

A black and white portrait of Josip Broz Tito, a Yugoslav leader. He is shown from the chest up, wearing a dark suit, a white shirt, and a dark tie. He has short, dark hair and is wearing glasses. His expression is serious, and he is looking slightly to the right of the camera. The background is dark and out of focus.

I.B. TAURIS

COMMUNIST
LIVES

tito
a biography
geoffrey swain

TITO

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TITO

A Biography

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Published in 2011 by I.B.Tauris & Co. Ltd
6 Salem Road, London W2 4BU
175 Fifth Avenue, New York NY 10010
www.ibtauris.com

Distributed in the United States and Canada Exclusively by Palgrave Macmillan
175 Fifth Avenue, New York NY 10010

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Communist Lives: Volume 5

ISBN: 978 1 84511 727 6

A full CIP record for this book is available from the British Library
A full CIP record for this book is available from the Library of Congress

Library of Congress catalog card: available

Printed and bound in Great Britain by CPI Antony Rowe, Chippenham
from camera-ready copy edited and supplied by the author

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ABBREVIATIONS

AVNOJ: the Anti-Fascist Council for the People's Liberation of Yugoslavia, the founding body of the post-war Yugoslav state which met twice in November 1942 and November 1943.

EAM: the Greek Resistance Movement, established by the Greek Communist Party during the Second World War and while ostensibly open to other parties, always dominated by the Communist Party.

SRZ: Peasant Work Co-operative, the equivalent of the Soviet 'collective farm' during Yugoslavia's short experiment with collective agriculture.

ZAVNOH: the State Anti-Fascist Council for the People's Liberation of Croatia, responsible for organising the liberation struggle in Croatia, but subject to the decisions of AVNOJ.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Part of Chapter One is based on an article 'Tito: the Formation of a Disloyal Bolshevik' published in *International Review of Social History*, volume 24, no. 2, 1989, and reproduced here with the kind permission of the editor of that journal. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the staff of two libraries, the University of Glasgow Library and the National Library of Scotland; Tania Konn-Roberts of the Slavonic Collection at the University of Glasgow Library deserves special mention for her help while I was working on this project.

SERIES FOREWORD

Communism has, traditionally, appeared to be something of a faceless creed. Its emphasis on the collective over the individual, on discipline and unity, and on the overwhelming importance of ‘the Party’, has meant that only the most renowned (and mainly Soviet) communist leaders have attracted interest from English-speaking political historians and biographers. In particular, the Party rank and file have tended to be dismissed as mere cogs within the organisations of which they were part, either denigrated as ‘slaves of Moscow’, or lost in the sweeping accounts of Communist Party policy and strategy that have dominated the historiography to date. More recently, however, historians have begun to delve beneath the uniform appearance of democratic centralism, endeavouring to understand the motivations and objectives of those who gave their lives to revolutionary struggle. The current series, therefore, has been established to bolster and give expression to such interest. By producing biographical accounts of communist leaders and members, it is hoped that a movement that helped define the twentieth century will begin to be understood in a more nuanced way, and that the millions who – at various times and in various ways – subscribed to such a Utopian but ultimately flawed vision will be given both the personal and historical depth that their communist lives deserve.

Matthew Worley

Series Editor – *Communist Lives*

INTRODUCTION

TITO: A POLITICAL BIOGRAPHY

For a certain generation Tito was someone who stood up to both Hitler and Stalin and won. He was a hero of both the Second World War and the Cold War. The best biography in this rather hagiographical genre was that by Phyllis Auty, *Tito: a Biography*, which included much useful information gleaned from her long conversations with Tito himself.¹ When after Tito's death in 1980 the time came for a revisionist approach, Nora Beloff led the way with her *Tito's Flawed Legacy*, an account which suggested that Tito's willingness to talk to the Germans in early 1942 and his constant struggle against the četniks made a nonsense of his claim to have 'liberated' Yugoslavia; he was a communist who fought a bitter civil war against fellow Yugoslavs, who 'hood-winked' Churchill and quickly got over his tetchy spat with Stalin.² A decade later Stevan Pavlowitch gave a more balanced, but rather condensed account in his *Tito: a Reassessment*; but by the time this book appeared the system Tito had bequeathed had already failed.³ Ethnic tensions, which Tito had worked so hard to resolve, resurfaced as economic problems multiplied and the collapse of communism elsewhere in eastern Europe raised a question mark over its vitality in Yugoslavia. As the country descended into terrifying civil war the old slogans of 'brotherhood and unity' seemed worthy of little more than a hollow laugh.

The Yugoslav tragedy has inevitably had an impact on interest in Tito. The atrocities of the 1990s, when linked to the similarly genocidal massacres of the 1940s, suggested to many that the South Slav (Yugoslav) peoples were so riven by mutual hatreds that Tito's experiment was doomed from the start and therefore of little interest. While, of course, a strong element within Tito's experiment was the attempt to bring together the people's of Yugoslavia around the concept of 'brotherhood and unity', the basis on which this was to be done has been largely forgotten. Tito developed a system of self-management socialism which was supposed to free workers from the alienation of the capitalist system, to enable them to perceive their common interests and work together towards common goals; on such a basis primordial ethnic tensions would evaporate. The Yugoslav experiment in self-management socialism has disappeared without trace, even though, briefly in the late 1960s, it seemed capable of uniting both Europe's Old and New Left and thereby revitalising communism itself. As the leading Yugoslav communist Krste Crvenkovski noted at the end of 1968, 'a fever of self-management has gripped, if not the world, then at least virtually all of Europe', with students and revolutionary groups 'raising slogans about participation and self-management' and including such ideas in their programmes.⁴ Crvenkovski was exaggerating, but there was a Yugoslav component to the intellectual ferment of 1968 and Tito's concept of communism deserves to be reconsidered.

Tito did not write any memoirs, and told Phyllis Auty that history would be his judge. Thirty years after his death, it is time for that judgement to be attempted, time to undertake a reassessment of his life. In this post-communist biography, I have tried to give fuller weight to Tito the communist by reducing discussion of the war years and giving due consideration to Tito's pre-war career, and to the 1950s and 1960s when he was still actively involved in the struggle for communism as an international movement. Tito was above all else a communist, and was devoted to the communist cause until the day he died. What made him different to other communist leaders was that his early experience of Soviet Russia had given him sufficient knowledge of the Soviet experiment not to be bound by its spell. He could compare the heady days of Revolution and Civil War to the penetrating fear at the height of the Terror; by the end of the 1930s he could already separate Stalin and Lenin, leaving for Stalin the problems of socialist construction within the former Tsarist empire and retaining for himself Lenin the inspirer of revolution and the guide to its successful implementation.

Tito's active political life covered the whole communist period, from 1917 until after the failure of the last experiment in reform communism, the Prague Spring of 1968. Compressing such a long and complex life into just seven chapters has been difficult and of necessity much has been understated or omitted. Focussing on Tito the communist militant, rather than the Yugoslav leader, exploring not only his relationship with Stalin, but his earlier relationship with the Comintern and his later long engagement with Khrushchev and the de-Stalinisation process, has meant that in this book there is surprisingly little discussion of the ethnic tensions which ultimately brought down Tito's state a decade after his death. These are mentioned as they affected Tito's leadership. Thus before the war, Tito and the Croatian Party leadership clashed over implementing the popular front strategy; at the start of the war the Croatian Party resisted the call to insurrection; and as the war neared its end, Croatian assertions of sovereignty threatened to undermine Tito's position as communist statesman. The Croatian problem as such only re-emerged in the troubled aftermath of Yugoslavia's 1965 economic reform.

This is a sympathetic biography. It is assumed that Tito's communist experiment was a worthwhile undertaking. The mass murders associated with Stalin and Hitler have inevitably raised the issue of the equivalence of the totalitarian systems of Stalinism and Nazism, but Tito was a communist whose career predated Stalinism, who struggled both to oppose and to overcome Stalinism, and who saw communism as a liberating ideology. Tito and his closest colleagues were genuine when, after the break with Stalin, they constructed a self-management system which, by the 1960s, they felt offered a practical solution to Marx's understanding of the alienation of labour. Tito's communism stressed the Marxism in Marxism–Leninism.

It is therefore suggested here that Tito was 'right' until almost at the last moment he got things 'wrong'. When self-management reached a cross-roads in 1968, Tito took the wrong turning, despite telling both workers and students in June of that year that he would listen to their demands. Tito was a dictator, less violent than many and certainly more ready to consult than most, but a dictator nonetheless. It had been possible to argue in 1954 at the time of his clash with Milovan Djilas that Yugoslavia

was surrounded by enemies and the people unschooled in socialism so the dictatorship had to continue, but by 1968 neither of these conditions still applied. And yet Tito decided to continue as dictator, and a lonely dictator at that. Not only had he broken with Djilas, but in 1966 he broke with Aleksandar Ranković and in 1967 with Svetozar Vukmanović Tempo; only Edvard Kardelj was still at his side. In 1968, his decision to stop workers' self-management moving in what he understood to be a syndicalist direction, resulted in power being transferred to republican elites which simply re-ignited nationalist passions. Clamping down on those passions meant clamping down on all debate and stopping any evolution towards a democratic polity.

Tito's failure proved that communism and dictatorship could never be combined. It was his greatest failing that in 1968 he could only see the Marxist philosophers around the journal *Praxis* as the 'enemy' and not part of a broader democratic debate about the nature of the working class in a modern consumer society. At a time when Marxist socialism has disappeared from the agenda, it is at the very least interesting to note that Tito both initiated, and then arrested, an experiment in making workers the masters of both the labour they performed and the value they created.

THE MAKING OF A YUGOLSAV REVOLUTIONARY

POLITICAL APPRENTICESHIP

Although when President of Yugoslavia Josip Broz celebrated his birthday on 25 May, he was actually born on 7 May 1892 in the Croatian village of Kumrovec, the seventh child of Franjo Broz and Marija Javeršek. The family of Franjo Broz had lived in Kumrovec, in the Zagorje region of Croatia, for three centuries, but Marija came from the village of Podsrede which, although only ten miles away, was in Slovenia. What is today Croatia, an independent state, was then part of the Kingdom of Hungary, which was itself part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, ruled by the Habsburg dynasty from Vienna; Slovenia belonged to the Austrian half of the Empire. As Tito grew up, both Croats and Slovenes would increasingly identify with their fellow Slavs, the Serbs, in the ambition to establish a South (Yugo) Slav state; Serbia had already established its independence from the Ottoman Turkish Empire and, once economically dependent on the Austro-Hungarian Empire, would by Tito's teenage years have begun to assert itself on the international stage.

Tito's father inherited one of the finest houses in the village and a relatively prosperous estate, with ten acres of land and a horse and cart that were often used to run a carrier's business. However, under Franjo the farm soon ceased to prosper. For much of his pre-school upbringing, Tito stayed with his maternal grandparents, becoming a firm favourite of his maternal grandfather, who was a charcoal burner as well as a farmer and took him off on expeditions to the forest. When Tito returned to Kumrovec aged eight he spoke Slovene better than Croatian. Tito's schooling was meagre, attending school for just four years; those who worked closely with him noted in later life that he could never spell correctly. His school records show that he was frequently absent, and he readily admitted that his parents had a peasant view of education, believing farm work was more important; Tito himself recalled 'playing truant from home' in order to attend school and his final report for 1904 was good.¹

Political education of a sort began early. The Zagorje region was the heart of the peasant revolt led by Matija Gubec in 1573, who attempted to storm the castle of Cesargrad, the ruins of which stand above Kumrovec. This rising left a deep imprint on local folk memory. Gubec's followers put cock's feathers in their caps as a symbol of revolt, and Tito recalled doing the same in his childhood games. When in 1903 the Zagorje villages rose in revolt against increased taxes, tearing down Hungarian flags and clashing with armed police, it made a deep impression on the eleven-year old, especially since four Hungarian soldiers were subsequently billeted in the Broz house for a month. On leaving school, Tito first worked on the farm of his uncle, his mother's brother, and then returned to his own family farm. Then in 1907, aged

fifteen, Tito left Kumrovec for Sisak, a garrison town where his cousin Jurica Broz served in the army. His cousin found him a job as a waiter-cum-washer-up in the restaurant of a friend, but after a while Tito tired of this and, having met youngsters of his own age taking on apprenticeships, he approached a local Czech locksmith, Master Nikola Karas, about becoming an apprentice. Karas agreed, and offered the usual three years training and keep, so long as Tito's family provided clothing; since Franjo could not afford to buy the necessary boiler suit, Tito paid for it himself.

Until September 1910 Tito worked as an apprentice with Karas, joined shortly afterwards by his younger brother Stjepan. Mostly the apprentices worked from six in the morning to six at night, but twice a week they went to a technical college from five to seven in the evening. Throughout those three years only one incident disturbed the calm. Karas found Tito reading a detective novel when he should have been supervising machinery. Karas, as was his right, resorted to corporal punishment and Tito ran away. The police were then summoned and Tito was found and detained. Karas decided not to prosecute Tito for breaking the terms of his apprenticeship and the incident was forgotten. While serving his apprenticeship, Tito had his first taste of social democrat politics. For May Day 1909 the apprentices were encouraged by the more experienced journeymen to decorate the workshop, while Tito was persuaded both to read and sell the socialist newspaper *Slobodna Reč*.

Once a qualified journeyman, Tito used some of the contacts he had made to take a job in Zagreb. There, in October 1910 aged eighteen, he joined the Metal Workers' Union, worked for two months, and took part in his first ever labour demonstration. Tito took union membership seriously, visiting headquarters most days to read literature and meet fellow workers. From December 1910 to January 1911 he was back in Kumrovec, and then was frequently on the move. He went first to Ljubljana, where he could find no work, then walked to Trieste, where again there was no work, and by February 1911 he was back in Kumrovec. By March he was again in Zagreb repairing bicycles, and he worked there for four months, taking part in a May Day demonstration and his first successful strike. Loyal to the trade union, he was careful to pay back dues for the periods he had spent unemployed. Tito then settled in Kamnik, Slovenia, where he worked in the same factory for over a year, until May 1912. When that factory closed, he accepted the offer of redeployment to Bohemia, but learned when he arrived that a Slovene workforce was being brought in to try and undercut the wages of the local Czech workers who had gone on strike. The Slovenes joined the strike and the employers backed down.

With the economy booming as the First World War approached, Tito, a skilled metal worker with a union card, was in demand. He recalled that natural curiosity took him to visit the biggest metal factories in that part of Europe. He moved to Pilsen, where he worked for Škoda, then travelled to Munich, Mannheim and the Ruhr. Finally in October 1912 he came to rest in Vienna, where his older brother Martin worked. Tito lived with his brother's family and found a job first at the Griedl works, and then with Daimler, where for a short while he was a test driver. Although Tito later declared that he 'began to appreciate the latent strength of the metal workers, in their huge factories where thousands of men work together on the most up-to-date

machinery' his main pastime in Vienna was not trade unionism but the gymnasium and fencing. He fenced twice a week and also started dancing classes.²

In 1913, aged twenty-one, Josip Broz was called up for two years military service. He asked to serve in the 25th Domobran Regiment in Zagreb, in which orders were given in Croatian rather than Hungarian. Over the winter of 1913–14 he trained as a skier, and subsequently attended a course for non-commissioned officers in Budapest, becoming the youngest sergeant-major in the regiment. In the army he pursued his fencing career, becoming regimental fencing champion and coming second in the all-army championship. When the First World War began, Tito was arrested and imprisoned on the charge of threatening to desert to the Russians, something several of his compatriots succeeded in doing. Ultimately Tito gave conflicting versions of this story, telling the Yugoslav historian Vladimir Dedijer that he had indeed threatened to desert to the Russians, but also claiming, as his defence counsel argued at the time, that the whole thing was the result of a clerical error. After his release, Tito was transferred to the Serbian Front, and then, at the beginning of 1915, the 25th Domobran Regiment was sent to the Russian Front in the Carpathian Mountains.³

Tito was put in charge of a scouting platoon, and later wrote about this experience with fond memories.

One thing interested me in the science of warfare: that was scouting, because it required a clear head. Soon my wishes were granted and I was given command of a platoon which night after night crossed the enemy lines and operated deep in the rear. We were very successful and the reason, I believe, was that I took care of my men, saw to it that they were not cheated on their food rations, that they had shoes and the best possible sleeping accommodation.⁴

Although this was the extent of Tito's military experience, scouting taught him invaluable lessons about maintaining morale when behind enemy lines. Milovan Djilas, at one time his closest associate but later his bitterest critic, argued that Tito's time as an NCO in the Austro-Hungarian army gave him 'a highly developed sense of military organisation'. On 25 March 1915 Tito's regiment was attacked by Russian, Circassian and Cossack troops and Tito was wounded by a Circassian lance and taken prisoner; this wound was so serious that he spent the next thirteen months in a prison hospital established in an old monastery in the small town of Sviyazhsk, on the river Volga close to Kazan. Here he learnt Russian, helped by two secondary-school girls who brought him the Russian classics to read. In summer 1916 he was considered well enough to be moved to the Ardatov PoW camp in Samara Province, where he was given the job of mechanic maintaining the local village mill. At the end of 1916 he was moved once again, to the Kungur PoW camp near Perm, where prisoners were used to repair the Trans-Siberian Railway. Here he discovered that Red Cross parcels from Sweden were being stolen by camp officials, and when he complained he was put in prison and beaten up by Cossacks. During the revolutionary disturbances of February 1917 when the Russian Tsar was forced from the throne, a crowd broke into the prison and returned him to his camp.⁵

Amongst those with whom he had been imprisoned was a Polish Bolshevik, who befriended him, then got him a job on the railway, and then helped him escape to Petrograd in June 1917, where he lodged with the son of his Polish friend. Tito arrived at the height of the political crisis known as the July Days. After the Tsar's overthrow, Russia's various liberal parties had formed a Provisional Government, supported from the sidelines by the socialist parties represented in the soviet. In April, the moderate socialists had decided to support that government, joining it and turning it into a coalition; Lenin's Bolsheviks had defined themselves by refusing to support this government and calling instead for the transfer of power to the soviets. The Coalition Government had been held together by its commitment to Russia's continued participation in the First World War, but the offensive launched at the end of June had gone so disastrously that the Coalition Government had collapsed. In this power vacuum at the start of July, the Bolsheviks organised a series of massive demonstrations calling for a new Soviet Government and toyed with the idea of seizing power. Tito took part in these demonstrations, and was one of the many suspected Bolsheviks arrested when the new Prime Minister Alexander Kerensky restored order. Tito was sent to the Peter Paul Fortress where, after three weeks of posing as an innocent inhabitant of Perm, he confessed to being an escaped PoW. Ordered back to Kungur, he jumped off the train in Ekaterinburg and fled, taking another train as far as Omsk. Here, on 8 November, the local Bolsheviks stopped the train and explained that Lenin had seized power in Petrograd the previous day and that recruits were being sought for a new International Red Guard. Tito joined the International Red Guard and spent the winter of 1917–18 guarding the Trans-Siberian railway.⁶

It was at this time that Tito met Pelagiya Belousova, then only 14 years old. She gave him shelter in May 1918 when the Czechoslovak Legion staged its rebellion and overthrew Bolshevik power in Siberia. Omsk became the headquarters first for the anti-Bolshevik Siberian Government, and then for Admiral Kolchak's White Government. Pelagiya helped Tito take refuge forty miles outside Omsk in a Kirghiz village, where he again found employment maintaining the local mill. Then, in November 1919 Omsk was recaptured by the Red Army, Tito moved back to the town and he and Pelagiya married in January 1920.⁷ In autumn 1920 a massive operation began to return German and Austro-Hungarian PoWs to their homelands and Tito and his new bride decided to take advantage of this opportunity. Like thousands of others, they travelled to Narva in newly-independent Estonia, and then by boat to Stettin. From there Tito and Pelagiya took a train to Vienna, where they arrived on 20 September 1920; by early October they were in Kumrovec, where Josip discovered that his mother had died in 1918 and his father had moved to Jastrebarsko near Zagreb.

When Tito had been taken prisoner, Croatia was part of the Kingdom of Hungary which was itself part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire; by the time he returned, it was part of the new Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. Communist activity in the new state was significant. In the local elections held in 1920 in March and August, the communists won 39 per cent of the vote in Zagreb and 34 per cent in Belgrade, making them the biggest party in both cities; in November 1920 elections were held to the Constituent Assembly in which the Yugoslav Communist Party got the fourth

largest percentage of the vote, 12.4 per cent, and when the seats were allocated in December, the communists emerged as the third largest party. On the night of 29–30 December 1920 the ruling government coalition issued a decree banning Communist Party activities until after a constitution for the new state had been drawn up. That constitution had no sooner been agreed on 28 June 1921, than the Minister of the Interior, who had issued the ban on the Yugoslav Communist Party, was murdered by a young Bosnian communist on 21 July and all fifty-eight communist members of parliament were removed from the assembly and from local government; the Yugoslav Communist Party was declared illegal and the death penalty could be invoked for activity leading to the spread of communism.

In this political climate, Tito struggled to find work. In Zagreb he was briefly a waiter, taking part in a successful waiters' strike, and then worked as a locksmith. When in November 1920 the Zagreb Trade Unions organised a meeting to mark the anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution, Tito was asked to speak and ended his oration with the slogan 'the workers can only conquer with the help of arms' Tito also actively campaigned for the communists during the elections held to the Constituent Assembly in November, but this got him sacked and employment for a known communist became even harder to find. At the beginning of 1921 Tito and Pelagiya moved to the village of Veliko Trojstvo near Bjelvar where Tito found steady work as the mechanic in charge of a mill; he worked here for four and a half years, until the middle of 1925.⁸

During this time, Tito's personal life seems to have been as important to him as his political life. Almost as soon as the couple returned to Yugoslavia, Pelagiya gave birth to a child who died within hours. A boy then died of dysentery after just eight days. Shortly afterwards another child died after a similarly short life, although this time she lived long enough to be christened Zlatica. Their second daughter Hlinka survived two years, but it was only their son Žarko, born in 1924, who survived beyond infancy in the one-room flat all three shared. However, Tito was still a communist and in 1923 he was contacted by a former officer in both the Austro-Hungarian Army and the Red Army, who had been charged by the Party with trying to re-establish contact with dispersed party members and sympathisers. There were elections in 1923 and the communists had registered the Independent Workers' Party as a front for communist propaganda for the duration of the election campaign. Tito was brought back into Party work and by early 1924 was in charge of the Party's Križevci District Committee, as well as being elected to the local trade union committee.⁹

It was as a member of the trade union committee in early 1924 that first brought his communist activities to the attention of the police. When a trade union member died, Tito was asked to deliver a funeral oration. Although the funeral took place in a Catholic church, Tito took the occasion to declare: 'comrade, we swear to fight to the end of our lives for the ideas to which you were so devoted'; he then unfurled a red flag. Arrested and taken to Bjelovar prison, after eight days in detention he was acquitted. In summer 1925 Tito's employer died and the nephew who took over the business did not appreciate Tito's political activities; he was now under regular police surveillance and his room was regularly searched. So Tito and his family moved to Kraljevica, a small coastal shipbuilding town, where he started work on 21 September.

Most of the work was repairing torpedo boats which Yugoslavia had inherited from the Austro-Hungarian Navy, but which had been impounded by the Italians in 1918 and stripped of much of their machinery; he also worked on constructing a motor launch for the Minister of Finance, and recalled adapting a seaplane engine to power it. Tito brought with him some fifty books, including *The Iron Heel* by Jack London, *Women and Socialism* by August Bebel, and *Mother* by Maxim Gorky, and soon an informal workers' library had been established. Elected shop-steward, Tito was soon organising a Communist Party cell and then a successful strike to get compensation for wages which by then were seven weeks in arrears.¹⁰

During this dispute, Tito contacted the General Council of the Metal Workers' Union in Belgrade asking it to intervene, and thereafter his name was known in trade union circles in both Zagreb and Belgrade. When, after a year in Kraljevo, he was involved in another strike he was made redundant on 2 October 1926. He was then called to Belgrade by the Metal Workers' Union, enticed with the offer of a good job. On moving to Belgrade, he found work at the Smederevska Palanka railway carriage factory, some forty miles outside the capital. Tito was elected a workers' 'trustee' and took the opportunity to study at the Workers' Library attached to the Metal Workers' Union Headquarters; he was also encouraged to write an article for its newspaper *The Organised Worker*. Sacked as a result of this article, Tito returned to Zagreb in March 1927. By April he had a new job and was again organising a trade union branch. But when the campaign was over and recognition had been obtained from the employers, Tito left industrial employment and became what he would be for the rest of his life, a full-time labour movement organiser, first secretary of the Metal Workers' Union for Zagreb and then secretary of the Croatian Regional Committee.

In June 1927 Tito was arrested on charges dating back to his time in Kraljevica. When by October 1927 he had still not been informed of the charges against him and there had been no interrogation and no court appearance, Tito staged a hunger strike. After five days a local judge visited him in prison and promised an immediate hearing; on 28 October 1927 he was sentenced to seven months in prison. Tito was allowed to go free pending an appeal, but when the appeal was heard and the sentence reduced to five months, Tito could no longer be found; his underground life had begun.¹¹

It was on Tito's return to Zagreb in March 1927 that he entered a new stage in his political career. It was not just the ever increasing trade union activity, but he was also elected to the Zagreb Committee of the Yugoslav Communist Party, and that gave him the chance to intervene decisively in Party affairs for the first time. Ever since its foundation, the Yugoslav Communist Party had experienced an intense internal struggle between Right and Left factions. The Yugoslav Communist Party was the heir to the Serbian Socialist Party, which had supported many of the ideas of the Austro-Marxists. The Yugoslav Communist Party's first leader, the Right-wing Sima Marković, retained a certain scepticism about the Leninist version of Marxism and had to be persuaded to accept the benefits of Lenin's twenty-one conditions for Comintern membership. Marković responded to the banning of the Yugoslav Communist Party by arguing that this was only a temporary phenomenon, and since the authorities had left the communist run Independent Trade Unions free to continue their activities, the

Party had in them the perfect cover for its underground work, so long as the communists' links to the trade unions were not so blatant that the unions were closed down. To the Left-wing of the Party, the Right-wing's determination to retain the trade unions as legal institutions at all costs, was little more than unprincipled capitulationism and opportunism. More than once the Comintern had felt the need to intervene in these struggles, but to little avail; in May 1926 the Comintern Executive described the Party as 'paralysed and transformed into a permanent debating club'.¹²

One of the ironies of this situation was the fact that, while the Independent Trade Unions had their headquarters in Belgrade, many of their biggest branches were in Zagreb. It was when Tito moved to Belgrade in October 1926 that these factional struggles began to have a direct bearing on him. The Metal Workers' Union had called him to Belgrade with the offer of a good job, but his eventual placement in the Smederevske Palanka railway wagon works meant he was placed in a factory where there was no Communist Party cell. Was this because he was seen as a typical Left-wing trouble-maker from Zagreb? This thought seems to have occurred to Tito, and he felt similarly edged out when after his dismissal, the union could only offer him work in Macedonia. His return to Zagreb coincided with his increasing determination to put a stop to the debilitating factionalism in the Party. He was now a figure with some experience behind him for between 1926–8 he had written twenty-four factory reports for the workers' press. In his view, at the trade union conferences which took place in 1927 and into 1928, the Right-wing leaders 'took a provocative attitude'. Tito recalled 'how often at that time, after Party meetings, we would walk till dawn talking and thinking about how to rescue the Party from the factionalist nightmare'. He resolved to 'keep the Zagreb Party organisation safe from the factionalist scourge' and use it as a base to organise pressure on the Party leadership from below.¹³

This decision changed Tito from a regional to a national figure among Yugoslav communists. From his return to Zagreb in March 1927 onwards, Tito argued the case for what he called 'a workers' front', opposed both to the Left and Right factions within the Party. After careful preparation, and accompanied by the like-minded Andrija Hebrang, Tito launched his challenge to factionalism on the night of 25–6 February 1928 at the Eighth Zagreb City Conference. There were some thirty people present, including a representative from the Communist International sent specifically to work out a tactic for ending factionalism, and when the Zagreb Party Secretary gave a bland report with no mention of factionalism, Tito led those demanding a full discussion of the problem; he stressed that factionalism damaged the whole progressive movement since those who engaged in it put their personal prestige above the development of the movement itself. As a result of Tito's intervention, the official report was rejected and the conference adopted one drawn up by Tito and his supporters. Tito was then appointed the new Zagreb Secretary, and in this capacity wrote to the Communist International, outlining the current situation. The Comintern's response was immediate. In April 1928 the Balkan Secretariat issued an 'Open Letter' which appealed for an end to all factionalism and praised Tito's initiative; the new leadership of the Yugoslav Communist Party, imposed as a result of the Comintern's letter, threatened in June 1928 to expel the Belgrade Party

Organisation. This decision seemed to be turning Tito's campaign against the factionalism of both Left and Right into a one-sided onslaught against the Right, something reinforced by the decisions taken at the Sixth Congress of the Comintern in July–September 1928.¹⁴

Tito was not unhappy with this move to the Left. This was perhaps most obvious in the May Day celebrations he organised in Zagreb for 1928. These were assiduously prepared in order to confuse the police, but their centerpiece was an attempt to raise the political temperature by attempting to organise the break-up of a social democrat meeting, an event in which Tito himself took part. The Party also called on the communist demonstrators to resist the police. Tito was arrested during the disturbances and detained for two weeks. On his release he was soon busy organising protests about the murder on 28 June of Stjepan Radić, the leader of the Croatian Peasant Party, first co-operating with the Croatian Peasant Party but then insisting that the demonstrations continue after the Croatian Peasant Party had called them off; these demonstrations lasted three days and were the most violent in the post-war history of Zagreb, as Tito recalled, 'we went as far as to issue a proclamation calling upon the people to reply with arms to the murder of Radić'.¹⁵ When the authorities closed down the Zagreb Workers' Club and suspended the trade unions, Tito called a general strike. Now on the run, when he was eventually cornered on 4 August 1928, he jumped out of a window and waved a gun; when his lodgings were searched the police found four hand-grenades, one revolver and a quantity of ammunition alongside the more conventional stash of communist literature.¹⁶ Tito told the court that the weapons were planted, but he also told collaborators that even in the pre-war years conditions existed which could 'foster armed insurrection and revolution'; later in life he told the British historian Phyllis Auty 'they were mine all right'.¹⁷

Tito's trial caused a stir. As before, Tito declared a hunger strike in protest at his treatment, and the international communist weekly *Inprecor* published an account of his suffering under the headline 'A Cry from the Hell of Yugoslavia's Prisons'. The trial opened on 6 November 1928 in Zagreb County Court and, according to a local newspaper, 'younger workers and students had taken an extraordinary interest in this trial' and took a great interest in the fate of 'the defendant Josip Broz, undoubtedly the most interesting person in the trial, [whose] face makes you think of steel'. Tito obeyed the Party instruction to use the dock for political propaganda. When asked to plead guilty or not guilty, he replied:

Although I admit the charges of the state prosecutor's indictment, I do not consider myself guilty because I do not accept the jurisdiction of this bourgeois court. I consider myself only responsible to my Party. I admit that I am a member of the illegal Yugoslav Communist Party. I admit that I have spread communist ideas and propagated communism, that I have expounded the injustices suffered by the proletariat, in public meetings and in private talks with individuals.

Later he stated that 'if the bourgeois class goes on plundering the people, then political power should be seized by force; force must be destroyed by force'. When it

came to the final defence submission on 9 November, he dispensed with his lawyer and made a speech which several times the judge interrupted. He was still shouting slogans as he was led away.¹⁸

Tito was sentenced to five years. From January 1929 to June 1931 he was held in Lepoglava prison on the borders of Zagorje; then until November 1933 in Maribor prison. Lepoglava was a relatively easy time for him. The prison contained a small electric plant to supply both the prison and the town; Tito was put in charge of it. Soon he was trusted enough to undertake various electrical repairs in town, and was thus able to restore contacts with comrades in the Zagreb Party organisation. In his workshop he was joined by another communist Moša Pijade, who was made his assistant. Pijade, a Jewish intellectual, was engaged in translating Marx's *Das Kapital* into Serbo-Croat. Tito helped him with this, and a small study circle evolved, reading Marx, Plekhanov, Kautsky and Luxemburg. The transfer to Maribor came after he was accused of trying to escape, although Tito always denied that there was any truth in this allegation. Maribor was harsher, according to Tito 'the worst prison in Yugoslavia', although even here he was able to continue his Marxist studies by reading Engels's *Anti-Dühring*, smuggled into the prison by comrades. In November 1933 Tito was informed that he would have to complete the remaining three and a half months of the five month sentence from which he had absconded while awaiting the result of his earlier appeal. So he was transferred again, to Ogulin, and only finally released in March 1934.¹⁹

After Tito was arrested, Pelagiya returned to the USSR in 1929 with their son Žarko. There is little evidence that theirs was an unhappy marriage. There is a letter from Pelagiya to Tito dated 1 January 1927 complaining about how often he was away from home; there were stories of rows; but they shared a commitment to the cause. She worked with Tito in the trade unions, she joined the Party in 1926 and was elected to the Women's Section of the Central Committee. She also worked for International Red Aid, distributed Party literature, and was arrested at the same time as Tito. When Tito was not released, but she was, she lived with Tito's brother and continued to carry out trade union work for some months. It was the Party that organised her return to the Soviet Union. On arriving in Moscow, she studied at the Communist University for Western National Minorities and like many other Comintern activists transferred Žarko to the boarding school linked to the university. She then got a teaching job in Kazakhstan, which she felt necessitated leaving Žarko behind in an orphanage, a difficult decision, but life in Kazakhstan at that time was still very primitive as Trotsky found when exiled there. From Kazakhstan she succeeded in sending some money to Tito, and up until 1932 she was writing to him regularly. Then, in 1933, she took a job with the Comintern in the section dealing with political prisoners. When almost a year after Tito's release he visited Moscow in February 1935 the couple agreed to divorce; Tito was upset less by the fact that the two of them had drifted apart than by the fact that Pelagiya had become so detached from Žarko that she could not say where he was. Subsequently Pelagiya was caught up in Stalin's purges, sentenced to ten years in prison in 1938 and then to a further ten in 1948, she was released in 1953. Tito never spoke of her, and resisted her subsequent attempts to make contact. Djilas later

recalled that for Tito any reference to that marriage was 'painful, it seemed as if he wanted to blot out any trace of it from his life and memory'.²⁰

COMINTERN FUNCTIONARY

When Tito was released from detention in March 1934 the political situation had changed dramatically. King Alexander had tired of the whole democratic experiment and on 6 January 1929 dissolved parliament, renamed his state Yugoslavia and established his personal dictatorship, banning all political parties and trade unions. The Yugoslav Communist Party responded by calling for an armed revolutionary struggle, since the only 'solution to this crisis for the working class and peasantry is armed struggle'. Although in May 1929 the Politburo suggested that armed insurrection was no longer imminent, it was far from abandoning this radical line; in October the Central Committee resolved 'to go from defence to attack ... and prepare the masses and the Party for armed insurrection'. It was only in April 1932, with the Comintern Executive's decision to appoint Milan Gorkić as the new Party leader, that the first steps were taken to move away from this aggressive Leftist stance.²¹

Further afield in Europe, Tito's years in prison had seen the Wall Street Crash's dramatic denouement in Weimar Germany, the growth of both the Nazi and communist parties, and the ultimate victory of the Nazis over the divided democratic forces. Some blamed the communists for Hitler's triumph. The German communists, convinced that the world economic crisis heralded the collapse of capitalism and an imminent communist revolution in Germany, a belief strongly reinforced by Moscow, saw no point in allying themselves with the reformist social democrats; indeed, the desire of the social democrats to save Weimar democracy seemed a greater danger than bringing on a head-on collision with the Nazis. The communists were still relatively relaxed when Hitler came to power in January 1933. It was only when the Nazis consolidated their power so easily and prevented the communists establishing any sort of realistic underground organisation that they began to become seriously concerned, a concern reinforced in February 1934 when in Austria the armed resistance to the Dollfuss dictatorship turned out to be completely ineffective. The street fighting in Paris that same month between fascist and anti-fascist groups marked the point when communists, initially mounting pressure from below, forced a rethink in communist strategy.

