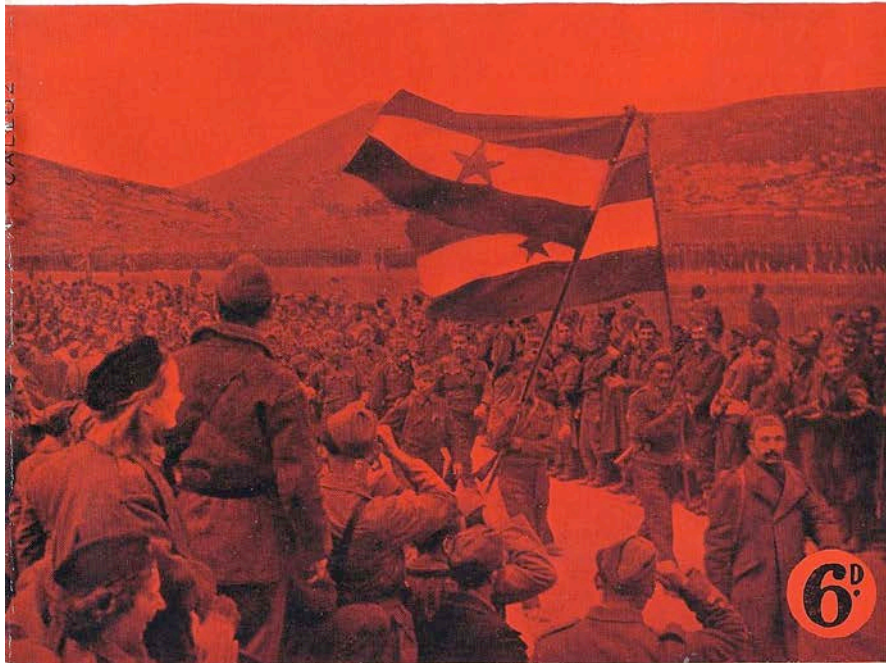


THE STORY OF THE PARTISANS OF



**FREE  
YUGOSLAVIA**



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MARSHAL TITO

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## FOREWORD

IN the first World War the resistance offered by the little Serbian Kingdom, and the still smaller sister Kingdom of Montenegro, to the overwhelming forces of Germany, Austria-Hungary and Bulgaria, aroused the sympathy and admiration of the British people, with whom Serbia till then had had no direct relations. The Serbian retreat across the snow-covered Albanian mountains during the winter of 1915 ranks with the retreat of the Czechoslovak Legions across Siberia as one of the great epics of the war. The British nurses and doctors who helped the Serbs in their dire distress learned to admire the sterling qualities of a peasant race, and laid the foundations of a new but genuine friendship between the two countries. And meanwhile it was from London that the exiled Yugoslav Committee, representing the seven millions of Yugoslavs then still living under the yoke of Austria-Hungary, conducted their agitation for complete national unity. It may fairly be claimed that Britain's practical help and sympathy contributed very materially to the realisation of the programme of Yugoslav unity, which in 1914 seemed to many altogether unattainable, but which on 1st December, 1918, became a reality through the proclamation of "The Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes."

To-day Britons and Yugoslavs are again allies in a still more desperate war, and the survival of Yugoslavia as an independent and united state depends upon the victory of the Allies—now happily at last visible on the horizon. Once more the high spirit of the Serbs rose against German aggression, and when the Yugoslav army, inadequately armed and badly led, was irresistibly borne down and the Government was driven into exile, the people at home, alone and desperate, prepared a resistance movement which will go down to history as second to none for heroism and endurance. Not even the guerrillas of the Russian front or the French maquis can show such a record of unaided and successful defiance over so long a period. What gives the Liberation Movement its unique character is the emergence of a real leader in the person of "Tito," in some ways comparable to the rugged figure of Kara George, but possessed of certain qualities of organisation which he lacked, and which are essential to our more mechanical age. But Tito himself would



be the first to insist that his strength rests upon the free, spontaneous *élan* of thousands of peasant heroes—men, women, and children fighting side by side and inspired by the summons “Death to the invader!”

The movement is democratic to the core, and party colour is altogether subordinated to the supreme aim of liberating the national territory.

What most impresses me, as one who has had a hand in many Yugoslav ventures during the past 35 years, is the discovery that though it is essentially a movement of youth, in the best sense of the term, it has been joined by many “youths” of 60 or 70, including many of those whom I have known all these years as the toughest and truest of Yugoslav idealists. The suggestion that it is a skilfully camouflaged Communist conspiracy or that it is just a new shift of party politics in a country political to the core, is simply ludicrous to those who know the personnel of the movement. It is a movement for a new way of life, social and economic as well as political, and the federal idea upon which it is based offers a way of escape from the old internecine racial quarrels towards a wider Confederacy of free Balkan peoples. For these ideals Orthodox and Catholic priests are fighting side by side with Moslems and with former Macedonian revolutionaries. Business men and intellectuals from the universities accept the ideal of the free peasant state, in which the peasant holding is the unit and is safeguarded against economic exploitation.

