have not the slightest chance of winning. Do you really imagine that Britain and the United

States – the strongest countries in the world – that they will tolerate any disruption to their communications artery in the Mediterranean! What rubbish. And we don't have a fleet. No – the rebellion in Greece must be crushed and the sooner, the better.⁸²

Stalin was right. The Soviet Union could hardly have avoided war with the United States if it had responded to the programme of American military aid by sending large amounts of weaponry to the DSE. The Soviet dictator was, of course, playing the game of great-power politics in the Balkans, a tradition familiar to Russian statecraft. The United States, on the other hand, was becoming involved in the Balkans for the first time. Washington stopped short of sending troops, aside from 250 military advisers. Instead, the British granted a US request to leave a few troops in Greece. But Washington was liberal with its weapons. By the end of 1949, military aid alone amounted to \$353.6 million, and included 159,922 small arms weapons and 4,130 mortar and artillery pieces... Even the participants in the DSE, insulated as they were from the outside world, saw that for every mule load of foreign aid reaching themselves, a ship load reached their opponents.⁸³

Ferocious fighting raged throughout the second half of 1948 and the first half of 1949 as the DSE were slowly but surely pushed northwards. Riven by factional disputes, the 13,000 soldiers of the DSE nonetheless mounted a heroic but futile last stand on the mountains of Vitsi and Grammos just south of the Albanian border. To this day, Grammos sports a bald patch on its forested head where the royalist army used napalm, the first time the American military was able to gauge the effects of this material. The fighters who withdrew into Albania and the refugees who followed them were subsequently scattered throughout eastern Europe and Russia where many still live, the youngest branch of the Greek diaspora. As they went, they closed the door on the Second World War.

The Balkan peninsula was now divided by ideology, one Russian, one American. Crushing repression awaited one half, chaotic democracy and military dictatorship the other.

CHAPTER 8

PRISONS OF HISTORY

Communism and militarism, 1949-89

The Cazin rebellion: Yugoslavia

In March 1950, a Serb farmer, Milan Božić, set out from his hamlet in north-western Bosnia to visit his friend, Ale Čović, a Muslim who lived in a village 5 kilometres away. The two had met during the war, fighting in the same Partisan unit around Bihać. After the war, their friendship helped build bridges between the Serbs and the Muslims of Cazin District, where relations between the two communities were strained. Fratricidal conflict among Serbs, Croats and Muslims had been intense in north-western Bosnia and the neighbouring Croatian districts, Kordun and Banija. Božić and Čović, however, used their influence to encourage reconciliation. Both were respected by their peers as successful farmers, and Božić even joined the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (*Komunistička Partija Jugoslavije* – KPJ). But the optimism which the two men shared had dissipated when the spirit of Partisan resistance made way for communist reconstruction. Six years after Tito had taken power in Yugoslavia, Božić called on his old comrade, Čović, to persuade him to take up arms once more.

Both men belonged to the peasant farmer class which made up three-quarters of Yugoslavia's population. The countryside had contributed the majority of recruits to Partisans, Ustaše and