In November and December 1933 Gorkić travelled clandestinely from the Party's foreign base in Vienna to Yugoslavia as part of the preparations for the planned Fourth Party Conference. As a Comintern official prior to becoming Party leader Gorkić had been part of the commission which had considered Tito's letter denouncing factionalism in spring 1928, and so it was perhaps not surprising that, not long after Tito's release from prison, he was co-opted to the new Party leadership that Gorkić was establishing. The triumph of the Left in the Yugoslav Communist Party which had been so evident at the time of Tito's arrest, soon led sectarianism to spiral out of control. The Left were convinced that King Alexander's coup was a desperate measure to save a crumbling regime and that an 'armed uprising' now topped the agenda. For much of the first half of 1929 the Party was involved in sporadic exchanges of fire with

policeman, before in May it was recognised that any preparations for an uprising should remain in their 'preparatory phase'. In line with this new policy, the communists moved over to the formation of illegal, rather than legal trade unions, holding the first and essentially fictitious first national conference of the revolutionary trade unions in October 1929. By spring 1930 the Party had begun to appreciate the damage caused by this dramatic turn to the Left, particularly the disastrous failure of the attempt to construct illegal trade unions. When in July 1930 the Comintern Executive intervened to impose a new Party leadership committed to restoring work within the existing trade unions, rather than building up revolutionary alternatives, Tito's letter of 1928 was cited as offering guidance for the true way forward. The new trade-union line received even clearer backing when Gorkić was selected as Party leader, and under his stewardship the recovery of the Party would begin. In September 1932 the Yugoslav Communist Party and its newspaper *Proleter* began a consistent campaign 'to work with the masses'. The Party's declared aim was to break with the old cell mentality and base its work in the factories; armchair revolutionaries plotting revolution from smoke-filled rooms were no longer appropriate; the Party would only be a mass party when it was linked with the masses.²²

Work among the masses meant competing with the socialists and, in the Comintern context of 1932–3, working for the 'united front from below', i.e. ignoring the Socialist Party leadership and trying to win a majority of workers to the communist side. Gorkić always pushed this concept to its limits. In September 1932 *Proleter* suggested that joint action with the socialist rank and file, rather than permanent confrontation with them, was the way forward. By October 1932 *Proleter* was criticising the 'sectarian' policy of the Spanish Communist Party, which had failed to profit from the overthrow of the Spanish monarchy in 1931; the journal stressed that the 'united front from below' allowed the formation of 'militant accords' with members of the reformist trade unions for specific if limited campaigns. When Hitler came to power, the April 1933 issue of *Proleter*, while careful not to go beyond the Comintern's own appeal for a 'united front of the proletariat', argued that it was time to 'hold out a brotherly hand to all workers and socialists in reformist organisation'. When the Comintern made clear that communists could make 'concrete agreements in individual countries' with socialist leaders, Gorkić at once proposed joint campaigns with the Yugoslav socialists, and the trade unions, which had been legalised once again in 1932. Once the French communists had begun their push for increased co-operation between communists and socialists in spring 1934, Gorkić was keen to follow suit. *Proleter* praised the decision of the French communists and socialists to co-operate which was reached in July 1934, and when the Fourth Conference of the Yugoslav Communist Party was eventually held in Ljubljana in December 1934, the Party stressed that its call for united action with the socialists was in line with the emerging French popular front and the recently established 'worker-peasant alliance' in Spain; for the first time it was stated publicly that such unity would be reached 'from above', in talks with the socialist leaders, not only 'from below'. And there was a clear target for such talks. In 1933 the King had announced the formation of a new parliamentary assembly. The communists had boycotted the elections on that occasion,

but in July 1934 *Proleter* criticised this decision. The Party would take part in the 1935 elections, and if it did so, it needed a clear strategy towards the socialists.²³

When Tito was released from prison he was not allowed to return to Zagreb and was supposed to return to Kumrovec and report daily to the police. The chairman of the local council, a school friend, interviewed him on the first day, congratulated him on the show he put up at his trial, and let it be known 'by a wink' that Tito would not be expected to report every day. By April he was living illegally in Zagreb, having been restored at once to the Croatian Regional Committee of the Yugoslav Communist Party. In summer 1934 he was sent to Vienna, disguised as a member of a Slovene mountaineering society, and, co-opted to the Central Committee, attended a series of Central Committee sessions held from 10–18 August. By autumn 1934 he was deeply involved in underground work, funding trade union groups and organising a conference of the Party in Slovenia on 15–17 September; on this occasion he appointed a new leadership for the Slovene Party which included his future long term collaborator Edward Kardelj. Tito returned to Vienna immediately afterwards and attended Central Committee meetings on 23 and 25 September and 1 and 4 October, but he then returned straight away to Yugoslavia, first to Zagreb and then again to Ljubljana. However, the assassination of King Alexander on 9 October led to extraordinary security measures which persuaded the Central Committee to order Tito back to Vienna. Together, Tito and Gorkić attended the Fourth Party Conference on 25 December 1934 at which 'the leadership had to admit a whole range of mistakes and shortcomings', including boycotting elections both to trade unions and local government. On 18 January 1935 Tito's success as an underground operative was recognised when it was agreed that he should join the Balkan Department of the Comintern.²⁴

In Moscow Tito was given a small room on the fourth floor of the Hotel Lux where many Comintern officials were based. Within the Balkan Secretariat he had an office and a secretary, and his duties were essentially to read all the reports coming from Yugoslavia, and to prepare papers based on those reports when Yugoslavia was on the agenda of meetings; special reports were to be written as and when necessary. When not working or sleeping he spent most of his time reading, either in his room or in the libraries, continuing the Marxist education he had begun in prison. He also gave occasional lectures at the Lenin School and the Communist University for the National Minorities of the West on work in the trade unions and on the formation of communist cadres. Gorkić sent a letter in advance to the other members of the Yugoslav community in Moscow stressing that, while Tito might take a while to find his feet within the Comintern bureaucracy, 'he knows the Party, he represents the best part of our active workers and after some time – six to eight months – we shall recall him for leadership work in the Central Committee; therefore no-one should treat him as a petty official but rather as a Party member who in the near future will be one of the actual, and we hope, good leaders of the Party'.

Inevitably, Tito was very much involved with preparations for the Seventh Congress of the Comintern, eventually held from 25 July to 20 August 1935 but originally planned for earlier in the year. Tito attended the congress, and the Yugoslav

delegation chose Gorkić as its leader and Tito as its Secretary. Thus Tito attended all congress sessions and several meetings of commissions. When it came to selecting a Yugoslav representative to the Comintern Executive, the Yugoslav delegation failed to give clear backing to its leader Gorkić and, briefly, Tito's name was put forward; in the end the Comintern intervened, appointed Gorkić, but downgraded him from a full to a candidate member of the committee. However, Tito had done enough to be co-opted onto the ruling Politburo of the Yugoslav Communist Party on 21 August 1935. After a three week tour of the Soviet Union, Tito was told he would be returning to Vienna in December.²⁵

Tito's return was delayed because of renewed factional tension within the Yugoslav Communist Party. This time the issue was what Lenin had called 'Liquidationism'. Liquidationism meant abandoning, or 'liquidating', the underground committee structure of the Party in an attempt to legalise the Party and thus make easier an alliance with the liberals by keeping the radical leadership in emigration at a distance. It was a term used by Lenin to describe the views of the majority of his Menshevik opponents in Russia during the years 1907–14. The Menshevik view of Tsarism was that there were essentially only two political groupings in the country, supporters of the Tsar and supporters of the opposition; the Russian social democrats should, therefore, be ready to co-operate with any opposition alliance which might emerge. Liquidator Mensheviks argued that this would be facilitated if the social democrats concentrated their activity on the trade unions, legalised after 1905, and rebuilt the party on a semi-legal footing, abandoning the centralised hierarchy of underground committees. Lenin, on the other hand, argued that there were two opposition groupings in pre-revolutionary Russia: the liberals, little more than a new capitalist government in the wings, and the social democrats. No co-operation with the liberals was possible and the legal labour movement should be protected from liberal influence by remaining under the control of the underground committee structure based in emigration. For Lenin, talk of reforming the Party organisation was simply a cover for reformism: it was the logical next step in a strategy of betrayal which began with the demand for a united opposition.²⁶

Gorkić seemed to be implementing policies pretty close to Liquidationism as he pressed forward with his popular front strategy. Under his leadership, in the shadow of developments in France and Spain, the Party sought a popular front style agreement with the socialists. Of course, at first sight there were few similarities between the situation in France, where both the communist and socialist parties were legal, and Yugoslavia, where both were illegal. However, the Comintern line required all parties to follow broadly the same policy, and ever since the assassination of King Alexander there had been signs that the royal dictatorship established in 1929 was beginning to weaken. Not only were elections promised but the censorship was relaxed and prominent political prisoners were released. Seeking to capitalise on these developments Gorkić held talks with socialist leaders throughout January and February 1935. However, although an agreement on joint action in the trade unions seemed feasible, negotiations on an electoral agreement broke down over who should head the electoral list. To speed up these negotiations, Gorkić initiated a dramatic change in tactics. Earlier instructions that the Party fight as an independent entity, but in co-operation with other groups, were contradicted by the

proposal that the Party merge into a single opposition list. An electoral pact with the socialists was one thing, a policy of a single opposition list was quite another, and dangerously close to the sort of liberal domination of the opposition against which Lenin had once warned.²⁷

The May 1935 elections were for many observers a moral victory for the opposition, despite the government's comfortable majority in terms of parliamentary seats. With opposition groups at first boycotting the new parliament, and the appointment of the more liberal figure of Milan Stojadinović as Prime Minister, the political scene in Yugoslavia remained fluid, with the socialists now legalised *de facto* if not *de jure*. Gorkić, therefore, was to repeat the proposal for a single opposition list throughout his period as Party leader, even though the rest of the leadership did not support him. In June 1935 the Central Committee rejected his 'single opposition' stance, but continued to press for an alliance with the socialists. When prospects for an alliance improved in the autumn, after the socialists had adopted a new radical programme, Gorkić was sent to Yugoslavia in October 1935 to try to finalise these negotiations: again he had no success. Mass arrests during the winter of 1935–6 showed the clear limits to Stojadinović's liberalism and revived opposition to Gorkić's tactics. He was forced to summon a meeting of the Central Committee in April 1936, without the prior agreement of the Comintern, and to agree to the adoption of a series of resolutions critical of all the attempts at negotiating an alliance with the socialists.²⁸

The Comintern's decision to quash these April resolutions and summon the Party leadership to Moscow in August appeared to suggest total endorsement for the Gorkić line. However, questions had clearly been raised in the Comintern by Gorkić's apparent inability to keep his own house in order, for he was criticised for not having sought Comintern intervention earlier. When Gorkić returned from Moscow to Vienna, he told a Central Committee meeting on 8 December 1936 that henceforth he had the right to veto all Party decisions: he alone would in future have the right to correspond with the Comintern.²⁹ Again negotiations began with the socialists, and again Gorkić stressed the single opposition tactic. Discussions had already started in Zagreb in autumn 1936 about an agreement for the December 1936 local elections. A joint platform was drafted and sent to the Central Committee for comments and the Party's November report to the Comintern was upbeat and optimistic, as was a Gorkić letter to Tito. Once again Gorkić was convinced of the need for agreement at any cost. An agreement of some sort had to be achieved, whether officially or unofficially and no matter what name was given to that list, he told Tito. It was essential that any united Left grouping that might emerge should become an active part of the United Opposition organised by the 'bourgeois' parties: the 'old socialist' idea of a 'third bloc' was rejected.³⁰

The problem for Gorkić was that the idea of a 'third bloc' was not so much an 'old socialist' idea, but Lenin's idea, as developed in his clash with the Menshevik 'Liquidationists' between 1906 and 1914. Tito had no problem with the Gorkić concept of working with the masses; however, he did have concerns about Gorkić's tactics on implementing the popular front, especially when it came to trade union work. That the Comintern also had certain reservations about Gorkić became clear in August 1936, when after open disagreement between Gorkić and Tito, the Comintern

decided that Gorkić would continue as Political Secretary of the Yugoslav Communist Party, but Tito would be Organisational Secretary, responsible for organisational work within Yugoslavia. This decision was a result of the backing Tito had received from the head of the Comintern, Georgii Dimitrov. So it was in the capacity of Organisational Secretary that Tito left Moscow for Vienna in October 1936. Amongst his first jobs was the transfer of the Party's foreign headquarters from Vienna to Paris because of increased surveillance by the Austrian police. From there he could also oversee the dispatch of Yugoslav volunteers to fight in the international brigades in Spain.³¹

Tito knew as early as November 1936 that the Comintern had serious doubts about Gorkić, and the differences between them became apparent at once. While not critical of the negotiations with the socialists *per se*, Tito was clearly worried by the logic of Gorkić's concept of an agreement at any price. The socialists insisted that the illegality of the Yugoslav Communist Party was a major stumbling block to an agreement, and Tito told Gorkić in November 1936 that much of the current talk about relations with the socialists could only be described as Liquidationist.³² That Gorkić was a Liquidationist there can be no doubt. Not only did he call for a united opposition, but he wanted to facilitate this by legalising the Communist Party and thus overcoming the socialists' fear of association with an illegal organisation. To this end, he drew up lengthy proposals aimed at completely transforming the party's organisational structure. At his first meeting with the Central Committee on returning from Moscow he called on all those in emigration who were in contact with Yugoslavia to study the question of the relationship between legal and illegal work. All Gorkić's correspondence with the Comintern in the spring of 1937 made clear that radical changes were at the front of his mind. The issue of reform appeared regularly on the agenda of Central Committee meetings as the 'organisational question'.³³

The starting point for Gorkić's analysis of the failings of the Party were the constant arrests. He therefore proposed legalising as many Party leaders as possible by involving them in the legal and semi-legal trade union work so essential for working class unity. This would inevitably mean the demise of 'deep underground commanding committees', which showed little activity and were increasingly irrelevant. 'We must be brave enough to recognise this,' he wrote in January 1937, 'and draw the logical conclusions, which are not,' he insisted, 'Liquidationist.' The old technical apparatus should be abolished, the Party rebuilt from below, and the Party leadership legalised in Yugoslavia. Unfortunately for Gorkić, the Comintern did not agree that these proposals were not Liquidationist. He was warned by the representative of the Yugoslav Communist Party in Moscow that he should take care not to commit any sort of 'silliness' by appearing to favour Liquidationism. The impression 'here', he was told, was that the proposed reorganisation would indeed be 'silly'. Gorkić stuck to his guns and took a detailed statement on Party reorganisation when summoned to Moscow in July 1937. This repeated the call for the legalisation of the Party and the abolition of the technical apparatus; it described the underground cells as irrelevant. The Comintern was equally unhappy about his repeated calls for the Party to follow the tactic of a single opposition and criticised his letter of July 1937 calling for all anti-fascist elements to be part of the same list in local elections.³⁴

Gorkić never returned from that visit to Moscow, one of the many victims of Stalin's purges, and at a meeting on 17 August 1937 Tito took over as interim Party

secretary. His Leninist opposition to Liquidationism did not mean his position as interim Party leader was automatically endorsed by Moscow. Gorkić had been arrested by the NKVD, not for the ideological sin of Liquidationism, but as a British spy; before becoming Yugoslav Party leader he had twice undertaken Comintern work in Great Britain. As a result, while the NKVD looked for more spies among the Yugoslav communists, the Comintern began a lengthy investigation into the Yugoslav Communist Party to establish whether Gorkićites existed among the remaining leadership. Understandably, this enquiry gave new heart to those, mostly on the Left, who had opposed Gorkić in 1935 and 1936 and who interpreted his removal as a vindication of their position.

Tito's clash with Gorkić revealed him to be instinctively on the Left, but tactically flexible, determined to strengthen links with the trade union masses, and opposed to all sectarianism. When his leadership met sniping from other Leftists opposed to Gorkić, Tito was uncertain how to respond and whether he should openly criticise Gorkić's links with the socialists, at a time when the popular front policy was apparently so successful in France and Spain. It would be eight months before Tito could even begin to combat Liquidationism and 'Bolshevise' the Party, and over two years before his position as Party leader was truly secure. During that time he experienced at first hand the role of the NKVD within the Comintern at the height of Stalin's purges. This experience forced him to clarify his thoughts on the relationship between the Leninist and the Stalinist state.³⁵

PARTY LEADER

Unlike other leading communists attached to the Comintern, Tito had experienced the Russian revolution and civil war; he was not in awe of Russia and quickly learned to adapt to life in Moscow at the height of the purges. From the start of Tito's period as *de facto* Party leader, he began to explore the nature of his dependency on Moscow: a sort of sparring began, through which he sought to establish the limitations on independent action. He was determined to act, rather than simply await instructions. To justify such initiatives he was concerned to keep the Comintern informed in detail of what was happening; however, much of what he told the Comintern verged on disinformation and was highly selective, often glossing over controversial issues and essentially reporting for reporting's sake. In his first letter as interim leader to Wilhelm Pieck, the Comintern Secretary responsible for the Balkans, Tito proposed holding a Party conference and pressing ahead with plans to relocate the leadership to Yugoslavia. Receiving no instructions from Pieck, Tito then undertook a series of initiatives: on 24 September he sent Politburo member Rodoljub Čolaković to Spain to look after the Yugoslav volunteers fighting in the war against Franco, and shortly afterwards, having asked Moscow whom to appoint to run the Party's affairs in Paris and having received no reply, he went ahead and appointed Lovro Kuhar. This appointment was characteristic: it was a bold move to make without the agreement of Moscow, yet the appointment was cautious in that Kuhar was respected by all Party factions and was one of the two possible candidates named in his letter to Pieck.³⁶

Any idea that the Party crisis would be of short duration ended in mid-October 1937, when Tito was first summoned to Moscow and then told to cancel his travel arrangements. With no clear instructions, Tito carried on running the Party's routine affairs and at the beginning of November sent Čolaković on a trip to Yugoslavia immediately on his return from Spain. This, however, proved controversial. After months without a reply from Moscow, Tito was told by Pieck, in a letter dated 17 December 1937 but not received until 7 January 1938, that Čolaković and another Politburo member, Sreten Žujović, should be suspended. Tito recalled Čolaković at once, admitting he had been wrong to send him without Comintern approval.³⁷ The suspension of Žujović and Čolaković was instigated by reports from Paris that the whole leadership, and not just Gorkić, were traitors. These Paris-based critics had contacted Petko Miletić as a potential new Party leader as soon as Gorkić was summoned to Moscow: Miletić, another former Politburo member, had had a battalion of Spanish volunteers named after him because of his supposed heroism under torture.³⁸ On 8 December 1937 Ivan Marić, one of the Paris dissidents, complained to Tito that he had simply continued with the old Gorkić practices and had taken no measures against Gorkić's closest associates. Henceforth, Marić said, he would boycott Central Committee meetings attended by Čolaković and Žujović.³⁹

This Paris-based assault on Tito posed a serious threat. Another of its leaders Labud Kusovac, a former member of the Profintern apparatus and the man responsible for the travel arrangements of Yugoslav volunteers destined for Spain, where opposition to Gorkić had been most widespread, had good contacts with the Comintern and the NKVD. He was visited in Paris by the Comintern emissary Mustafa Golubović early in 1938, although no contact was made with Tito who happened to be in the French capital at the same time. Apparently as a result of this visit, the French Communist Party supported Marić in his job as organiser of the Yugoslav emigration in France even after Tito had removed him from that post. The Marić and Tito groups were fighting bitterly for control of the Party with Marić insisting no personnel initiatives should be made until the Comintern enquiry was over.⁴⁰

In this dispute, Tito portrayed himself to the Comintern as an aggrieved innocent, appealing always for the Comintern to conclude its enquiry rapidly to prevent the Party disintegrating. However, far from waiting patiently for a decision, Tito took a series of initiatives to reinforce his position and bypass the restrictions coming from Moscow. The Comintern enquiry meant that all financial support from Moscow ended and the Party journal *Proleter* had to cease publication. Tito looked to other means of support and first sought to divert money being used to send volunteers to Spain for the more mundane task of keeping the Party press operating.⁴¹ Frustrated in this by the opposition of Kusovac, whom he tried to sack as Spanish agent in March 1938, Tito had to appeal for funds to Yugoslavs living abroad. Even more controversially, perhaps, despite the clear instructions from Moscow that Čolaković and Žujović should be removed from the leadership, Tito equivocated. Their suspension was 'noted' by a Politburo meeting on 21 January 1938, but the two men continued to attend meetings throughout February, including the one on 15 February at which, amongst other things, Marić was removed from his post as organiser of Yugoslav emigrants in France.⁴²

Marić responded to his dismissal by writing a long letter to the Comintern detailing his criticisms of the current leadership. In his letter to Tito of December 1937 Marić had made clear he saw Tito as a positive figure. In this letter of February 1938, while he was still prepared to recognise Tito would have to be included in a new leadership, he made a series of serious accusations against him: these included his refusal to listen to advice and his dictatorial behaviour in manipulating the proceedings of the Party's trade union commission. For Marić, Tito had, quite simply, failed to live up to expectations by falling completely under the spell of the Gorkičites.⁴³ This new turn of events prompted Tito to act. On 23 March 1938 he wrote to Dimitrov, Chairman of the Comintern, explaining that he was winding up the Central Committee in Paris and moving his base to Yugoslavia: this temporary leadership was formally inaugurated on 20 May. This move was again both revolutionary and cautious. To set up a new leadership without the agreement of the Comintern was certainly revolutionary, but the Comintern was kept informed at every stage and those co-opted to the new leadership were people who were either existing Politburo members, not associated with the Gorkić and Marić factions, or the leaders of the Yugoslav Communist Party's constituent sections, whose appointments had all been endorsed by the Comintern.

When writing to explain his actions to Dimitrov, Tito referred only obliquely to the power struggle under way. He justified his decision, rather disingenuously, by referring to the German occupation of Austria, which had just taken place, and the consequent war threat to Yugoslavia. He stressed the cautious side of what he had done even though by appointing Žujović as Kusovac's replacement in handling the Spanish volunteers and making Čolaković one of Kuhar's advisers, he was clearly questioning the decision to suspend them. His comment that Čolaković and Žujović had done no more than fall under Gorkić's influence was almost a direct criticism of the Comintern decision.⁴⁴

Having established his new leadership, Tito reaffirmed his orthodoxy by starting the task of 'Bolshevising' the Party's organisation, putting to rights the organisational errors of Gorkić. Tito was not only opposed to Liquidationism but advanced a positive alternative in reasserting Gorkić's earlier stress on working with the masses. In December 1937 the Politburo had agreed to confront the Liquidator danger, while retaining legal work at the centre of attention, by establishing Party cells in mass organisations. Tito would not have contradicted Gorkić's view that the underground was discredited, but rather than abandoning it he concentrated on reforming the underground, making it more secure and more in tune with workers' needs. He concentrated on trying to break down the old 'super-conspiratorial' three-man cell structure – in which student revolutionaries had debated the pros and cons of the dictatorship of the proletariat – and establish Party cells in the legal workers' movement. Party cells in the trade unions would become the responsibility of the Party's trade union commission whose work had been so criticised by Marić. This commission would be under the immediate control of the Central Committee. The impact of this on the Liquidators was obvious. Those who, in their legal life, held responsible and legal posts in the trade union hierarchy could in their illegal life be a mere rank-and-file party member, subject to Central Committee directives and ultimately to Moscow. Whereas they had once sought to ignore the illegal underground in

order to improve relations with the socialists, they now had to obey the centralised underground hierarchy.⁴⁵

As a result of Tito's effective work in the legal labour movement, seven of the fifteen members of the executive of one of Yugoslavia's Independent Trade Union Federation were communists after the congress held on 17–18 April 1938. That same year communists took control of the construction workers' union, textile workers' union and woodworkers' union, while the powerful Zagreb regional board of the metal-workers' union was in their hands. The Yugoslav trade union movement remained divided along political and national lines, but the situation had been transformed since the early 1930s and the brief flirtation with illegal revolutionary trade unions. Now, Tito's organisational structure would ensure that all the healthy developments of the previous two years were brought firmly back under the control of the Central Committee.⁴⁶

Having established his provisional leadership and begun the task of 'Bolshevising' the Party, Tito returned to Paris in June 1938 to seek a visa for Moscow to explain his actions in person. It took the intervention of Josip Kopinić, a Yugoslav Comintern official sympathetic to Tito's cause, for that visa to be obtained and when Tito arrived in Moscow on 24 August 1938 he found the Comintern still debating the future of the Party. It had three options before it: dissolving the Party completely, appointing Petko Miletić as Secretary, or appointing Tito as Secretary. Evidence against Tito had been supplied by Ivan Srebrenjak, a Yugoslav member of the NKVD active in Paris. It concentrated on rumour and innuendo current among the Paris emigration: Tito's lifelong penchant for beautiful women, and the smart clothes and dinners associated with his businessman cover story, were portrayed as liaisons with Gestapo agents and favouritism towards the Party's bourgeois rather than proletarian members. It was also pointed out that since the Party press had continued to appear during his acting leadership, despite the cut-off in Moscow funding, he must have entered into some dubious alliance with the Yugoslav police. Faced with such primitive and preposterous charges, Tito responded by stressing his record of success in Yugoslavia, and that the Party was at last beginning to make headway among the working class.⁴⁷

Ultimately, Tito's strength probably lay in the fact that Marić had made it plain in both his letter to Tito and his letter to the Comintern that he would be prepared to work with Tito if the Gorkičites were removed.⁴⁸ Nevertheless the enquiry dragged on for many months. Tito saw Dimitrov on 17 October and again on 2 November and clearly believed a favourable outcome was possible, but it was not until 26 December 1938 that the relevant commission accepted a pro-Tito report drawn up by Kopinić.⁴⁹ Formal agreement by the Comintern Executive came on 5 January 1939. For that meeting, Tito drew up a revised version of his plans for the future. This stressed working towards uniting the fragmented trade union movement by developing the Party's legal work. However, in such legal work any agreements reached with the socialists would not mark an end to criticism of the policies pursued by socialist trade union functionaries.⁵⁰ This readiness to confront the socialists was also apparent in Tito's attitude to elections. Tito insisted, following Lenin, that there were three political blocs in Yugoslavia, not two; the government, the hesitant bourgeois opposition and the principled workers' opposition. The December 1938 elections brought this out clearly. As in 1935, although in terms of parliamentary

seats obtained the government won the December 1938 elections handsomely, in terms of the popular vote the opposition almost defeated the government list. What is more, in 1938 the opposition increased its vote considerably over 1935. It was hardly surprising, therefore, that, sensing the popular mood, the socialist leadership should be was prepared to support co-operation with the bourgeois opposition. Many communists took a similar line, and over the summer, the socialists and communists had come to an understanding about some joint activities. Tito, however, believed that the communists were not committed by this understanding to following the tails of the socialists in the elections. He believed the Party should put up a separate electoral list and issued an instruction from Moscow to this effect. In Croatia, however, the Party refused to accept this ruling and did not put up a separate candidate. Tito condemned them angrily as 'capitulators and Liquidators'.⁵¹

It is not surprising therefore, that when Tito returned to Yugoslavia in spring 1939 as unquestioned Party leader, he was determined to finish off Liquidationism. At three meetings of the Central Committee between March and May 1939, all leading Liquidators were expelled from the Party for preventing the correct functioning of the trade union commission. At a national meeting of the Yugoslav Communist Party in June 1939, the Croatian Party was severely criticised. Far from the talk of a single opposition, the resolution stressed that it was the role of Party cells to explain to workers the basic communist message 'that the struggle for a better life, the struggle for socialism was not a utopia', as the socialists implied, but at the appointed time the working class would come to power.⁵²

This firm action against what remained of Gorkić's Rightist policies in the Party, and the leadership's new revolutionary rhetoric in spring 1939, sparked off more anti-Tito manoeuvres within the Comintern hierarchy, during which questions of reformism and nationalism became hopelessly entwined. When opposing the idea of independent candidates in the December 1938 elections, the communists in Croatia had argued that Croatia was a special case. Indeed, the question of Croatian nationalism, never far below the surface, was to move centre stage in Yugoslav domestic politics during 1939. Ever since the assassination of his father, King Alexander, Yugoslavia's ruling Prince Paul had had contacts with Dr Vladimir Maček, leader of the Croatian Peasant Party. After the December 1938 elections, Croat pressure led to the replacement of Stojadinović as Prime Minister by Dragiša Cvetković, and, after six months of secret negotiation, the announcement of an agreement on Croatian autonomy on 26 August 1939. In such a climate, Croatian communists could argue it was absurd to split the opposition forces in Croatia, even if it might make sense in other parts of the country. Their motivation was clear: if the communists in Croatia were to make progress, Croatian national feelings should not be offended.⁵³ Thus, Tito's Leftist policy of opposing a united opposition list in the December 1938 elections, became sucked into the nationality question as it affected Croatia, at a time when the Comintern hierarchy also had an interest in making concessions to Croatian national feeling. When, in March 1939, Hitler broke up Czechoslovakia, annexed Bohemia and Moravia and created a new 'independent' Slovak state, the possibility of the dismemberment of Yugoslavia became real.

In March 1939 the Central Committee turned to the question of international relations, and in particular the defence of the Yugoslav state as then constituted. Tito's statement, endorsed by the Central Committee, was uncompromising in its defence of Yugoslav territorial integrity. However, far from seeking alliances with other opposition groups to help preserve and defend that integrity, the statement verged on the ultra radical: only a people's government, it argued, a truly democratic government, would be capable of defending the country. Franco's victory in the Spanish Civil War, the Central Committee stressed in an Open Letter published at this time, proved that the officer corps of any bourgeois state was inherently disloyal and reactionary, and that the time had come to put the Yugoslav armed forces at the service of the people.⁵⁴ This view, which seemed to imply that political change not far short of revolution was the only way Yugoslavia could play a role in the defence of peace, clearly caused great concern in Moscow. This was a time of intense international discussion between Great Britain, France and the USSR on the issue of collective security. Those talks had already been complicated by the three powers' differing attitudes to the Republican Government in Spain. If Yugoslavia became a new revolutionary republic, established in an area which was of great strategic importance, that could only cause further complications for the Soviet Union and was not likely to be welcomed by Stalin.

Not all Party leaders endorsed Tito's radicalism. A report from his opponents in Paris drew a rather different conclusion to those of Tito on the consequences of the 'tragic fate of Czechoslovakia'. It argued that the Croats should be given no grounds for turning to a foreign power for support and intervention, as some Slovaks had done. In particular the Yugoslav Communist Party should not allow itself to become isolated from the Croatian Peasant Party, the socialists or the united Serbian opposition. In other words, the whole strategy of 'one opposition bloc' would have to be revived in view of the new international situation.⁵⁵ Lovro Kuhar, still the Party's agent in Paris, was contacted by Dimitrov on 1 May 1939 and told there was an issue which only Tito could discuss, and which necessitated his immediate presence in Moscow.⁵⁶ No doubt suspecting the true issues involved, but resorting to the tried tactic of disingenuity and procrastination, Tito wrote to Dimitrov on 20 June 1939 asking for comments on the Party's March statement on defence. Tito was, clearly, genuinely anxious. He had given a commitment that the task of reorganising the Party would take three months, after which time he would return to Moscow, so a summons to Moscow was not anticipated, but the mysterious approach through Kuhar was troubling. Tito asked for an extension of his period abroad, but by August it was clear he could delay his visit to Moscow no longer: there, it also became clear, he was to face the charge of Trotskyism.⁵⁷ However, by the time he arrived in Moscow, the international situation had changed completely. The Nazi-Soviet Pact had been signed on 23 August and the Second World War began with the German invasion of Poland on 1 September. In March 1939 Tito's talk of a people's government had contradicted the Soviet Union's ambitions for collective security agreements with the governments of Eastern Europe. By September collective security was a thing of the past and the Comintern had adopted a new revolutionary rhetoric. Popular fronts from above, through alliances with socialists, were suddenly anathema; only popular fronts 'from below' could be considered. Tito's views on the elections of December 1938 were close to

just such a view, and his talk of a people's government fitted the new mood. In the end, there was no accusation of Trotskyism when on 26 September 1939 Tito reported to the Comintern that the second 'imperialist' world war presented Yugoslav workers and peasants with the opportunity to free themselves from capitalism.⁵⁸

On 23 November 1939 the Comintern Secretariat met and endorsed Tito's work since its original decision of 5 January.⁵⁹ Tito's position as Party leader was finally secure. The more than two years of intrigue and manoeuvre since his provisional appointment had taught him much about which initiatives he could, and could not take. In 1938 he had successfully defied the Comintern on domestic matters and reorganised the Party leadership on his own initiative: in 1939 statements on international affairs had resulted in charges of Trotskyism, a charge for which there was only one possible punishment. Adapting to the new Left line of the Nazi-Soviet Pact presented Tito with few problems. The Left turn of the Comintern not only saved his life, it meant that the Left, which had once seen Tito as a disciple of Gorkić, now had no problems in rallying to his side.

Tito exaggerated his abilities, for in 1939 it was chance not prescience which saved him. However, Tito did feel he had developed a few rules of thumb to help navigate through the choppy waters of the Comintern under Stalin. In later years, he explained how easy he had found it to carry out a Comintern request at this time to write a proclamation which took into account the new international situation. He simply took the line that the job of Yugoslav communists was to struggle, and not to concern themselves with the behaviour of the Soviet Government. On his return to Yugoslavia he made similar comments in some notes on the relationship between Leninism and Stalinism. Stalin's ideas, he wrote, were those of constructing socialism: Stalin was a comrade who had saved the Soviet state from crisis and built socialism. 'But', he went on, 'the revolutionary struggle in capitalist countries is mainly led by Lenin's thought'. Stalin and his ideas were of more importance to the Soviet proletariat than to the workers in countries where the revolution had still to occur. The workers' of the capitalist world were guided not by Stalin but 'Lenin's thought, the thought of revolution'. From this point on Tito operated according to the rough-and-ready rule that if he avoided international affairs, he would have a free hand in working towards a Leninist revolution.⁶⁰

The long struggle, first against Gorkić and then to consolidate his position as Party leader, had also taught Tito another invaluable lesson; not to rely exclusively on Moscow's support. While the Comintern, overseen by the NKVD, endlessly investigated the state of the Yugoslav Communist Party and suspended its funding, Tito found alternative resources and looked to the support he could garner from within Yugoslavia. There would be other occasions when support expected from Moscow did not materialise.

THE REVOLUTIONARY ROAD

In its statement endorsing Tito's leadership, the Comintern also endorsed Tito's rhetoric. The general crisis of capitalism which had led to the war, it stated, had struck Yugoslavia particularly acutely. The unresolved national problem, the unresolved agrarian problem, the general exploitation of semi-colonial peoples by the imperialists all meant ever increasing opposition to the Great Serb bourgeoisie and 'gave the Party great opportunities

for the revolutionary mobilisation of the working masses' in a war during which the conditions would ripen for abolishing the very system which caused imperialist wars, capitalism. In short, Tito stood on the eve of the second imperialist war, as Lenin had stood on the eve of the first; on the threshold of revolution.⁶¹

With the defeat of the Spanish Republic and the crackdown on the French communists once war had begun, the Comintern had to reassess the situation in Europe: in this reassessment the Yugoslav Communist Party became something of a model for other parties to follow. Tito returned to Yugoslavia to prepare for the Fifth Party Conference. During the spring, summer and autumn of 1940 conferences were held of all the national and regional parties which constituted the Yugoslav Communist Party. These developments were welcomed within the Comintern: the Czech Comintern emissary Jan Šverma returned favourably impressed from the Second Slovene Party Conference held on 31 December–1 January 1940. An even more positive assessment of the state of the Party was given by Franz Honer, an Austrian Comintern emissary, after a meeting with Tito on 5 May 1940.⁶² Tito's views at this time were indeed at one with those of the Comintern. Quoting Stalin's *Short Course*, the Yugoslav Communist Party continued to argue that an illegal party could win mass support if illegal work were correctly combined with legal work: every legal opportunity had to be exploited, but under the guidance of the Party hierarchy. This lesson was repeated in the Comintern journal, the *Communist International*, which published a statement at this time from the British, French, German, American and Italian parties calling for detailed study of the *Short Course* to help once legal parties like the Spanish and the French adapt to the new exigencies of life underground. The results of correctly combined legal and illegal work were certainly fairly impressive in Yugoslavia. The outbreak of the Second World War saw an upturn in working-class unrest: after two general strikes in Split in the autumn of 1940 the government decided to close down the communist influenced independent trade unions.⁶³

During 1940 the Yugoslav Communist Party could claim with some justification to be the model for the new illegal communist movement. Under Tito's stewardship Party membership had risen from 1,500 at the end of 1937 to 8,000 in spring 1941. The Yugoslav Communist Party was the Party to which the old legal parties of the popular front era could turn to for advice. That claim was reinforced by the Comintern's decision to use Zagreb as the base for its new radio transmitter for communications with the Italian, Swiss, Austrian, Czechoslovak, Hungarian and Greek parties. The operator of the transmitter was to be Tito's ally Josip Kopinič. From being on the verge of dissolution, the Yugoslav Communist Party had emerged as one of the few viable and strategically important communist parties in Europe, and from this position of strength, Tito felt able to confront the Comintern on an issue which fell into the grey area between domestic and international affairs: in the new international climate, should the Yugoslav Communist Party continue to campaign for a people's government as Tito had proposed in March 1939? While this slogan caused no problems in the first half of 1940, in June the international situation was radically altered by the defeat of France. This defeat was explained by Tito as stemming from the treachery of the French bourgeoisie; he therefore repeated the call for a people's government if Yugoslavia were to be defended. The Yugoslav Communist Party argued in a statement on the fall of France that French

financiers had sold their own people to the erstwhile enemy. Only the French Communist Party had shown itself ready to defend France's independence, and only a people's government could really defend the national interests of Yugoslavia.⁶⁴

After the Fall of France, the Soviet Union, which had already stationed troops in the Baltic States, intervened to establish friendly governments there. First, in June, the existing authoritarian governments were replaced by new popular front governments, and then in August the states were incorporated into the Soviet Union. Soviet involvement in Yugoslavia was far less direct, but on 10 June 1940 the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia established diplomatic relations, and this at least opened up the possibility that Yugoslavia might share the same fate as the Baltic States. In an article entitled 'Between two perspectives' *Proleter* discussed the parallels between those states and Yugoslavia: it cautioned that it would be a mistake simply to sit back and wait for the Red Army to save the Yugoslav peoples; however, Lenin and Stalin had stated that in certain times and in certain conditions an offensive liberation war against imperialism was possible, but 'for the Red Army to help a people that people had to be able to help itself'. The logic of *Proleter*'s argument seemed to be this, that if the Yugoslav people rose up and established a people's government, the Soviet Union would come to their aid, and it was precisely this which made the Comintern cautious about the slogan 'a people's government'.⁶⁵

When on the eve of the Fifth Party Conference Tito asked the Comintern to rule on whether the slogan 'a genuine people's government' should be endorsed by the conference, it had been used regularly in Party documents in July and August 1940, the Comintern rejected the slogan as inappropriate in a detailed response delivered to Tito by courier. This slogan, it explained, could be interpreted as a call for the dictatorship of the proletariat. For all the progress of the Yugoslav Communist Party over the past year, the time was not right for that. The slogan would isolate the Party from the masses and provide hostile powers with a justification for interfering in Yugoslav affairs. The Comintern added that if the slogan did lead to such consequences there was no point looking to the Red Army for help. The clear message was that the route to revolution implied in 'Between two perspectives' was out of the question.⁶⁶

The Fifth Party Conference, held illegally in Zagreb from 19 to 23 October 1940, was in essence a snub to the Comintern. The Comintern courier had warned Tito that it would not be possible to hold an assembly of over one hundred delegates illegally in a police state; therefore the Comintern refused to accept the risk of calling the assembly a congress. Tito made a concession to the Comintern by agreeing not to call it a congress, but went ahead with an assembly of over one hundred delegates anyway and there were no arrests. Djilas saw the conference as cocking a snook at the Comintern, and the policy of a 'people's government' was supported in spite of the Comintern's known views. The final resolution of the Fifth Party Conference made clear that the Second World War had opened up perspectives for the 'revolutionary overthrow of imperialism' and 'new victories for socialism'; what was more, the 'decisive battle' lay in the 'near future'.⁶⁷ Tito's determination to stand by this policy can perhaps be explained by the fact that he had been in Moscow for the greater part of the Comintern's inquest into the Spanish Civil War, and that inquest had come out firmly in favour of a 'people's government'. It argued that 'to defeat the enemy in a popular revolution, it is essential to destroy the old state

apparatus, which serves reaction, and replace it with a new apparatus which serves the working class; the 'people's' character of the revolution had to be recognised organisationally.⁶⁸