With the retreat of the Germans from Greece and Macedonia, and with the liberation of Belgrade, the climax of the Balkan struggle has been reached, and the complete liberation of Yugoslavia may be near at hand. Nowhere will the task of reconstruction after the ravages of war be more arduous; and this is the psychological moment at which our practical help should be given to the Liberation Movement and the people of Yugoslavia.

23rd October, 1944.

R. W. SETON-WATSON

## I. The Soul of a Nation

*“Yugoslavia has found her soul.”*

MR. CHURCHILL'S words will go down to history as the description of what March 27th, 1941 meant for Yugoslavia, for the Balkans, and for Europe. On that day the people of Yugoslavia overthrew their government because two days earlier it had surrendered them to Hitler by joining the Axis Tripartite Pact. By this act of defiance they brought down on themselves the full might of German invasion, but in doing so they earned the admiration and gratitude of the whole free world, and dislocated Hitler's time-table for the invasion of Russia by several weeks.

In that spring of 1941 Germany was at the height of her power. France lay prostrate. Britain stood alone and isolated, while the Luftwaffe poured death and destruction down on her cities. Everything was ready for the great campaign in the East, which would finally annihilate the “Bolshevik colossus.”

Before flinging his armies against Russia, Hitler had to secure his right flank, the Balkans. The ground had already been prepared. His armies were already in Roumania and his diplomats were busy in Belgrade, Sofia, Ankara and Athens. In Athens, though, the position was not exactly to his liking; instead of surrendering to the Duce the Greeks had chased Italy's black-shirts back into the mountains of Albania. Hitler had no time to waste. In a few weeks he must finish off the Greeks and such British troops as had come to their assistance.

He issued definite orders: Yugoslavia and Bulgaria were to become Germany's vassals. Nazi armies would enter both countries and then, if the Greeks still refused to see reason, they could be crushed by force. The Balkan flank would be secured.

In Bulgaria Hitler had a trusted friend—King Boris—who promised him full support, and whose Prime Minister went to Berlin to sign the Tripartite Pact on March 1st, 1941. Three weeks later Prince Paul, the Yugoslav Regent, sent his Prime Minister on the same errand. He signed the Pact too. Both Bulgaria and Yugoslavia were now on the side of the Axis, and the time had come to exert pressure on Greece.

The motives of Boris of Bulgaria and Paul of Yugoslavia were the same: hatred and fear of Russia, and preference for dictatorship over democracy. Both knew that Hitler was planning an “anti-Bolshevik” war and both welcomed the opportunity of helping the great German Reich to smash the bar-



barous Soviets. Both were unpopular with their own people and ruled with the aid of cruelly dictatorial regimes. A German victory over Russia would help them to maintain themselves in power and would strike a death-blow at the subversive ideals of liberty and democracy.

With two such rulers in charge of their destinies it looked as if both Bulgaria and Yugoslavia were quite "safe" from Hitler's point of view. But Hitler had forgotten the Yugoslav people. Directly they heard that their Government had signed an alliance with Germany, riots broke out and demonstrations took place all over the country. In Belgrade the university students revolted. Prince Paul's police were quite unable to keep order. The German legation was stoned, Swastika flags were burned in the streets, photographs of Hitler were torn to shreds.

On March 27th, General Simovitch and some of his assistants in the Air Force occupied the main government buildings in Belgrade and proclaimed a new government. Prince Paul was deposed as Regent, and the young King Peter was proclaimed of age.

Although the actual overthrow of the government was carried out by a military conspiracy, it was not simply an officers' coup. It was the direct outcome of the people's revolt against the pro-German policy of Prince Paul. Hitler realised its meaning quickly enough. For the first time the common people had defied him, despite the surrender of their rulers. They must be taught a lesson. On April 6th the bombs rained down on Belgrade, the capital, and the panzer columns of the Axis rolled across the frontiers.

With the first bombs that fell on Belgrade the whole administrative and military machinery of the Yugoslav state collapsed. It had been mined in advance by the dictator regimes of King Alexander and Prince Paul. Corruption and incompetence were rife. The Germans had spies and saboteurs everywhere. Even in the General Staff they had agents who were employed as confidential telephone and telegraph operators.

General Milan Neditch, later to become Hitler's Quisling premier of a puppet government in Belgrade, surrendered while in command of a vital sector of the front. Many other Fascist-minded officers refused even to take up arms against the enemy. Chaos and confusion reigned in every mobilisation centre. At Kotor Bay a traitor general prevented the Yugoslav fleet from putting out to sea, with the result that most of its ships fell intact into the hands of the Italians. Under these circumstances all

the bravery and fighting spirit of the rank and file soldiers could be of little avail. Many units fought gallantly and desperately, but they were very soon overwhelmed and disarmed.

The generals surrendered unconditionally on April 17th, after only ten days of fighting. General Simovitch, together with his ministers, the young King and an assortment of elder politicians, escaped by plane to Greece and thence to the Middle East. The mutilated country they left behind them, bewildered by treachery, was unable to comprehend the suddenness of the disaster that had overwhelmed it.