How the Second World War might accelerate the prospects for revolution were discussed by the Comintern's journal *Communist International* in February 1941. In an article which discussed the role of nationalism during an imperialist war, it compared the writings of Lenin, Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg on the national question during the First World War and pointed to Lenin's belief that, in certain circumstances, national movements against imperialism could be revolutionary, something Liebknecht and Luxemburg denied. *Proleter* was quick to comment on the same theme. Lenin, it noted, had actually discussed the nature of Serbia's war against Austria-Hungary in 1914. Describing that war as 'imperialist' because of Serbia's alliance with Britain, Lenin had pointed out that had in the course of the war the proletariat risen up against the Serbian bourgeoisie, revolutionary change could have developed from what had begun as a purely national war. For such a development, Lenin had stressed, the proletariat needed to dominate the nationalist movement and establish its 'hegemony' over it. The lesson seemed clear enough: if Lenin's views were accepted, a foreign invasion of Yugoslavia could turn into a revolutionary war if Yugoslavia's ally was the 'proletarian' Soviet Union rather than 'imperialist' Britain, and if Yugoslav communists could gain hegemony over the resistance movement. Such hegemony was the theme of the Yugoslav Communist Party's New Year communiqué for 1941. Again ignoring the advice of the Comintern, the communiqué firmly called for a 'genuine people's government' and concluded: 'We communists consider that in this final hour it is essential to unite all those forces which are ready to struggle [...] however, we communists further consider that such militant unity will only really bring results when it is achieved not only between leaders but from below, among the depths of the working masses'.⁶⁹

Tito clearly believed that Yugoslavia would inevitably get sucked into the Second World War, and that, when this happened the subsequent fighting would be the occasion for a Yugoslav revolution. The call for the Second World War to become a revolutionary war was made even more explicit in Tito's report on 'The Strategy and Tactics of the Armed Uprising', delivered at the Party school held in Zagreb at the end of February and early March 1941. The report concentrated on the importance of Party leadership: in Vienna in 1934 the workers had taken up arms, but with no leadership they had been crushed. The Party should not allow the uprising to break out 'spontaneously, beyond its organisation and leadership'; the 'hegemony' of the working class in the national revolutionary situation was essential. The key to a successful uprising, Tito argued, was to act offensively, even if momentarily on the retreat: an uprising needed to unleash the revolutionary energy of the masses. Controlling that revolutionary energy, however, meant electing a single central staff which would lead the uprising. Equally, the Party should form its own armed formations; Spain had shown that armed units should not be based on the trade unions but be under central Party control from the start. Another key lesson of the Spanish Civil War also formed part of the report. The revolutionary army should disarm the gendarmerie and overthrow the old system of local government. They should then call mass meetings to elect a new form of local government which would at once begin to

implement the Party's programme. Tito assumed this uprising would begin with action in the towns. Rather as an afterthought Tito recognised that victory might not be immediate and that it was possible that a long civil war might develop. If, however, major towns had to be evacuated, those who fled to the mountains would make sure they left a secure underground organisation behind them. Contact between guerrillas and the underground would be the key to eventual re-conquest. Thus on the eve of Hitler's invasion of Yugoslavia, Tito had already sketched out a working model for how a liberation war and revolution might be combined.⁷⁰

Hardly surprisingly the Comintern took fright when the Yugoslav Government was overthrown on 27 March 1941 by army officers angry at the government's decision to adhere to Hitler's Tripartite Pact. Would Tito overreact and assume a revolution was imminent? The Comintern's communication of 29 March was cautionary: avoid all armed conflict with the government at all costs, organise no street demonstrations and limit yourselves to propaganda. 'Do not get carried away by the moment . . . do not jump ahead . . . do not give way to provocation . . . The moment for decisive struggle with the class enemy is still a long way off.'⁷¹ Almost before the Yugoslav Communist Party had had a chance to absorb this advice, the German invasion of Yugoslavia began on 6 April. Zagreb was occupied four days later and the so-called Independent State of Croatia was declared; on the 13th the German Army entered Belgrade; and on 17 April the Yugoslav Army formally capitulated. Struggling to bring at least some influence to bear on events, on 10 April the Central Committee met and established a Military Commission headed by Tito. There was little sign that he had heeded the Comintern's call for caution. His first act was to issue a call for soldiers to retain or hide their weapons for use in a future struggle.⁷² On 15 April Tito wrote a widely circulated proclamation calling on communists and workers not to lose heart because 'from the bloody imperialist slaughter a new world would be born'. By the end of April the message went out to Party organisations to 'set up shock squads and investigate conditions for sabotage'.⁷³

As Yugoslavia disintegrated, Party leaders gathered on 4 May to assess the new situation. Tito gave the following analysis: the country had been betrayed by the bourgeoisie, therefore only under communist leadership could the country regain its independence; this struggle, the struggle of a small nation for independence in alliance with the Soviet Union during an imperialist war, could lead to social transformation and revolution; to make sure this happened, learning the lesson of Spain, the old order had to be completely destroyed and a new state structure drawn up, a form of popular front which would guarantee proletarian hegemony; finally, to enable the Communist Party to lead the struggle for national independence and social change, it had to gather around it a partisan army. Those present left the meeting having taken a decision in principle in favour of an armed uprising, and as the first step, military committees were to be set up at every Party level.⁷⁴ It was also decided that, because of increased police activity in Zagreb, the Central Committee should move its base to Belgrade. The crucial question of when the uprising would begin was left unconsidered, because it depended on the Soviet Union, when it would find itself in a position to offer support to an insurrection, and thus when it would become involved in the Second World War. At the end of May, Tito had a meeting with Ivan Ribar of the Democratic Left Party and representatives of the

Peasant People's Party and told them that, since the Soviet Union would soon be at war, the struggle against the occupier should begin at once.⁷⁵

Comintern diplomacy was still working overtime to try and keep the Soviet Union out of the war. It broke diplomatic relations with the old Yugoslav Government on 9 May and seriously considered recognising the 'Independent State of Croatia'; it also made no protest when Bulgarian troops entered Macedonia. All this suggested a readiness among some Soviet diplomats to come to terms with the division of Yugoslavia, just as the division of the Czechoslovak state had earlier been acknowledged. 'Bolshevik' armed uprisings could prove to be extremely harmful in such circumstances. Suspicious of Tito's real intentions, Moscow requested an urgent report. Tito replied in generalities, devoting just half a paragraph to the May meeting and giving no details of the 'decisions taken in view of the new circumstances'.⁷⁶ Against this background another intrigue against Tito began, drawing on many of those involved in the previous machinations. Golubović, the NKVD man who had contacted Kusovac in Paris in 1938, met the journalist Vladimir Dedijer in Sarajevo in May 1941 and told him Tito was a Trotskyist who would not remain as leader of the Party for long. Golubović had access to the Kopinić transmitter in Zagreb and one of his messages to Moscow was intercepted by Tito and never reached its destination. Ivan Srebrenjak, the Soviet Intelligence officer active in Paris in 1938, moved his base to Zagreb in April 1941 and became a confidant of the Croatian Party leadership, which he apparently tried to turn against Tito. Whatever the precise nature of these anti-Tito machinations, Kopinić warned Tito in one of his telegrams that he believed the Comintern to be 'very dissatisfied with you'. When Nazi Germany invaded the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941 these moves against Tito ended as suddenly as they had begun.⁷⁷

The German invasion forced Tito to abandon the relatively stable family life he had built up since becoming *de facto* Party leader. He met the Slovene communist Herta Haas in Paris in 1937 and after a year they married; their son was born on 23 May 1938. Settling in Zagreb, Tito was unwilling to leave when the German invasion began and delayed his departure until mid-May when it was forced on him. The house was searched while he was out, and, warned not to return, he took the train to Belgrade, leaving Herta and his son behind.⁷⁸

LEARNING TO IMPLEMENT THE PEOPLE'S LIBERATION STRUGGLE

STARTING THE INSURRECTION

As soon as the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union began Tito summoned his Politburo. It met in Belgrade's Dedinje suburb on 23 June and issued the call he had long anticipated making. The 'Proclamation on the occasion of the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union' was addressed to the workers, peasants, and citizens of Yugoslavia, and pointed out that 'the German fascist capitalist band headed by the lunatic Hitler' had attacked the Soviet Union but, 'no longer pitted against the weak European states led by treacherous capitalists cliques' the German forces confronted a people 'rallied round the heroic Bolshevik Party, round their great and wise leader Comrade Stalin' and an invincible Red Army. The 'precious blood of the heroic Soviet people', the proclamation made clear, was being shed not only in defence of the first country of socialism but also 'for the final social emancipation and national liberation of all working people throughout the world'. It ended with the appeal: 'onward into the final and decisive battle for the freedom and happiness of mankind'. Nothing had happened to change Tito's conviction that there was a link between the struggle against the occupier and the final triumph of socialism. The orders he had received from Moscow, however, made no reference to socialist revolution, indeed, Moscow made clear that the Yugoslav Communist Party should 'bear in mind that, at this present stage, what you are concerned with is liberation from fascist oppression, and not socialist revolution'.¹

When the Central Committee met on 27 June, some progress had been made in fleshing out just how communists could do what Tito expected of them. It was decided to transform the Politburo into a General Headquarters of the People's Liberation Partisan Detachments, and representatives were sent across the country to supervise the formation of these units. Kardelj was already in Slovenia, and Djilas was sent to Montenegro. Bosnia-Hercegovina was the destination for another of Tito's close collaborators, Svetozar Vukmanović Tempo, while a fourth, Aleksandar Ranković joined Tito in organising the uprising in Serbia.² Tito proudly informed Moscow 'we are preparing for a people's uprising against the occupiers' boasting of 'a great readiness for struggle among the people'. Moscow responded at once:

The hour has struck when communists are obliged to raise the people in open struggle against the occupiers. Do not lose a single minute organising partisan detachments and igniting a partisan war in the enemy's rear. Set fire to war factories, warehouses and fuel dumps ...

demolish railways ... organise the peasantry to hide grain ... It is absolutely essential to terrorise the enemy by all means so that he will feel himself inside a besieged fortress.³

At this stage the actions of Tito's small partisan bands were far more limited than Moscow envisaged, as yet sabotage was the order of the day, but Tito could report that the uprising had begun. Unaware of the true state of affairs on the Eastern Front, he naively asked if the Comintern would be able to supply him with arms in the near future. Moscow ignored the request for arms but asked on 1 July that a partisan war should begin 'without wasting a moment'.⁴

Tito responded at once. On 4 July the Politburo drew up a proclamation to 'the peoples of Yugoslavia'. This made clear that the struggle should move beyond sabotage and become an insurrection led by the Yugoslav Communist Party. The same Politburo meeting agreed the basic strategy to be followed for the next four years of war: the aim of the struggle was to establish liberated territories and administer them through people's liberation committees. However, the proclamation was only made public on 12 July after Tito had accepted Moscow's guidance and removed references to the 'decisive battle' for 'social emancipation'.⁵

The call to move beyond sabotage and to develop a partisan war met significant resistance in Croatia, where the formation of the notionally Independent State of Croatia by the Ustaše leader Ante Pavelić had been greeted with some popular enthusiasm. This situation was complicated by the fact that, when Tito had moved to Belgrade in May, the radio transmitter he used for communication with Moscow had remained in Zagreb. Understandably, but in violation of the chain of command, Josip Kopinič, the man in charge of the radio, decided to report directly to both the Croatian Central Committee and the Zagreb Committee the urgent messages he was getting from Moscow as the Nazi invasion began. Thus on 22 June he informed the Croatian Party leadership of Moscow's call for an immediate sabotage campaign, and on 26 June he transmitted the call for armed insurrection. Also on 26 June a courier arrived from Belgrade bringing Tito's proclamation of 23 June. The Croatian Party leadership noticed the crucial discrepancy between the two documents; from Moscow the Comintern leader Dimitrov stressed that the uprising should avoid setting itself a socialist agenda, whilst Tito's appeal clearly suggested revolution was in the air. The Croatian Party leadership therefore resolved not to circulate Tito's 23 June proclamation before guidance had been sought. It also still considered as an open question whether or not the time had come to move from sabotage to armed insurrection. It did agree to form partisan brigades, but warned against any premature actions and counselled in favour of small deeds; it stressed that, while military operations were suitable for some areas, other areas, by implication Croatia, should not go beyond sabotage.

For Kopinič, the attitude of the Croatian Party leadership violated a clear Comintern directive and on 28 July he warned the Croatian Central Committee against ignoring Moscow's instructions. In response, the Croatian communists complained to Tito about what they interpreted as an attempt on the Comintern's part to interfere in Yugoslav affairs. On 1 July Kopinič received a further telegram from

Moscow calling for partisan war, but when he informed the Croatian Party leaders, they still refused to budge. After seeking advice from Moscow on 3–4 July, Kopinič was instructed to draw up plans to bypass the Croatian Central Committee and, with the support of the Zagreb Committee to establish a 'Provisional Central Committee' which would be prepared to implement partisan war. On 8 July he informed Moscow that he was ready to intervene in this way and he received permission to do so on the 9th. As a result over the next two days he organised meetings with the Military Commission of the Zagreb Committee and the Croatian Military Committee.

By 11 July, however, it was clear that Tito was himself fully aware of the situation and had determined to act to discipline the Croatian Party leadership. When the Politburo met on 4 July and passed its resolution to develop armed insurrection, it also resolved that, to ensure its implementation, both the Croatian Military Committee and the Croatian Central Committee should be suspended; in their place Tito imposed an 'operational leadership'.⁶ Kopinič's actions clearly undermined Tito's authority, but whether or not that was their purpose remains moot. Kopinič reported to the Comintern on 11 July that his courier had finally tracked Tito down, that Tito had acted, and that he hoped all would now be well. Tito's determination to brook no dissent at this time was clear from a conversation he had with Djilas. When Tito said farewell to Djilas, sent to oversee the insurrection in Montenegro, he warned him: 'shoot anyone, even a member of the provincial leadership, if he wavers or shows a lack of discipline'. In a move apparently linked to the need to have a united chain of command, Tito asked Moscow on 13 August to concentrate all sabotage activity through his command, rather than also using intelligence channels and the network of the dissident communist Ivan Srebrenjak.⁷

Under the agreement reached on 27 June, Tito was responsible for organising the uprising in Serbia, assisted by Ranković. Tito later recalled how he had assembled maps of the whole of Serbia and studied them in order to decide where the basic offensive should be launched. 'While looking over the configuration of the terrains of Serbia, I saw that western Serbia was most suitable for us, for the orientation of our fighting units, for the organisation of our partisan units and for the creation of a certain free territory', although as he conceded, 'at the beginning we did not believe that we would create a large free territory so soon'. He chose western Serbia because the terrain was hilly and woody, the people possessed a militant spirit and had offered tough resistance to invaders in the past.⁸ Early successes in this region did indeed suggest promise, the Šabac, Valjevo, Kraljevo, Kragujevac and Čačak areas provided 1,300 Party members at this time, more than half the total for Serbia, and within six weeks of the order going out to form partisan detachments, twelve had been formed; as early as mid-July several skirmishes had taken place. Tito therefore abandoned an earlier plan to base himself to the east rather than the west of the Morava river, close to the Danube; in this area, it had been argued, the partisans would be positioned closest to the likely approach of the Red Army.⁹

Tito originally planned to go to the Čačak region about 20 July, but Ranković was arrested and that delayed things while the Party diverted resources to organising his dramatic rescue from prison. Meanwhile preparations continued. On 10 August the

first issue of the Bulletin of the General Headquarters was produced in which Tito wrote about 'The Tasks of the National Liberation Partisan Detachments', stressing that their ranks were open to anyone who wished to resist the invaders. He could report to Moscow on 13 August that the insurrection was gaining in strength, but suffered from a shortage of arms, which he hoped the Comintern might help address.¹⁰ By mid-August the communists claimed twenty-one partisan detachments in Serbia with some 8,000 members. On 6 September Tito informed the Comintern that the insurrection was developing into a popular uprising, with the Germans only securely in control of the towns, and this was not an exaggeration, for on 4 September, after bitter fighting, the town of Krupanj was taken and the establishment of a substantial liberated territory began.¹¹ A meeting of military and political leaders on 16 September resolved to advance on Užice, Čačak and Požega; Užice fell to the partisans on 24 September, a rich prize with a bank full of money, about 55 million dinars, and an arms factory with a daily output of four-hundred rifles and large quantities of ammunition. Since the prospect of establishing an extensive liberated territory now looked real, Tito felt he should explain to Moscow how he intended to administer the areas under his control. The partisans were removing the old municipal authorities and establishing new people's liberation committees as sources of authority, he explained. The people's liberation committees would include representatives of various democratic directions, together with our people; 'it will be a sort of popular central power'. The problem for Tito was that a rival source of power was also being established in Serbia.¹²

MIHAILOVIĆ VERSUS THE UŽICE REPUBLIC

When the Germans invaded Yugoslavia on 6 April 1941 Colonel Dragoljub Mihailović was serving as Assistant Chief of Staff to the Sixth Coastal Army Region near Mostar. During the fighting Mihailović was promoted to Chief of Staff of the Second Army, based near Doboj in Bosnia, and after the armistice of 15 April he led a few dozen men into the forests hoping to keep some resistance going. The core of his force, known as četniks, then moved to Ravna Gora on the slopes of Mt. Suvobor, not far from the Serbian town of Valjevo, where they arrived in mid-May; some of Mihailović's close supporters came from this region and therefore knew it well. Mihailović asserted control over other groups surviving in the forests, and attracted the support of some Serb politicians, all with strong pan-Serb views; by August he had established an advisory Central National Committee. Before the war, while working in Belgrade, Mihailović had established a close relationship with British diplomats, indeed in November 1940 he had been sentenced to thirty days arrest for having attended, in military uniform, a meeting of officials of the Association of Reserve Non-commissioned Officers organised by the British military attaché in Belgrade.¹³

As soon as he had been freed from prison, Ranković set out for Serbian Partisan Headquarters. Early in August he proposed talks with Mihailović, and on 14–15 August partisan representatives went to the Mihailović Headquarters at Ravna Gora and met the četnik leader. Mihailović issued a warning that would become his mantra: premature action by resistance forces could bring terrible reprisals. There were other

meetings between the two sides in August and early September, but no firm decisions could be taken without Tito. Leaving Belgrade on 16 September, Tito arrived at Serbian Partisan Headquarters on the 18th, and set off to Ravna Gora the next day to meet Mihailović. Tito pressed for joint action and offered to put his forces under Mihailović's command; Mihailović warned again of the dangers of premature resistance. The only achievement of this first meeting was to confirm that some četnik leaders were co-operating with the partisans, and to reaffirm the agreement Ranković had reached at the earlier talks that there should be no fighting between the two sides, although this was subject to increasing strain.¹⁴

At a meeting in the village of Stolice, attended by some twenty partisan leaders from most regions of the country, Tito took stock of the situation on 26–7 September. Here it was agreed to move beyond scattered partisan attacks. Separate military headquarters would be established in each region of the country, and every staff would have a common command structure, complete with political commissars. The existing General Headquarters would co-ordinate the work of the regional headquarters and transform itself into the Supreme Headquarters of the People's Liberation Partisan Detachments. As to political work, Tito's proposals were adopted and new people's liberation committees were to be established in the place of the former government authorities throughout liberated territory. Tactically, it was decided to form larger partisan units, of battalion strength, but to avoid frontal clashes with the enemy; when necessary, such battalions could be brought together to form shock units. All these decisions, of course, were linked to the major strategic necessity of both extending the Užice liberated territory and establishing others.¹⁵

The only other significant liberated territory at this time was in Montenegro. Indeed, Montenegro was the first region to heed the call, rising 'almost as a man' on 13 July. The attempt by the Italian occupying forces on 12 July to restore the pre-1914 royal dynasty was deeply unpopular and provoked a popular uprising, which the communists soon dominated, partly because it was on 12 July that the Central Committee issued its second appeal to the peoples of Yugoslavia. Here the Italian forces were soon driven back to the garrison towns of Podgorica and Cetinje, while the local communists led by Milovan Djilas established something akin to soviet power. Djilas's propaganda used the term 'revolution' rather than 'liberation', and the Party's concerns often seemed as much about uncovering 'spies' who had worked for the old royalist government, or even 'anti-Party elements' within the Party itself, as improving the lot of the peasants of Montenegro.¹⁶

It was via Montenegro that the first British emissary arrived in western Serbia, charged with uniting both the četnik and partisan resistance. The SOE agent Bill Hudson had been landed by submarine on 20 September on the Montenegro coast, and, after contacting Djilas and the Montenegro partisans, set off to establish contact with Mihailović. Hudson felt that, although the communists clearly headed the resistance in Montenegro, there were also many regular officers involved in that struggle and that the political identity of the movement, even in Montenegro, was not fixed. When he met Tito on 23 October, he offered the partisans technical data and codes to establish wireless links with the British, and when he moved on to

Mihailović's headquarters on the 25th, he left Tito a radio transmitter even though Tito had given him the clear impression that he was more concerned about getting aid from the Soviet Union than from Britain. Indeed, both at the end of September and early in October, Tito did send messages to the Comintern, explaining that the partisans controlled three airfields and even had three million litres of fuel if refuelling was needed. He outlined the agreed landing signals and listed the arms he needed for the 100,000 partisans he controlled and the 30,000 četniks he suggested were allied to his forces.¹⁷

Since their first meeting in mid-September, Tito had been proposing a second meeting, but Mihailović continually postponed it. However, on 20 November Tito sent Mihailović a twelve-point agenda which was accepted and Tito, accompanied by Sreten Žujović, travelled to Ravna Gora for talks on 26–7 November. There they asked that Hudson take part in the talks, but Mihailović refused to allow this. Tito was mostly silent, leaving Žujović to make the partisan case. Mihailović insisted on control of all military forces on Serb inhabited territory. The partisans proposed instead a united headquarters which would organise joint operations with a common quartermaster. Although this would have given command of many operations to Mihailović's officers, the partisans intended to compensate for this by insisting that political commissars operate throughout the joint resistance force; they also insisted that people's liberation committees should be established in četnik as well as partisan areas. The partisans again offered Mihailović the post of Supreme Commander. Mihailović rejected the partisan proposal out of hand. From his perspective the talks could not have taken place at a worse time. On 20 October the Germans had killed 1,700 hostages in Kraljevo; a few days later 2,778 were killed in Kragujevac. He felt his warnings about premature action simply causing retaliation had been borne out by events. The agreements made at the end of this meeting were minimal: there could continue to be joint četnik-partisan commands in certain areas of territory already liberated; production from the Užice arms factory would be shared; and mixed commissions would be established to examine disputed issues. A declaration that the two sides would try to avoid conflict in the future and co-ordinate activity was also issued.¹⁸

Mihailović's hostility to the partisans was not only prompted by their willingness to provoke reprisals. The partisans were very clearly introducing a communist programme. Mihailović reportedly took particular exception to the appearance of women in the partisans' ranks and the burning of tax and land records. Hudson had rather similar impressions, summing up his brief contacts with the partisans thus: 'the familiar nucleus of men with rifles, women with typewriters, organisation, bustle, passing propaganda and raids'. Throughout the experiment of what was later known as the Užice Republic, it was assumed by the Yugoslav communists that a Red Army counter-offensive was not far off. As a result, there was little incentive to mask the communist ambitions of the partisan revolution. For example, despite the stated aim of opening the partisan detachments to all, at least two partisan detachments only recruited communists and known sympathisers, turning away any other volunteers; since the Party's links with the peasantry were minimal, this meant turning away

peasants. A similar sectarian attitude was taken towards officers and non-commissioned officers from the former Yugoslav Army; the Party ensured only its people were in positions of authority and doubted the reliability of those with military experience, unless they were Party members with experience in Spain.¹⁹

The Party continued to operate as it had always done. Each military unit had its Party cell, but its meetings continued to be conspiratorial and excluded rank-and-file partisans from any form of decision making. Each detachment had its commissar complete with typewriter and duplicator, and often an erratic supply of revolutionary literature, such as the *Short Course History of the Bolshevik Party*, Stalin's *Foundations of Leninism*, and Lenin's *State and Revolution*, as well as polemical Soviet novels such as Maxim Gorky's *Mother* and Nikolai Ostrovskii's *How the Steel was Tempered*. Tito's *The Yugoslav Communist Party in the National Liberation Struggle* was the only new text available.

Building up the new state structure involved trial and error. In some areas, local communists decided to leave the lowest level of Yugoslavia's old administration, the commune, in place since it served the local people rather than the occupier, giving the people's liberation committees the task of supervising and overseeing the activities of this administration. By the time the Užice Republic was properly established Tito's policy of severing all links with the old system and using only the people's liberation committees had been decided upon and was announced in the first Užice issue of the newspaper *Borba*. The Užice Town People's Liberation Committee was elected on 7 October, and by early November there was a District People's Liberation Committee as well; on 16 November the Serbian People's Liberation Committee was set up and the communist Petar Stambolić appointed its Secretary. This latter committee, however, was an entirely nominated body, and despite the decision of the Central Committee to expand the membership to include a representative of 'the bourgeois parties', this never happened.²⁰

The communists were insistent on retaining their hegemony in the liberation movement by enforcing the line that only the Communist Party could be represented, as a party, within the structures they established. They resisted any suggestion of 'parity' representation for other parties; members of other political parties could take an active part in the work of the people's liberation committees, but only as individuals, there was no 'party' representation as such. Dedijer recalled a meeting held with representatives of the People's Peasant Party at which those present acknowledged the communists as the leaders and organisers of the uprising and promised to send their people to the partisans, but also insisted 'that each side has an equal number of representatives in all the military and political organisations'; the communists present agreed only to 'inform our higher forums' of this. There were only very occasional exceptions to this rule. In October a joint partisan-četnik command was created in Čačak and as a corollary the people's liberation committee there was created on a parity basis.²¹

The new people's liberation committees were concerned with health, establishing clinics and combating typhus. They took measures to improve the lot of workers by such initiatives as freezing rents and confiscating the assets of those deemed

speculators. Other measures were not so popular. They also encouraged workers to donate a day's pay to the cause and the week starting 28 October became 'Everything for the front week'. The Soviet origins of such ideas were self-evident. Dedić recalled his arrival in Užice at this time: 'quite an impression, the hammer and sickle with a star on the wall of houses, the National Bank's modern building as the seat of the Supreme Command with the red and Serb flags'. The tenor of the regime was summed up by the celebrations for the anniversary of the October Revolution: on 7 November 1941 Tito took the salute as partisan formations marched past.²²

Serious fighting between četniks and partisans began a few days earlier. On the night of 1–2 November the četniks attacked Užice but were repulsed. The partisan response was to seize Požega and its airfield, on which Mihailović hoped British planes might soon land. On 3 November Mihailović's Chief of Staff telephoned Tito and offered a truce if the partisans ceded Požega; Tito refused. A stalemate followed, during which, to Hudson's fury on 9 November Mihailović received his first arms drop from Britain. Hudson managed to get further drops delayed until another attempt had been made to persuade Mihailović and Tito to co-operate; on 16 November this stance was endorsed by the Yugoslav Government-in-Exile in London which urged Mihailović 'to smooth out differences and refrain from any kind of vindictive action'. British drops to Mihailović resumed on 17 November, once Mihailović had convinced them that he had 'succeeded in stopping this fratricidal war declared by the other side', and indeed efforts were being made to stop the conflict. Tito proposed an armistice and, after failing to reach an agreement on the 18th, a further meeting was held on 20 November, attended by Ranković. This time a cease fire was agreed and a commission established to uncover the sources of the quarrel. Further meetings between partisan representatives and the četniks took place on 24, 26 and 27 November, this time with Hudson taking part, but the sticking point was always Mihailović's refusal to agree to joint operations.²³ Tito later informed Moscow that 'Captain Hudson demanded in November that we disband the partisans and unconditionally submit ourselves to the leadership of Mihailović'; various 'secret telegrams from the English Government' demonstrated that 'London would not support the people's liberation war'.²⁴

Joint action between the četniks and the partisans was essential because the Germans had been launching a determined assault on Užice. The town was evacuated between 25 and 30 November. Tito, carrying a sub-machine gun and accompanied by Captain Hudson, left the town only twenty minutes before the Germans arrived, and lost touch with his staff for several hours. On 28 November, with his forces in full retreat, Tito again telephoned Mihailović and asked for help to hold up the German advance; Mihailović replied that it was not possible to engage in open war with the Germans and that partisans and četniks should withdraw to their own territories until the time for a general uprising had come. On 2 December Tito informed the Comintern that all their efforts to win over Mihailović had failed.²⁵ According to German documents, from 1 August to 5 December 1941, German casualties in Serbia were 203 dead and 378 wounded; 11,522 insurgents died in combat and 21,809 hostages were executed. Only between 1,000 and 1,500 partisans followed Tito from Užice to the Sandjak region, to join the approximately five-hundred partisans already

active there. This was scarcely a tenth of the forces active in Užice.²⁶ Not surprisingly, on 7 December Tito offered to resign; he would have had Kardelj replace him as Party Secretary but would have stayed on as Supreme Commander. He commented later: 'we did not think that the Germans would go through the liberated territory like a knife through butter, we expected steady pressure and that we would be able to hold on for a long time, that we would get more organised and produce more arms'.²⁷

OVERCOMING SECTARIANISM

Tito's plan after Užice, as far as there was one, was to winter in the Sandjak and link up with the partisan bases in Montenegro; to this end on 12 December he had talks with the partisan commanders from Montenegro. Yet there was very little evidence at this stage of a serious rethink in strategy. Djilas recalled that when the Central Committee met on 7 December, after rejecting Tito's proffered resignation, 'without any reports, in brief dialogues in which Kardelj held forth at greatest length, we agreed that the armed struggle against the occupation had developed into a class war between the workers and the bourgeoisie'.²⁸ Dedijer recorded in his diary on 8 December the 'great happiness' with which the news was received that the counter-offensive at Moscow had begun, a letter to the Serbian Party of 14 December, as other letters at this time, saw the start of this Soviet counter-offensive as having decisive significance.²⁹ On 14 December 1941 Tito's message was that countering the četniks was still 'the main political task'. While Mihailović himself should be treated with caution, there should be no more approaches to 'Greater-Serb reactionary elements' and the Party should assume the dominant role in 'strengthening the worker-peasant core of the liberation front'.³⁰ From the men who retreated with him out of Serbia, Tito told the Central Committee on 7 December that he intended to create the First Proletarian Brigade; its founding members, when formally established on 22 December 1941, were 1,199 volunteers from Montenegrin and Serbian units; its first commanding officer was the Serb communist who had fought in Spain, Koča Popović. Tito recalled later:

It was shown in Serbia that the partisan detachments that consisted of peasants preferred to fight in their own areas. I noticed that during the retreat from Serbia, those who retired were mostly workers. The Belgrade, Kragujevac and Kraljevo partisan detachments consisted mostly of industrial workers, though there were among them many class conscious peasants. Then I decided to form a brigade which would be called the proletarian brigade.³¹

When Tito informed the Comintern of the formation of the First Proletarian Brigade on 29 December, he was still anticipating Soviet air support. He reported that, although Serbia had been evacuated, he still controlled an airfield at Sokolac in Bosnia. A week later this message was repeated, adding that the new Proletarian Brigade was protecting the airfield; he also had to explain that the partisans no longer had a supply of petrol for refuelling. In this message Tito also asked Moscow to send him a stronger radio. Tito's communications with Moscow started to improve at this time because on 24 December he met up with Kopinič, who had succeeded in leaving Zagreb and

transferred to him the codes needed for contact with Moscow. The first successful transmission was made on 7 January 1942.³²

Yet with the retreat from Užice, there were some signs that policy was being reconsidered. On 22 December 1941 the Central Committee wrote to the regional committees in Montenegro and the Sandjak complaining at the 'sectarian' way people's liberation committees had been established. Party activists had used the slogan 'people's liberation committee', but in practice had done little to develop the work of these committees; they had certainly not understood that the people's liberation committees could not just be established by decree but should arise in the course of the insurrection as organs of popular struggle, which the people themselves had established. It was especially important to get the relationship between partisan detachments and people's liberation committees right. People's liberation committees were not subordinated to the partisan detachments, rather partisan units were the armed organs of the people's liberation committees.³³

In Montenegro in particular 'sectarianism' had been strong. In June 1941 the Montenegrin Provincial Committee had called for 'soviet power and the final settling of accounts with the capitalist system'. Once the uprising began there had been several examples of 'Bolshevisation', declaring areas to be a 'soviet republic', establishing collective farms and attacking 'kulaks' and other 'bourgeois' representatives. The class element to the struggle in Montenegro was stressed rather than the issue of people's liberation, and the hegemony of the Communist Party in the struggle was explicit. Incidents of 'red terror' and the execution of alleged fifth columnists were often hard to distinguish.³⁴ The Party press in Montenegro talked of 'kulak elements' and argued that people's liberation committees were merely schools for a higher type of power, the soviets; in some places church property was seized. As late as 8 February 1942, with the Montenegrin partisans in retreat, at Ostrog near Nikšić, the remaining liberated area of Montenegro was declared to be an integral part of the USSR. During their seven-week control of Kolašin in January–February 1942 the partisans killed some three-hundred of the town's 6,000 inhabitants, throwing the mutilated bodies into mass graves which they called 'the dogs cemetery'. In some parts of liberated Hercegovina the partisans called themselves the Red Army, condemned whole villages as 'enemy', and talked of 'sovietising' the whole of the region.³⁵

As northern Montenegro slipped out of partisan control, the Supreme Headquarters was forced to move to East Bosnia. When the main partisan force arrived at Foča on 25 January 1942, the mood was still upbeat. Dedijer noted in his diary how he talked with Ranković 'about how the Red Army could push into Belgrade': although the two of them accepted they would have 'to wait at least a month more', relief was assumed to be close at hand. Communications with Moscow at this time, suggested that the Comintern had given some sort of undertaking about supplying the partisans. On 16 February 1942 Tito requested arms, ammunition, medicine – one in ten members of the Proletarian Brigade were suffering from frostbite – and once more a better radio; a possible site in Montenegro was agreed and the Montenegrin partisans were instructed to prepare for a parachute drop after 23 February. When the Party cell within Supreme Headquarters met on 21 February 1942 the upbeat mood continued.

It was only General Arso Jovanović who warned that Hitler would attempt a spring offensive, which might delay the Red Army. Dedijer noted: 'Tito and Žujović and all the others did not agree with this; the Red Army's offensive is like an avalanche, it becomes stronger and stronger'.³⁶

Despite the upbeat mood, Tito gave voice to his growing concerns about sectarianism. He explained that overt calls for class war should be made more subtle by exploiting the blending of class and national issues the war had produced. 'Our bourgeoisie from Serbia', he said, 'has imposed a class war [because] they will not fight the occupier'. However, it was their lack of patriotism which should be criticised, not their social status. 'We will liquidate the kulak', he went on, 'but not because he is a kulak, but because he is a fifth columnist'. In Tito's view: 'the current struggle is people's liberation in form, but class in essence'.³⁷ However, form was as important as essence and could not be ignored. In what became known as the Foča Instructions, drawn up at the end of February, Tito stressed the importance of political work both in the army and among civilians through the people's liberation committees. The Instructions pointed to the need for the continued formation of people's liberation committees throughout the country and insisted on democratic elections as the best way to establish 'the new people's rule' in such a way as to both help the army and mobilise the population in the struggle against the invader.³⁸ The Instructions made clear that the committees had to be broadly based and were to perform all the usual functions of a government; at a very practical level, the old commune boundaries were to be used as the basis for the new people's liberation committees. The Instructions made clear once again that the people's liberation committees were 'provisional organs of power', and logically that at some stage a Central People's Liberation Committee for Yugoslavia would be set up.³⁹

A key moment in elaborating the Foča Instructions and countering sectarianism came on 25 February when Žujović assessed the lessons of Užice: there the communists had power, but had been unable to consolidate that power in any concrete form; the military had control of everything, and few organisational roots were left behind once the communists withdrew. With this in mind, the following errors needed to be addressed. First, Party work should not be neglected, Party members could not concern themselves exclusively with military matters. The second error was related to the first, that of weak political work among the masses. However, the class struggle was not to be toned down. One of the manifestations of weak political work Žujović saw as 'an opportunistic position in relation to četnik leaders', allowing 'četniks and kulaks to roam around freely behind our lines; co-operation and agreement were achieved without any conditions'. Working among the people did not mean abandoning the assault on class enemies. The focus on domestic enemies was still strong. Dedijer noted in his diary on 1 March how 'Stari' (Tito, the Old Man) had told him of the 'liquidation' of two prominent figures in the Peasant Party. Dedijer commented: 'our partisans are not joking; the bourgeoisie had foisted a class war on us – and now there it is'. On 2 March he noted that, after the formation that day of the Second Proletarian Brigade, Tito made a speech which ended: 'we will even shoot our fathers – if they go against the people'.⁴⁰

Defeat in Užice had forced Tito to give more stress to the masses and work in the people's liberation committees, but when it came to the balance between class struggle and people's liberation struggle, Tito still saw class struggle as 'the essence'. Unsurprisingly, Moscow began to express concern. On 13 February 1942 the Comintern had asked Tito to write an account of the Yugoslav partisan struggle, to be circulated as an example to other resistance movements. When Dimitrov commented on the text, he suggested that there was too much of a 'Party tone' and that Tito had missed out any reference to the grand alliance of 'England, America and the USSR'; Dimitrov also decided to edit out Tito's reference to the communist leadership of the partisan movement and the slogans hailing the Red Army, Comrade Stalin and the Soviet Union. On 5 March 1942 the Comintern suggested to Tito that the reports he was sending them did suggest some basis in fact for the charge coming from the British Government and Yugoslav Government-in-Exile that the partisan movement was communist and intent on sovietisation. Moscow referred in particular to the choice of name 'proletarian brigade'. Surely there were other patriots than the communists and their sympathisers? Surely it was a misunderstanding that representatives of the Government-in-Exile were supporting the occupiers? 'We urge you to think seriously about your tactical line and activity, and to check whether everything has been done on your side to create a genuinely united popular front'.⁴¹

Tito responded on 9 March 1942 by explaining to the Comintern that it had drawn the wrong conclusions from the information he had supplied. It was true not all the supporters of the London Government-in-Exile supported the occupier against the partisans. However after the collapse of the Užice Republic many of Mihailović's men had chosen to 'legalise' by joining the Serbian State Guards established by the Serbian Quisling General Milan Nedić. So, Tito explained that 'Mihailović's detachments are now merged into Nedić's army', while Mihailović himself still opposed the struggle against the occupier because of the danger of reprisals. Tito stressed that his own forces did not only include the communists, but supporters of various parties, along with generals from the old army. As to the proletarian brigades, they had not been formed in the first phase of the struggle, but only when they became essential; they now served as a model for how to struggle for national independence. Thereafter Tito was determined to overwhelm Moscow with daily reports on the partisans' war and the četniks' treachery, concealing certain complex and unpalatable facts from 'the ignorant busybodies in the Comintern'.⁴²

Just why Moscow was so concerned became clear a few days later. On 9 March 1942 news arrived at Supreme Headquarters that some Englishmen had landed from a submarine and were on their way to meet Tito. As early as 16 February 1942 Tito had warned those partisans sent to await a hoped for Soviet parachute drop that it was just conceivable that British and Yugoslav officers might be dropped at the same time; if this happened, the officers were to be closely watched, but not allowed to suspect that they were being guarded, while being brought straight to Tito. The Atherton mission in fact landed in partisan held Montenegro in late February 1942 and arrived at Tito's headquarters on 19 March.⁴³ Shortly before Atherton's arrival, the Second Conference of Party Activists met on 10 March and heard Djilas explain that the alliance of Britain

and the USSR had reversed the priorities Tito had so recently given to class and national struggle. Djilas declared: 'we do not dare allow a class war to be foisted on us; that is what the occupier wants; he wants to ruin us; we are leading and we must lead a national liberation war'. Djilas discussed this speech with Tito before making it, and got Tito's full backing. A week later Dedijer was told that 'we are allies with the English; they could send us arms'.⁴⁴

However, there was no sense in which Tito trusted the British. On 6 April Tito mentioned in a letter to Pijade, his old comrade from prison days, that there was something 'not right' about the Atherton mission. This proved true. On 15 April Atherton suddenly left Tito's headquarters without warning or explanation in an attempt to contact četnik commanders believed to be ready to break with Mihailović's policy of passivity. Tito warned in a memorandum to the Croatian leadership on 8 April:

If any missions arrive, see that you are not taken in by them. Find a way of denying them direct access to the people and keep them well under your control. Each mission has its own wireless transmitter. They keep in direct touch with their parent organisation, the Intelligence Service ... In Croatia the military missions will probably try and make contact with members of the Croatian Peasant Party, the Independent Democrats and the Yugoslav Nationalists, with whose help they will attempt to undermine your influence and the struggle for national liberation ... In public the alliance between the Soviet Union, Britain and the US must continue to be stressed, and the latter two powers are to be depicted as our allies. But their agents and pawns inside our country must be opposed, just as we oppose the henchmen of the invaders and the enemies of the people who are out to crush our struggle for national liberation.⁴⁵

However, trustworthy or not, the British offered a way out of a terrible dilemma. On 23 March 1942 the Comintern informed Tito that despite all the efforts it had made, the technical difficulties in getting Soviet supplies to the partisans were such that 'you should not count on them being overcome in the near future'. The situation was clear: there would be no aid from the Soviet Union, but there might be some from Britain. Understandably, at an event to mark the anniversary of the German invasion of Yugoslavia, Žujović addressed a crowd of six-hundred and warned them that there was 'still a long struggle before us'.⁴⁶ Tito had been here before. It was not the first time he had been forced to cope without the support from Moscow he anticipated; he had already survived the cutting of Moscow's funds during the Comintern's investigation into the health of the Yugoslav Communist Party during the late 1930s. As then, Tito adjusted to the situation by looking to strengthen his contacts with his own people.