## II. *The Beginnings of Resistance*

THE German blitz on Yugoslavia not only wrought havoc with many of her towns and villages; at the same time it brought about the complete collapse of the whole machinery of government. Within a few days of the invasion conditions were terrible. Economic life was disrupted, Hitler and his satellites were busy carving up the country between them and installing their various puppet regimes, the Gestapo was rounding up all the popular leaders, and was quickly extending its deadly tentacles over the whole country. It seemed that the people, stunned by the suddenness of treachery and defeat, might sink into sullen despair.

But there were some people who did not give up hope. Among them was an energetic leader of the Yugoslav Communist Party with the curious nickname of "Tito." He realised that below the surface the spirit of popular revolt and independence was still alive, and that a people who had manfully defied both their own rulers and the whole might of the Axis on March 27th, would not give up the fight merely because their military leaders had deserted them.

Without delay he started organising illegal resistance. Together with Dr. Ribar, an elderly and respected politician, he laid the basis for the whole Partisan movement. It was a very simple basis. They decided that unity must be the watchword of resistance, and that unity must embrace everyone who was prepared actively to fight the Germans. If a man was prepared to oppose the Germans he was accepted, whatever his past political record. If he was not prepared to, then he could not be accepted, however unimpeachable his record or his words. Experience later showed that this bond of unity and test of action was the key to the Partisans' success.



At first the work must have been terribly difficult. Open revolt was not yet possible for the whole country was still full of German and Italian troops. Nevertheless Tito, Ribar, and others moved about Belgrade under the noses of the Gestapo rallying support, linking up different groups, stirring patriots into action, hammering out differences and difficulties. Many of their collaborators were caught by the Gestapo and subjected to horrible tortures, whole organisations were suddenly wiped out as the result of a single slip or denunciation, but they carried on, and so did other Patriots in other towns all over the country. As early as April 20th—only a week after the military collapse—the underground “Freedom Front” was formed in Slovenia, and down in the south in mountainous Montenegro united resistance committees were already being formed soon after.

Though these underground preparations were going on throughout May and June, it was only after the German attack on Russia on June 22nd, that they were able to develop into actual armed uprisings. The attack on Russia directly helped the Partisans by draining off large numbers of the German troops of occupation and, of course, at the same time, the morale of the underground resisters was tremendously increased when they realised that they now had their great Slav brother-nation fighting by their side.

Within ten days of the attack on Russia Tito's preparations were already bearing fruit. On July 13th revolt suddenly swept across the whole of Montenegro, and at about the same time Partisan warfare flared up round Valjevo in Serbia. Trains were attacked, columns were ambushed, dumps were blown up, bridges were mined, and villages were liberated. The Partisan war had started; a war that has never ceased, by day or night, ever since.

### *III. Who Tito Is*

**H**ISTORY contains few figures more romantic and arresting than that of Josip Broz Tito, Commander in Chief of Yugoslavia's Liberation armies.

Three years ago Tito was unknown to the outside world and indeed his identity was not always known even to the scattered bands then fighting under his command. To-day his name is headline news in every paper in the world, and he is the acknowledged leader of the Yugoslav people. This man, who never

attended any military academy, who learned the art of warfare not from textbooks but on the battlefield, has become one of the outstanding military leaders of this war. He was not even a private when it began, to-day he is a Marshal, with the official status of Allied Commander-in-Chief in Yugoslavia.

Tito's political achievements are perhaps even more remarkable. He, who was not even a deputy, who had never held office, who had no “practical experience” of state affairs, has proved to be one of the most enlightened statesmen Yugoslavia has produced.

This extraordinary man who has rallied to his leadership the whole of fighting Yugoslavia was born 51 years ago in a small Croat village, Klanjets, near Zagreb. For three or four years he attended the village school and at the age of twelve began work as apprentice to the local blacksmith. At sixteen he ran away to Zagreb where he worked as a builder until, when he was not yet twenty, he got a job as metal worker in the railway yards. It was here that he first had a clear picture of the terrible conditions under which workmen in the Balkans toiled to earn their daily bread. He was dismissed several times from his job, for participating in strikes, and finally, in 1914, he was called up into the Austrian army.

After training for a few months Tito was sent to the Eastern Front where he, followed by his whole company, did what the Yugoslavs conscripted into the Austrian army almost invariably did—he made his way into the enemy lines and surrendered to the Russians. As a rule the Tsarist authorities freed the Slav soldiers who came over to them from the enemy and allowed them to join the Russian army. But Tito and several of his companions who shared his “radical ideas” were considered suspect, and so he stayed behind barbed wire until in 1917 the tide of revolution swept away prisons and prison camps.

Tito immediately joined his liberators and fought for nearly three years in the ranks of the Red Army. At that time he must have intended to settle down in Russia for he married and had a child (a boy called Zharko who, twenty years later, as an officer in the Red Army was to lose an arm and win a medal for gallantry in the Battle of Moscow). But before long his feelings for his native land and the desire to continue at home the struggle he had waged in Russia impelled him to return to Yugoslavia.