On 4–6 April 1942 the Politburo met in Foča and took its condemnation of 'sectarianism' and 'Leftism' one stage further. Echoing Djilas, the Party was now committed to a political revolution through the development of the people's liberation struggle without heightening class tension. In April 1942 the Central Committee sent an Open Letter to the Party in Montenegro condemning it for trying to seize power, executing people without clear justification and thus discrediting the Party.⁴⁷ However,

it took a while before the new policy took hold and eliminating the 'fifth column' could still mean class terror, with the victims being četnik commanders, richer peasants, gendarmes and even lukewarm communists. In May, Kardelj could report to Tito that in Slovenia on average sixty people were 'liquidated' each month. On 28 April the Bosnia-Herzegovina Committee reported that five hundred leading četniks had been killed.⁴⁸ Set backs could all too easily be blamed on such 'enemies', thus Dedijer recorded the loss of Knežina on 20 April, which he put down to units being infected by 'četnik-fifth column propaganda'. When at the beginning of May, the partisans were forced to withdraw from Foča, Dedijer again noted that the ustaše and German offensive was accelerated by the work of 'fifth column elements' rebelling in the Trebović battalion. Reflecting on the one hundred and ten days in Foča, 'longer than the Paris Commune and the Hungarian Revolution', Dedijer noted that 'we brought the town freedom, we removed all the corpses from the bridge, we stopped the slaughter, we introduced culture, new life, yes sunshine'. And yet 'the influence of the Nedićites could not be forgotten; their fifth column propaganda had eaten away at the ranks of the volunteer units'. The proximity of the Nedićite bands had played a role in undermining morale.⁴⁹

THE LONG MARCH

As Tito moved his forces from Foča his situation was critical. The loss of Foča prompted no fewer than six rebellions in quick succession, all led by Serb commanders worried both by increased communist militancy, such as the banning of saint day celebrations, and by Tito's insistence on fighting alongside Croats and Muslims; the Great Serb chauvinism of Mihailović seemed particularly attractive in this latter regard. Tito moved temporarily into Montenegro, but as he reported to the Comintern on 23 May 1942 the situation there was not good either. His forces were being attacked along the road by motorised Italian units, and through the forests and hills by a group of četniks; the local people, he insisted, were being mobilised against the partisans at gun point. The partisans were therefore faced with the prospect of withdrawing from Montenegro and regrouping in Herzegovina where the uprising was developing well. Immediate help was needed since the lives of hundreds of thousands were in danger. The only good news for Tito at this time was that on 14 May he received his first British arms drop. To ensure future deliveries he sent the Comintern increasingly more detailed accounts of collaboration between the četniks and the Italians, stressing that all četniks, 'and especially Draža Mihailović', were fighting together with the occupier against the national liberation forces. His report of 21 May concluded:

We are firmly convinced that the Yugoslav Government in London is also mixed up in this. Please do all you can so that this terrible betrayal was known to the whole world. We have just issued an appeal denouncing the četniks and the Yugoslav Government in London. Until now, we kept silent, but now the people must be made clear about the dastardly traitorous game.⁵⁰

Tito's working assumption, on leaving Foča, was that his forces would move first into Montenegro, and from there back to Serbia. Tito had hinted to Dedijer as early as 25 May that the next move by the partisans might not be back into Serbia, but on the eve of the departure from Montenegro, the debate was still going on. On 11 June Dedijer recorded in his diary the following summary: 'a discussion has arisen concerning our general situation; Stari thinks that the current situation in Montenegro and Hercegovina is, for the most part, the result of our mistakes; Djilas thinks the enemy has become stronger, but, Serbia, there we were defeated militarily, but not politically; in Montenegro and Hercegovina we lost much politically, in Serbia it was the reverse, there a rich harvest awaits us'.⁵¹ But in fact the harvest was not that rich. A report for June 1942 showed there were only 852 partisans in the whole of Serbia, whereas radio reports from Croatia spoke of considerable free territories in western Bosnia.⁵² Four days later there were more discussions in the leadership of 'Leftist' errors. Dedijer's summary noted that in Montenegro the policy was 'kill anyone who could tomorrow kill you'; the regime introduced was 'a true system of tyranny', with 'every Party member being given the task to kill a fifth columnist' and furthermore 'the people's liberation committees did not represent a broad popular authority, only procurement organisations for the army'.⁵³

On 19 June, Tito used the occasion of the establishment of the Fourth Proletarian Brigade, to make a speech which clearly formulated the new direction the Party should take. Tito first made clear that 'not all the četniks are our enemies' and, second, that it was wrong to think that England was not an ally. He went on:

Our duty is to gather into our ranks all those who love their people. This, moreover, obligates us to view everything in as broad and elastic a manner as possible. Our people have made many mistakes and we have paid dearly for some of these. We must come to our senses. We have only one mission – to liberate our country from the occupier and to destroy the fifth column. But we must be very cautious in the struggle against the fifth column. Our punitive actions must strike at the true culprits. The line of the people's liberation struggle must be given breadth and flexibility. Those who have remained neutral must be patiently convinced ... From now on we will go in a new direction.

Although Tito never repudiated his policies in Užice and Foča, and always directed the charge of 'sectarianism' against the actions of others in Montenegro, Kardelj conceded in 1943, in an unguarded conversation with Djilas, 'that grave sectarian errors were made in Serbia in 1941'.⁵⁴

On the river Sutejska, near Zelenagora, Tito found a mill and, according to Dedijer, he 'felt an old urge – to repair mills; he worked on it for about half an hour and then the wheel started working'. This seems to have been a form of therapy, for at a meeting later that night, it was decided to begin the Long March to the north. Tito's speech of 19 June not only heralded a dramatic change in strategy, but also the start of a radical relocation of partisan activity. The partisans were starting all over again, wiping the slate clean. It is instructive that in spring 1941 Tito is reported to have been reading Edgar Snow's *Red Star over China*.⁵⁵ This move was the culmination of long discussions within the Central Committee, in which Tito overcame those calling for a

return to Serbia and insisted on moving to Bosnia, 'taking on himself the responsibility for this decision'. Djilas recalled how apprehensive Tito was about this decision, for many members of the Central Committee were 'sentimental over Serbia' and all recognised that the decision 'meant abandoning, if only temporarily, a territory which was crucial to the outcome of the war'. Since a month earlier Djilas had himself considered that without Serbia it was 'impossible to preserve the movement from disaster', it is clear why Tito felt he had to force this decision through as an issue of confidence.⁵⁶ Starting on 24 June, it took over three months to transfer over 4,000 partisans, half from Montenegro, on the Long March two hundred miles north from east Bosnia to the borders of Croatia along the demarcation line separating the Italian and German zones of occupation; by late autumn they had knitted together a liberated territory of approximately 20,000 square miles centred on the town of Bihać.⁵⁷ Before setting off, Tito gave a speech on 23 June to mark the signing of the Anglo-Soviet Agreement, announced on 11 June. He commented that 'recently we have tended to think that Britain is not our ally'; however, it is, not 'the lords and the secret service' that was the partisans' ally, but the 'English people'.⁵⁸

The change of mood was soon captured by Dedijer, who had also been reading *Red Star over China*. Earlier his diary recorded the evil doings of fifth columnists. But now his comments changed. On 1 July he noted in his diary: 'the people are the water and the partisans the fish; there can be no fish without water'. This 'guiding principle of the Chinese partisans' was valid for the Yugoslav partisans too.⁵⁹ When on 9 August the Comintern suggested that the 'proletarian brigades' be renamed 'shock brigades', Tito meekly agreed three days later. He could hardly refuse, for on 16 June *Pravda* had published a glowing account of the Yugoslav partisans and on 13 July the Soviet ambassador Ivan Maisky informed British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden that because Mihailović was known to be in contact with Nedić, the Soviet Union would no longer be able to support him or criticise the partisans.⁶⁰

On 21 August 1942 the Central Committee met near Glamoč and took decisions later formalised as the 'September Notes'; these again involved the care to be taken when establishing people's liberation committees and the importance of elections to them. In a letter of mid-September Tito described the people's liberation committees as 'a transitional form to the future people's power which the people will establish after liberation'. The old systems of power were being completely overthrown and the new ones, created by the uprising, were the kernel from which new power would emerge. Thus as a territory was freed, elections were to be held. Tito produced 'instructions' for these elections and a series of commissions were established to oversee them. Elections were based on a show of hands, and those to be delegated to the next higher committee in the hierarchy were chosen at the same time. Those elected to the committee would then elect a narrow committee of at least three people to act as an executive.⁶¹

The newspaper *Borba* explained the situation to the partisan readership in an article of 30 September entitled 'For the Right of People's Power'. 'At this stage in the national liberation struggle', the article stated 'the character of the national liberation committees has changed into organs of power; they can no longer be seen as temporary in the sense that they were in an earlier stage of struggle'. Nor could there be any

return to the old forms of administration. At one level this article said nothing new, repeating much of what had been said at Foča. Yet everything depended on how the Party related to the people's liberation committees in practice, how seriously it took the instructions to organise elections and accept that 'there could be no fish without water'. There is no doubt that the Long March did much to restore the partisans' image, attracting numerous uprooted young men and women who were eager to fight. By the end of 1942 the Germans put the number of partisans at 45,000, a ten-fold increase during the course of the year.⁶²

Forced to survive without Soviet aid, and only erratic British air drops, Tito became frustrated by the political ambitions of his allies. On 26 August 1942 he wrote to the Comintern seeking guidance about what should happen if a second front opened in the Balkans. The partisans would, of course, destroy communications and contribute their forces, but the arrival of the Red Army would be far more preferable than the arrival of the British, for 'our people doubt the fighting strength of the English troops in the West'. On 8 September Tito complained to the Comintern about the Soviet Union's decision to accept an ambassador from the London Government-in-Exile. 'Do you not believe what we are telling you every day?', he asked. 'We stress that the Yugoslav Government is working openly with the Italians and secretly with the Germans, it is traitorous towards us and the Soviet Union. We are convinced that the [British] Intelligence Service is helping to implement this policy'.⁶³ As he pressed on north-east to capture Bihać on 4 November 1942, relations with both Britain and the Soviet Union began to frustrate his ambitions. It was here that the new strategy towards the people's liberation committees was formalised with the first meeting of the Anti-Fascist Council for the People's Liberation of Yugoslavia (AVNOJ) which took place on 26–7 November 1942.

The delegates who attended AVNOJ claimed to represent the whole of Yugoslavia, although no delegates made it to Bihać from Macedonia or Slovenia. In the preceding weeks elections had been held throughout liberated territories and were clearly a more genuine attempt to win popular support than any that had gone before. However Dedijer, who was gathering election reports for a special issue of *Borba*, could comment in his diary on 11 October that the elections 'were poorly organised: the people showed little interest in them, because the speakers spoke a language foreign to the people; we must strike another path with more lively more comprehensible propaganda'.⁶⁴ Tito was careful to keep Moscow fully briefed on his plans. Moscow had already advised him on 1 June 1942 that he 'should strive to organise a national committee of support for the Yugoslav people's struggle for liberation, composed of prominent Serb, Croat, Montenegrin and Slovene figures; this committee should promote, in the country and abroad, the political platform of the people's liberation partisan army'. Tito explained on 12 November that this was precisely what he had begun to do: 'we are organising a sort of government, to be named AVNOJ; in the committee there will be representatives of all the nationalities of Yugoslavia and various former parties, the president will be Ivan Ribar, the President of the National Assembly in 1920 and the leader of the democratic left; in the next few days the committee will

issue an appeal to the peoples of Yugoslavia'.⁶⁵ The Comintern replied on the 19th welcoming the decision to establish AVNOJ, but added:

Do not consider this committee as something like a government, but a political organ for national liberation struggle. Do not oppose it to the Yugoslav Government in London. At this stage do not raise the issue of overthrowing the monarchy. Do not call for a republic. The question of the Yugoslav regime, as you understand, will be decided after the defeat of the Italian-German coalition and after the liberation of the country from the occupier ... Keep in mind that the Soviet Union has signed agreements with the Yugoslav King and that open attacks could complicate the general conduct of the war and the relations between the Soviet Union on the one hand and England and America on the other.

Kardelj later recalled that they had received a telegram from Moscow warning them not to make Tito president of AVNOJ, for fear of alienating the West and advertising the communist nature of their movement.⁶⁶

THE LIBERATED STATE

The first meeting of AVNOJ opened in a hall adorned with portraits of Stalin, Churchill and Roosevelt and the flags of all three countries. In all, 54 of the 71 elected delegates took part, listening to speeches by Tito, Žujović and Djilas. Tito explained that there was 'no possibility of setting up a legal government, because international relations and conditions did not permit it as yet' but 'a political instrument to rally the masses' was essential given the clear prospect of Allied victory. Although the council established by AVNOJ was not considered a government, it would be concerned with all questions of social life and the front; therefore it established departments of internal affairs, economic affairs, religious affairs, social affairs and propaganda, a government in all but name. On the second day of the meeting a representative of the Croatian Peasant Party spoke, and Tito was keen to report to the Comintern on 30 November and again on 10 December, that even 'bourgeois' delegates had been ready to condemn the Government-in-Exile and described its flight to London as betrayal.⁶⁷

Essentially, the work of this first session of AVNOJ was to make decisions which endorsed the policies adopted by Tito since the start of the Long March. The system of plenums and 'narrow committees' outlined in the September Notes was confirmed, but this resolution also stressed that the committees were responsible to their electors, who could recall the whole committee or individuals as necessary; the electoral mandate of just six months was supposed to keep them tightly under the control of the electorate. However, once AVNOJ had been set up and a full hierarchy of committees established, lower committees were obliged to implement the decisions of higher committees.⁶⁸ Thus centralism and popular initiative were supposedly brought into balance. A number of other key policy issues were also adopted, most important of all, private property was declared inviolate. The 'reactionary' local administrations with their gendarmes 'which served the occupier' would be replaced by people's liberation committees, but there would be 'no radical changes concerning social life and activity'. There was a moratorium on debts, but taxes had to be levied and collected, wages and prices were fixed, transport and communications repaired, burnt-out villages rebuilt

and local industry and agriculture put into some kind of working order, as were schools. The only people to have property confiscated would be those who had collaborated with the occupier. However, the powers of the military authorities to commandeer strategic assets such as mines, large factories and hospitals could make the promise that the people's liberation committees would implement no radical change seem illusory.⁶⁹

The embryonic partisan state moved on to more secure foundations. In Bosnia at the start of 1942 there had been five district and seventy-seven municipal people's liberation committees. By the end of the year the number of district people's liberation committees had risen to sixty-four, although the number of municipal people's liberation committees had fallen to sixty-six. Partisan territory had been reduced in size, but the partisan administration had been both deepened and strengthened. People's liberation committees dealt with a plethora of essential local matters. They had significant economic powers. If in liberated territory most large factories were taken over directly by the partisan forces, the smaller handicraft workshops were overseen by people's liberation committees, which had powers to fix maximum prices; where shops had ceased to exist, it was up to the people's liberation committees to establish them. Essential suppliers, like mills and bakeries, were put under the direct control of the people's liberation committees. One of the most successful aspects of the work of people's liberation committees was in the field of agriculture, where attempts were made to influence the amount of land sown and to mobilise the labour force during harvest time. Often the people's liberation committees had at their disposal a land fund, acquired by confiscating the land of collaborators.⁷⁰

One of the decisions of the first session of AVNOJ was to establish health sections in every village responsible for the provision of clean water, the extermination of lice and other basic elements of health care. Often led by activists from the Anti-Fascist Women's Front or the Anti Fascist Youth, these sections concentrated on training nurses and trying to reduce the risk of typhus and other contagious diseases. Always short of medicine, activists would be sent to the fields and forests to collect suitable herbs. War widows and orphans were also the concern of the local people's liberation committees. Local committees had to find their own finances, but emergency grants were available. Thus on 19 November the Supreme Command allocated 2,500,000 kuna from its military sources for the reconstruction of the burnt-down villages Donje Vukovsko, Gornje Vukovsko, Janj, Podgorje and Pljeva; later 500,000 kuna was allocated to the poor of Bihać and 200,000 kuna for work in Drvar.⁷¹

November 1942 also saw an important overhaul of the military command. The Supreme Staff decided that, with now 150,000 men at its disposal, it should reorganise its forces and create a regular army of brigades, divisions and corps; this involved the final abandoning of the territorial principle of recruitment which was deemed to have failed, thus taking to its logical conclusion a process started with the establishment of the First Proletarian Brigade. Dedijer, who visited Supreme Headquarters after a significant absence on 9 December 1942, wrote: 'I easily noticed the great changes which have taken place in the organisation of the Supreme Staff itself. A great change is

felt here; it can be seen that we have indeed become a regular army with divisions. New sections have been formed and are functioning regularly'.⁷²

Past errors had not been entirely abandoned. In Slovenia fighting between supporters of the Slovene People's Party and the partisans became acute in autumn 1942 and seventeen Catholic priests were among those killed by the partisans. Some 9,000 partisans had their base at Gorjanici, near the border with the Independent State of Croatia; when the Italians tried to drive them out in October, 'the partisans' use of terror against all opponents, real or potential, had led to the nadir of their popularity'. And yet when Bihać fell on 29 January 1943, unlike when Užice was abandoned just one year earlier, the partisans may have been dislocated but remained a cohesive force. After the Long March 'those peasants who felt that the past had been destroyed, that the present was catastrophic, and that there was no future in the German dominated New Order, could be tempted by the hope of a really new order provided by the people's liberation movement'. Such is the verdict of the historian Stevan Pavlowitch and Mark Wheeler, another historian of the war years, made a similar point: in 1942 it was the sheer survival of Tito's partisans that was remarkable; in the first half of 1942 the Party maintained only a precarious hold on a few liberated 'islands' of territory, yet the Long March changed all that and success was due in great part to the Yugoslav Communist Party's 'own organisational genius, tactical finesse, functional ruthlessness, military valour, and moral hegemonism – all of which enabled it to mobilise in the name of liberation and renewal the energies and enthusiasm of Yugoslavia's most determined minorities'.⁷³

What was it that attracted this 'partisan generation' to Tito's cause? There was no concession on the communist tone of partisan propaganda. The Yugoslav communists did not hide behind nationalism, but argued that, in the crucial hour, it was only the communists who had stood up for the real interests of the Yugoslav peoples, whilst groups like the četniks represented not nationalism but Great Serb chauvinism. The communists argued that they deserved to be followed and to be given the leading role in the people's liberation struggle because they had taken up arms first. When *Borba* reappeared as a regular publication in Bosnia in September 1942, it branded itself both as the 'organ of the Yugoslav Communist Party' and the 'paper of the working class and of the patriot and fighter for freedom'. *Borba* made clear that the Government-in-Exile might argue that the time was not yet right for struggle, and that patriots should wait to fight the occupiers when a more suitable occasion presented itself, but the Government-in-Exile lied when it said that this was what the Allies wanted: the Soviet Union had called for action in summer 1941 and had been calling for it ever since. As the communists saw it, they had risen up in summer 1941 and after fighting for the best part of eighteen months had liberated roughly a fifth of the country: 'people of various nationalities, various faiths and political convictions, are taking the path shown by our Party ... the people have taken up our proposals, they accept our views and trust in our Party'.⁷⁴

The true nature of the Government-in-Exile was returned to again and again. *Borba* argued:

Our liberation struggle is not only difficult and bloody, but it is very complicated and every day becomes more complicated because of various traitors.. That struggle has become even more complex because of the traitor émigré government in London which has begun through its agents sent to this country to stab the people in the back. It is the task of *Borba* to explain to the people the betrayal of the 'Great Serb' émigré government in London, which is working with the occupiers through Draža Mihailović and his četniks.⁷⁵

Borba reminded its readers that the Government-in-Exile was the continuation of the government established on 27 March 1941. The communists had adopted a wait and see attitude towards that government, seeing it as a purely temporary phenomenon and, because of its composition, unlikely to represent the people of Yugoslavia. The subsequent actions of the government had fully justified the communists' reservations, since not only did it not support the liberation struggle but it also offered help to a traitor in touch with the occupier. By denouncing the partisans as 'communist bands', the Government-in-Exile was 'continuing the same anti-democratic reactionary policies of the last 23 years'. The people of Yugoslavia, however, 'had understood the policies and the struggle of our Party and supported its appeals'.⁷⁶

The joint struggle with the Soviet Union was repeatedly stressed. The propaganda example offered by the Soviet Union as a multinational state where ethnic tensions were a thing of the past, was a much repeated theme in *Borba*. Thus the twenty-fifth anniversary of the October Revolution was the occasion to declare: 'Peoples of Yugoslavia, Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, Muslims, Montenegrins, Macedonians and others – look at the people of the Soviet Union, at their unity ... and stand as one, without concern for political views, beliefs or nationality in one general People's Liberation Front!' As Tito said in a speech reported on 22 October: 'We will fight in the future together with the Soviet Union, just as we have fought together with them up till now'.⁷⁷ *Borba* gave extensive coverage to the anniversary of the October Revolution, including an article on 'Stalin' by Milovan Djilas which assessed the Soviet dictator as 'the best opponent of all that is inhumane' and 'the living embodiment of Marxism–Leninism'. When writing about the power of ideas, *Borba* stressed 'the rich experience of the early teachers Marks–Engels–Lenin–Stalin'; this was 'not dead history or theory ... but living sources from which we can learn to solve questions thrown up by the present'. A special issue of *Borba* was published on 23 December to announce that the partisans had liberated five Red Army soldiers who had been captured by the Germans and were being held in Croatia.⁷⁸

However much Tito stressed the leading role of the communists and the example offered by the Soviet Union, he was equally clear by summer 1942 that the only source of communist authority in Yugoslavia came from the Party's ability to build a relationship with the people. In his speech of 22 October, Tito commented: 'in this struggle we came to the conviction that only the people alone, with power in its hands, could destroy that tyranny which had until now oppressed our people; we saw that on one side there was every force that was against the people, and on the other, everything that was patriotic, which loved its land, freedom and independence'.⁷⁹ Yet 'relying on the people' was easier said than done. Repeatedly the partisan press urged its activists to move beyond rhetoric to action. An article in *Borba* for 30 September 1942 entitled

'Improve Agitational Work!' urged agitators to concentrate on specific aspects of the work of people's liberation committees – 'the firm link with the masses and their interests' had to be real. On 8 October 1942, *Borba* carried an article 'Concern for New Cadres and Fighters' which stressed the importance of the link with the masses. 'The content of the people's liberation struggle and correct policy of the Yugoslav Communist Party has secured this link once and for all. The popular strength of the Party is measured by how it resolves the life and death questions of the insurgent people. Only a deep understanding of the interests of the peoples of Yugoslavia, on a daily basis, tests and strengthens the link between the Party and the nation-loving popular masses.'⁸⁰

The partisans were well aware that, when juggling the concerns of centralism and popular initiative, bureaucracy was an inherent danger. On 15 October 1942, in an article entitled 'We will study the Leninist style of work', the author warned of the danger of bureaucratic routine and the use of old, stale phrases in propaganda. This type of person, and this type of work 'kills the Party line and turns away the masses; it has long been time to declare war in our organisations and destroy this method of work and such activists and functionaries'. The Party should not be made up of bureaucrats but revolutionary activists: 'war in our ranks on banging out old, empty phrases; war on the usual bureaucratic routine; war on the unfeeling, humanless spirit; war on empty phrases – that today is one of our first tasks'.⁸¹ Discussing the approach of winter and the need to supply the partisans with warm clothing, *Borba* warned on 22 October:

To undertake this task in a centralised way, issuing instructions, means learning nothing from the Bolshevik Party, which mobilises its members for all pressing practical tasks. A bureaucratic approach means turning the Party into an abstract and passive group of dogooders, whereas Party activists must at once stir things up and get all mass organisations involved in resolving this crucial problem for the liberation war ... Communists must combine all their organisation thought with the working initiatives of the masses ... In this campaign it is essential to liquidate those general phrases that here and there infect out agitational work.'⁸²

Here too the example of the Soviet Union could be followed. On 28 November *Borba* published an article originally printed as an editorial in *Pravda* on 16 October. It noted how, at one of the worst moments during the Russian Civil War, Lenin had said: 'The situation is extraordinarily difficult, but we should not despair, for we know that every time that a difficult period develops for the Soviet Republic, workers show wonders of bravery and through their example of strength inspire the troops and lead them to new victories'. The article argued that 'inexhaustible popular initiative would open up every type of help to the front', and proceeded to give many examples of the way, on the Eastern Front, local soviets had taken the initiative in resolving apparently intractable issues of supply. The implication was clear, people's liberation committees should act in a similar way. Thus in an article describing how elections to people's liberation committees should be conducted, *Borba* brought out what it saw as the differences between the new and the old democracy. It was necessary to liquidate the

old habits of political passivity and an uncritical stance towards political representatives – ‘without the active participation of the masses the new power will not be built quickly’. People’s liberation committees should be subject to constant criticism from the public, ‘so that in the full sense they will be a reflection of the popular will, and not act simply by declaring their civic “bourgeois” responsibilities’.⁸³

By mid-December the Yugoslav Communist Party was planning courses for Party members at all levels, to try and ensure through ideological training that the link with the masses was never lost. As the author of the *Borba* article in which this policy was announced made clear, Stalin had stated in a much quoted speech of 1935: ‘cadres decide everything!’ And from autumn 1942 onwards, when it came to cadres, the Yugoslav communists were already looking forward to the post-war years. On 18 October *Borba* stressed that new volunteers needed ideological training because, after their ‘difficult future military campaigns’, these young people ‘tomorrow, after liberation, will return to their villages and towns, fields and factories and must become the new political leaders’. The point was repeated on 13 December, training was essential because of the jobs the partisan generation would undertake ‘after the completion of the armed people’s liberation struggle’.⁸⁴

Summer and autumn 1942 was the formative period for Tito’s revolution and for Tito’s new Yugoslavia. If most of the building blocks of his ideas had been in place even before the insurrection – a people’s government, the destruction of the old state machinery, partisan detachments – implementing those ideas had always been premised on support from the Soviet Union. The radicalism and sectarianism of Užice and Montenegro only made sense in the context of the swift arrival of the Red Army, and for that reason people’s liberation committees could be seen as ‘temporary’ and simply vehicles for the supply needs of the partisan detachments. Abandoning sectarianism, getting beyond the rhetoric of relying on the people to actually relying on the people, that was Tito’s achievement. Much of the theoretical re-formulation of Tito’s idea took place between February and April 1942, but it was the Long March which brought about their practical implementation. At the end of November 1941 Tito was retreating from Užice in chaos, a year later he had organised the first session of AVNOJ; it was an achievement of which he could be justifiably proud.

REVOLUTION THROUGH WAR

FIGHTING AND TALKING WITH THE ENEMY

The relative peace and security which had enabled the partisans to organise the first session of AVNOJ did not last long. On 18–20 December 1942 meetings took place between Hitler and Mussolini's Foreign Minister at which it was decided to crush the Yugoslav resistance. When the attack began, the partisans were already moving south as part of Tito's plan to break back into Montenegro and southern Serbia during spring 1943. What the Germans called *Operation Weiss* aimed in its first phase to encircle partisan positions in the Bihać area where Tito had his headquarters, then, in the second phase, to penetrate partisan held territory in Bosnia and destroy most of the partisan army. In a third phase, which was never reached, the Germans intended to disarm the četniks and reduce them to carrying out auxiliary duties. In the first phase, however, over 18,000 četniks were mobilised to take part in the operation, two thirds of them operating in Montenegro. In Hercegovina Italian forces took up positions to the south and south-east to cut off any partisan retreat.¹

The partisans started to prepare their retreat in mid-January, and the evacuation proper began at the end of the month. On 31 January 1943 Tito wrote to the Comintern: 'I must ask you once again – is there really no possibility of getting us some sort of aid? Hundreds of thousands of refugees are threatened with hunger. Surely after twenty months of heroic partisan struggle it must be possible to find a way to help us'. Dimitrov responded on 11 February: 'You should not doubt for a moment that if there was the slightest possibility of giving your fantastic heroic struggle material aid, we would have done it long ago ... I have discussed it personally with Josif Vissarionovich [Stalin] on many occasions ... but it has not proved possible because of insurmountable transport problems ... When it is possible, we will do all we can. Can you have any doubt about that?'² Deprived of outside help, Tito could only look to his own men. On 7 February 1943 he called on partisans in those areas not affected by the offensive to undertake every sort of imaginable action to disrupt the offensive. Then he warned that the German pressure was such that tactics would have to change. Early in February 1943 Tito wrote an article on strategy: 'We must protect ourselves and abandon rigid fronts; we must abandon them so that our enemy, through his own tactics, provides us with our defence by aid of over-extended fronts ... Our People's Army must be imbued with an offensive spirit [even] ... when on the defensive ... penetrating behind enemy lines and destroying not only his communications but also his supply centres ... We need not fear encirclement as we did not fear it when we had smaller units'.³

It took the main partisan army three weeks to withdraw across the central uplands of Bosnia towards the Neretva river, which had to be crossed if they were to break out of the enemy ring. From 22 February the partisans were involved in bitter battles with the četniks, and succeeded in both securing the Neretva and then routing the četnik forces. But more četniks were massed on the Hercegovina heights above the Neretva between Mostar and Kalinovik, stationed to descend on the partisans as German forces pushed forwards into the steep valley. There was bitter fighting between 27 February and 7 March, but the partisans succeeded in escaping and even in taking some German captives. Dedijer recorded on 1 March what he saw at the decisive moment: 'yesterday, in the Rama Valley there was a meeting of Tito, Ranković, Djilas and Žujović; a decision was made here to break out of the enemy's ring'.⁴ Djilas agreed that this was when the crucial decision was made:

It was Tito, who in that complex and dangerous situation, came up with a risky but brilliant manoeuvre: first pin down the German 717th Division, which was descending on our wounded, and then carry out the breakthrough on the Neretva – through the četniks, since the Italians had already been beaten. In making these grave decisions, Tito consulted with the Central Committee. The meeting was short, for everything was clear; nobody opposed anything and Tito's initiative prevailed.⁵

Tito's plan was to destroy the bridges on the Neretva, in order to make the enemy think the partisans had decided not to cross the river, but then to launch a counter-attack against the Germans to the north, using captured Italian artillery and tanks, before turning, crossing the Neretva and advancing on the četniks. The plan worked, a wooden structure was quickly strapped to a destroyed railway bridge to enable the partisans to make their unexpected crossing and the četniks were routed. Dedijer captured the drama of this epic battle in his diary. 'The enemy is around us on all sides ... We are caught in the valley of the Rama. In front of us is the Neretva gorge'. The partisans' only choice was to follow goat paths 'like the Chinese partisans who crossed the Tata river in their Long March'.⁶ The crucial moment came on 9 March. As Dedijer recorded it: 'Will we succeed in crossing the Neretva or not?' Djilas later recalled that 'Tito on the Neretva was a tiger in a cage, clawing about for weak spots – among the Italians and četniks of course – gauging a hole wide enough for the partisan storm to gush through'. This battle did indeed inflict a defeat on the četniks from which they would never recover. By 15 March, Tito knew his main force had escaped encirclement and gave the order to withdraw to Montenegro. Then, in the uplands of Montenegro, some of the most savage partisan-četnik battles of the whole war were fought as Tito pressed home his advantage.⁷

This assault on the četniks was made possible by one of the most controversial episodes of the partisan war, the approach made to the Germans in March 1943. On several occasions during the partisan war there had been talks with the Germans to facilitate prisoner exchanges. The first such incident had taken place during the Užice Republic and subsequently, early in August 1942, the partisans captured Hans Ott, who worked for the SS Todt Organisation and was also a member of the German

Intelligence Centre. Ott proposed an exchange and eight Germans were traded for ten partisans. Other exchanges followed, notably in September 1942 when Dedijer's wife was among 38 captured partisans and supporters exchanged for a senior German officer. During the fighting on the Neretva in early March, Tito decided to initiate discussions with the Germans once again. This time his aim was more than just an exchange of prisoners, he wanted to gain a respite from the German assault so that the partisans could finish off the četniks in Hercegovina and Montenegro; should an Allied second front ever involve a British landing on the southern Adriatic coast, he wanted to be sure they were welcomed by partisan rather than četnik forces. With Montenegro secure, the partisans could again turn their attention to Serbia.⁸

During the recent fighting a high-ranking German officer had been captured, Major Stoecker. Djilas recalled how 'Tito brought together the Central Committee members – Ranković, Pijade, and me – in his water mill by the Rama River, and suggested that we send a letter to the Germans through Major Stoecker proposing, in addition to an exchange of prisoners, that the wounded and prisoners be treated according to international conventions, and demanding specifically that the Germans recognise us as a belligerent force'. The Germans replied positively a few days later and on 9 March Tito, Ranković and Djilas agreed that Djilas should be sent to conduct the negotiations, accompanied by Vladimir Velebit who had studied German in Vienna and was a lawyer. Djilas recalled that he asked Tito what he thought the Russians would say, and Tito replied almost angrily 'well, they also think first of their own people and their own army'. Djilas's brief was to move beyond discussion of prisoners, the wounded and belligerency and to persuade the Germans that the partisans' chief objective was not to penetrate into Serbia, but simply to win control of the Sandjak from the četniks. The Germans needed to believe the Sandjak was the anticipated future partisan territory and the četniks their main enemy; the Italians would be fought only in as much as they supported the četniks, and, since the partisans had no designs on Serbia, fighting with the Germans was unnecessary. Djilas insisted that during his talks there was not a word said about the cessation of fighting between the Germans and the partisans, but 'this too was understood', and for six weeks there was 'a *de facto* ceasefire'.⁹

The prisoner exchange was quickly negotiated in Sarajevo, before Djilas and Velebit pressed on to Zagreb where the serious talks began on 26 March. In the two meetings held, the Germans indicated that they would cease operations against the partisans as soon as the partisans stopped carrying out raids on the strategic railway line passing through Slavonia. Tito responded by instructing the Slavonian partisans to suspend operations, and, to encourage agreement, Djilas told the German negotiators that the partisans 'would fight the British if they landed'. Djilas then returned to partisan headquarters, while Velebit continued the discussions in Zagreb. Ranković had always been more dubious about the outcome than Tito, and his doubts proved justified.¹⁰ Before the negotiations began, the German ambassador in Zagreb had sent a telegram to Berlin on 17 March in which he reported the possibility 'that Tito and supporters will cease to fight against Germany, Italy and Croatia and retire to the Sandjak in order to settle matters with Mihailović's četniks'. The ambassador felt that

‘the possibility exists that Tito will demonstratively turn his back on Moscow and London, who left him in the lurch’. The ambassador made clear that in his opinion ‘this possibility should be pursued’. Receiving no reply, he wrote again on 26 March, explaining that the talks with Tito’s representatives had begun and there was a real possibility of ‘saving manpower and blood’. However, on 29 March Ribbentrop, after talks with Hitler, informed his ambassador that all contacts with the partisans should be broken.¹¹

It was only on 30 March that Tito informed the Comintern that a prisoner exchange was being negotiated with the Germans, and when he did so, he sought to hide what was really going on by playing on Soviet concerns about their British ally. Tito stressed that the partisan delegation had gleaned useful information from their conversations in Zagreb. Leading officials in Germany, he reported, doubted there would ever be a British landing in Europe, since the British outnumbered the Germans five to one in Africa and still undertook no serious operations. The partisan delegation had also learned that the Germans suspected the Italians of being in secret contact with the British. Tito added: ‘Not only among our fighters, but also among the peoples of Yugoslavia as a whole, hate towards the English is growing because they are not opening a second front in Europe, that they want in this way to weaken the Soviet Union in its struggle against Germany – please advise on how to act in this matter’. Lost in the middle of the report was the statement that the Germans recognised the partisans as their serious enemy and were ready to hold talks with Tito. Dimitrov was not fooled and asked at once ‘what is going on here?’ Any contact with the Germans was harmful, he stressed. Tito mentioned only the prisoner exchange when he replied on 31 March, and again tried to throw up a smoke screen. His reply stressed not the exchange of Major Stoecker but the hundred Croat prisoners who, if not exchanged, would otherwise have to be fed, which was impossible, or shot, which was undesirable. He reassured Dimitrov he had no intention of going to Zagreb himself, he just thought it ironic that, given what the occupation press had been writing about him, the Germans were nevertheless prepared to talk. In another attempt to pull the wool over Dimitrov’s eyes, Tito added that Djilas’s delegation to Zagreb had also been instructed to obtain badly needed medical supplies to combat typhus.¹²

The Zagreb talks gave the partisans some much needed respite; that was their purpose and to that extent they succeeded. Much later their discovery would inflame historical debates about who collaborated in Yugoslavia and who resisted. Allegations of collaboration against the četniks rest on the charge that they were trying to get the Germans and Italians to act together with them in a war on the partisans. Tito’s collaboration, if such it was, was rather different. His ultimate aim was to trick the Germans, by bravado about an Allied landing, into allowing him a free hand against the četniks; but lesser outcomes, like recognition as a combatant force, would be a bonus, and simply stalling for time would be useful. Time was of the essence for the partisans now anticipated a long struggle. On 31 March Dedijer spent the morning with Tito and Djilas and recorded the comments of both of them on how long the war would last: Djilas said that ‘this is the end of the second act, but the climax and denouement will not be until the fifth’; Tito agreed that ‘a long struggle still awaits

us'.¹³ Yet, as a result of the talks with the German Supreme Staff spent the greater part of April 1943 secure from attack. Djilas recalled 'clambering among the cliffs in search of chamois' and even persuading Tito, who was not much of a hunter, to go with him. Tito could concentrate on forward planning, briefing Djilas on how he should prepare political cadres for the new areas the partisans planned to liberate. Tito also put Djilas in charge of his planned Commission for the Suppression of the Fifth Column and Terrorism, which would operate in southern Serbia as the partisans advanced into the region.

The partisans were now established in an area the četniks had once controlled. Djilas had always argued that the 'četniks would be weakened by their way of governing – the restoration of the old police regime without any rights let alone laws' but the speed with which the people abandoned the četnik movement surpassed his expectations. The partisans' behaviour inevitably contributed to the strengthening of the movement, for, learning the lessons of the Long March there were no arrests, let alone executions. Djilas noted how, as if by agreement, the peasants, when reproached for having sided with the četniks, replied: 'Well, you're not the way you used to be either!' Lulled into a false sense of security, on May Day 1943 Tito told his troops nothing about the long struggle still awaiting them, but declared: 'I am convinced that we will observe the next May Day in Belgrade'.¹⁴

That this was wishful thinking became clear on 15 May when the Germans resumed their anti-partisan offensive and launched *Operation Schwarz*. A week later, on 22–23 May 1943 the Supreme Staff met at Crno Jezero, near the town of Žabljak on Mount Durmitor. Realising the scale of the renewed offensive, Tito declared: 'The Germans are lying! We have never been in greater danger! We have to go back to western Bosnia. There is no other way out!' Djilas declaimed: 'So much for our negotiations!'¹⁵ However, the retreat to Bosnia could not begin at once because help for the partisans was at last at hand, help from what Tito still saw as the most threatening quarter, the British. The British had begun to have serious doubts about Mihailović when Hudson informed London on 7 September 1942 that, in his view, Mihailović would not fight the Axis until an allied landing had begun. As a result of British pressure, Mihailović did begin a programme of sabotage on the north–south railway line, which paralysed rail movements between Belgrade and Greece from 16 to 20 November. However, German arrests and reprisals followed, with 1,500 being executed by December 1942; at which point Mihailović ceased his activity. Despite repeated requests by Hudson to resume operations, Mihailović argued that 'half a million Serbs had already perished during the war' and he could not countenance further losses 'for the sake of outside interests'. Thus by early 1943 the British were looking to improve relations with the partisans.¹⁶

Immediately after deciding retreat to western Bosnia was inevitable, Tito informed Dimitrov on 24 May 1943 that a British representative was soon to arrive at the Supreme Staff; he therefore urged the Red Army to send its own representative as soon as possible. The same day he contacted Dedijer, who spoke good English and asked him to help with preparations 'to receive an English mission'.¹⁷ On the night of 28 May 1943, near the village of Negobudje on Mount Durmitor, the British mission

descended by parachute on the very spot where, in February 1942 a Soviet air drop had been expected. The mission, led by Major William Deakin, arrived at Tito's tent by Crno Jezero on the 29th where it was given horses to carry its radio transmitter and belongings, and an escort of carefully selected men. There was a brief festive welcome, before the partisans began their break-out to the north. As Dedijer recorded things on 30–31 May, 'our lives hung by a thread'. The Germans needed only fifteen minutes to descend from the mountains above Mratinje and close off the partisans' last exit from the river Piva. On 1 June Tito was almost killed when a shell whistled by from forty yards away. As Tito, Ranković and Žujović sunk to the ground, Tito said to a member of the British Mission: 'this is how Draža [Mihailović] fights, the Germans are advancing on us from all sides, but his men lay ambushes for us like vultures'.¹⁸

When the Supreme Staff met on 3 June, it resolved that the First and Second Divisions were to pierce the enemy ring at Sutejska and Zelengora, while Djilas stayed behind with the wounded, trying to evacuate them to the Sandjak. The fate of the wounded haunted Tito. Preparations for the breakout began on 6 June, the archives and heavy weapons were buried and draught animals slaughtered, yet Tito was struck down by indecision. On the 8th he was still pacing up and down repeating 'the lives of 2,500 people are at stake, we cannot leave them behind but we cannot stay here any longer, it is too dangerous'.¹⁹ But his delay already meant that Djilas and the wounded were surrounded. In the end, Tito ordered that most of the wounded should be hidden and Djilas should bring out only those who could walk. This uncharacteristic hesitancy put Tito's life in danger on two occasions. The first involved Žujović who was assigned to command the First Division and, having secured a crucial opening in the front, called on Tito and the Supreme Staff to take advantage of it. Tito decided not to do so, since in his view the passage was not secure enough. Žujović then lost patience and ordered the First Division to continue its advance without awaiting the Supreme Staff. Tito certainly felt deliberately abandoned, while Djilas saw it as evidence of Žujović's 'repressed hostility toward Tito'. The second occasion on which Tito narrowly escaped death came on 9 June. As the weather cleared, Tito's party was sighted and bombed by German planes. Tito's bodyguard was killed, as was his dog, and Tito himself was hit by shrapnel in his left arm; a member of the British Mission was killed and Deakin was injured in the foot.²⁰

Militarily, this was the most difficult time for Tito. When Djilas had fought his way back to headquarters, he was shocked at Tito's appearance. He recalled how 'we came upon Tito and Ranković on 3 July, in a little cave overlooking Kladanj. The two of them had lost a lot of weight: Ranković looked like someone about to die of tuberculosis, and Tito's fingers were so thin that the ring he had acquired in Moscow to serve him in need had slipped off and was lost'. Operations *Weiss* and *Schwarz* had tested the partisans to the limits, but they had survived. Of approximately 40,000 partisans who set out with Tito from western Bosnia in January 1943, only a few thousand emerged from the cauldron of the Sutejska valley in late June. Having survived, the partisans had to assess their position. One thing was certain, there would be no return to sectarianism. At the beginning of July, Tito was extremely angry over the fact that some units were continuing to requisition food. This practice had been

permitted at the height of the May–June crisis on Mount Durmitor out of sheer necessity, but there was no longer any need for it. Tito called the officers concerned to a conference and Ranković harangued them. According to Djilas, Tito was so upset over this issue that ‘he declared he would not command a plundering army’.²¹

THE ENGLISH ALLY

Political moderation was particularly important since the alliance with ‘the English’ was beginning to pay real dividends. Tito reported to Dimitrov on 20 July that so far he had received seven supply drops from the British. He expressed some caution, noting that the British were keen to develop sabotage, but ‘we are keeping control of operations’. British aid was welcome, although the partisans ‘would very much like the Soviet Union to send its mission’. In some ways the propaganda advantages of working with the British were greater than the relatively modest supplies that could be air-dropped to the partisans. On 23 July Dedijer recorded how the partisans entered a village which had once supported the četniks: ‘the people, therefore, looked dumbfounded at the English; the people now understood that the četniks were lying to them when they said the Allies have not recognised us’. In these circumstances, arbitrary executions could be an embarrassment. Djilas recalled that at the end of July a četnik commander was captured and he and other officers were executed. ‘Not far off, in a clearing by the road, we came across some ten executed men – spilled brains, smashed faces, contorted bodies; the English mission was with us, and we all felt awkward. On this occasion Tito even remarked, ‘couldn’t they have done it somewhere else?’²² Possible ‘English’ support even led the partisans to consider a negotiated settlement with some četnik leaders. In mid-July Italian Military Intelligence intercepted messages between Mihailović and četnik military commanders. These reported that ‘Djilas had approached them on behalf of the partisans’ Supreme Staff to see whether they would agree to common action against the occupiers, in view of the fact that a new Government-in-Exile was about to be formed without Mihailović’. Mihailović threatened disciplinary measures against any commander who took up this invitation.²³

As far as the British were concerned, partisan activity, even if it was remote from centres of population and main lines of communication, obliged the Germans to maintain divisions in Yugoslavia that would otherwise have been available for service in Italy. With this in mind, on 23 June Churchill had presided over a meeting of the Chiefs of Staff which addressed the question of Yugoslavia; he had briefed himself fully and called for increased air support to the ‘anti-Axis movement’.²⁴ A fortnight later Fitzroy Maclean was briefed to lead a mission to Tito’s headquarters. While Maclean was told to explore the possibility that the actions of Mihailović and the partisans could still be co-ordinated and that ‘King Peter will return’, the fact that Tito, and not Mihailović was to be approached by someone so close to Churchill made clear the differing status accorded to the two men.²⁵ The reports received in Cairo and London from Deakin included too much damning information for Mihailović to be acceptable to the British. Just one example will suffice: a četnik was captured on 31 July 1943 guarding a railway which the partisans are preparing to blow with British explosives;

Deakin was with them; the četnik was found to have a document from the German High Command detailing the railway protection operation and 'Deakin copied down the agreement'.²⁶

By mid-July 1943 Tito had decided to regroup his forces. He, Ranković and Djilas would go to Croatia, leaving a small staff in eastern Bosnia; Peko Dapčević, commander of the Second Division, would return to Montenegro and build up the nucleus of a force for future advance into Serbia. Thus when Fitzroy Maclean parachuted into Yugoslavia and arrived at the new partisan headquarters of Jajce on 18 September, Tito's suspicions of the British continued. On 1 September 1943 he informed Dimitrov that the British mission 'wanted to know too much about our army, but we give them the information which seems appropriate'. However, as he listed the forty air drops providing explosives, medicine and anti-tank weapons, as well as a large quantity of light weapons, with the promise of seventy more drops in September, it was difficult to pretend that he was not grateful for British support. Soviet help was still needed, Tito stressed once again, help in getting the partisans recognised as a regular army would be of great benefit, but the arrival of a Soviet mission would be best of all.²⁷

Tito's suspicions of British intentions were again evident when he was given no advance information about Italy's unconditional surrender on 8 September 1943, especially since he suspected that Mihailović had been tipped off in advance. In fact that was not the case, and the partisans were soon able to take advantage of the Italian surrender because of their superior organisation. In Split the clandestine people's liberation committee emerged from underground and forced the Italians to surrender to them, holding power long enough for supplies to be transferred to Tito. Deakin accompanied Koča Popović and the First Proletarian Division in its dash to reach Split before the Germans occupied the region.²⁸ The town was successfully held until 27 September, enabling the partisans to disarm ten Italian divisions with large quantities of armaments and stores. Some of the captured Italians joined the partisans in newly formed Garibaldi divisions. Even before the Italian surrender, Deakin had been trying to persuade London that his role was not that of organising guerrilla bands, but of liaising with an established army. After the Italian surrender, this was self-evidently the case.²⁹

The Italian surrender and the subsequent strengthening of the German presence in the Independent State of Croatia pushed the Croat question up Tito's agenda. Over summer 1943 the communist leader in Croatia, Andrija Hebrang, faced the dilemma of how best to work with radical members of the Croatian Peasant Party. Although as far as the partisans were concerned the pre-war leadership of the party was hopelessly compromised, the Party had retained a clandestine organisation within the Ustaše state and by summer 1943 Party members were frequently found in partisan ranks. Could Croatian Peasant Party partisans be allowed some organisational forum without destroying the concept of a communist led people's front? In June 1943 Hebrang had allowed them to elect an 'Executive Committee of the Croat Peasant Movement'.

In July 1943 the old Croatian Peasant Party newspaper *Slobodni Dom* was revived. These moves worried Tito, especially since he suspected that during the May-June

crisis, when as in February he had appealed to partisan units throughout the country to disrupt the German offensive, the Croatian staff could have done more to ease the military pressure on Tito. In August 1943 Tito relieved the Croatian commander Ivan Rukavina of his command and Ivan Gošnjak and Velimir Terzić were sent in to take over; at the same time Djilas was sent to Croatia to investigate. On 14 August 1943 Tito wrote to Hebrang in the name of the Central Committee stating: 'We consider it a mistake to aid the creation of some new Croatian Peasant Party as a basis for co-operation in the people's liberation struggle. Agreements must be made on the basis of the Anti-fascist Council for the Liberation of Croatia (ZAVNOH). The creation of a new Croatian Peasant Party is a purely internal affair of those who wish that'.³⁰

The discussions proper began on 27 August 1943 when Kardelj joined Djilas at Hebrang's headquarters. The Croatian Peasant Party had offered to co-operate with the partisans and wanted to enter the partisan army and form within it a Radić Brothers Brigade, named after the party's two leaders of the 1920s. The advantages for the partisans were obvious – six-hundred cavalry would immediately cross over to the partisans from the garrison in Bjelovar, while the Croatian Peasant Party had promised it would mobilise a further 3,500. However, the party wanted to have its own political commissars, who would train soldiers in 'the ideology of the Radić brothers'. There were other conditions. They would acknowledge partisan command, but would fight only against the Germans and the Ustaše, not small units of the Croatian Home Guard. Kardelj proposed a compromise, suggesting the partisans give in on the question of political commissars, but not on the question of command; no exception with regard to the Croatian Home Guard could be made. Djilas was then sent to negotiate with the Croatian Peasant Party, but he was instructed to make clear that while the Radić Brothers Brigade could be formed, its Croatian Peasant Party commissars would be appointed by the Croatian General Staff, not the Croatian Peasant Party; in this way the Croatian Peasant Party would not be operating independently but through ZAVNOH. Kardelj could thus reassure 'we can control them'.³¹

Although the immediate issue was resolved, Djilas continued to have concerns about the situation in Croatia. Hebrang had virtually dictatorial powers among the Croatian partisans and his propaganda line gave 'rather too great an emphasis on Croatia'. In his view, 'by placing the primary emphasis on attracting the Croatian masses, Hebrang gave the Party a predominantly Croatian tone'. However Djilas and Kardelj had been joined in their investigation by Žujović, and he did not share Djilas's concerns about the creeping spirit of nationalism among Croatia's communists. Nor did Kardelj. Dedijer recorded on 7 September 1943 how Kardelj and Hebrang had 'a very interesting discussion' about the crude sectarian positions of some comrades, who do not admit that '*Slobodni Dom* is written more journalistically than our own paper in Croatia', nor did they admit in any way to the great significance *Slobodni Dom* has. The peasant masses in Croatia preferred reading *Slobodni Dom* because it was written in a language they could understand unlike the partisan press, 'talking in clichés like *Vjesnik*' and 'theorising like *Naprijed*'. If the partisan press had been better, the peasants would have outgrown *Slobodni Dom* six months previously, so Kardelj and

Hebrang agreed it would be suicide to throw over those Croatian Peasant Party members who had crossed over to the partisans.³²

However when on 20 September 1943 ZAVNOH declared, in the context of the Italian surrender, Istria, Zadar and Rijeka, which had been occupied by the Italians and did not form part of the Independent State of Croatia, were once again to be united with 'the land of Croatia', Tito protested. He saw this as a clear example of latent nationalism within the Croatian Party leadership. By acting as they had, they were assuming a power of sovereignty which really belonged to Yugoslavia as a whole.³³ He was perhaps right to worry. On 12 October 1943 the second session of ZAVNOH resolved to establish 'a new, democratic Yugoslavia of free and equal peoples, in which – on the basis of self-determination – a free and democratic Croatia will be erected'. Although it added 'there is not, nor dare there be, a Croatia in which Serbs will not be guaranteed full equality', the drum of nationalism seemed to be beating. Tito's view was put by Vladimir Bakarić on 21 October 1943. Noting that by autumn 1943 over half the Croatian partisans were Croats by ethnicity, rather than the persecuted Serb minority which had initially rallied to the partisan cause, and that 'more and more functionaries of the Croatian Peasant Party are crossing over to our ranks', he stressed that it would be totally wrong to consider that ZAVNOH was a coalition with the Croatian Peasant Party leaders; the people's liberation struggle was unified, its strength was that it was not a coalition'.³⁴

The defeat of the četniks, the Italian surrender and the arrival of the British mission had a powerful political and psychological affect on the population, persuading many who had remained neutral to come over to the partisan side. In these circumstances it was imperative to build on what had been achieved at the previous year's first session of AVNOJ. As before, the elections were carefully prepared, selecting as candidates 'people who have distinguished themselves in battle'; attention would also be paid to social origin, to ensure 'workers and poorer peasants' were properly represented, along with 'some from richer circles'. Party agencies also made an effort to include well-known non-party people, patriots who did not question the partisans' aims and methods; the Central Committee chose the delegates from Serbia from military units.³⁵ The two issues which emerged during these preparations were the related questions of who should lead AVNOJ as its president, and whether AVNOJ should establish itself as a government. Dedijer recorded on 7 September 1943 that in a talk with Kardelj and Žujović they had agreed that AVNOJ should meet and expand, taking a more decisive stance towards the Government-in-Exile. But they also thought about choosing a new president, because 'Ribar in reality was not living up to his responsibilities'; in this context, they mused, no one was more deserving than Tito.³⁶

This idea was soon taken up more broadly. The Slovene Assembly on 2 October heard a contribution from the floor by a worker who described Tito as 'the embodiment of the unity of our people – his mother was a Slovene, his father a Croat and he began the struggle in Belgrade'. The same assembly also expressed extreme bitterness at the role played by the Government-in-Exile: another voice from the floor called out 'let the English hand them over so that we can put them on trial'.³⁷ On 2 October 1943 Tito broached these issues with Dimitrov, especially since he was aware

that a meeting of Allied Foreign Ministers was shortly due to take place. Tito stressed that AVNOJ had empowered him to make clear 'that we do not recognise either the Government-in-Exile or the King ... [and] we would not allow their return to Yugoslavia'; the British mission had been informed of this, he added. Moscow did not respond to this point, but a telegram from Dimitrov's deputy to both Tito and Kardelj instructed them to cancel the proposal that Tito be made president. On 12 October, Tito confirmed to Dimitrov that he dissociated himself from the proposal, made in Croatia as well as Slovenia, that he should become president of AVNOJ.³⁸

Kardelj and the whole leadership were keen to establish AVNOJ as a proper government. Djilas recalled how on 10 October 1943, en route to a meeting with Tito, he and Kardelj discussed the forthcoming second session. 'We confided to each other our critical view of the first session; we both felt that it had not been prepared properly, and that it had not resolved basic questions: the future form of the state, the future government, and the foundations of the social system. Kardelj maintained that the next session of AVNOJ should establish a government and possibly declare a republic. I agreed with him'. The key meeting of the Central Committee took place in late October and decided that the new Yugoslavia would be a federal state, that a provisional government should be established and that the Royal Government and the king should not be allowed to return to the country. Some of those present argued that there was no need for the government to be provisional and that the king should be overthrown immediately, but most agreed with Tito that they should adopt a more moderate transitional course. This meeting also adopted the name of the new provisional government, National Committee for the People's Liberation of Yugoslavia. According to Djilas, a day or two after this meeting, Tito remarked to him, Kardelj and Ranković that they should not keep the Russians informed of all the decisions taken, because they would be opposed and would undermine the entire session.³⁹ In these circumstances, Tito felt the best form of defence was attack. On 30 October 1943 he protested to Dimitrov that the slogans to be used in Moscow for celebrating the twenty-sixth anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution on 7 November made no mention of the Yugoslav partisans; he asked for this to be put right. Dimitrov responded on 5 November by stating that no slight had been intended, just as in 1942 the slogans referring to the Slav peoples were general in nature; 'it would be quite wrong to interpret these slogans as a sign that we undervalue the heroic struggle the liberation army is undertaking'.⁴⁰

Active preparations for the second session of AVNOJ began on 4 November 1943 with the start of a press campaign, and on 7 November 1943 Djilas, in his own speech to commemorate the October Revolution, outlined all the important issues for the forthcoming session. His speech stressed that 'only those organs which had arisen from this struggle can represent our peoples' and that the people themselves would decide after the war if the King could return to the country or not.⁴¹ However, it was nearly three weeks later, on 26 November, just three days before the session opened, that Tito informed Moscow of what he was planning. 'On 29 November the plenum of the Anti-Fascist Council of Yugoslavia will begin. Agenda: 1) Reorganisation of the Council into the provisional legislative body for the peoples of Yugoslavia; 2) the

creation of the National Committee as the provisional executive authority responsible to the council'. Anticipating criticism, once the session was over, Tito was keen to explain to Moscow how it was one of the few non-communist delegates, Dr Vojislav Kecmanović, a leading figure from the Serbian Democratic Party, who had moved the Council's Declaration containing three important resolutions: 1) that AVNOJ was the supreme legislative and executive body, the presidency of which would appoint a National Liberation Committee of Yugoslavia 'in the character of a Provisional Government'; 2) the future Yugoslav state would be a federation; and 3) the rights of the Government-in-Exile were abrogated and the king would not be allowed to return until the country had been liberated and the people allowed to settle the question of the future of the monarchy.⁴²

In Moscow, as Tito had predicted, the news was not well received. Dimitrov's deputy told Veljko Vlahović, the representative of the Yugoslav Communist Party in Moscow: 'the boss is extremely angry; he says it is a stab in the back for the Soviet Union and the Tehran decisions'. Coinciding with the Tehran Conference, where Yugoslavia was on the agenda, Tito's actions could well have caused difficulties for Stalin's diplomacy. In the event by the time the Tehran Conference was concluded, it was clear that Britain was no longer wedded to the Yugoslav Government-in-Exile and was ready to support Tito; in Tehran it had not opposed any of the decisions Tito had made.⁴³ Maclean had left the partisans for Cairo in early November and made clear in talks with Eden that the partisans were well on the way to becoming masters of Yugoslavia and that co-operation with Mihailović was quite impossible; similarly, there was no chance of a deal over the monarchy, although Tito had agreed not to prejudge the issue and would prevent propaganda attacks on the king. Despite this Eden pushed for Tito to agree that the king would meet a partisan delegation; Maclean agreed to raise the matter with Tito on his return, but only when British-partisan relations were more securely established. Thus, unknown to Stalin, the work of Maclean meant that the British were pretty much in line with Tito before the Tehran Conference began, hoping only that the monarchy could be saved if the king distanced himself from Mihailović and established a working relationship with the partisans. Thus Moscow's anger with Tito soon evaporated and in the middle of December 1943, the Soviet Government issued a communiqué expressing its support for AVNOJ and announcing that it would send a military mission to Yugoslavia.⁴⁴

In recognition of the understanding reached between the British and the partisans, on 5 December 1943 Deakin, who had attended the second session of AVNOJ, arrived in Cairo with a partisan delegation. The British Government put the following three points to the partisans: 1) do you insist that the National Committee is formally recognised right away; 2) do you abide by the decision that the question of the king will be decided after the war; and 3) will you undertake propaganda against the king. Tito instructed his delegation to give the following responses: 1) we have never called for this, and hope it can be arranged taking into account our wishes and those of the allies; 2) we abide by the decision that the question of the monarchy will be decided after the war; and 3) propaganda about the king is an internal matter, one that will depend on the behaviour of the king towards those anti-popular elements both at

home and abroad who are helping the occupier.⁴⁵ When on 20 January 1944, Maclean returned to partisan headquarters, he gave Tito a letter from Churchill, promising aid and making clear 'we British have no desire to dictate the future government of Yugoslavia'. Churchill also stressed that, while Mihailović would no longer be supported, the British felt a debt of honour to King Peter. Although Maclean had warned the Foreign Office that the idea would be received 'with derision', he had also been instructed to raise the possibility of the king being invited to partisan headquarters. As Maclean predicted, Tito was not at first interested in discussing the king, but on 5 February Churchill telegraphed him directly suggesting that King Peter should sack Mihailović and in return be allowed to join Tito 'in the field', with the future of the monarchy being decided after the war. Tito responded on 15 February by saying he would send a representative to talk to the king about possible co-operation if the Government-in-Exile was replaced by AVNOJ; the king would also have to declare openly that he was at the disposal of the resistance movement.⁴⁶

Maclean urged Churchill to accept this attempt at a compromise. Possibly Maclean had picked up on some of Tito's frustration with Moscow at the time of the second session of AVNOJ. The Comintern had been dissolved on 15 May 1943, and yet Tito was still expected to report to Moscow and follow guidance that might suit Stalin's grand strategy, but appeared to frustrate the prospects for Tito's own revolution. Whatever the case, Maclean told Churchill: 'From what he has said to me recently, it seems as though Tito may be genuinely concerned to preserve the independence of Yugoslavia and would welcome our support in his efforts to do so'. Maclean cited comments such as an offer of economic concessions for Britain in post-war Yugoslavia and assurances that the country would not be 'an appendage or replica' of the Soviet Union. Tito instructed Party leaders on 30 January 1944 to 'approach all matters from the standpoint of a new, independent, state formation that is nobody's affiliate but a product of the struggle of our peoples'. If this suggests nothing else, Tito was clearly thinking in terms of statehood, as a future state leader.⁴⁷

On 6 February 1944, Dimitrov informed Tito that he would soon start to receive regular Soviet arms drops. Then, the Soviet mission finally arrived on 23 February 1944 and, whatever reservations might have been welling up, Tito welcomed it with an intimacy which bore no comparison to his suspicious treatment of the British. If relations were at first a little stiff, within a few weeks they had mellowed as the mission found its bearings. As Djilas put it, 'it secretly became thick with us and penetrated into our affairs', helped by the fact that one of its members, General Gorshkov, was experienced in Soviet partisan warfare.⁴⁸

Meanwhile, the negotiations between Britain and Tito continued. Not long after the arrival of the Soviet delegation, on 26 February, Tito was informed that the British Liaison Officers with Mihailović had been withdrawn. Tito responded by stating that he was willing to expand his National Liberation Committee to include exiled politicians whom he considered uncompromised by association with collaborators. One of those he mentioned was Ivan Šubašić, who in 1940 had been appointed Governor (Ban) of Croatia; back in December 1942 *Borba* had published the text of a short broadcast by the Soviet based Radio Free Yugoslavia which had quoted Šubašić as

telling a meeting of Yugoslav émigrés in San Francisco that the Government-in-Exile was causing division within Yugoslavia, even a civil war; Šubašić had then stressed that the organised struggle against the occupier was being led by the partisans, who operated as a unified force and had roots among the people. On 9 March 1944, as part of the greater objective of getting Tito to agree to the king going to Yugoslavia and there forming a new government, the British welcomed Tito's willingness to include representatives of other Yugoslav elements opposed to the Germans and Šubašić was accepted as an 'excellent choice'. A further concession that Tito had prepared, but did not in the end implement, was the possibility that the king could train with the partisan air-force in Egypt.⁴⁹

SOVIET ALLY

On 10 March 1944 Soviet diplomacy weighed in behind Tito. Both the Yugoslav ambassador to the Soviet Union and his Military Attaché resigned their posts, stating that they now recognised AVNOJ and not the Government-in-Exile. Tito was quick to capitalise on this public Soviet endorsement. On 16 March 1944 Djilas was appointed to head a military mission to the Soviet Union. He took with him some of the partisans' most treasured possessions, including Dedijer's diary and the Supreme Staff archives, but he was also carefully briefed by Tito on some of the realities of life in Stalin's Moscow of which Djilas knew nothing. Given the rather tetchy nature of several of the radio exchanges between the partisans and Moscow, Tito was keen to find out from Dimitrov if there were any criticisms of the way the Party had performed. With his long experience of the workings of the NKVD, Tito also warned Djilas to be wary of female secretaries. Djilas set off on 3 April, arrived in Moscow on the 12th, but then spent about a fortnight kicking his heels. Meanwhile Dimitrov wrote to Tito on 9 April 1944 explaining that he had had a long talk with Stalin and could now outline his considered view: 1) the Government-in-Exile should be overthrown and called to account to AVNOJ for the money it had wasted; 2) AVNOJ should be recognised by the British and other allies, with the king accepting AVNOJ legislation; and 3) if the king accepted this, AVNOJ should not oppose working with him, although the question of the monarchy would be decided after the war.⁵⁰

Stalin's approach was confirmed when Djilas had talks with Molotov on 24 April. Molotov made clear that the Soviet Union was preparing to break relations with the Government-in-Exile. He made clear that Churchill wanted a reconciliation between Tito and King Peter, but he doubted the feasibility of this and made clear that the Soviet Union thought the key was an agreement with Tito, not an understanding with the king. However, outright recognition of Tito was for the future, it was impossible to say when this would happen. Molotov then moved the discussion on to Serbia. When asked about the status of the king, Djilas conceded that the king did retain some authority there; certainly the people's liberation movement considered it premature to start campaigning for a republic. Djilas stressed that the people's liberation movement was influential in Serbia, if weakly organised, while Mihailović's influence was waning and the morale of his remaining 15,000 fighters was low. The situation in Serbia was 'the movement's most important task', Djilas said, and Molotov agreed that it was very

important for Tito to strengthen his position in Serbia. As this exchange came to an end, Djilas conceded that currently the partisan forces in Serbia were 'insignificant'.⁵¹

Molotov was right to raise the question of Serbia. Soviet intelligence may have been aware of recent developments in London. Tito was, of course, well aware of the strategic importance of his partisan forces returning to Serbia. In March 1944 he sanctioned scouting operations into Serbia from bases in Bosnia and Montenegro and insisted that all such operations had to be planned and implemented by him.⁵² London was equally keen to prevent the partisans' return to Serbia. On 14 March 1944 Churchill met with Colonel S W (Bill) Bailey, who had just returned from his time as the British Liaison Officer with Mihailović. What he proposed was that the king sack both the Government-in-Exile and Mihailović, and that within Serbia those četniks ready to fight the Germans should overthrow Mihailović and 'foreswear anti-communism'; Tito would then have no reason to extend his actions into Serbia. Although those British officers still in contact with the četniks reported that dissident commanders were too fearful for their lives to move against Mihailović, this idea did not go away.⁵³

Churchill held talks with King Peter on 26 April 1944, after which Šubašić was summoned from America. On 2 May he organised a meeting attended by Maclean, Bailey, Hudson and Velebit to discuss strategy. Bailey felt the partisans would struggle to penetrate Serbia; Maclean argued they would manage it; Hudson felt they would succeed only if they made concessions to Serb feeling, and an appeal from Peter might be the concession that was needed. When discussions continued at Chequers on 6 May, without Velebit being present, the consensus of the gathering was that Tito should be encouraged 'to be as independent as possible of Soviet Russia'. Other evidence suggests at this time that Churchill was moving towards a sphere of influence concept for the future of the Balkans. Molotov and Eden had exchanged sharp telegrams in April about the roles of their respective countries in Romania and Greece; the result had been a tacit acceptance that Romania belonged to the Soviet Union and Greece to the British. By May, various British policy papers were suggesting that Bulgaria might be seen as belonging to the Soviet sphere, but Yugoslavia would be British: 'the advantage of giving full support to Tito would be that we should be backing a probable winner and make it less necessary for him to look to Russia for support', one official suggested. When on 17 May Churchill informed Tito that Šubašić was about to be appointed to head a new Government-in-Exile, he was still hoping that a combination of Šubašić, the king and assorted anti-Mihailović četniks could check Tito's claim to total authority and ensure continued British influence. Soon the possibilities for British intervention in Yugoslav affairs improved dramatically.⁵⁴

Since evacuating Jajce on 7 January 1944, Tito's headquarters had been in Drvar, Bosnia, where there was a large and complex base, complete with the British and Soviet missions housed in nearby villages. Tito's own quarters were in a protected, well-nigh impregnable position just outside the town; approached by a path along the river Uvac with hills on one side and steep cliffs on the other. In a natural cleft in the rock three flights of wooden steps led to a place where the opening widened into a large cave,

inside which rooms had been constructed with a veranda in front commanding a fine view across the valley. On 23 May a reconnaissance plane flew over the headquarters, but no extra precautions were taken because that day marked the opening of an Anti-Fascist Youth Conference, which would continue until Tito's official birthday, 25 May.