He went back to Zagreb and to his old job. He soon found that the conditions under which the workmen lived were no better and indeed, in many ways, worse than they had been



before the war. The Austrian yoke had been cast off but that of the Belgrade oligarchy had taken its place. With the corruption of the régime the economic position of the country had deteriorated and as a consequence of this an intolerable burden had been added to the life of working-class people.

With the great victory of the Russian workers fresh in his mind, Tito was one of the first to lead the Yugoslav working class in its campaign for a better standard of living. He was arrested several times. All workers organisations and all trade unions that were not state controlled were proclaimed illegal and Tito was forced to go underground. After several years of privations and constant clashes with the police in his uncompromising fight for workers rights, Tito was finally arrested in 1928 and sent to prison for "anti-State" ideas.

Tito stayed five years in prison. When he was released his health was seriously weakened as a result of the brutal treatment to which he and his friends had been subjected, but his spirit was as indomitable as ever. He became one of the foremost members of the underground workers movement and the Communist Party, which between them united all Yugoslav workers. The police were once more on his trail and countless warrants were issued for his arrest. But they were never able to trace him.

They were still hunting for him when the Spanish war broke out and he made his way through underground channels to France. In Paris and in Marseilles he organised the transport of thousands of volunteers who, from all over Europe, were rallying to the call of the Spanish Republic. With the democracies pledged to non-intervention and the other nations of Europe in the clutches of ruthless police régimes, this was not an easy task. The fact that many thousands of volunteers managed, nevertheless, to reach Spain is a tribute to Tito's ability as an organiser. It was here that Tito had his first experience of underground work on an international scale. It was an experience that he never forgot. Coming into contact, as he did, with Frenchmen, Spaniards, Germans, Czechs, Yugoslavs, Greeks, Americans and Englishmen he understood that stronger bonds than the mere claims of nationality can hold men together—the bond of a common ideal.

He returned to Yugoslavia soon after the war in Spain came to an end. Defeat had strengthened his determination. He realised that South Eastern Europe would be among the next victims of Nazi expansion. He prepared his party for the long and desperate struggle that was to come. Not long before the

German invasion he established the "Military Committee" of the Communist Party. And thus when war came it found him ready. When Germany attacked Yugoslavia he had already planned the nucleus of the Partisan movement.

#### IV. Partisan Warfare

SOON after the first armed uprisings in July and August, 1941, the Partisan movement had already spread so widely that quite large areas were temporarily cleared of the Germans. Several bigish towns were freed, and it became possible for Tito to work his way through to the liberated territory from Belgrade, and to set up his first regular military headquarters near the town of Uzhitse in Eastern Serbia.

From then onwards Tito's headquarters was constantly on the move. As soon as any large area was liberated, the Germans launched an attack on it. The Partisans would withdraw, but in the meantime they had successfully freed other areas from which the Germans had withdrawn. So the unequal battle went on. In all the Germans launched seven full-scale offensives. Each one of them looked successful on the map, but none of them succeeded in wiping out the Partisan detachments. In fact month after month they gained in strength and numbers and efficiency. As Tito himself has said "without armament factories, without store houses, without ammunition, without military supplies or provisions, without any assistance from abroad, an army of a quarter of a million people was created, not in a period of peace but in the course of the most terrible and bloodiest struggle ever waged in Yugoslavia."

It is difficult for us to imagine how much suffering and bravery and endurance went into this almost incredible achievement, but the following eye witness account of the retreat from Bosnia into Montenegro in 1943—one of Tito's most desperate battles—gives some idea of the sort of conditions under which the Partisans had to fight. (The quotations are taken from a despatch from Cy Sulzberger to the *New York Times* published on December 21st, 1943.)

"Early in 1943 the Germans mounted a big new offensive with four crack divisions plus Italians and Ustashi and some Mihailovich Chetnik units. Terrific aerial bombardments and strafings were loosed against the People's Army, which had neither fighter protection nor anti-aircraft artillery.



Around the Bihach area and in Croatia and Lika, Marshal Tito left the First Bosnian Corps of four divisions and with five of his best divisions—the First, Second, Third, Seventh and Ninth—began to fight a terrible retreat southward more than 200 miles into Montenegro. With him he took 4,500 wounded rather than risk their capture.

Snow, whipped up by a terrible gale bit into the ragged army. Hunger was with them day and night. Their diet was raw meat and leaves. Mass hallucinations drove the troops desperate. At one stage an entire battalion fancied it saw in the distance a vast castle, with warm smoke pouring out of chimneys.

Again, a whole brigade, imagining it smelled cooking food, rushed up to a barren field kitchen with battered mess tins.

At Prozor and Imotski in southwest Bosnia the People's Army, forcing a passage southward, attacked and wiped out an Italian division, capturing quantities of arms and clothing.