It was on his birthday, at 6.30 in the morning, that the Germans launched an attack aimed at securing Tito's headquarters and capturing Tito himself. After an initial bombing raid, parachutists appeared at 7.00, members of a five-hundred strong SS parachute battalion, each carrying a picture of Tito. The parachutists were followed by gliders, from which emerged machine gunners. During the bitter fighting, Tito managed to escape, but not without more controversy and another clash with Žujović. Both Žujović and Ranković urged him to leave the cave, but he refused, not wanting to risk the danger of capture. Tito later recalled the drama: 'The Germans succeeded in getting hold of our machine guns, and, having started to fire, they hit the hut in the cavern. ... I looked at the Germans as they were taking away my jeep ... It was the jeep given to me by Maclean'.⁵⁵ In the end, he had no choice, and escaped around midday by cutting a hole in the floor of his office and dropping a rope to the bed of a stream below; from there he could cross through into orchards and safety. By the night of 3 June Tito could see no other solution than to ask for Allied help to evacuate his Supreme Staff, and during the night of 3–4 June he was flown to Bari from where, three days later, he sailed for the island of Vis.⁵⁶

As Tito arrived in Bari, so Djilas held talks with Stalin. Stalin expressed deep concern that Tito was in British hands. He reminded Djilas of the strange death the previous July of the Polish leader General Sikorski. With some justification Stalin claimed to have long experience of British machinations, making it plain that he thought the British had organised Sikorski's death; planes can fall out of the sky, he mused darkly. When Djilas contacted Tito the following day, he had taken Stalin's warning to heart, urging him to keep his departure date for Vis secret from the British. While the British had no assassination plans, they did hope that Tito would now be accessible, chastened and ready to compromise. Churchill was determined to press ahead with his plan to get either King Peter or Šubašić to Vis for talks with Tito so that 'heads could be banged together' and an agreement made. There was the danger, according to Churchill, that 'Tito will flit: but ... I expect it will be possible to make it very difficult to find an aeroplane'. Thus on 14 June Šubašić landed on Vis and from the port of Komiza climbed up the mountain track to Tito's new cave headquarters. There, after three days, an agreement was signed on 17 June.⁵⁷

The basic provision of the Vis agreement was that the people's liberation movement now recognised the royal government abroad, and the new royal government led by Šubašić recognised Tito's partisan army and his administration in the homeland. Both sides agreed to co-ordinate their activities in a way that would lead rapidly to the emergence of a single 'representation' of the state. Šubašić pledged to form a 'progressive, democratic cabinet' which would devote itself to organising aid for the partisan army, while the people's liberation movement undertook not to stress or aggravate 'the problem of the king and the monarchy', accepting that this was a

question for post-war settlement. In public declarations, Šubašić asked all Yugoslavs to rally to the partisans, while Tito promised not to prejudice the form of the state's future organisation. At the organisational level, Tito was able to nominate two members of the Šubašić cabinet; the Yugoslav Navy, until then in the service of the Government-in-Exile, would be put at the service of the partisans, but fly its old flag; new recruits to the partisans would be allowed to wear either royal or communist insignia; the people's liberation movement would cease to object to the Government-in-Exile controlling former National Bank funds; and Tito would succeed Mihailović as Commander-in-Chief. The Vis agreement would be revised both in autumn 1944 and at the Yalta Conference of February 1945, but its essence remained unchanged.⁵⁸

The same day that the Tito–Šubašić agreement was signed on Vis, news came from Djilas and the Yugoslav Military Mission in Moscow that the partisans had negotiated a loan from the Soviet Union of two million dollars and one million roubles. If Tito had felt in any way cornered by the British, he could now be sure of Soviet support. The first thing to do was to secure the situation in Serbia. Tito knew from Djilas and other reports from the Yugoslav Military Mission in Moscow that 'here they are very interested in the situation in Serbia', and information 'even about insignificant clashes with the enemy' was badly needed. The advance into Serbia was essential, and preparations began as soon as Tito was settled on Vis. Soviet help in this campaign would be crucial, and so Tito wrote to Stalin on 5 July explaining that although the head of the Soviet Military Mission with the partisans was on his way back to Moscow to report in person, he was taking the opportunity to outline what he saw as the most important issues in coming months. First came arms, especially for the Serbian campaign where, Tito argued, 'thousands of new volunteers' were waiting but lacked arms. The British 'were doing everything they could to strengthen the position of the king's supporters, that is the četniks, and to weaken our position, so we cannot count on effective aid from the allies'. Success in Serbia was, he pointed out, the key to final victory: 'we need tanks and planes, but talks with the English on these matters are very difficult', despite agreement in principle.⁵⁹

Tito wrote to Molotov at the same time as writing to Stalin, and this letter too stressed that 'in Serbia the great majority of the people are on the side of the people's liberation movement and only the great terror and until recently the weak military capability of the partisans in this region explained why the insurrection had developed less well there than elsewhere'. That was all changing, Tito said, and 'if we receive arms in time' there would soon be ten divisions in Serbia. Tito therefore urged that the talks about forming a new government on the basis of the Vis agreement should be 'dragged out as long as possible so that we can win the time to strengthen our position in Serbia'. Tito expressed concern that the British were trying 'to foist' the pre-war socialist leader on them, something they would not accept. The partisans could agree to a small government abroad made up of honest people which would support the struggle and work with the people's liberation committees, as outlined in the Vis agreement, but Tito felt the British wanted more, the restoration of the pre-war constitution which stressed the authority of the king. Tito had the impression the British wanted the king to rule in Serbia, if not in Yugoslavia and 'if the English

succeeded in doing this, I assure you, that would mean civil war', Tito went on. Such a scenario would be less likely if the Red Army were able to advance to the Balkans.⁶⁰

In his letter to Stalin, Tito had raised the danger of the British extending their influence by deciding to land in Yugoslavia. 'The allies until now have not raised the question of landing on Yugoslav territory', he wrote, and 'I must say that such a landing would be unpleasant for us since I am sure it would create difficulties within the country, prompting various conflicts'. If a landing did come up in talks, the partisans would propose that it were with the smallest possible force, and was 'confined to Istria and the Croatian coast'. He added that in the event of a landing, the partisans would not agree to the formation of any allied military or civilian authority in the country, nor could partisan military formations be under allied command; Tito mentioned this because Šubašić had told him that the British wanted the Yugoslav Navy to remain under the control of the Admiralty. Tito again stressed that, if the Red Army were able to advance southwards, the plans 'of those hoping to sow discord' could be frustrated. Eager to distance himself from the British still further, Tito suggested visiting Stalin 'early in August' since 'before peace talks' there were things of interest to the Soviet Union and the Balkans that needed to be discussed.⁶¹

Tito also explained to Stalin why, after several invitations, he had first agreed to go to Italy for talks with General Wilson, Supreme Allied Commander in the Mediterranean, on 15 July, and then at the last minute changed his mind. Later, he would claim that his 'healthy Zagorje instincts' told him not to go, but it was the fact that the future of the Yugoslav Navy was on the agenda which finally tipped the balance. In Dedijer's words, Wilson 'was prepared to present certain ultimatums, that the četnik navy occupy all our islands, [and] that we agree to eliminate the rank of commissar in our army'. Tito's formal explanation for not attending the talks with Wilson was that Šubašić would be there, representing the Government-in-Exile, and the Vis agreement had not yet been ratified.⁶² Rather than going to Italy to meet General Wilson, Tito preferred to stay on Vis and plan the advance into Serbia. On 22 July 1944 he wrote to the Serbian Party leadership giving advice about how to establish the revolutionary regime there. He stressed the need to involve the masses, taking everyday tasks seriously and thereby winning popular acclaim, the best Party cadres had to be sent to the people's liberation committees because Party leadership was not about giving orders, but winning support. However, he went on, Party control was essential. While members of other parties could be involved on the people's liberation committees, no 'enemies' were to be allowed into the ruling apparatus.⁶³

According to Djilas, the British simply refused to see that in Serbia the uprising was spreading on a scale far bigger and stronger than in 1941, especially in the south-eastern regions; every day new units were being created, ill-equipped and inexperienced maybe, but full of spirit. Peko Dapčević was hurried by the Supreme Staff to capitalise on this. By the end of July he had already set off from Montenegro for Serbia with the Second, Fifth and Seventeenth Divisions. Early in August he fought a major battle on Mt. Kopaonik against četnik forces supported by the Germans. Victory there enabled him to move northwards until he could establish contact with the small partisan outpost in Toplica, situated between Užice and Belgrade, which the partisans had

clung on to without interruption since 1941. Partisan forces were beginning to make progress in Serbia, so Tito felt under no pressure to make concessions.⁶⁴

Having refused to hold talks with General Wilson, a month later Tito was invited for talks with Churchill. The two men met on 12 August in General Wilson's villa overlooking the Bay of Naples. Although at a personal level they got on well, there was some straight talking to be done. Churchill made clear that he hoped to see as little fighting as possible between Yugoslavs, to which Tito responded that the partisans had only fought četniks when there was no alternative, which was quite untrue. However, there was more truth to his second assertion that if Mihailović had been the partisans' main enemy, they could hardly have become as popular in Yugoslavia as they undoubtedly were. When Churchill mentioned that the Serbian peasants were unlikely to welcome the imposition of a communist system and the collectivisation of agriculture, Tito said that he had often and publicly stated that no such system would be imposed in Yugoslavia. On potentially the most contentious issue between them, Tito agreed to support an Allied landing in Istria, if that became necessary.⁶⁵

Just ten days after Tito returned from meeting Churchill, he received dramatic news from the Yugoslav Military Mission in Moscow. The overthrow of the Antonescu dictatorship in Romania on 23 August and that country's subsequent decision to fight on the Allied side for the rest of the war meant that Tito's hope that the Red Army might 'move southwards' was about to be realised. On 25 August the Yugoslav Military Mission urged Tito to do all he could to move partisan forces towards Belgrade and the Danube. A week later the Yugoslav Military Mission warned that it was Moscow's view that 'it would be unfortunate' if, as the Germans withdrew, Mihailović captured Belgrade.⁶⁶ Tito decided on 30 August to offer the četniks an amnesty, giving them two weeks to change sides without recrimination. His response to Stalin, sent on 5 September 1944, was to reassure him that the partisans were making rapid progress in Serbia with the population welcoming their advance; he added, however, that a supply base in Romania might speed things up even more.⁶⁷ The Vis agreement was also helping Tito's cause. On 12 September King Peter put all Yugoslavia's military forces under Tito's command and appealed for all Serbs to rally to the partisans.⁶⁸

COMMUNIST STATESMAN

At the beginning of September, Stalin informed Tito that henceforth Yugoslavia was no longer Dimitrov's concern, all communication should be direct with Molotov; the affairs of Yugoslavia were centre stage and Tito was recognised as a foreign statesman not just a foreign communist. In circumstances of great secrecy Tito was flown to the headquarters of the Red Army in Romania on the night of 18–19 September. Security was so tight that many senior members of the Yugoslav Supreme Staff, let alone the British, were unaware of his departure for several days.⁶⁹ From Romania, Tito flew to Moscow and talks with Stalin. Tito's memories of these talks were later relayed by Dedijer:

The first meeting was very cool. The basic cause, I think, was the telegrams I had sent during the war, especially that one I began with the words. 'if you cannot send us assistance, then at least do not hamper us'. This was confirmed to me by Dimitrov when I visited him immediately after my first meeting with Stalin. He told me: 'Walter [Tito's Comintern name], Walter, the Boss was terribly angry with you because of that telegram ... He stamped with rage'. Dimitrov wanted to let me know that he had actually defended me before Stalin.

Although Tito had noticed that Stalin could not bear being contradicted, and it was only Molotov to whom he turned occasionally for an opinion, he nevertheless felt that Stalin had to be put right about the situation in Yugoslavia, even if this led to 'uncomfortable scenes'. At one point, in Dedijer's version Stalin said to Tito: 'Walter, be careful, the bourgeoisie in Serbia is very strong!' Tito answered calmly: 'Comrade Stalin, I do not agree with your view. The bourgeoisie in Serbia is very weak ... The talk proceeded in a painful atmosphere'. When Stalin suggested that Tito agree to the return of King Peter, Tito protested, forcing Stalin to clarify that any return would be purely temporary.

During these talks a news report was issued claiming that the British had landed in Yugoslavia. Deliberately or not, the Soviet news agency had confused a limited British operation on one Adriatic island, carried out with the agreement of the partisans, with a full-scale landing. Asked by Stalin what he thought, Tito responded that he was sure this was a planned and limited operation, but if it were a general landing it would be resisted. The subsequent meetings between Stalin and Tito were more relaxed and extremely advantageous to Tito. Stalin offered a tank corps for operations in Serbia, and an agreement that the Red Army would deploy temporarily on Yugoslav territory to capture Belgrade and then leave Yugoslavia to pursue its goal of defeating Hungary; crucial for Tito's new status as a statesman, Stalin would deploy the Red Army in Yugoslavia with Tito's authorisation.⁷⁰

On 18 September, immediately before leaving for Moscow, Tito wrote to Kardelj asking him to go at once to Croatia where, he believed, 'all sorts of stupidities' were taking place. Croatia had been an ongoing concern for Tito since the beginning of the year; but the issue could no longer be ignored, for if Belgrade were secured with Red Army support, the next task would be to defeat the ustaše in Croatia, and before then the policy towards Croatia needed to be in order. Tension between Tito and Hebrang had been continuous. In December 1943 Hebrang accused Tito of effectively annexing Dalmatia, 'treating it as if it were not part of Croatia'. There was an element of truth here, for with the Italian collapse and surrender in Split, the Supreme Staff was able to have more influence here than elsewhere in Croatia. When in January 1944 the Croatian communist press wrote of Yugoslavia as 'the artificial creation of Versailles', Kardelj was again sent to investigate the situation. There was no immediate improvement. In February 1944 Tito overruled Hebrang's attempt to create a Croatian partisan government on the model of Tito's National Committee for the People's Liberation and in March he stopped what he took to be Hebrang's attempt to establish a separate system of courts in Croatian liberated territory. In April, Tito objected to the slogan: 'Long live a free and united Croatia in a fraternal federative community with free Serbia and free Slovenia'; Tito's point was that this both avoided the word

'Yugoslavia' and ignored the Montenegrins, Macedonians and Bosnians. Tito informed Hebrang that in his view 'this is no accident; this is consistent with your line'. Hebrang was summoned to Drvar and the Croatian Communist Party instructed to repudiate these proposals.⁷¹

On 8 May 1944 the third session of ZAVNOH took place and Hebrang stressed in his address that the struggle was 'not for communism ... but for common popular aims'; in what was seen as 'a true war against sectarianism', he stressed the rights of 'ownership and property, private initiative, freedom of religion and conscience'. Hebrang wanted to make a break with those in the Party who opposed appealing to the Croatian Peasant Party, and in this regard he criticised especially the Dalmatian Regional Committee where 'such sectarian tendencies thrived'; Split, the main town in Dalmatia, was where the Supreme Staff exercised most influence. Hebrang's comments prompted four ethnic Serb commanders within the Croatian partisan movement to desert in protest at what they perceived as marginalisation within the growing Croatian power structure. They objected that the use of the Cyrillic alphabet was being discouraged, that references to the ustaše massacres of Serbs in 1941 were no longer made, and that Serbs were poorly represented within ZAVNOH. In fact, Hebrang did insist that Cyrillic was taught in schools to all pupils, but in his view Serbs in Croatia had to accept that they were a minority, a minority with equal rights but living in a Croatian entity.⁷²

When in September 1944 Hebrang again criticised the Dalmatian Regional Committee, Tito prepared to intervene, for by then Hebrang had also allowed Catholic religious education to take place in schools and had established a specifically Croatian Telegraph Agency. To Tito this all suggested separatist tendencies. Kardelj's brief this time was not only to check on the situation in Croatia, but, if Hebrang was shown to be responsible, to remove him.⁷³ Kardelj's report was damning. He wrote to Tito on 30 September: 'Andrija [Hebrang] with every daily step exudes a nationalist deviation [and] ... considers Yugoslavia "a necessary evil"'.⁷⁴ On 5 October Tito sent a telegram to Ranković asking him to instruct Kardelj and Djilas to go to Croatia, to take Bakarić with them, and to appoint him Croatian Party leader in Hebrang's place. They should then reconstruct the whole Croatian leadership and return to the Supreme Staff with Hebrang. This was all accomplished by 21 October.⁷⁵

While Kardelj and Djilas were in Croatia, the Yugoslav partisans and the Red Army were fighting alongside each other, reaching the outskirts of Belgrade by 16 October and on the 18th launching a full-scale assault on the city. The city centre was captured on the 20th. By the time Tito returned from Moscow on 27 October 1944, after spending some time in Romania at front headquarters, there had already been signs of tension between the Red Army and the partisans. Stalin had decided that he had no choice but to use Bulgarian troops in the advance on Belgrade. Tito was unhappy about this, mostly because he believed it had not been part of the original plan, but also because the Bulgarians took no notice of a deal Tito believed he had made with the Red Army on the question of trophy weapons. Even before his return, Tito had asked the Red Army to remove Bulgarian troops from Yugoslavia and complained about the way the Bulgarians did not hand over trophy weapons to the

Yugoslavs. Molotov reminded Tito on 18 October that he had in fact agreed to the use of Bulgarian troops on 12 October, and made clear that it was a convention of war that trophy weapons went to those who seized them. Molotov added that, if problems arose, Tito should use the correct channels to sort them out and not pester commanders in the field.⁷⁶

Once settled back in Belgrade, Tito wrote to Stalin on 29 October outlining the help his new government needed given the destruction of both Belgrade and the country at large. Asking for 1,000 lorries, he again raised the question of trophy material, complaining that the Red Army had not transferred captured material as agreed; in particular some five-hundred lorries and other vehicles had been seized, but only six cars handed over to the Yugoslavs. In addition the Yugoslavs had seized sixty tanks and six armoured cars, and 'your men' took the lot. Trophy artillery, on the other hand, had been transferred as agreed. Tito then went on to list a whole series of issues that he felt had to be addressed:

There are many other incidents of unpleasant behaviour on the part of Red Army soldiers and officers, which pain the heart of our army and people who admire the Red Army and idealise it. I think that for the front staff there was a briefing failure for those troops entering Yugoslavia, to whom it was not explained that they came to Yugoslavia not as occupiers but as allies ... I am afraid all sorts of enemies are using this to their own purpose, both against the Soviet Union and our people's liberation movement. I wanted to inform you of this earlier, but held back and invited the head of your military mission General-Lieutenant Korneev and asked him to take immediate measures to at least reduce the number of such incidents, and at the same time to inform Moscow of this. I must confess that I called out your officers from the army staff and in the presence of Korneev informed them of the many facts and firmly demanded that they take action to put right even trivial matters which spoil relations with our people. It is very unpleasant for me that I am forced to worry you with this, but I considered it my communist duty ... The front staff should instruct those subordinate to it in Yugoslavia, that they do not have the right to interfere in internal political questions, as happened in Smederevo when Major Soprokhov banned the free activity of a people's liberation committee and a Party organisation, maintaining that our country is an enemy and the Red Army has occupied it, or, as did happen, free prisoners whom our forces had detained as enemies of our people. I do not think staffs should occupy factories in Yugoslavia and take away machinery and equipment, as happened at the military factory at Kragujevac.

The meeting with Korneev had indeed been a stormy affair. Tito, the other four members of the Politburo, and the two commanders responsible for the Serbian campaign, Peko Dapčević and Koča Popović, had all turned up at Korneev's headquarters to protest at the behaviour of the Red Army. Tito's criticisms were measured, but Djilas had blurted out that our opponents 'keep comparing the assaults by Red Army soldiers with the behaviour of English officers, who do not engage in such assaults'.⁷⁷

Stalin replied to Tito with no greeting or formalities on 31 October. Tito was wrong, there never had been an agreement about trophy weapons, and Molotov had already informed him of this. The Soviet Union was offering all the aid it could, but, he commented: 'I am struck by the fact that individual incidents and mistakes on the part of Red Army soldiers and officers are generalised by you into an accusation against

the whole Red Army; it is not possible to insult in this way the army which helped you drive out the Germans'. Then he turned to Djilas's outburst. 'If Red Army men knew that Djilas, and those who did not contradict him, consider English officers higher, in the moral sense, than Soviet officers, then they would not forget about such an unheard of insult', he wrote, before assuring Tito that eight-hundred trucks would be delivered at once, followed by a further eight hundred; 50,000 tonnes of grain was also on its way.⁷⁸ In the aftermath of this exchange, Tito was careful, almost obsequious in his correspondence with Stalin. On 12 November 1944 he wrote thanking Stalin for his advice on policy towards the četniks and other opponents: Stalin had suggested offering a further amnesty, a proposition which Tito took up with enthusiasm – 'I express to you my great thanks for your valued advice' – and on 21 November an amnesty was offered to all rank-and-file opponents. On 17 November, conceding that the Yugoslav Army was in many ways still imbued with the partisan spirit, Tito asked for Stalin's help in forming a modern army and specifically requested the provision of Red Army advisers.⁷⁹

Tito's relations with his British allies continued to be tetchy. While the battle for Belgrade was underway, Tito was under pressure from Britain to undertake joint military action in partisan controlled territory. In the view of General Wilson, from the military point of view it made sense for the Russians to take Belgrade and for the partisans to concentrate instead on preventing the Germans from withdrawing from Albania and Greece through Sarajevo. He offered air support for a joint British–Partisan operation in the region, but got no response. On 19 November Tito refused Wilson's request to land an armoured regiment with field artillery in Zadar to help partisan units in difficulty; Tito was adamant that Allied forces could operate on Yugoslav soil only under his own command. Control of Belgrade enabled Tito to finesse his agreement with Šubašić in a way that strengthened his position and weakened British influence. On 1 November, much to Churchill's annoyance, the two men agreed that the King would transfer his sovereign rights to a regency made up of three people approved by Šubašić and Tito; at the same time, without consulting King Peter, Šubašić agreed that the king should not return to Yugoslavia before a referendum had been held on the future of the monarchy.⁸⁰

At this point Stalin decided to intervene as an honest broker. Kardelj and Šubašić were summoned to Moscow on 22 November and Stalin was 'harsh with Kardelj'. He insisted that royalist officers should be allowed in the new Yugoslav Army and demanded that the Soviet military advisers being deployed to Yugoslavia at Tito's request should be listened to. Stalin informed Kardelj of the percentages agreement that he had reached with Churchill, 'noting by way of introduction that the Yugoslavs were not alone in the world and could not behave as if they were'. The final text of the Šubašić agreement, published on 7 December 1944, made clear that elections would be held within three months of liberation, but until then AVNOJ would rule, suitably broadened in January 1945 by the inclusion of 'uncompromised' members of the pre-war parliament.⁸¹ If Stalin's intervention on the new Yugoslav Army was a concession to Šubašić and Churchill, another controversial issue on the agenda showed Stalin's underlying support for Tito. Point four of this meeting was 'to speed up the process of

a federal commonwealth with Bulgaria'. The idea of some sort of Balkan Federation had always been at the heart of Tito's political vision and the establishment of communist governments in both Bulgaria and Yugoslavia meant that the question of Macedonia could be resolved through the creation of some sort of new federal entity.⁸²

Given that the Bulgarian partisans had looked to their Yugoslav brothers for support during most of the war, the Yugoslavs could hope to set the agenda in such talks. Kardelj had visited Bulgaria early in November, but returned disappointed. The Bulgarian leaders envisioned unification with Yugoslavia as a dual Bulgarian–Yugoslav state; the Yugoslavs wanted something rather different, something that might be termed a 'poly state'. The Yugoslavs felt a 'dual state' would offend and belittle the Croats and Slovenes, to say nothing of the Serbs. What was more, according to the Bulgarian plan, the new capital of the federation was to be Sofia. In the Bulgarian plan, Tito would be president of the government and Dimitrov secretary of the Party. The Yugoslav proposals envisaged rapid moves to a federation, with a customs union and shared foreign policy, passport-free travel for citizens of both countries, and a joint military command headed by Tito, with a target date for agreement of 31 December 1944. The Bulgarians responded by agreeing to a customs union, but not to joint military command. How these negotiations would have ended will never be known, for Stalin rapidly lost enthusiasm for the idea of a Balkan Federation when on 27 December the British, who were represented on the Bulgarian Allied Control Commission, issued an official demarche in protest at the idea of a Bulgarian–Yugoslav Federation.⁸³

The state of Soviet–Yugoslav relations were again assessed in early January as Stalin began to prepare for the Yalta Conference. On being dismissed as head of the Croatian Party, Hebrang had been appointed to manage the economy of the new Yugoslav state. In that capacity he arrived in Moscow early in January 1945 and held talks with Stalin on the 9th. Stalin made clear that while the war continued, help for Yugoslavia would be limited. He also came back to Tito's 'misunderstanding' of the question of trophy weapons – trophy weapons had always belonged to the army that took them. This prompted Hebrang to raise once again the question of the behaviour of the Red Army: many Yugoslavs, he said, did not like the way the Red Army took produce from Yugoslavia and used it to supply their troops operating in Hungary; Stalin responded simply that the Red Army needed these supplies, and seized supplies in Hungary as well as Yugoslavia. Stalin then returned to Djilas and his 'insult' to Red Army officers, explaining why the Red Army behaved as it did. 'A fighter thinks: he's a hero, he can do anything, today he's alive, tomorrow dead, he'll be forgiven anything. The military are tired, worn out from heavy fighting – it is not right to come at this from the standpoint of a "respectable intellectual"'. Moving on to the relationship between partisans and regular soldiers, Stalin explained how the Red Army, as it had entered partisan controlled areas, had sent the partisans to the rear, where some continued to serve, some were sent for training and others were cashiered. 'Behind the lines, partisans are fine, but they are not suited to open struggle, lacking military discipline.'⁸⁴

Hebrang summarised this meeting in a long report for Tito. He noted that 'on many political questions their opinion differed from ours'. On Bulgaria they suggested

that in the long run a 'dual state' federation was the way forward, but for now, given the international situation, all that was possible was a pact of friendship and mutual aid for ten to twenty years, and not even this should be considered until after the Yalta Conference and the final international acceptance of the Vis agreement. Stalin had made clear that the Yugoslavs 'must be careful in external political affairs'; the main task was to strengthen their victory and to make no demands on neighbouring countries, so as not to provoke clashes with them. In practice, the Yugoslavs should consult Moscow on all foreign policy matters. Stalin reassured Hebrang that, should the British change their minds and the agreement with Šubašić was not internationally recognised, the Yugoslavs should wait until February and then declare the Yugoslav National Committee for the People's Liberation the Provisional Government of Yugoslavia. At Yalta, Stalin did indeed take up Tito's cause. On 8 February he wanted to know from Churchill why there was a delay in forming the Yugoslav Government. Churchill answered that all was more or less in place, except for a couple of amendments. Stalin then agreed to Churchill's demand that broadening AVNOJ meant accepting within it all members of the pre-war Yugoslav parliament who were not tainted with collaboration; he also insisted that, if AVNOJ was accepted as the temporary legislative body, its legislation should ultimately be ratified by the forthcoming Constituent Assembly.⁸⁵

However, the successful formation of an internationally recognised government headed by Tito, only led to a further clash between Stalin and the Yugoslavs. The Soviet Union had always assumed that, along with Šubašić, the other non-communist to join the new government would be the former Yugoslav ambassador to the Soviet Union. Tito chose instead the pre-war Serbian politician Milan Grol. This failure to appoint Moscow's candidate prompted an immediate protest from Molotov, who on 11 March 1945 warned Tito that this unilateral action of Simić could cause trouble. When Tito tried to explain, Molotov tartly responded on the 15th that he did not accept Tito's explanation: he doubted whether Tito could really believe that Grol had actually abandoned his Great Serb anti-democratic ambitions, since Grol had never publicly condemned Mihailović; if the British had insisted on Grol, as Tito had implied, the Soviet Union would have backed Tito in standing up to the British. Molotov then suggested that Great Serb pressure on Tito's new government was also clear in the blandness of the new government's declaration, which made no real mention of the Soviet Union. Molotov concluded by pointing out that, since there was not yet a Treaty of Friendship between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union, its concerns about this matter could be made public.

Tito was chastened. His Politburo responded later the same day in an almost grovelling manner. It accepted that Grol was trying to strengthen Serb reaction, and that Soviet fears had proved justified since 'Serbian reaction was raising its head'. The Politburo had hoped that by including Grol in the government they would neutralise Serbian reaction, but this had proved mistaken. In particular, the Politburo had made a mistake in not taking Molotov's first message sufficiently seriously. The biggest mistake identified by the Politburo, however, had been to play down the role of the Soviet Union. The Politburo had done this not as a result of pressure exerted by Grol

and Šubašić, but from 'an opportunistic fear of a break with England and America'. The reply went on:

We take full account of the responsibility the Soviet Government has for our actions in Yugoslavia and consider that we made a mistake not giving sufficient information about our plans and intentions. For Yugoslavia there is only one way – only to go together with the Soviet Union under its leadership. We think this not only because we are communists, but also as responsible state figures. As concerns concrete measure to correct our mistakes, especially in the case of Grol, we shall consult with you.

Tito asked for permission to send Djilas and Ranković to Moscow to clarify matters.⁸⁶

Molotov initially responded favourably to this suggestion, but then informed Tito on 18 March that Djilas and Ranković should not come and that any decision could await the appointment of a Soviet ambassador. The Soviet Union was particularly sensitive at this time. When the ambassador arrived and Tito organised a banquet for all the allied ambassadors, he gave place of honour to the British ambassador as the doyen of the new diplomatic corps. When the Soviet Union protested, Tito complained, 'really, one does not know what these Russians want'. In the end it was Tito, rather than Djilas and Ranković who visited Moscow. He arrived on 5 April and met Stalin the following day. By 11 April a Friendship Treaty had been signed between the two countries, after which Tito visited Ukraine, where he was entertained by the Ukrainian Party leader Nikita Khrushchev.⁸⁷ Superficially at least, all the problems between the two countries had been put to one side as victory in Europe approached. On his return from Moscow, Tito told the Politburo on 23 April that 'the Soviet Union will help us on any level'.⁸⁸

As the war ended, Tito described himself as 'a communist and a responsible state figure' in charge of the new Yugoslav state; he was also organiser of only the second successful socialist revolution in the world. However, Tito's personal life during the war was traumatic. When Djilas led the Military Mission to Moscow in spring 1944 Tito was able to re-establish contact with his son Žarko and on 21 May he rather reluctantly agreed that Žarko should return to Yugoslavia; wounded in the war, he had become a rather unenthusiastic student at a Moscow Military Academy.⁸⁹ When Tito fled Zagreb for Belgrade in April 1941, he had left Herta Haas behind and it was not long before she was detained by the ustaše and put in a camp. Early on in the partisan struggle, Tito formed a relationship with Davorjanka Paunović, Zdenka, who acted as his secretary. Although she was not popular with his colleagues, Tito was happy to put up with what others saw as her 'rages'. However, when Djilas was sent to negotiate with the Germans in March 1943, Tito insisted that Herta Haas be one of those freed. Djilas recalled how he brought Herta from Sarajevo to partisan headquarters where 'Tito told her about Zdenka ... [and] Herta sobbed on my shoulder ... accepting the break with dignity and patience'.⁹⁰ Herta soon moved from Tito's headquarters to work with the Croatian partisans. Tragically, Zdenka soon developed tuberculosis and by the end of the war was seriously ill; she died in hospital in the Soviet Union in 1946.

REVISING MARXISM–LENINISM

BUILDING STALINISM

At the time of preparations for the second session of AVNOJ, Kardelj commented:

We dare not become arrogant; we dare not become giddy with success ... We can be victorious only if we have the majority of the population behind us ... The Soviet Union will aid us in the principle of non intervention in internal affairs. It will not allow reactionary forces to extinguish our people's liberation struggle by force of arms. But the state's internal organisation is a matter for our own people. Consequently it will be necessary to go along in as broad a front as possible and in the process of struggle to uplift the consciousness of the popular masses.¹

In the first months after victory, Tito became 'giddy with success'. With the Soviet Union by his side he quickly dropped any fiction that he was not about to build a communist state. There was little his opponents could do about it. On 8 August 1945 the king recalled his regents in frustration at the one-sided nature of the Tito–Šubašić agreement, but that month the people's liberation committee structure was renamed the People's Front and under its auspices elections were held to a Constituent Assembly on 11 November. A general election followed on 27 November and on 29 November the monarchy was abolished. Tito restricted any political activity outside that of the People's Front using regulations which disenfranchised all those who had allegedly collaborated with the enemy. In protest, both Šubašić and Grol resigned and boycotted the election. In this fashion the People's Front won 90 per cent of the vote in a turnout of over 88 per cent; Tito had no qualms about advancing smartly towards socialism, nationalising the banks and commercial businesses.²

As leader of the world's second successful socialist revolution, Tito was happy to use the experience of the world's first socialist state as a model. Djilas recalled how the leadership estimated that it could have won at least 60 to 70 per cent of the vote in open elections, but preferred sham elections which would prevent the opposition establishing itself legally. The new regime dealt harshly with its political opponents, arresting many thousands under the broadly defined charge of collaboration. In March 1946 Mihailović was captured, tried and executed; those of his supporters who did not surrender were hunted down and executed on the spot. The Mihailović trial was followed in autumn 1946 by the trial of Catholic Archbishop Alois Stepinac, whose ministry to Catholic Croats had brought him into close if strained relations with the ustaše government of the Independent State of Croatia. Summer 1946 also saw moves against the leaders of the Serbian and Croatian peasant organisations. At the same time the full paraphernalia of Soviet style communism was established. In July 1946 a Basic

Law on Co-operatives was passed, the first step towards socialised agriculture. Thereafter peasants had to face fixed low prices, compulsory deliveries, high taxes, credit restrictions and bans on hired labour – unless they joined a co-operative where new agricultural machinery would be made available to them. Progress was also soon made in the other area of the economy where the Soviet experience could be drawn upon, industrialisation. By the end of 1946, at the cost tremendous self-sacrifice, the country had recovered from much of the wartime devastation and the government was determined to push ahead with a programme of socialist industrial development; in April 1947 the First Five Year Plan was announced.³

The pace of this bid for rapid industrialisation caused the first post-war division among the leadership. In spring 1946 Hebrang, who was in charge of economic policy, argued for a slow-down in economic growth. For much of the preceding year he had been talking to the Soviet Union about the planned establishment of bilateral joint stock companies, and it was when the Soviet Union called for detailed negotiations relating to these in April 1946 that Tito's differences with Hebrang came to a head. Hebrang was due to go to Moscow to conduct these negotiations, but Tito lowered the status of the visit so that Hebrang should not be allowed to go. Hebrang then wrote to Kardelj complaining about this and saying that he felt marginalised. This 'Hebrang Letter' was discussed by a special Party commission and on 19 April the Politburo met and condemned Hebrang for his behaviour, removing him from the Politburo and most of his other posts on 24 April, although he did remain in charge of the planning agency until March 1948.⁴ Tito seems to have feared that Hebrang was hoping he would get Soviet support for a slow-down in the pace of economic development, once the joint stock companies were firmly established and the Soviet Union had a clear stake in the Yugoslav economy performing efficiently rather than chaotically.⁵

In the place of Hebrang's economic negotiations, Tito proposed diplomatic talks and these the Soviet Union was willing to agree to, since it had concerns about Tito's Balkan policy. The Soviet Union was worried that the planned Yugoslav–Albanian Treaty of Friendship contained secret military clauses, and outlined a possible future Yugoslav–Albanian Federation. On the eve of his departure, Tito also included on the agenda the question of a federation with Bulgaria, since the Bulgarian side had raised this again in April 1946. Stalin and Tito met on 27 May and on 8 June and an agreement was signed covering the formation of the joint stock companies, a long-term loan and Soviet support for the Yugoslav military industry. During the talks on international affairs, Molotov insisted that the Bulgarian issue should await the signing of a peace treaty, but the Yugoslavs were allowed to go ahead with the Yugoslav–Albanian Treaty, subsequently signed in July 1946. The atmosphere at these talks was friendly, but important differences of emphasis did emerge. During the discussion, Stalin asked Tito whether the Albanian communist leader Enver Hoxha agreed with Albania joining a federation with Yugoslavia and Tito replied that he did; Stalin's response was that, with the issue of Trieste still unresolved among the former wartime allies, it would be wise not to push a merger between Yugoslavia and Albania too far. However, the two men agreed that Hoxha should not visit the Soviet Union, with Stalin accepting Tito's assurance that 'we can take care of him'.⁶

Nevertheless, at this time Stalin was more than happy with Tito's actions, telling an official from the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs that 'Tito is a tower of strength'. It took a trained eye to spot the differences between Yugoslav Stalinism and the Soviet version which the Yugoslavs were imitating. Djilas noted an important element of difference in an article for *Komunist* on 1 October 1946. Criticising 'Perversions of People's Power' in the way People's Front committees operated, he picked up on Kardelj's point that the Yugoslav communists did not want to become 'giddy with success', they needed 'to go along in as broad a front as possible'. Djilas stressed that the People's Front committees had to be democratic and it was 'essential that democracy was not merely formal'. In his view the committees 'differ from soviets and have certain unique features', the most important of which was that they were the location for 'bitter political struggle'. Such struggle could not be avoided 'by expelling a rascal', it was essential 'to work persistently among the masses'. At the same time he condemned bureaucracy, 'one or two committee members taking everything into their own hands'. When it came to the choice between persuasion or coercion, 'coercion should be avoided wherever possible'. The article did not emphasise the differences between the bureaucratised soviets under Stalin, where 'rascals' were routinely expelled, and the patient work of inclusion developed by the Yugoslav communists during the Long March, but it was there nevertheless.⁷

If Tito's plans for rapid economic growth through the development of the First Five-Year Plan caused disagreement within Yugoslavia, within Albania they prompted a full-blown political crisis. After the war a joint co-ordination commission was set up between Yugoslavia and Albania, the task of which was to implement all economic agreements between the two countries. On the basis of this, once the Yugoslav-Albanian Treaty of Friendship had been signed in July, an industrial agreement was signed through which Yugoslavia provided Albania with Yugoslav credits, followed by a further agreement of 27 November 1946 which effectively demanded the economic merger of the two states since it covered the harmonisation of economic plans, the formation of a customs union and currency equalisation; on the basis of this agreement, a series of Albanian-Yugoslav joint stock companies would also be set up. When Djilas addressed parliament about the customs union agreement he suggested it was unique in diplomatic history for two countries to co-operate so closely.⁸

In June 1947 Yugoslavia gave Albania a further credit worth two milliard dinars, but by then some of the Albanian members of the joint co-ordination commission were worried by the implications of what was happening, since this loan represented over half the Albanian state's income, putting a question mark over whether the state could consider itself truly independent. Selfula Malešova and Nako Spiro headed what the Yugoslavs called the 'Western tendency' among Albanian communists which was critical of Albania's clear dependence on Yugoslav support and wanted to keep open some traditional trade links with Italy. On 5 July 1947 Spiro wrote an article in the Albanian press which guardedly implied that the demands made on Albania by incorporating the country into Yugoslavia's ambitious Five-Year Plan were responsible for a fall in the Albanian standard of living. When, later in the summer, Spiro issued a decree reducing that autumn's compulsory purchases from the peasantry below the

1946 level, 'Yugoslav representatives explained to the Albanian Government the incorrectness of this decision and a new decree was issued', a decree that Spiro refused to sign.⁹ Once the Five-Year Plan got underway, the Albanians were quick to complain that they saw few benefits in terms of deliveries. Spiro was also concerned when the joint co-ordination commission decided on 7 July 1947 to implement currency equalisation by abolishing the old Albanian currency and establishing a new one on parity with the dinar. Although the Yugoslavs could provide figures suggesting that the new currency would actually improve the standard of living for the Albanians, Spiro argued that the opposite was the case. Similarly Spiro dragged his heels when it came to co-ordinating the Yugoslav and Albanian Five-Year Plans. In his view it was important to retain a degree of autarky, even if this meant developing industries in Albania when, in the Yugoslav view, the natural resources did not exist for them. On 20 November 1947, rather than face any more criticism, Spiro committed suicide. Subsequently, the Albanian communists dutifully condemned Spiro's alleged policy of encouraging Albanian industry to develop separately from that of Yugoslavia.¹⁰

Yugoslavia not only dominated Albanian economic affairs, it also effectively controlled the Albanian army. Yugoslavia spent over 700 million dinars on supporting and equipping the Albanian Army between 1945 and 1948. At the start of 1948 there were 225 Albanians studying in Yugoslav military academies and representatives of the Albanian General Staff were present at all important military conferences within the Yugoslav Ministry of Defence, while the Yugoslav Army provided the Albanian General Staff with its basic operational plans. After August 1946 a team from the Political Directorate of the Yugoslav Army was constantly attached to the Albanian Army.¹¹ This decision followed a personal meeting between Tito and Hoxha on 23 June 1946 at which Hoxha reportedly begged Tito to form a federation with Yugoslavia since this seemed to him the only way to prevent some sort of 'imperialist attack' on his country; at this meeting the two men went on to discuss the impact on Kosovo of Albania becoming part of the Yugoslav Federation. Djilas later condemned as Tito's greatest 'blunders and excesses', his repeated attempts at this time 'to subject Albania to Yugoslavia'.¹²

ESTABLISHING THE COMINFORM

Enver Hoxha had feared 'an imperialist attack' on Albania because, with Yugoslav support, Albania was in the front line of support for the Greek communists in the civil war which had reignited in that country in May 1946. From September 1946 onwards, Stalin had encouraged the Yugoslavs and Albanians to expand their assistance to the Greek communists, promising that Soviet aid would eventually be forthcoming as recompense.¹³ The success of the communist insurgency in Greece prompted the United States to announce the Truman Doctrine in February 1947, and as a result, the post-war coalition governments in both France and Italy collapsed, ousting the communists of both countries from their ministerial posts. From a Soviet perspective, the United States' offer of Marshall Aid in July 1947 was a further step in this new anti-communist crusade. Its most obvious aim was to reward countries like France and Italy which had 'ditched' their communist ministers by binding them into a system of

dollar-funded security. However, Marshall Aid also seemed to Stalin to be a bribe to the communists' opponents in Eastern Europe, particularly in Czechoslovakia and Hungary. In both these countries the parliamentary arithmetic was such that if the social democrats turned against the communists and allied themselves with various liberal and conservative groups, as the socialists had done in both France and Italy, the communists could be ousted from power in Eastern Europe as well. East European communists were disturbed by the sudden interest which the British Labour Party took in the March 1947 International Congress of Danube Valley Socialist Parties, and at the visits made to Czechoslovakia and Hungary by prominent British and French socialists. To help bind together the states of Eastern Europe into a firm alliance against Marshall Aid, Stalin turned to Tito.¹⁴

The establishment of the Communist Information Bureau (Cominform) was first discussed when Molotov met Djilas in Paris in June 1947 at one of the periodic post-war Conferences of Foreign Ministers. Molotov suggested the need to re-establish some sort of Communist International, and Djilas responded with enthusiasm. Serious consultations began on 15 August and the leaders of the communist parties of the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, France and Italy met finally in Szklarska Poręba from 22–27 September 1947. At this meeting the Yugoslavs took centre stage. Their delegates, Djilas and Kardelj, severely criticised the French and Italian communists in particular for allowing themselves to be ousted from their governments, and argued that they understood why and how their French and Italian comrades had been so easily duped. The Yugoslavs argued it was because these coalition popular front governments had not been strengthened 'from below'.¹⁵

For communists the correct tactics to be used when forming a popular front with other parties was an issue which had long caused controversy. In the German state of Saxony in 1923 communists had briefly formed a coalition administration with the social democrats, but this had not enabled the German Communist Party to profit from the severe political and economic crisis of that year and arguably contributed to the fiasco of the failed German 'October' revolution that autumn. It was partly in response to this failure that the Sixth Congress of the Communist International in 1928 initiated the policies of the so-called Third Period, which identified social democrats as the last bulwark of capitalism and insisted that any co-operation with social democrats could only take place 'below', at rank-and-file level. Understandably, when Hitler came to power partly as a result of the failure of German communists and social democrats to co-operate in opposing him, the Communist International again reconsidered the question, and at the Seventh Congress of the Comintern in 1935 adopted the popular front strategy advanced by Georgii Dimitrov.

When Dimitrov launched the popular front strategy in 1935 he saw it as leading not only to the defence of the existing parliamentary regimes, but as a way forward to socialism. He was at pains to point out that communists could not join just any 'normal' parliamentary government; that, he argued, had been the policy adopted in Germany in 1923 which had reduced the idea of co-operation with the social democrats 'to the unprincipled tactics of forming blocs on the basis of purely parliamentary arrangements'. The key to when and if the communists should join a

government was the preparatory work carried out in the construction of a non-party popular front mass movement. Non-party mass organisations, elected from the bottom up in the struggle against fascism were the key to an effective popular front movement. 'The better this mass movement will be organised from below, the wider the network of non-party class organs of the popular front in the factories ... the greater will be the guarantee against a possible degeneration of the policy of a popular front government'. In Saxony in 1923, Dimitrov said, the communists did nothing to arm the proletariat, or mobilise the masses – they did not even requisition a single flat. They simply behaved like ordinary ministers 'within the frame work of bourgeois democracy'. Communist ministers in a popular front government needed to 'control production, control the banks, disband the police' and for this they needed support 'from below'.¹⁶

Just the sort of degeneration predicted by Dimitrov occurred in Spain during the civil war. As the conflict began, there was a network of popular front committees throughout the country and the communist ministers joined the government at the height of the crisis, as arms were being distributed to the workers. So far, so good, but as the republican–socialist–communist administration struggled to agree on the correct strategy on combating Franco, the notion of 'pressure from below' was gradually lost. True, in autumn 1937 communist pressure, both at grass-roots level and within the government, was such that the Spanish Communist Party contemplated moving from a position in which it merely participated in government to one in which it overtly dominated the government, but Stalin's fear of the possible international consequences of such a development meant that in spring 1938 the Comintern vetoed any such development. Increasingly the Spanish popular front became indistinguishable from a 'bourgeois' coalition government. When in January 1940 the Comintern drew up what it saw as the 'Lessons of the Spanish Civil War', Spanish communist leader José Díaz condemned the Comintern's intervention of spring 1938 and stressed that the Party should have worked 'to break the old state apparatus which served reaction and replace it with a new apparatus serving the working class'; central to its failure was the way the original popular front committees had withered on the vine and no committees capable of bringing pressure to bear on the non-communist governing parties 'from below' had been developed.¹⁷

Tito had always been sceptical about the popular front as his disagreements with Gorkić had shown, and his wartime people's liberation committees drew firmly on the lessons of the Spanish Civil War and were always firmly under communist control. It was the same with those foreign communist parties which the Yugoslavs were able to influence during the course of the war. The Greek Communist Party's Greek Liberation Movement (EAM) claimed to be a genuine coalition, but in fact the coalition of four parties could always be outvoted by representatives of such mass organisations as the partisans, the youth movement, the women's movement or the trade unions. In Italy, especially northern Italy, where until Mussolini's fall all Comintern influence was exercised via Yugoslavia, the National Liberation Committee also ensured communist predominance by giving representation to the mass organisation. By early 1944, Stalin was again concerned that talk of communist hegemony in Western Europe could endanger the international position of the Soviet

Union. In March 1944 he sent Togliatti to the south of Italy to make sure the communists accepted what was called 'the parity principle', all the parties in Italy's post-Mussolini coalition should have an equal voice. In Greece Stalin's pressure and Tito's pressure collided. Under Soviet pressure, the Greek communists also agreed to join a coalition government on 1 August 1944; but by December, with the encouragement of Tito, they had changed tactics and used their hegemony in EAM to launch an insurrection.¹⁸

This was the crux of the history lesson that Kardelj set before fellow delegates to the founding session of the Cominform. The Yugoslavs had never forgotten the importance of working 'from below' and had triumphed; the French and the Italians, whose popular fronts were nothing but 'bourgeois' coalitions, had failed; elsewhere in Eastern Europe, and specifically in Czechoslovakia and Hungary, it was time to introduce an element of 'from below' into the popular front to ensure that local Social Democrats in particular were not bribed by the enticement of Marshall Aid. The Yugoslav line seemed to be fully backed in Moscow, especially since the Cominform meeting went on to decide that the new organisation's headquarters should be based in Belgrade, and that its journal would be produced there as well. Indeed, the warmth shown to the Yugoslavs at Szklarska Poręba persuaded Tito that he was no longer bound by the message Hebrang had brought back early in 1945 that Yugoslavia should not embark on any foreign policy initiatives without consulting Moscow first. Briefed by Kardelj on the way things were going in Szklarska Poręba, on 27 September Tito addressed the Second Congress of the Yugoslav People's Front and explained to them why, in some countries, the people's fronts had not lived up to expectations. They had been created 'only from above' and this meant that other parties in Europe had failed to establish 'a new democracy'. Where people's fronts had failed to confront fascism by armed force, negotiated with parties rather than relying on the people, and never evolved a clear militant programme, they had always failed. Tito's lesson was clear: while different national situations meant that a popular front could be at a different stage of development in any one country at any particular time, ultimately, if 'new democracy' was to be assured, it had to develop according to a single pattern, the Yugoslav pattern. All people's fronts would 'gradually transform themselves [from a coalition] into a single, united, all-people's organisation' with a common programme. It was almost as if Tito were saying to Stalin: I understand why you had to temporise and form coalition governments in the complex international circumstances of 1945, but the time has now come to resume the advance towards socialism.¹⁹

In the ensuing weeks, Yugoslav denunciations of the West were as vitriolic as anything written on the pages of *Pravda*. Writing in *Borba* on 8 October 1947, Djilas stated that 'the sharks of Wall Street and their overseas accomplices see the defeat of Germany and her allies as the elimination of their competition, an opportunity for them to take the first step in realising their own mastery of the world'. Trying to turn the United Nations into their own instrument, 'these barbarians would like to convert such highly cultivated people as the French, Italians and even the English into their obedient slaves'. To make matters worse, this American expansionism 'had found an accomplice in Western countries in the socialists of the Right'. Noting the importance

of the formation of the Cominform, Djilas wrote: 'the peoples of Yugoslavia can only be proud that Belgrade is the place where the communist parties will conduct their consultations in future.'²⁰

The speed with which the countries of Eastern Europe began to follow the Yugoslav path must have encouraged Tito to believe he was acting in line with Stalin's wishes. On 25 October 1947 the Bulgarian Fatherland Front announced that it would be changing its structure, changes were to be implemented in February 1948. In November 1947 the Czechoslovak leader Klement Gottwald announced that it was time to bring mass organisations like the trade unions into the National Front; when the communists took power in Czechoslovakia in February 1948 it was 'action committees' of the National Front, which 'from below' organised the massive demonstrations which forced the 'bourgeois' parties from office. As the Yugoslav *Borba* commented immediately afterwards, what happened in Czechoslovakia was not just a change of government but 'a strengthening of the popular front from below'. In an article written to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Communist Manifesto, Pavel Yudin, the Soviet editor-in-chief of the Cominform journal wrote:

The concrete embodiment of the ideas of Marxism regarding the unity of the working class with the majority of working people can be seen today in the new democracies. It has been most consistently developed in Yugoslavia where the People's Front unites almost seven million people ... The People's Front is not merely a coalition of parties; it is a social-political organisation of the people in which the working class, headed by the Communist Party, plays a leading role.²¹

Yugoslav support for the struggle of the Greek communists also seemed to be getting willing support. In November 1947 the Yugoslavs took the lead in gathering the Bulgarian, Yugoslav, Albanian and Romanian trade union federations together and calling on the World Federation of Trade Unions to instruct affiliates in every country to form aid committees for Greece. By December 1947 such committees were operating in Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Romania, and by January 1948 they existed in Hungary, Poland and France as well. In Greece itself, with Yugoslav encouragement, the non-communist members of EAM were pushed into organising 'single ticket' elections throughout 'liberated' Greece on 11 October 1947, and, after more pressure, agreed to the formation of a Democratic Government on 24 December. Mimicking wartime Yugoslavia, the formation of the government was announced by its leading non-communist minister, a former Minister of Labour in the post-war coalition. Below the government was a whole hierarchy of people's committees which administered every aspect of life in 'liberated' Greece.

Tito, however, had failed to draw the necessary conclusions from an incident in August when the composition of the Cominform was still being discussed. The Yugoslavs proposed on 20 August that the Greek communists should join the Cominform, but this was rejected by Moscow. The first public sign that Stalin had reservations about Tito's initiatives came in mid-January 1948. The Greek communist leader had written an article for publication in the Cominform's journal. This article

was accepted in Belgrade and approved in Moscow, but then at the very last minute vetoed by Stalin. Tito was quick to pick up on the implications of this. In the first fortnight of January the Yugoslav press gave every impression that Yugoslavia would recognise the new Democratic Government of Greece which it had done so much to sponsor; on the 11th *Borba* had an editorial expressing full support for these 'true representatives of the Greek people'. Yet recognition did not come and by the end of the month Tito had let it be known in diplomatic circles that Yugoslavia would not be recognising the government formed by the Greek communists. By then it was clear that Stalin was having serious reservations about Tito's policies in Greece, especially since they seemed to be interwoven with renewed interest in a Balkan Federation.²²

In February 1947 the post-war Bulgarian Peace Treaty was signed, and once it came into force six months later full Bulgarian sovereignty was restored. As a result the Allied Control Commission for Bulgaria was wound up and British influence over Bulgarian politics ended. Stalin got a little concerned when in July Dimitrov visited Yugoslavia and began to discuss reviving federation talks before the treaty had come fully into force, but once the six months had passed he raised no other objections, after all, in June 1946 he had backed the idea enthusiastically. At the end of November Tito visited Bulgaria, and then visited Hungary in the first week of December and Romania in the middle of December; the result of this whirlwind diplomacy was that by the end of 1947 a customs union had been established embracing Albania, Bulgaria, Romania and Yugoslavia.²³ Addressing a press conference on 17 January 1948, Dimitrov made clear that a future communist Greece would also to be part of the planned Balkan Federation. Then, on 26 January, Tito gave instructions to deploy Yugoslav Army units to defend Greek communist bases in Albania, and did so not only without informing Stalin, but without seeking the agreement of the Albanian leader Enver Hoxha.²⁴

THE STALIN-TITO DISPUTE

It was Tito's decision to deploy the Yugoslav Army in Albania which infuriated Stalin the most. He did not object to Tito's high-handed interference in Albania's affairs, for he had encouraged it; the problem for Stalin was that he had only found out about Tito's actions in Albania through the press; yet these actions could have had enormous repercussions for the Soviet Union. It was for this reason that he decided that Tito needed to be brought back under control, and the method he chose was the Balkan Federation. Yugoslav and Bulgarian delegations were summoned to Moscow and at talks on 10 February 1948 the Yugoslavs were again instructed to take no foreign policy initiatives without clearing them with Moscow. As Stalin pointed out, Albania was 'our weakest spot' because its regime was not recognised and it was not a member of the United Nations; 'if Yugoslav troops entered Albania, the reactionaries in England and America would be able to use it and step forward as defenders of Albanian independence'. As Molotov added in the discussion, both Dimitrov and Tito needed to remember that when the two of them spoke 'the whole world believes that such is the view of the Soviet Union'. Yet, although Stalin was critical of the adventurist way Tito was supporting the struggle of the Greek communists, he was less critical of the

principle of supporting them. Although he declared at first that 'you and the Greek communists are living under an illusion, and at the same time causing us real political difficulties', he then accepted Kardelj's suggestion that the next few months would be crucial and even mused 'may be I was wrong, I was wrong over China, I never believed in the victory of the Chinese communists ... Perhaps it will be the same with Greece, but I really do not believe it, Greece is not China'.²⁵

The Yugoslav side was ready to accept criticism of its adventurism. Indeed on 1 March Tito explained to the Yugoslav Politburo that he had not informed Stalin in advance of his decision to visit Romania in December 1947, nor the decision to deploy troops to Albania in January 1948 and for these lapses he apologised. The sticking point was how to prevent such behaviour recurring. For, as Stalin told Kardelj in an angry exchange, in Stalin's view 'it was not a mistake, it was a system'. At the 10 February meeting with Stalin, Kardelj and the Yugoslav delegation were instructed to form a Balkan Federation with Bulgaria at once. Kardelj began by repeating the line taken by Tito in June 1946. He told Stalin that a 'mixed state', formed by simply merging Yugoslavia and Bulgaria, one far more advanced in terms of socialist development than the other, might collapse. He insisted that what was needed was 'a federation of seven peoples' not a merger of two states. Momentarily, Stalin conceded that 'the Yugoslavs are right, the federation could have seven members not two', but then when Kardelj began to back track further, Stalin butted in and said: 'no more delays, the federation should be formed tomorrow'.²⁶

After these talks, Dimitrov invited the Yugoslav delegation to his dacha and the talks about a Bulgarian–Yugoslav Federation continued. Djilas came out in favour, but as far as Kardelj was concerned, Stalin's policy was clear and the whole proposal was 'a Trojan Horse', to push aside Tito and then the whole Yugoslav Central Committee. Tito would be forced to play a captive role in Stalin's Balkan Federation, which would impose a Soviet vision of socialism. And it is clear that from the very start different visions of socialism, not just the co-ordination of foreign policy, were at the heart of the emerging dispute. Dimitrov spoke in similar ideological terms. He was optimistic about the chances of the new federation building its own road to socialism, a road unlike the Soviet one: 'together we can build democratic socialism', he said. However Kardelj felt that, although Dimitrov was quite genuine in his commitment to democratic socialism, Stalin planned to use him as a stool pigeon.²⁷

Tito, after years of reporting to Dimitrov, shared Kardelj's assessment. Kardelj reported to the Yugoslav Central Committee on 1 March and Tito backed his view that all further talk of a Balkan Federation should be shelved. He told the meeting:

The real possibility of a federation between Yugoslavia and Bulgaria no longer exists. We would have created the federation during the war. Now things are firmed up and the demand is that we work ... with a federation forced by Bulgaria. Yugoslavia has confirmed its road to socialism. The Russians look differently on what we have done. The question has been put in an ideological manner. Are we right or are they? We are right. They look at the national question differently from us. It would be wrong to appeal to communist discipline ... We are not a piece on a chess board.²⁸

Clearly both Tito and Kardelj believed that Yugoslavia would be allocated a subservient role in such a federation, and that such subservience would mark an end to anything that was specific about the Yugoslav road to socialism.

After Tito's Politburo rejected Stalin's proposals on 1 March 1948, relations between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union degenerated quickly. The result was a confusion of claim and counter-claim, accusation and counter-accusation, as the row developed a momentum of its own. Little of what was said related to the substance of the talks which had been held in Moscow on 10 February, but much touched on ideology, the differing perceptions of what socialism meant, and the best road to follow in order to establish it. Stalin's letter of 27 March returned to Djilas's comments of 1944 about Red Army officers, remarks which, Stalin claimed, had never been repudiated by the Yugoslav Communist Party. As a result, an 'atmosphere of hostility' had been created, and that same atmosphere was seen in the behaviour of the Yugoslav security service which 'tailed' Cominform representatives like Yudin. The letter also referred to the 'anti-Soviet' view current among the Yugoslav leaders to the effect that the Cominform was used to control other communist parties, and that 'the Soviet Communist Party was degenerate', something Stalin considered not so much comradely criticism as slander of the sort that Trotsky had engaged in.

Stalin not only referred to ways in which the Yugoslavs expressed dislike at elements of the Soviet system, he also criticised the Yugoslav practice of building socialism. The Yugoslav Communist Party, although it ruled the country, still operated like an illegal party. What was more, although the Yugoslavs claimed to be following Soviet practice, in reality they were not. In Stalin's view 'the increase in the capitalist elements in the villages and cities was in full swing, and the leadership of the Party was taking no measures to check these capitalist elements', suggesting that the Party was 'hoodwinked by the degenerate and opportunist theory of the peaceful absorption of capitalist elements by a socialist system borrowed from Bernstein and Bukharin'. Having successfully linked Yugoslav practice to that of both Trotsky and Bukharin, Stalin suggested that Tito's much vaunted commitment to the People's Front showed another error: the Party was dissolved within the People's Front, just as the 'Mensheviks proposed that the Marxist Party be dissolved into a non-party mass organisation of workers and peasants'. Stalin's final allegation reflected Stalin's spy psychosis rather than his drive for ideological purity. Velebit remained an Assistant Minister within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs when he was known to be 'an English spy'.²⁹

When preparing his response, Tito involved Djilas, Kardelj and Ranković in the drafting process and accepted their view that it would be best to play down ideological differences. Indeed, ideology scarcely featured when the Central Committee met on 12 April. A stormy debate began when Žujović made a speech calling for the Soviet criticism to be accepted. Žujović, who had been in regular contact with the Soviet ambassador, commented that 'we are making ourselves equal to the Soviet Communist Party'. He was not afraid of dependence on the Soviet Union, he said, 'I think that our aim is that our country become a part of the Soviet Union'. For everything depended on what camp you were in, and nothing would come of an independent

stance in international relations. Žujović was not a lone voice, Hebrang had also come out against Tito. Yet the Central Committee Plenum backed Tito and resolved to set up a commission to investigate the behaviour of Žujović and Hebrang. Tito suspected that both men had never been fully reconciled to his appointment as Party leader and had been providing Moscow with hostile reports ever since 1938.³⁰

The Yugoslav Communist Party responded to Stalin on 13 April taking the line that it had been misunderstood, for the only explanation for the tone of Stalin's letter could be tendentious misinformation. After the powerful assertion 'no matter how much each of us loves the land of socialism, the USSR, he can in no case, love his country less, which is also developing socialism', Tito dismissed the charges one by one: the comment made by Djilas had been taken out of context, as Tito had made clear to Stalin in person in 1945; the suggestion that Yudin and others were followed by the security police was simply untrue; comrades who spent years in Yugoslav prisons for defending the Soviet Union were hardly going to slander it now; the Party would soon be legalised at the forthcoming Fifth Party Congress; it was quite wrong to say the class struggle was ignored; as to the People's Front, the situation for Bolsheviks and Mensheviks in Tsarist Russia at the turn of the century and the situation in Yugoslavia in 1948 when the Communist Party was in power were completely different and it was inevitable that organisational forms and methods of work should change when it came to leading the masses. As to the matter of Velebit, this was still under investigation 'and we would not care to remove and destroy a man on the basis of suspicion'. The letter then went over to the attack, accusing Soviet security agents of operating on Yugoslav territory and recruiting Party members.

Tito ended the letter of 13 April by repeating his view that the disagreement was 'the result of a grave misunderstanding, which should not have happened and which must rapidly be liquidated in the interest of the cause our parties serve'. Dimitrov passed through Belgrade on his way to Prague on 19 April 1948 and, speaking with Djilas alone in his train compartment, he urged the Yugoslavs to 'stand firm, stand firm!'³¹ However, all hopes that the row could be put down to a misunderstanding were dashed on 4 May by Stalin's second letter. This second letter not only repeated and in places elaborated on the previous charges, but also accused the Yugoslavs of 'unbounded arrogance' in not accepting criticism, thus treating the Soviet Union as if it were an imperialist state.³² 'Yugoslav comrades did not accept criticism in a Marxist manner, but in a petty bourgeois manner, regarding it as an insult to the prestige of the Yugoslav Communist Party and as undermining the ambitions of the Yugoslav leaders'. The French and the Italian Parties had admitted their errors, unlike the Yugoslavs whose 'heads were so turned by the successes they achieved', that they refused to do so. Then Stalin touched on the nub of the matter, asserting that 'even though the French and Italian Communist Parties have so far achieved less success than the Yugoslav Communist Party, this is not due to any special qualities of the Yugoslav communists, but mainly because after the destruction of the Yugoslav partisan headquarters by German paratroopers, at a moment when the people's liberation movement in Yugoslavia was passing through a serious crisis, the Soviet Army came to the aid of the Yugoslav people, crushed the German invader, liberated Belgrade and in this way

created the conditions which were necessary for the Yugoslav Communist Party to achieve power'.³³ Stalin may have genuinely believed this to be the case, but all those who fought alongside Tito during the long months of 1942 when the begged-for Soviet aid did not come and the Yugoslav communists who survived their Long March by coming to an understanding with their own people, in fact the whole partisan generation, knew that the success of the partisan revolution had little to do with the Soviet airlift to Vis and everything to do with Tito's evolving tactics during 1942. The specifics of the Yugoslav revolution really were at stake.

Stalin's second letter ended by calling for Cominform arbitration. The Yugoslav Central Committee met on 9 May, expelled Žujović and Hebrang from the Party and rejected Cominform arbitration. It saw no point in a Cominform meeting since the Soviet Communist Party had already written to all the other East European parties outlining its views. In their reply to Stalin on 17 May, Tito and Kardelj noted that all their attempts at explanation had clearly been in vain: 'We do not flee from criticism about questions of principle, but in this matter we feel so unequal that it is impossible for us to agree to have this matter decided by the Cominform'.³⁴ This prompted a third letter from Stalin which again praised the Italian and French Parties for stoically accepting the criticisms made of them in September 1947: 'the refusal of the Yugoslavs to submit reports on their actions to the Cominform, and to hear criticisms from other Communist Parties, means a violation of the equality of Communist Parties'. By continuing to argue that the difficulties were caused by false information, rather than recognising the errors committed, the Yugoslav Politburo was either deliberately misleading the Party at large or 'really did not understand that by its mistakes it was deviating from Marxism–Leninism', in which case the 'Politburo's ignorance of the principles of Marxism is extremely great'. It went on:

Comrades Tito and Kardelj have on many occasions given promises to the Soviet Communist Party which have not been fulfilled. From their letters and especially from their last letter we are becoming ever more certain of this. The Yugoslav Politburo, and especially Comrade Tito, should understand that the anti-Soviet and anti-Russian policy which they have recently pursued in their everyday work had done all that was needed to undermine faith in them on the part of the Soviet Communist Party and the Soviet Government.

Thus Stalin's final broadside echoed his first: Yugoslav socialism had deviated so far from Marxism–Leninism that it had become anti-Soviet. Expulsion from the Cominform was the logical and inevitable conclusion when it gathered in Bucharest on 28 June.³⁵

CONFRONTING MOSCOW

Djilas recalled that the pressure on Tito at this time was enormous. The break with Moscow came 'as a bitter psychological and intellectual blow' and in the months which followed he was 'fretful, easily agitated, and broke out suddenly into expressions of intimacy and warmth toward his closest and most trusted comrades, an intimacy and warmth he had lost toward the end of the war and in the early post-war years'. When declining the invitation to attend the Cominform meeting in Bucharest, he told Djilas

that 'if we have to be killed, we'll be killed on our own soil'. Later that summer, when Tito and Djilas were visiting Split, Tito suddenly exclaimed: 'The Americans are not fools, they won't let the Russians reach the Adriatic'. When Tito himself recalled that summer, he noted the 'similar days' he had experienced in 1938 when in Moscow. 'A discussion took place as to whether to dissolve the Yugoslav Communist Party or not; of all the Yugoslav leaders who had been in the Soviet Union at that time, only I was left, all the others were imprisoned'.³⁶ Tito survived that 1938 crisis and on his return to Yugoslavia broke the Yugoslav Communist Party's financial dependence on the Comintern. During the war, after repeated requests for Soviet aid, he survived alone, eventually accepting aid from British imperialists. Now, for the third time, he resolved to carry on the struggle for Yugoslav communism without Soviet help, but this decision would provoke disquiet at home as well as the sustained opposition from the entire Soviet bloc.

As the moves against Žujović and Hebrang made clear, Tito's decision to resist Moscow's instructions was not accepted by the Party unanimously. In early August 1948, Col-Gen Arso Jovanović, Tito's wartime Chief of Supreme Staff, together with Major-General Branko Petričević-Kadja and Col. Vladimir Dapčević, both on the staff of the army's main political directorate, attempted to flee to Romania after failing in an attempt to organise a military coup. Prior to their flight there had been five meetings between Dapčević and General S. S. Sidorovich, the Soviet Military Attaché in Belgrade. This was perhaps the most dramatic incident of 'Cominformist' activity and resulted in the public trials of both Dapčević and Petričević-Kadja. Žujović's deputy at the Ministry of Finance and Governor of the National Bank, Obren Blagojević, was also put on trial charged with attempting to flee to Albania with state funds. Major-General Pero Popivoda, head of the airforce operational service, escaped to Bucharest in 1948 and thereafter was involved in repeated attempts to seize military airbases. The most intransigent Cominformists, 8,250 in all, were confined at the Goli Otok concentration camp where intensive and brutal re-education was undertaken. In total, some 13,000 people were arrested. Evidence suggests that support for the Cominform was strong in Serbia, among the Serbs of Bosnia-Herzegovina and particularly strong in Montenegro.³⁷

One of the leading figures of the Cominform emigration was Radonja Golubović, who had served as Montenegro's Interior Minister and then as ambassador to Bucharest; like several prominent Cominformists, before the war he had been a member of the Miletić faction which was opposed to Tito's leadership. Golubović helped establish a 'Government-in-Exile' in Bucharest in August 1948. According to Belgrade, the Cominform emigration numbered 4,928, roughly half of whom had fled abroad, while the other half were abroad at the time of the break. The emigration was responsible for 7,877 border incidents, involving the death of 17 Yugoslav border guards. By the end of 1949, the Yugoslav emigration in Moscow had formed a Yugoslav Brigade within the Soviet Union and had begun to prepare for some sort of armed intervention in Yugoslavia, plans which were ultimately shelved when the Korean War began. Shortly before Stalin's death, plans to assassinate Tito were well advanced; one of those involved in the first, unsuccessful attempt to assassinate Trotsky

in 1940 had drafted a plan which involved killing Tito during his state visit to Great Britain. When asked what motivated them in opposing Tito, most Cominformists justified their actions by criticising Tito for violating Party discipline when he refused to attend the Cominform meeting and abide by Cominform arbitration.³⁸

One of the first casualties of the Cominform affair was Yugoslav support for the communist side in the Greek Civil War. Like the other communist parties, the Greek Communist Party received a letter from Stalin in March 1948 outlining the Soviet stance in the dispute with Yugoslavia. General Markos Vafiadis, the leader of the Greek partisan army and someone devoted to Yugoslav guerrilla tactics, advised that his army's dependence on Yugoslavia for support meant that the Greeks should keep out of the quarrel between Stalin and Tito. At first the Greek communist leader Nikolaos Zahariadis seemed to agree, travelling first to Belgrade for talks with Ranković. However after moving on to Moscow, he fell completely in line with Stalin. Although when the Greek Communist Party held a plenum on 28 June Markos was allowed to argue the case for neutrality, Zahariadis pushed through a self contradictory resolution that the Greek Communist Party should accept Stalin's accusations while not itself becoming involved in the struggle. This proved an untenable position and in January 1949 Markos was relieved of his military command as part of a large-scale purge of pro-Tito elements. As a result, the Greek communist army and its supply organisation within Yugoslavia was gradually being turned into an anti-Tito organisation.³⁹

At this time, the fate of the Greek communists became entwined with Tito's tentative moves to restore relations with the West, Britain in particular. At the end of December 1948 the British signed a modest one-year trade agreement with Tito 'to keep him afloat', but almost at once there was talk within the British Government of a longer-term deal, if the Yugoslavs would disengage from Greece. Talks began in mid-February 1949 about a British–Yugoslav five-year economic treaty, but the issue of Greece slowed progress. At the start of May, Fitzroy Maclean visited Belgrade and had a long private talk with Tito, who admitted that Yugoslavia faced severe economic problems and asked that the proposed economic agreement with Britain be signed as soon as possible; Maclean pointed out that Yugoslav policy in Greece made Yugoslavia unpopular in Britain. Tito picked up the hint, responding that sudden changes were impossible but that some steps had already been taken and that a further gradual change could be expected. He then promised, as long as this was not made public, to cease aiding the communists and to prevent any refugees returning to Greece, although he could not prevent Greeks seeking asylum in Yugoslavia.

By June the British were prepared to offer a £5 million credit to Yugoslavia as well as continuing with the trade talks. Speaking in Pula in July, Tito made public that, given the Cominform economic blockade, Yugoslavia would accept a loan from the West if offered. In this same speech he announced that he was closing the Yugoslav–Greek border. The justification he used was a Greek communist broadcast a few days before, a broadcast which Tito asserted had been concocted 'somewhere else', i.e. Moscow. This broadcast asserted that the Yugoslav Army had invited the Greek National Army onto Yugoslav soil in order to help them pursue Greek communist guerrillas.⁴⁰ As the Yugoslav daily *Borba* made clear, such fabrications showed how 'the

Greek communist leaders have forgotten the interests of the democratic movement in Greece and judge participation in the struggle against Yugoslavia more important than the struggle against foreign interference in Greek affairs'.⁴¹

Stalin's campaign against Tito had even more impact on the politics of the East European states. Trials of alleged Titoites were staged in Albania and Bulgaria, where there had indeed been many communists who favoured co-operation with Yugoslavia. 'Traitors' like Koçi Xoxe, who was tried in Albania in May 1949, and Traicho Kostov, who was tried in Bulgaria in December that year, were not difficult to find; if death was a just punishment for advocating political union with Yugoslavia, at a time when Stalin also favoured such a union, they were indeed guilty. But Stalin believed in bringing to trial not only those who had actively supported Yugoslavia, but those who might do so in the future. In the case of Hungary suspicion fell on László Rajk, the Minister of the Interior. In reality, Rajk probably did no more than suggest in spring 1948 that the Yugoslav case should at least be heard, but Stalin and the Hungarian communist leader Mátyás Rákosi developed a trial scenario according to which, ever since 1940 when Rajk had been in a French internment camp as a Spanish Civil War veteran, he had been in secret contact with Tito, whose wartime contacts with Deakin and Maclean were now depicted as clandestine meetings with the British Secret Service. Four days after the Rajk Trial concluded on 24 September 1949, the Soviet Union unilaterally abrogated the Treaty of Friendship signed on 11 April 1945 on the grounds that the evidence produced during the trial proved that Yugoslavia had for some time been undertaking hostile actions towards the Soviet Union. On 25 October the Yugoslav ambassador to Moscow was expelled for spying.⁴²

The Cominform met again in Hungary on 27 November 1949 and decided that Yugoslavia had 'moved from bourgeois nationalism to fascism'. The hysterical resolution adopted on that occasion suggested that 'the Belgrade clique of hired spies and murderers' had made 'a flagrant deal with imperialist reaction and entered its service'. The Rajk trial had made this perfectly clear. This move of 'the Tito clique' towards fascism was not fortuitous; it had been effected 'on the orders of their masters, the Anglo-American imperialists'. After explaining how 'the social basis of this regime consists of kulaks in the countryside and capitalist elements in the town', it asserted that genuine communists were being persecuted in a way comparable to 'the atrocities of the Hitler fascists or the butcher Tsaldaris in Greece or Franco in Spain'.⁴³

The Yugoslav communists simply did not accept that their regime was based on kulaks and capitalist elements. Writing in *Borba* on 8 September 1948, Djilas made clear that 'we recognise the leading role of the Soviet Union in the struggle for socialism in the world' and after a brief lament that 'such a leading role is not strengthened by belittling the struggle of other peoples', he went on to note that when it came to building socialism, some decisions were inevitable.

The fact that our transition to socialism proceeds at a different rate and in a different manner to that envisioned by Marx, Engels, Lenin or Stalin does not mean that their laws about the construction of a socialist society are invalid. Revolutionary practice and the specific route to socialism may vary, but the general laws of development continue to be valid ... meaning that

The Five-Year Plan had put the Yugoslav economy under strain even before the Cominform blockade. If industry were to survive, the laws of socialist construction meant that agriculture would have to be collectivised. Thus in autumn 1948 the Yugoslav Agrarian Council declared bluntly: 'the tempo of agricultural growth is not such as to fulfil the tasks of the Five-Year Plan'. Collectivisation was necessary not just as a response to Stalin, but to feed the industrial revolution.⁴⁵

Although Tito never conceded Stalin's charge of concessions to the kulaks and 'Bukharinism' in agricultural policy, there is no doubt that Yugoslav communists had a different approach to collectivisation than Stalin, one close to the policies followed in the Soviet Union before the winter of 1929–30. Agrarian legislation assumed that without 'goading from the authorities' poor and middle peasants would be able to convince the better-off peasants that co-operative farming was the way forward. When the Five-Year Plan was formally adopted in April 1947, there was no interest in following the Soviet model and linking industrialisation to collectivisation and dekulakisation. Writing *Agricultural Co-operatives in a Planned Economy* in September 1947 Kardelj was relaxed that Yugoslavia was embarking on the process of industrialisation while most agricultural co-operatives were General Agricultural Co-operatives (*Opšta zemloradnička zadruga – OZZ*) rather than the labour-pooling Peasant Work Co-operatives (*Seljačka radna zadruga – SRZ*). His argument was that, as ever more Machine Tractor Stations were established, so the move to pooled labour would intensify spontaneously. When the Central Committee Plenum of January 1949 endorsed the policy of collectivisation, the clear intention of the resolution was that the Party should put greater emphasis on establishing SRZs. Yet even now, although Kardelj recognised the need to oppose the trading activities of the kulaks, he saw no reason to exclude them from the co-operative farms', as had happened in the Soviet Union. As the campaign to establish more SRZs got underway, five thousand were set up in 1949, increased coercion was used. Taxes, obligatory collection of grain and livestock, and redistribution of grain were all cited as measures that local cadres could take in order to pressurise the kulaks into the SRZ. However problems were revealed as early as May 1949 when a report on 'The Work of the Party in the Village' showed that the SRZs being established lacked sufficient land, leadership and labour to be viable: 'local cadre had made a mess of the implementation, out of either ignorance, wilful misinterpretation, or downright subterfuge'. To encourage their rapid growth an important concession was made; the original commitment on the part of peasants to work in the SRZ for ten years was reduced to three.⁴⁶

Even so, the collectivisation drive caused unrest, some of it exploited by Cominform activists. There were uprisings in Macedonia, northern Bosnia and in the Banija and Kordon regions of Croatia; the worst incident was in Cazin, near Bihacs, where after disturbances on 5–6 May 1949, over seven-hundred peasants were arrested and over four-hundred brought to trial, with three ring-leaders being executed.⁴⁷ Bizarrely, this incident started with rumours that King Peter had parachuted into the

region to save the local peasantry. The other serious incident was in Montenegro where a local communist leader, Ilija Bulatović, organised a rebellion in Bijelo Polje, which took on a clearly pro-Cominform tone. In December 1949 a Central Committee Plenum debated whether the achievements of collectivisation were worth the cost. Critics reported that to obtain 65,000 freight wagons of grain, 12,000 people had been arrested and, on the grounds that this made no economic sense, it was proposed that the SRZs be abandoned.⁴⁸ A report on the situation in Croatia said that in Slavonia alone fifty peasants had been killed in clashes over deliveries. Another speaker noted that in Vojvodina there had been particularly strong resistance from the Hungarian peasantry.⁴⁹ However, despite these warnings, the decision was taken to press ahead with collectivisation and try to bring the SRZs into order.⁵⁰

Bringing the SRZs to order was not easy. In 1950 the average size of an SRZ was only 220 hectares, not big enough to be truly efficient. Critics argued that the management and accounting skills of the SRZ had to be higher and regularly pointed out that the SRZs had too many full-time paid officials and no proper accounting system for the calculation of labour-days; it was on the basis of labour-days that the peasants were rewarded for their labour. Yet in March 1951 the Party was still discussing the problems caused by remuneration according to labour-days and the organisation of work in brigades. Poor accounting was in fact a systemic problem. Collective farm peasants made their state deliveries from the collective land, not their private plots; it therefore made economic sense to let the collective farm run at a loss and to concentrate instead on their private plot. In June 1951 management changes were introduced, the most important being the decision to elect rather than appoint the management board, but these reforms remained cosmetic and ineffective.⁵¹

The SRZs had been established in 1949 for a three-year trial period, after which the peasants were free to leave or stay. In light of the numerous petitions to leave, in November 1951 the Party decided on further concessions. A Central Committee directive of 24 November 1951 introduced cash payments for the labour-days worked rather than remuneration in kind. At the same time delivery quotas were first reduced and then abolished in June 1952. The directives of November 1951 also made clear that unprofitable SRZs would be disbanded and only those which were genuinely voluntary would continue; by the end of 1952, 2,700 SRZs had been abandoned and 600,000 hectares returned to private owners.⁵² Djilas blamed Tito for sticking to what was clearly a doomed policy. In 1952 he and Kardelj proposed that the collectives be disbanded, but Tito did not agree, commenting 'we have just begun, we cannot give up socialism in the village!' He was backed by the Party's agricultural experts and collective farms limped on for a further year.⁵³ In March 1953 members of the remaining SRZs were allowed to withdraw singly or in groups. The only area of successful collectivisation had been Vojvodina, where 41 per cent of the land was collectivised by 1951; in arid areas the figures were higher, 60 per cent in Macedonia and 44 per cent in Montenegro, but in prosperous Croatia the figure was only 14 per cent.⁵⁴

Although Tito and Kardelj first discussed the idea of 'workers' self-management' in private talks in autumn 1948, it was not until the January Plenum of 1949 that important moves were taken to reassess the Stalin system. Abandoning the notion that the dispute with Stalin had essentially revolved around a 'misunderstanding' which rational debate should have been able to resolve, the Yugoslav communists now argued that while they had remained true to Marxism–Leninism, Stalin had abandoned it. At the plenum Djilas stressed that in defending the specific path of Yugoslav development, 'we in fact do not defend some kind of national independence of Yugoslavia or some kind of right of Yugoslavia to independent development; we are defending proletarian Marxist–Leninism internationalism from those who distort it'. As the spring of 1949 progressed, the process of defining the true, Marxist–Leninist, Yugoslav road to socialism got underway: it was then after a Politburo meeting in Split that the idea of workers' self-management first began to be sketched out, and it was then that the Yugoslavs began an overhaul of the Party's name and statutes, and revived the Marxist notion that under socialism the state might 'wither away'.⁵⁵