March was a savage month, cold and cheerless. The Germans commenced a new offensive from the north and Colonel General Alexander von Loehr flew down from Belgrade to assume command. Three Nazi divisions took part, including the Thirty-sixth Grenadiers sent from Greece.

In a desperate strategic position, Marshal Tito assembled all available munitions and started a counter-attack. Despite continual Luftwaffe bombardment, in one day the People's Army fired 3,000 captured Italian howitzer shells, and drove back the Nazis.

Marshal Tito's headquarters was situated in a small mill. After studying maps he ordered a surprise crossing of the Neretva river, swollen by the melting snows, intending to drive into Herzegovina and Bosnia. As far as the Neretva they were transported in Italian trucks. But there all heavy equipment was abandoned to achieve the crossing: howitzers, tanks and trucks were blown up and dropped in the raging stream.

The river was forced and behind the tattered army, protected by two divisions, came 2,000 limping and wounded, 1,500 on their mountain ponies and hundreds more on man-borne stretchers. They had hardly any medicine. Many were suffering from a terrible typhus epidemic. Even the stretcher cases had rifles lying beside them and fought when able to. On the verge of starvation, they marched across the stark snowbound landscape filled with burned-out houses.

At Jablanica during a battle, 300 typhus cases lay in a tunnel open at both ends. The stench within was indescribable.



Tito addresses the Second Youth Congress

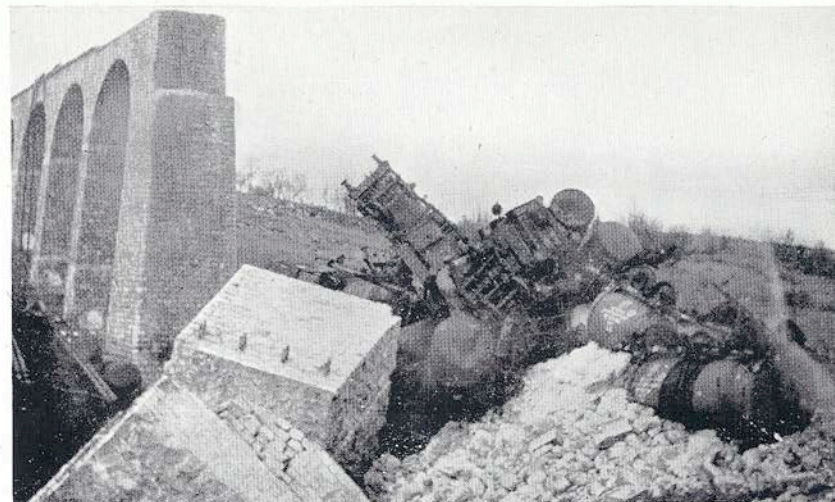


On guard on the island of Hvar, off the Dalmatian Coast





Peasant women arrange that the Partisans stationed in their areas have food and drink



Viaduct at Ottovach blown up by Partisans



After a forced march during the fifth offensive, Partisans rest in the Montenegrin forests



Every Army Unit produces its own newspaper. They are part of the Army's educational system





"Tito, Tito, lend us your young men for an hour. We'll send them back to you after the dance."—(*Partisan Song.*)



Partisans continue their education between battles. Every illiterate man and woman joining the Army promises to learn to read and write.

The tunnel entrances were covered by enemy positions 1,500 yards away. The Italians shelled constantly with 115 mm. howitzers. It was impossible to cook such food as existed, because by day smoke and by night fire, gave their position away to low-flying German bombers pounding the roof. It was impossible to bury the dead stretched yellow and blocked in the passage-way.

Most of the regular army had already fought a way ahead. Marshal Tito sent back the Sixteenth Croat Brigade which forced a path through, and that night the sick were evacuated."

For two and a half years the Partisans endured this sort of fighting completely alone, and without any form of outside support at all. It was not till May 27th, 1943 that the first British military mission arrived. Six men were dropped by parachute in the middle of a terrible gale and were immediately obliged to take part in a non-stop march of 24 hours, for the Germans had just started their fifth major offensive against the Partisans.

The mission were astounded at what they found. They had expected active but isolated bands of guerillas; instead they found a fully organised army with proper military formations and ranks, all of which had been built up in the heat of battle. 5,000 Partisans had recently been given officers' ranks and many more were undergoing training at a central Staff School. This school was as unconventional as the tactics which it taught. It was a "battle school" in the most literal sense of the word. To every unit Tito attached several instructors, and every commander received instructions to point out to them those men who had already distinguished themselves in battle. In this respect Tito's Officers' Training School was unique. No candidate could hope to enter it unless he had already given practical proof of his ability to command in the field. The main task of the school was to equip these practical battle-commanders with the knowledge of military strategy and theory that they hitherto lacked.

The British Military Mission soon found that Tito's claim to command an army of nearly 300,000 soldiers was perfectly correct, and that it was true that they were successfully holding down and fighting nearly 30 enemy divisions, including 10—12 good German divisions. This was enough to convince the British government that the Partisans deserved all the military support they could get. It was some time before supplies actually began to be sent, but from January 1944 onwards they went in slowly but steadily. These helped the Partisans considerably. It was



not long before they were using them to liberate wider and wider areas of the country, and the time is now not far off when the whole country will once more be free. One can be sure that when that takes place, the Partisans will not regard their work as finished. They intend to assist in taking the fight into Germany, and they will not rest till the day of Hitler's final downfall.

### V. *Tito and Mihailovich*

THE Partisans' military achievement would have been extraordinary enough even if they had had to fight only against the Germans. Actually they have also had to fight the Italians, Hungarians and Bulgarians, who had all seized part of Yugoslavia, as well as Neditch's Serbian "Volunteers," Pavelitch's Croat Ustashis and Mihailovich's Chetniks. The Neditch and Pavelitch troops were the usual type of Fascist Quisling mercenaries, but Mihailovich's Chetniks were rather different.

During 1942 and 1943 these Chetniks were held up as being heroic guerilla bands—romantic films were made about them—and Mihailovich is pictured as a brave and popular resistance leader. It is now known that the truth was quite different. It is true that Mihailovich—a colonel in the old Yugoslav Army—went into the mountains with a handful of other officers when the army collapsed in April 1941. His idea was to escape being taken prisoner and deported to Germany like most of the Serbian officers. He had no intention of leading a fight against the German forces of occupation—he believed this would be suicidal—but he thought he would be able to keep out of their way in the mountains till the Allies came back.

Soon after Tito left Belgrade in September 1941, he went and saw Mihailovich in the Ravna Gora mountains. He had two conferences with him and tried to persuade him to change his waiting attitude and to join up with the Partisans. Mihailovich refused to join them in their fight against the Germans, but he did agree to an arrangement for sharing out captured arms and for avoiding disputes. This arrangement did not last long. There were many causes of friction. The Partisans were suspicious of him for his refusal to come out openly against the Germans. He objected to the Partisan's methods, as he thought they merely provoked the Germans and jeopardised his plans for keeping quiet till the return of the Allies.

This conflict gave the Germans and Italians their chance. It was not long before Italian commanders were approaching Mihailovich officers and making arrangements under which the latter were allowed to patrol certain areas unmolested so long as they didn't help the Partisans. These initial agreements between Chetnik commanders and Italians were the first steps on a road that ended up with open collaboration with the Italians and Germans.

As yet there is not enough detailed evidence to show the exact stages by which Mihailovich and his Chetniks moved over from a position of hostile inactivity to the Germans to a position of active collaboration with them against the Partisans. But there is now not the slightest doubt that this process took place. Throughout 1943 and the beginning of 1944 British military liaison officers were stationed both with Tito and with Mihailovich, and as a result of their detailed reports—stretching over a period of more than a year—the British Government decided in June 1944 to withdraw all support from Mihailovich because "evidence had been steadily accumulating . . . that he had refrained from active operations against the enemy, and that some of his leaders, far from fighting the Germans, were directing their efforts against the Partisans."

This finally confirmed the statements that the Partisans had been making ever since the beginning of 1942. They said that Mihailovich and his officers regarded the Partisans as their main enemy, and that they had long ago given up any pretence of fighting the Germans, and had become little more than Quisling troops, though in some ways more dangerous than open Quislings because they still deluded some people by pretending to be pro-Allied. Though their numbers were never very great, the damage they did to the Partisans was enormous. For example, during a very critical period in the middle of the fourth German offensive, when the Partisans were making desperate efforts to ward off German attacks on a crossing over the river Neretva. Mihailovich assembled his Chetnik troops and suddenly attacked them from the rear. The Partisans finally managed to beat off this blow, but not before it had caused them very heavy casualties and forced them to abandon several key positions to the Germans. This example could be multiplied many times.

The damage which Mihailovich did to the cause of liberation inside Yugoslavia was paralleled by the effects of his propaganda outside the country. At the same time as he was attacking



the Partisans together with the Germans, he was busy sending out all sorts of propaganda actually claiming the Partisans' military successes as his own. This shocking fraud would have been exposed much earlier had it not been that the emigré Yugoslav government in London was extremely hostile to the Partisans and did everything possible to run them down while praising Mihailovich to the skies. It was only when British military liaison officers on the spot reported back what they saw of the Partisans' efforts that the real truth became known.

These successive emigré governments—there was a whole series of them following constant cabinet crises—objected to the Partisans because Tito was a Communist and because they could not reconcile themselves to the new political world which Tito and his adherents were building up, and in which there will be little room for the worn-out pre-war political parties.

As a result of this, some people have thought that the main conflict between Tito and Mihailovich arose because the former represented the left wing, while the latter represented the right. This is a misreading of the situation. Tito's only objection to Mihailovich—and it was an overwhelming one—was that he fought not against the Germans but with them. The presence of many elderly and conservative politicians in the Partisan movement shows quite clearly that Tito has no objection to working with right-wing people so long as they join in the fight against Germans. If Mihailovich had done so too, he would have been welcomed by the Partisans whatever his political views. Instead, he did precisely the opposite and acted as a traitor.

At the beginning of July 1944, the pro-Mihailovich emigré government in London was finally dismissed. It was replaced by a small working cabinet of six ministers under Dr. Shubaschich. This government has broken all ties with Mihailovich and supports Marshal Tito and the Partisans.

## VI. A People in Arms

ONE thing is quite certain. The partisans would never have been able to carry on and win through against so many difficulties, unless they had had the full-hearted support of the whole civilian population. No guerilla organisation could possibly have been built up unless it was constantly protected from the Germans by popular sympathy and support. If the peasants in a particular village had been hostile to a guerilla

force in their area, it is easy to see how quickly they could have betrayed its presence to the Quislings and Germans. The fact that this happened so rarely is the best evidence that Tito's forces are backed up by the whole population.

Perhaps it would be truer to say that his forces really *are* the whole population. Certainly this is the picture brought back by British liaison officers who have stayed and fought with the Partisans. They do not usually draw any sharp distinction between the fighters and the civilians. All are regarded as Partisans. The men carry out the immediate military tasks, while the older people and the women and children take charge of the nursing, the commissariat, the propaganda, the courier work, etc.—in fact they carry out all the tasks which in a properly equipped army are performed by the various Army Services. Naturally there is often very little distinction between front and rear. The pair of young girl Partisans who set out at night to take an important message over to an adjoining valley, the old grandmother who feigns ignorance of the Partisans when questioned by the Quisling police, the schoolboy who slips into the German garrison town to contact the underground leaders—all these are in just as much danger as if they were in the midst of a battle. All of them know that they can expect no mercy if caught by the enemy. Everyone carries arms—even the nurses and wounded in the forest hospitals, and the teachers and priests in the improvised schools—and all are prepared to use them.

The part played by the women is a point that is always stressed by the Partisans. In most areas of Yugoslavia the women were extremely backward before the war. In the Moslem areas they were kept veiled and in complete ignorance, and even in the Christian parts they were never regarded as fitted for public life of any sort. Now everything has changed. In many cases it was the mother of the family whose influence in the peasant home first persuaded the men to join the guerillas, and now that they are carrying out so many difficult and dangerous jobs in the Partisan ranks, any thought of continuing the old inequality and backwardness is quite out of the question.

Many special women's organisations have sprung up—such as the Women's Anti-Fascist League—and several newspapers and magazines are produced especially for women. They naturally take a leading part in the classes that are held for helping illiterate adults to read and write, and whenever there



is a question of electing a committee of any sort, steps are always taken to make quite sure that the women are properly represented. All the Partisans are quite certain that women will play a very important part in the new Yugoslavia after the war.

A point which always impresses visitors to liberated Yugoslavia is how young many of the Partisans are. Lads of 17 and 18 explain quite naturally that they have already seen three years continuous fighting, and the hospitals always contain a sprinkling of wounded boys and girls who are even younger. The Partisans themselves state that over 75% of all their soldiers are under 25 years old.

As with the women, so the youth also have their own special organisations. Conferences and meetings and congresses and rallies are constantly held to decide about every conceivable question, such as how to improve the primitive school arrangements, how to raise the standard of literacy in the army, how to improvise the manufacture of artificial limbs for the wounded, how to get in the harvest quickly.

The most important of these Congresses was the Second Congress of the United League of Anti-Fascist Youth which was held in the spring of 1944. Altogether over 800 young delegates assembled from all parts of the country—both liberated and unliberated. The Montenegrin delegation took 30 days to reach the Congress, and on their way they had to fight several skirmishes. Quite a large number of the delegates fell in battle while trying to reach the Congress, and others were killed on their way back. Tito himself addressed the delegates, and so did Major Randolph Churchill.

In some ways these youth activities are the most hopeful thing in Yugoslavia to-day. They are a guarantee of the energy and enthusiasm that will go into the making of the new Yugoslavia, for we can be sure that good use will be made after the war of the hard experience and determined idealism that this young generation is now learning in the fire of battle.

## VII. *The New Yugoslavia*

WHEN Major Randolph Churchill left liberated Yugoslavia he said: "I was impressed most of all by the way the Partisan movement has succeeded in uniting all the elements which constitute Yugoslavia. Marshal Tito was able to forge all into one whole. Your work should serve as a pattern for the

political reconstruction of the other countries of Europe." This unity is perhaps the Partisans' greatest achievement. It is particularly remarkable in view of past Yugoslav history.

From 1918 to 1941 the Yugoslav state was rent by constant conflicts between the different nationalities—principally the Serbs and the Croats. Of course all these conflicts were stirred up and intensified by Hitler as part of his plan of undermining Yugoslavia so that it would collapse when attacked. After its collapse he carried the process a stage further by splitting up the state into several parts and by setting up two rival Croat and Serb Quisling states and governments. He then egged them on to attack each other. In particular the Quisling Croat forces were incited to massacre all the Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia. They massacred at least 50,000 Serbs, and a much higher figure is often given. Hitler confidently believed that this massacre would cause so much hatred between the Croats and Serbs that unity in Yugoslavia would be impossible for a generation. Indeed many sober political commentators in this country and in America thought so too, and came to regard a united Yugoslavia as a hopeless proposition. They all ignored the statesmanship and political foresight of Marshal Tito and the other Partisan leaders.

From the very first Tito insisted that there should be complete equality between the different peoples of Yugoslavia. He insisted that this principle should be carried into practice in the ranks of the partisan army itself. Most of the military leaders of the Partisans are Serbs, but a high proportion of the rank and file are from Croatia; in addition the movement has always been very strong in Slovenia and Montenegro. All the leading political organs such as the AVNOJ (the Peoples' Parliament), and the National Liberation Committee, contain representatives of all these peoples and of the Bosnian Moslems and the Macedonians as well. This unity includes not only all the different racial elements but also all the religious currents. For example, the Minister of the Interior in the National Committee is the Rev. Vlada Zechevich, a well-known Serbian Orthodox priest, while the Minister of Mines and Forests is a Bosnian Moslem. One of the most distinguished Partisan supporters is Mgr. Rittig, Rector of St. Mark's, the best known Catholic church in Zagreb. Thus, as Major Churchill said, complete national and religious unity and equality has been achieved for the first time in the history of Yugoslavia.

Such a firm unity could never have been established if it had



simply been decreed by Marshal Tito or his National Liberation Committee. Its strength lies in the fact that it grew up as part of the Partisan movement, and consequently permeates the whole Partisan machinery from the bottom to the top. Whenever an area was liberated, one of the first steps was to see that a representative local committee started functioning so as to mobilise the area for the fight against the invaders. The Partisans insisted that such local committees should be set up in a really democratic way.

The system was best described by a simple peasant who explained to a British military liaison officer: "The Partisans are the only ones who, when they came to our village, did not appoint a governor or a mayor or even a tax-collector. They asked us to elect these officials ourselves. At first we could not believe they really meant it, but we soon saw that it was true. So you see we are for the Partisans in the same way as we are for ourselves."

When larger areas were effectively cleared of the enemy these already existing local democratic Liberation Committees were used as the basis for forming the wider administrative bodies that then became necessary. In this way the proper democratic basis of the movement was kept intact and it was always possible to ensure that the necessary committees were elected from below rather than being imposed from above. When very large areas of the country had been liberated the time came to summon similar democratic assemblies for each of the various historic divisions of the country. Thus there was a Liberation Council for Slovenia—this was one of the very earliest to be formed—a Regional Assembly for Croatia, another for Montenegro, and so on. This organisation was finally worked out at the historic Congress of the AVNOJ, or Peoples' Parliament, that was held in the town of Jajce in November 1943.

This Congress laid down the principle that the future Yugoslavia should be a federal commonwealth, with full equality of rights for all its constituent peoples. It applied this principle not only to the Serbs, the Croats and the Slovenes—the three peoples whose constant conflicts had always split the old Yugoslavia—but also to the Montenegrins and the Macedonians whose national aspirations had always been suppressed by the old dictatorship governments. The AVNOJ Congress did not merely pass a paper resolution about this equality of national rights. It took steps to see that on liberated territory the already existing Regional National Liberation Committees should

immediately take over those administrative functions that would devolve on them in the future federal states. The result is that by the time the whole of Yugoslavia is finally liberated, the proper machinery for a democratic federal state, with equal rights to all the different areas, will already be actually operating.

The Partisans' democratic federal organisation has made a tremendous impression on all the other Balkan countries, and all their most far-sighted leaders now look to Marshal Tito's successes as an indication of what could be gained by some sort of federal system embracing all the Balkan states. It is generally recognised that such a system is the only ultimate solution to the terrible and bloody political controversies that have plagued the Balkans for so long. In the long run some federal solution will certainly be achieved, and its achievement will have been largely due to the example already set by the Partisans in Yugoslavia. Perhaps their most valuable contribution to its achievement will be to have shown so clearly from their own experience, that any federal plans, if they are to succeed, must not be imposed from above or from outside, but must grow up on the basis of a really democratic people's movement.

At present these ideas about an all-embracing Balkan federation are still very provisional. In the immediate future the Partisans are thinking much more about tackling the tremendous post-war economic and reconstruction problems that will face them in their own country.

As far as their home policy is concerned, they know that their land has been ravaged as no other in Europe, and that the mere task of feeding the hungry, housing the homeless, and clothing the destitute, will demand all their determination and energies. As far as foreign policy is concerned, they are confident in the future, for they know that their super-human efforts and selfless sacrifices have won the admiration of the whole free world.



# YUGOSLAVIA EMERGENCY COMMITTEE

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To organise and provide help from the British people to the people of Yugoslavia and to the Army of Liberation led by Marshal Tito; to work for mutual understanding and co-operation between the British and Yugoslav democracies.

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