Reflecting a speech he made in parliament on 28 May 1949, Kardelj wrote an article for that month's *Komunist* 'On People's Democracy in Yugoslavia'. This referred both to Lenin's *State and Revolution*, with its numerous references to the withering away of the state, and stressed that the Yugoslav revolution 'born in historical circumstances which enabled it to rely on even broader masses of the working people' meant that it could 'rely on the daily active participation of the masses in running the state'. He went on to argue that it must never be forgotten that 'not even the most perfect bureaucratic apparatus, no matter how able the leadership at its head, is capable of building socialism; socialism can grow only from the initiative of the broad masses properly led by the proletarian party'. This speech called for the limited role of workers' representatives at production conferences 'to be developed further and transformed into a continuous form of direct co-operation of the workers in the management of our enterprises'.⁵⁶ Many factories had what Kardelj called 'spontaneous councils' uniting leading workers and the director; 'this so far underdeveloped, spontaneous form of self-management must be expanded even more into a permanent form of direct worker participation in the management of our enterprises'. As a result of this speech and further consultations, an Act of State was signed on 23 December 1949 introducing the first experiment of workers' councils in two-hundred and fifteen firms; this was extended after six months to eight-hundred more firms when on 26 June 1950 Tito presented to parliament the bill establishing workers' councils through which the 'self-management' of enterprises would be achieved.⁵⁷

Tito was very clear that workers' councils would have an educative purpose which would help free workers from the constraints of the past. He asked at this time: 'should we wait until all workers are equally capable to direct their work place? Of course not, because we would have to wait a long time. But in the process of management, the process of work and direction, all workers will gain valuable experience; they will get to know not only the work process but all the problems of production'. Through this

learning process workers would themselves be able to judge what was needed in the way of productivity and discipline to achieve a reasonable standard of living. Workers' councils would aim at the rational deployment of labour and thus fight bureaucracy.⁵⁸ Kardelj was equally clear that workers' self-management was not something unique to Yugoslavia. He stated that 'workers' councils are not only a specific feature of our development, but they are, in one form or another, a necessary element of the mechanism of socialist democracy'. The implication was clear, by never establishing workers' councils in the Soviet Union, Stalin had checked that country's progress along the socialist road.⁵⁹

At the same time, Yugoslav leaders developed a critique of the Soviet bureaucracy. In March 1950 Djilas began to argue that the bureaucratic stratum created during Russia's Civil War, which had been essential for victory in that war, had thereafter cut itself off from the masses and placed itself above society. In November 1950 he was even more specific about the nature of that bureaucratic caste which had arisen under Stalin's leadership, it had actually carried out a 'counter-revolution' and was governing the country according to the laws of monopoly capitalism. In advancing the theory that there had been a 'counter-revolution' in the Soviet Union, Djilas went further than other Yugoslav leaders. Kardelj spoke of 'deformed socialism', of 'bureaucratic-despotic' forms hampering socialist construction, of 'state capitalist elements' but not of 'state capitalism': for Kardelj the bureaucracy was capable of taking the first steps towards socialism, but then became 'the most dangerous obstacle to the further development of socialism'; bureaucratism 'subjugated society to itself and came to exhibit hegemonic tendencies towards other peoples'. Tito was even more cautious. He told the Second Trade Union Congress in 1951: 'we cannot quite say that the Soviet Union is in general not a socialist country, that is, that all the achievements of the revolution have been destroyed; rather the leaders and responsible figures are not socialists'.⁶⁰

These hints of a disagreement among Yugoslavia's leaders about the nature of the Soviet Union had no impact on the domestic reforms which continued apace. In line with the attack on 'bureaucracy' and the stress on local initiative, April 1951 saw the abolition of the old centralised planning body and the progressive decentralisation of economic planning. For the first year or so of their operation, the workers' councils functioned merely as elected bodies overseeing completion of targets set down by the plan. However the hope of Yugoslav leaders was that workers' councils would stimulate economic development, resulting in productivity increases and technical innovation. So in 1952, the workers' councils were granted market like freedoms, giving them control of enterprise funds and investment decisions; at the same time a whole hierarchy of elected Chambers of Production were introduced to give workers a democratic voice.⁶¹

As relations with the Soviet Union worsened, Tito told a Central Committee Plenum in June 1951 that Western military aid was 'in our interest and we, comrades, will pay no heed to what the Cominform says about this'. Shortly afterwards Kardelj made a speech responding to an attack made on Yugoslavia by Molotov. He stressed that no Cominformists had been executed in Yugoslavia, whilst in the Soviet Union

the Volga Germans, the Crimean Tartars and the Chechens had all been deported to Siberia, as had 'tens of thousands of inhabitants of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania'.⁶² Pushing their exploration of the failings of the Stalinist system to the limits, both Tito and Kardelj mused on the future of the Party. On 27 April 1951 Kardelj suggested that political parties were the creations of capitalist society and that after the revolution the Party too might wither away. On 9 November 1951 even Tito intimated that 'when socialism is developed, the Communist Party too will gradually disappear as a party'.⁶³

THE DJILAS AFFAIR

Yugoslavia's radical reform programme was endorsed by the Sixth Congress of the Yugoslav Communist Party which met in November 1952 and adopted a resolution singling out self-management as Yugoslavia's contribution to the theory and practice of socialist construction. Not only did this congress endorse the workers' councils and other reforms, it changed the name of the Party. Henceforth, drawing on Marx's own proposals, the Party would be called the League of Communists. According to the Sixth Congress resolution, this name change had a profound meaning, for the role of the Party itself would change: in the Soviet Union the Party had become virtually inseparable from the economic apparatus; in the new Yugoslavia this would not happen. The Congress resolution stated: 'the Yugoslav League of Communists is not and cannot be the direct operative manager and commander in economic, state or social life'.⁶⁴

Addressing the Sixth Congress on 3 November 1952, Tito turned to relations with the Soviet Union in the context of remarks made by Malenkov at the 19th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party that October.

Until Tehran we had great faith in them, but they gradually destroyed it all, so that we know them now, know their real face, their aims, their hypocrisy and ruthlessness when it comes to achieving their dishonest goals ... To all who believed in the unselfishness of the Soviet Union, her fame as the protector of small nations, that was the first moral blow ... From Tehran down to the present day, the Soviet Union has revealed herself to the world in all her imperialistic greatness ... Has she not made of the former independent Eastern countries such as Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria and so on mere colonies in the heart of Europe? Not to speak of the enslavement of the Baltic States before the war.

At Tehran Stalin had divided Yugoslavia into interest spheres on a fifty-fifty basis with a capitalist country, Tito asserted, not entirely accurately. However Tito's relations with Stalin in November–December 1943 had been particularly poor because of the coincidence of the second session of AVNOJ and the Tehran Conference. Tito went on to argue that 'the clash which occurred between ourselves and the Soviet Union in 1948 was not accidental [but] happened at the moment when we clearly saw that the USSR was abandoning socialist principles, not only in its domestic but [in] its foreign policy, and was openly following the path of imperialist expansionism'. As to the causes of this 'unsocialistic foreign policy', those were to be found in Soviet reality, 'the Soviet Union has long since diverged in its internal evolution from socialist development into state capitalism and an unprecedented bureaucratic system'.⁶⁵

The whole leadership shared this analysis, but precisely what was meant by a new role for the Communist Party soon came to divide Djilas from Kardelj and Tito. Although both Kardelj and Tito believed Lenin's concept of the 'leading role of the party' did not mean the Party being responsible for everything, they did accept that the leading role of the Party should continue in some form for the foreseeable future. Indeed, at the Sixth Congress Tito had been forthright in his defence of the Party: 'the League of Communists not only does not reduce its role in and its responsibility for the successful development of socialism, but further increases its role and responsibility', and he added 'when I said that in future the most important role of the Party will be of an ideological-educational character, I did not mean by that all its other functions would end, no!' The question of the future of the Party was clearly preying on his mind, because Djilas recalled that in 1952 Tito suddenly blurted out, for no apparent reason: 'We will not have a multi-party system, we will have a multi-group system'.⁶⁶

The future role of the Communist Party was again debated at the Fourth Congress of the People's Front in February 1953. This congress renamed the People's Front the Socialist Alliance of Working People and Kardelj hoped that the Socialist Alliance might become the body through which the Party's new 'ideological-educational' guidance could be executed; the Socialist Alliance would carry out most of the administrative roles which the Party currently played, while the Party would offer guidance in this process. He even let it be known that 'the Party does not consider the determination of the political line of struggle for developing socialist relations in our country to be its monopoly'. Djilas, however, had already begun to move beyond Tito and Kardelj on the question of reform, believing that unless the process were pushed through into the heart of the Party, any reform of the Socialist Alliance would fail; he wanted 'the whole system of our Party work to change'. Thus far his attacks on 'the bureaucracy' had been limited to the Soviet Union, but now he began to target developments within Yugoslavia itself.⁶⁷

In June 1953 Tito called a Central Committee Plenum at Brioni, his holiday residence, and made clear that to counter disintegrative forces the leading role of the Party was to be reasserted in the traditional way. After the Brioni plenum, Tito rejected Kardelj's draft of the new Constitutional Law, which would have forced Central Committee members to get elected to the National Assembly. Tito was 'obviously wary of the strengthened role of the Assembly', Djilas concluded, and felt particularly aggrieved because Tito made this decision not at a Politburo meeting but during a hunting trip. Meeting Kardelj at this time, Djilas declared that 'Tito is the standard-bearer of the bureaucracy!'.⁶⁸ Djilas saw Kardelj almost daily in September 1953 and often had long telephone conversations with him on top of that. He felt both of them 'had a lot in common', and undoubtedly he thought Kardelj his ally in trying to push Tito further along the road to Party reform. He recalled how he 'continued to publish proposals for reforms at a feverish pace; objections began to trickle down from Tito and his group at Brioni, and Kardelj was decidedly cautious and reserved'. Yet Djilas met Tito that autumn and he was not overtly hostile. Although Djilas realised Tito was

'annoyed by my revisionist writings', for the ceremonies to mark the tenth anniversary of the second session of AVNOJ he was seated at Tito's right hand.⁶⁹

The growing differences between Tito and Djilas echoed the controversy with Gorkić in the 1930s, and there were indeed similarities between the two controversies. In the 1930s Tito had considered it essential for the illegal Yugoslav Communist Party to exert its leadership over the trade unions, thus opposing Gorkić's view that the underground could be sacrificed for the sake of unity with the socialists. Now too, Tito was insisting that the Party should play a leading role, even if the mechanism for doing so was to change, while Djilas seemed to be increasingly assuming that the whole idea of a vanguard party, a party with a 'leading role' was outdated. Throughout the autumn and winter of 1953–54, Djilas wrote a series of articles in the newspaper *Borba* attacking the Yugoslav bureaucracy and making clear that the Party itself was part of the problem.

It was impossible, he argued, for the revolution to be saved by recreating what had worked in the past, that is, the Party. 'The revolution must find new ideas, new forms ... [and] transform itself into democracy and socialism, into new human relations'. The Yugoslav socialist state and its bureaucratic apparatus could behave despotically, but no theory could protect a society from despotism, no appeals to 'the good of the cause' could replace the rule of law, socialist legality. Communists put forward the idea that only they were the 'conscious forces of socialism', but this assertion simply cut them off from the masses and enabled them to justify their privileges. As far as Djilas was concerned, in future the Party should allow itself to wither away, just as Engels had suggested the state should wither away under socialism. Party members should be ready to discuss current policies within the Socialist Alliance, develop their ideas through discussion with the people at large, and ultimately merge with the Alliance and no longer act separately. He concluded his last article with the clear words: 'the Leninist form of the Party and state has become obsolete'.⁷⁰ Djilas wanted to transform *the* Party into a party, and possibly one party among other socialist parties. Giving the Party a leading role implied dictatorship, and Djilas believed that the Yugoslav Revolution was so secure that a dictatorship was no longer necessary. Socialist democracy exercised through the Socialist Alliance was the way forward.

Late in December 1953 Djilas visited Ranković, with whom he had worked closely since before the war, and noted that 'in conversation he was ominously reticent' and described the latest articles by Djilas as 'detrimental to the Party'. Ranković had earlier opposed renaming the Party the League, so Djilas was not greatly surprised by this response. However, he was shocked at the attitude of Kardelj. When he told Kardelj that he thought the two of them were agreed, Kardelj retorted: 'No we are not! I do not agree with you! You want to change the whole system!' This contradicted Kardelj's statement of three months earlier when he said to Djilas: 'As far as I am concerned, it would be better if this party did not exist'. True to his Leninist understanding of the Party, Tito summoned a special Central Committee Plenum on 16 January 1954 to deal with Djilas. At their last meeting before the plenum, Kardelj told Djilas: 'Nothing in my life has ever been more difficult'; Djilas's memory was different, 'as we said good-bye he held out his hand, but with a look of hatred and vindictiveness'. Djilas

had asked both Kardelj and Ranković if his case could be resolved quietly within the Central Committee, 'without public hearings', but it was too late. On the eve of the plenum Tito met members of the Central Committee one by one to inform them of Djilas's fate and persuade them that there was no alternative to the decision he had taken.⁷¹

Addressing the plenum, Tito was clear and to the point:

I first talked about the withering away of the Party, of the League, but I did not say that it should be in six months, a year or two years, but as part of a long drawn-out process. Until the last class enemy had been disarmed, until the broadest masses have been educated to socialism, there can be no withering away, no liquidation of the League, for it is responsible for implementing this present revolution, just as it was responsible during the earlier revolution and its victory.⁷²

Tito accepted that 'to a certain extent we are guilty'. Djilas had written articles before, and the previous autumn he had asked Tito 'Stari, what do you think of what I am writing?' Tito had replied that there were 'certain things I cannot agree with, but I do not think this is a reason for you not to write, on the contrary, mostly you have valuable things to say'. It was only in December that he realised things had gone too far. However, at that point Tito had made clear to Djilas that 'proposing the liquidation of the Party and the abolition of discipline' was unacceptable. Therefore Djilas was 'aware of my opinion before he published his last article [which] he hurried to get published'. This was a clear breach of discipline, as was the fact that the questions raised in Djilas's articles were not discussed within the Politburo in the form in which they appeared in the press, nor did he consider it necessary even to mention them at its meetings. He was 'advocating democracy at any price, which is exactly the position of Bernstein and of a whole set of revisionist circles in the West', Tito concluded.⁷³

At his last meeting with Kardelj Djilas had again accused Tito of defending bureaucratism and went on to accuse the rest of the Politburo with being opportunists in seeking to avoid an inevitable clash with Tito. At the plenum he was more conciliatory. He accepted that he had abandoned the long established rule that important speeches and articles were read by Politburo comrades; thus he had violated Party discipline. He had hoped that differences could be resolved by a public discussion, 'since the country had already entered the phase where such discussions could be conducted without any danger for the unity of our movement'. Stressing his willingness to consult with colleagues in future, he made clear that he did not want to liquidate the Party but to introduce organisational changes that would give the rank-and-file more initiative and end the top down approach: 'comrades, if our discussions were to lead to the reorganisation of the Party, all my differences with my colleagues would vanish,' he asserted. However, he did concede that 'I am a revisionist in relation to Leninism; I am of the opinion, and have no reason to hide it, that such an 'ideology' no longer fits our country'.⁷⁴

Had Kardelj joined Djilas in a move against Tito as 'standard-bearer of the bureaucracy' it is hard to predict what would have happened, other than the eclipse of

Tito himself. The country was not as secure as Djilas seemed to imagine, internally still suffering from the failed collectivisation campaign, with workers' councils still in a very embryonic stage; externally the Soviet Union still seemed hostile and the West predatory. Perhaps that is why at the plenum itself Djilas called only for Party reorganisation. With Djilas expelled, Tito wrote to all Party organisations making clear that they knew what their roles were relating to workers' councils and economic management. His message was not easy to interpret and would still be subject to analysis in twenty years time when Party reorganisation was back on the agenda. Communists were not to interfere in the technical management of the enterprise, but nor could 'communists in the enterprise limit themselves to education and raising the consciousness of the unconscious or weakly conscious workers to a higher level'. That was insufficient. Communists should 'see what general policies are pursued in the enterprises and how the workers' council functions; they give the tone to the work of the workers' councils'.⁷⁵

Although the early 1950s had proved difficult for Tito politically since the break with Djilas meant parting with one of his longest serving and closest lieutenants, Tito's personal life improved at this time. Early in April 1951 he had a severe gall bladder attack and underwent an operation. One of those who helped to nurse him was Jovanka Budisavljević. Tito and Jovanka married early in 1952 and were together for the next twenty-five years.⁷⁶

THE KHRUSHCHEV DECADE

SHADOW BOXING

When Stalin died on 5 March 1953, Tito was on a boat taking him to Britain for an official visit. By the time Stalin's death was public knowledge, Tito was already in London. He made no comment in general, but his entourage spent every moment between their formal engagements in discussion and analysis of the latest news from Moscow. Almost at once there were hints that Stalin's heirs might soften their stance towards Yugoslavia. Yugoslav diplomats were allowed to attend the funeral, and their presence was acknowledged by a handshake from a junior minister. On 15 March the Yugoslav *chargé d'affaires* in Moscow was invited to attend a session of the Supreme Soviet, where Malenkov, who then seemed to be the heir apparent, stated that in the Soviet Union's foreign relations there were no outstanding issues which could not be addressed. Tito responded while still in London, instructing Kardelj to report to the Yugoslav Parliament on 23 March that Yugoslavia had no demands on the countries of Eastern Europe other than that they respect its borders; Yugoslavia had strived, and would continue to strive for the normalisation of relations with all these countries. Thus on his return from Britain, Tito felt he could tell a Belgrade rally on 31 March: 'I believe that the Soviet leaders will try to look for a way out of the dead-end to which they were brought by Stalin's foreign policy'.¹

When the Yugoslav *chargé d'affaires* in Moscow asked for a meeting with Molotov on 25 April, he was amazed that this was granted just four days later, and that the meeting was extremely friendly; Molotov agreed at once that in future Yugoslav diplomats would not be followed by the Soviet secret police. That May Day there were no Soviet slogans attacking Yugoslavia. In fact, within the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs a major reorganisation was underway, led by a protégé of Beria, who, like Malenkov, seemed to be in the ascendancy among the Soviet leaders immediately after Stalin's death. By 31 May he had drafted a report 'On the situation in Yugoslavia and its foreign policy' which called for a normalisation in relations, to the point where Yugoslavia was seen simply as 'a bourgeois country'. Rumours of a change in Soviet policy appeared in the Italian press and on 21 May Tito responded by stating that Yugoslavia did want to improve relations with the Soviet Union, but because of what had happened in the past there was a problem of trust which had to be overcome; trust had to be earned through actions. One initial such action came on 6 June when Molotov proposed that ambassadors should again be exchanged.²

Tito was still cautious, in public at least. Speaking on 14 June, he said he would be happy to exchange ambassadors; it was true, he said, that in the Soviet Union people were sometimes smiling at us, but they were sometimes frowning as well, and the

exchange of ambassadors did not of itself mean an improvement in relations. He noted that since Stalin's death there had actually been an increase in the number of border incidents; 'whatever they do', he said, 'we will take it with a pinch of salt', although he did believe that the Soviet leaders 'really do wish to change their foreign policy' and that 'later they will do more in this direction'. He told the Party Plenum on 16–17 June the same thing: 'we will have to go towards normalisation: this does not mean that we will trust them blindly every time they smile'. Normalisation would come when border provocations ceased. 'We should work gradually towards normalisation', he said, but added that he felt that the Soviet move was genuine and was 'not simply a manoeuvre'.³

Tito's cautious optimism proved premature. In Moscow the question of normalising relations between the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia became entwined with the first act of the post-Stalin power struggles. Disagreement on the fate of the report 'On the situation in Yugoslavia and its foreign policy' had prompted Khrushchev to propose the establishment of a special commission to determine whether or not Yugoslavia was a socialist country. However, Beria and Malenkov were impatient with such a cautious approach. On 25 June, Beria and Malenkov agreed that the new representative of the Ministry of Internal Affairs within the Soviet embassy in Belgrade should contact Yugoslav security chief Ranković, pass on Beria's best wishes, and explain that 'Malenkov, Beria and his friends' wanted to improve relations between the two states through a root and branch re-examination of all problems; as such, they were ready to hold a confidential meeting with Tito and Ranković either in Moscow or Belgrade. This initiative was never undertaken. Beria was arrested on 26 June and the question of his undercover approach to Tito was one of the many charges brought against him. At the 2–7 July Plenum of the Soviet Communist Party Molotov made clear that while there was agreement on the policy of normalising relations with Yugoslavia, Beria had gone too far by referring to 'Comrade Tito and Comrade Ranković'; dropping talk of Yugoslavia as a fascist state and restoring 'bourgeois' relations was all that was being sought. Faithful to the rhetoric of the past, Molotov referred to 'Tito and his band', and he even hinted that Beria had been interested in following Tito's path by creating some sort of popular front organisation within the Soviet Union which would have operated alongside the Communist Party.⁴

Tito, of course, knew nothing of Beria's proposal. He actually welcomed Beria's removal from the Soviet leadership, commenting on 15 July that his dismissal marked a progressive move forwards. In fact the demise of Beria made Tito more positive that an accommodation with the Soviet Union could be found. On 19 July he told the British Labour Party politician Aneurin Bevan: 'we must never forget that the Soviet Union is, despite Stalin's despotism, home to the October Revolution, a country whose base is progressive'. Yet the consolidation of the post-Beria leadership led to a distinct cooling of relations; by mid-October the new Yugoslav ambassador in Moscow was describing relations when he arrived to take up his new post as 'cold but correct'.⁵ They did improve later in the month, however, when the long-standing tension between Yugoslavia and Italy over the future of the disputed city of Trieste suddenly reached boiling point. As Yugoslav relations with the West worsened dramatically, the

Soviet Union came down firmly on the Yugoslav side. On 20 October Kardelj told the Yugoslav leadership that Tito had resolved to work for a normalisation of relations with the Soviet Union, and on 3 November 1953 all ambassadors were instructed to work to this end.⁶

There was no positive Soviet response until after the Djilas affair. On 19 January 1954 the Yugoslav ambassador met Deputy Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko to brief him on the moves taken against Djilas. Molotov responded at once, calling the ambassador to a meeting on 21 January and telling him that the removal of Djilas 'could have a positive impact on the improvement of Yugoslav-Soviet relations', since it was well known that Djilas had been attracted to the West and had not wished the Soviet Union well.⁷ When the ruling Soviet Presidium met on 8 February 1954, Yugoslavia was briefly discussed and a commission was set up to consider the country's future. From very different standpoints, both Khrushchev and Molotov took an active interest in the work of this commission, whose report 'On relations with Yugoslavia' was presented to the Presidium on 25 February by Mikhail Suslov. The report stated that Yugoslavia was a capitalist state, its internal and external policies were bourgeois, but these were 'disguised with "socialist" phraseology so as to deceive the masses'. Despite this negative overall evaluation, the report was honest enough to conclude that the activities of the Cominform emigration had been utterly ineffectual, and that, since the masses in Yugoslavia wanted improved relations with the Soviet Union, 'possibilities for normalising relations did exist'. It therefore proposed economic and cultural contacts with Yugoslavia and more 'measured' propaganda attacks on it. This conclusion was not to Khrushchev's liking and under his pressure the Presidium agreed to consider the Yugoslav case further.⁸

Tito remained optimistic but determined that relations would only improve when the Soviet Union began to take practical steps to enable that to happen. On 2 March he talked to foreign correspondents and said that, so far, there had been no real change in relations between the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, but stressed that these relations would improve, although comments in the Soviet press linking an improvement to the Djilas affair were misplaced. Yugoslavia was standing firm – that was his message to the Central Committee Plenum on 30 March. The Soviet side still seemed to suggest the Yugoslavs had turned away from Marxism-Leninism and would now abandon their views, but this was something which would never happen. 'They now expect us to come to them in penitence', he said, but 'they are wrong ... we do not want to copy their methods any more, we have our own road, we follow our own road to socialism.' Yugoslavia asked only to be treated like any other capitalist country.⁹

Within the Soviet leadership, it was Khrushchev who continually pushed forward the agenda of improved relations with Yugoslavia. Taking advantage of the absence of Molotov at a summit in Geneva on the future of Germany, Khrushchev used a series of Presidium meetings in May and June 1954 to force through a proposal that the Soviet Union write to Yugoslavia proposing the restoration of normal relations at all levels. On 4 May the Presidium concluded that the report Suslov had prepared in February had been overtaken by events and Suslov was sent away to redraft it. The new draft, presented on 18 May, suggested for the first time that some of the assertions made by

the Soviet side in 1948 were mistaken and that a serious break with Yugoslavia had not been necessary; the break had reduced Soviet influence in the country 'and thus eased the Tito clique along its path of nationalist demagogy'. The Presidium should, therefore, support all ambassadorial initiatives at improving relations and propose to Yugoslavia that inter-party talks be held at Central Committee level. The Presidium made clear that, when the Soviet ambassador handed over the letter proposing such contacts, it should be made clear that the Soviet side would prefer direct, face to face talks with Tito rather than diplomatic correspondence.

From Geneva, Molotov protested that this type of approach to Tito would make the Soviet Union look weak and he urged that there be no more discussion of this proposal until he returned. Ignoring this, the Presidium resumed its discussion on 20 May and instructed Suslov to draft a document to the 'fraternal parties' of Eastern Europe explaining that Beria had been responsible in large part for the extent of the dispute in 1948, and that today an opportunity existed for an improvement in relations 'and the possible return of Yugoslavia to the democratic camp'. With Molotov's support the Foreign Ministry refused to implement this policy, and on 2 June the Presidium discussed the matter again. On this occasion it was agreed without dispute to compromise. The Soviet Union would sign a trade deal with Yugoslavia, but would not make a political approach to Tito. However, Khrushchev persevered, overcame the opposition within the Presidium and by 22 June the letter to Tito had been signed and sent; Tito received it on the 30th. The letter called for inter-party as well as inter-state relations, relations which would be based on 'Marxism-Leninism and 'non-interference in internal affairs'; both Beria and Djilas were blamed for exacerbating things. The letter also suggested that, while the Soviet Union was primarily at fault, the Yugoslav side had also not exhausted all the possibilities for defusing the 1948 crisis.¹⁰

For Tito, the Soviet letter came as a complete surprise. Perhaps for this reason he delayed three weeks before responding, initially discussing its contents only with Kardelj and Ranković. Informing an expanded meeting of the Party Executive about the letter on 19 July, Tito stressed that any thoughts that it might be 'a manoeuvre' were unfounded; he believed that 'latent socialist forces existed in the Soviet Union and this process was starting and Yugoslavia should have a role in that process'. Helping the latent socialist forces within the Soviet Union would remain one of Tito's ambitions for the next decade, especially when, as he told the Party Executive on this occasion, 'in the West they think we have nowhere to go and for this reason they believe that they can hold us to ransom'.¹¹ Tito, Kardelj and Ranković were duly empowered to draft a response to Moscow, and in the meantime Kardelj would inform the Soviet ambassador that the Yugoslav Party's response would be positive. The Soviet Presidium replied at once with a second letter addressed 'to Comrade Tito' expressing the hope that his response would come very soon.¹²

When Tito replied on 11 August 1954, he stressed that individuals like Beria and Djilas were not the cause of the conflict, things went deeper than that. In his view work on restoring inter-state relations could begin at once, especially in view of what the Soviet side had said about 'non-interference' in each other state's affairs, but inter-

party relations would have to wait, a Party meeting would be premature until some successes were achieved in normalising state relations.¹³ The Soviet Presidium discussed Tito's reply at a series of meetings held between 17 and 23 September, and decided on some practical steps which could be taken to improve bilateral relations. Such 'confidence building' moves as closing the Moscow-based League of Yugoslav Patriots and the two radio stations Free Yugoslavia and For a Socialist Yugoslavia were agreed. In his response 'to Comrade Tito' on 23 September, Khrushchev ignored Tito's reservations, welcomed the commitment of both sides to improving relations, repeated the importance of non-interference in each others' affairs, and asserted that he was willing to take up any proposal Tito might make concerning other ways to improve relations. As to a Party meeting being premature, that was fine and the Soviet side would not insist, the current exchange of letters had in fact started that very process. However, he hoped the delay would not be too long since meeting at a personal level would without doubt speed the whole process up.¹⁴

The Soviet side tried to speed the process up, on 20 October 1954 *Pravda* marked the tenth anniversary of the liberation of Belgrade, but Tito would not be hurried. On 25 October he told the Yugoslav Parliament that he welcomed recent signs of normalisation, like the trade talks and the winding up of the League of Yugoslav Patriots. This all, he said, gave rise to the hope that things could be taken further. There was no sense in which this was a manoeuvre, he repeated, it was clearly a positive step, but there were still serious problems to be addressed.¹⁵ When the Party Executive met on 3 November Tito said that the process of normalisation was nearing the point when the exchange of letters was not enough and a meeting would have to take place. He had not yet sent a reply to Khrushchev's letter of 23 September, but would do so after the plenum planned for the end of November had discussed the idea of Tito meeting the Soviet leader, then expected to be Malenkov.¹⁶ Meanwhile in Moscow, at the Soviet reception to mark the anniversary of the October Revolution on 7 November, Khrushchev told the Yugoslav ambassador that the Yugoslavs seemed to be delaying: inter-party relations were needed, but the Yugoslavs 'were trying to sit on two stools'.¹⁷ Khrushchev's impatience prompted Tito to act sooner than planned. In a letter to Khrushchev written on 16 November, but dated 24 November so that it appeared to be a consequence of the plenum, Tito explained that consultation with colleagues was not the same thing as dragging feet; all recent correspondences between the two Party leaders would be discussed at the plenum held at the end of November. Tito added that things were going well, and it was now time for a personal meeting, to be held once he had returned from planned visits to India and Burma. He rejected the charge of 'sitting on two stools' saying he was quite ready to discuss Party matters.¹⁸

True to his word, the views of the Yugoslav leadership were elaborated more fully when the plenum opened on 23 November. In his opening remarks Tito made clear that the Soviet leadership 'recognises we are building socialism in our own way' and that Yugoslavia had a right to its own foreign policy. This was a victory, he said, although he sensed that the Soviet Union still thought rather differently from what was said in the letters. He felt the Soviet side still thought, that 'we should join their family, enter their camp, although we have said that we will join no-one's camp'. Kardelj

explained why, despite such reservations, Yugoslavia should accept the invitation to talks; healthy forces were emerging in the Soviet Union, therefore 'we should support Khrushchev and his attempt to have a discussion with us'. Winding up, Tito described the prospect of talks as 'a great victory after six years of struggle'.¹⁹

While Tito was on his official visits to India and Burma, Khrushchev found himself under pressure from within the Soviet Presidium. At the end of November all seemed well. The Presidium met on 25 November, discussed Tito's letter and the current state of trade with Yugoslavia, and instructed Suslov to draft a response to Tito which would also be circulated to the fraternal parties of Eastern Europe. On 28 November, when a party was held at the Yugoslav Embassy in Moscow to mark Yugoslav National Day, Malenkov, Molotov, Khrushchev and Bulganin all attended and shared a toast 'to Comrade Tito'.²⁰ However, by the end of December, the process of normalisation once again got caught up with Moscow power politics and Khrushchev's need to find allies in his struggle against his rivals. As Khrushchev prepared to move against Malenkov, he allowed those opposed to normalisation with Yugoslavia to let off steam. Trade talks had been taking place between Soviet and Yugoslav delegations in Moscow for some time, and to mark their virtual completion, the deal was signed on 5 January 1955, the entire Soviet leadership visited the Yugoslav delegation towards the end of December. Khrushchev, Malenkov, Molotov, Kaganovich and Bulganin were all present at the Yugoslav Embassy when Khrushchev initiated an animated exchange about why the improvement in Soviet-Yugoslav relations was taking so long. He stressed: 'we are communists, you are communists; we are Slavs, you are Slavs; we are Orthodox, you are Orthodox', so why were things moving slowly?

The head of the Yugoslav trade delegation tried to joke that 'sometimes it is better to live with a good neighbour than a brother', but that merely made matters worse. Molotov cut in to defend the actions of the Cominform arguing that it had been established 'for consultation not to give orders'; this hardly improved the mood. When the Yugoslavs present mentioned 'Stalinism', Khrushchev protested: 'There is no such thing as "Stalinism". Stalin was a Leninist! All of us here worked with him and are his pupils. He lived and died a communist! We stand and fall by him, is that not the case, comrades?' To sour the atmosphere further, Molotov reminded the Yugoslavs of Lenin's numerous works criticising the idea of workers' councils and condemning them as 'syndicalist', before Khrushchev butted in to make clear that self-management in Yugoslavia would not be an encumbrance when it came to improving relations.²¹ At a further dinner between the Yugoslav trade delegation and its hosts, held at Molotov's dacha on 30 December, again with Khrushchev, Malenkov and Mikoyan in attendance, the Soviet side repeated the tactic of stirring up a row by criticising a recent speech by Kardelj in Sarajevo which had referred to 'democratic socialism'. Khrushchev said the Soviet Presidium was not clear 'who the Yugoslavs wanted to be with', and he hoped that, if not immediately, the Yugoslavs could rejoin the Cominform. The Yugoslav side made clear there could be no return to the 'old type of relations'. Khrushchev responded that the Poles and the Chinese had their own roads to socialism, but were part of 'the camp' as Yugoslavia should be.²²

On 15 January 1955 Suslov wrote to Khrushchev explaining that in a recent speech in Norway, Kardelj had shown himself 'to be no further to the Left than Kautsky' by talking about socially owned rather than state-owned property; this was 'a step back from socialism to capitalism'. Instead of ignoring such comments as in the past, when the Soviet Presidium met on 19 January, Khrushchev proposed that relations with Yugoslavia should be put on hold. Having made these concessions to hardliners, Khrushchev felt strong enough to move against Malenkov, who was dismissed as Prime Minister and replaced by Bulganin when the Presidium met on 31 January; these changes were only made public at a meeting of the Supreme Soviet on 8 February.²³ Most Yugoslavs interpreted the dismissal of Malenkov as victory for the hardliners, but when Tito returned from his tour of Burma and India on 12 February, he suggested that the changes in Moscow were not necessarily for the worse, and he proved to be right.²⁴ Molotov had used his speech to the Supreme Soviet on 8 February to attack Yugoslavia, but when the Soviet Presidium met on 22 February its discussion of Yugoslav affairs was measured. Considering both the reply to Tito's letter of 16 November and the letter to the fraternal parties, the Soviet Presidium agreed simply to take care in the process of improving relations with Yugoslavia and to play down the issue of action at Party level, since this would be possible only 'on the basis of joint recognition of the principles of Marxism–Leninism'.²⁵

Perhaps sensing that Khrushchev needed a little help now that he seemed ready to confront the hardliners again, Tito decided to confront what Molotov had said to the Supreme Soviet. Describing the speech as 'an attempt to hush up the actual facts', he insisted to the Yugoslav Parliament on 7 March that 'it is high time matters were explained as they really are and as they developed, instead of stopping normalisation half-way'. Tito took particular issue with Molotov's suggestion that Yugoslavia needed to do more to improve bilateral relations, since it had departed from the policies pursued from 1945 to 1947. Tito stressed that 'Mr Molotov's' comments did not correspond to reality.²⁶ Tito's tactic worked. In a clear snub to Molotov on Khrushchev's part, Tito's speech was published in *Pravda* on 10 March. On 14 March the Soviet Presidium agreed the text of a reply to Tito's letter of 16 November. Sent on the 17th, the reply agreed on the need for a personal meeting and that this should 'not be long delayed'. Tito accepted on 16 April that Khrushchev would head a delegation to Yugoslavia in the immediate future.²⁷

On the eve of Khrushchev's visit the Soviet Presidium witnessed another bitter clash between Khrushchev and Molotov. Molotov argued that in 1948 the Yugoslavs had rejected Marxism–Leninism and had adopted a revisionist path; before any new agreement could be reached, the Yugoslavs needed to join the Warsaw Pact, which had just been established by the Soviet Union and its East European allies, and to renew the Soviet–Yugoslav Friendship Treaty signed in April 1945 and abrogated by the Soviet Union in 1949; Tito, Molotov alleged, was no better than Trotsky. Molotov also protested about an article by Defence Minister Georgii Zhukov in *Pravda* on 8 May: this article, in which the Yugoslav partisans were praised, had not been discussed in the Presidium; what was more Khrushchev had himself edited Zhukov's text to heighten the praise for Tito. Molotov's allegations led to a long discussion in the Soviet

Presidium about the events of 1948, with Mikoyan backing Khrushchev and calling for 'the incorrect decisions of the Cominform' to be changed, and Molotov once again insisting that in 1948 the Yugoslav followed the path of 'bourgeois nationalism' and were still trying to weaken the socialist camp. Meeting almost continuously from 23 to 25 May, the Soviet Presidium continued these Yugoslav discussions, with Molotov constantly sniping that in 1948 the Yugoslavs had moved away from positions they had accepted in 1945, and Mikoyan stressing the need to make clear that Beria had been responsible for much of the misinformation circulated in 1948. Mikoyan believed that in 1948, Yugoslav affairs had been handled 'over the heads of the Central Committee' by Stalin, Molotov and the security apparatus. Only on 25 May was the text of the speech Khrushchev would make at Belgrade airport hammered out, although to maintain the façade of unity Molotov, who was not to form part of the delegation, came to Moscow airport to see his comrades off.²⁸

RENEWING COMMUNISM

Khrushchev, accompanied by Bulganin, Mikoyan, *Pravda* editor Dmitrii Shepilov and Deputy Foreign Minister Gromyko, arrived in Belgrade on 26 May 1955. Khrushchev read out the speech agreed with such difficulty by the Soviet Presidium which, although it expressed 'sincere regret', then moved on to put the blame for Soviet failings on Beria. At the end of the speech, Khrushchev raised again the issue of inter-party relations by referring to the need for 'a joint understanding on the basis of Marxism-Leninism'. Although Tito's letter of 16 November 1954 had included a willingness to talk about Party matters, Molotov's speech in February 1955 had caused the Yugoslavs to revert to their stance that normalisation would be a two-stage process, state matters would be resolved first, before Party matters were addressed, and the agenda agreed on 20 May had made very clear that this was simply a state visit. Tito therefore responded with fury, prevented Khrushchev's speech being translated, refused to make a speech in response and simply escorted Khrushchev to his car. Once the Soviet delegation had arrived in central Belgrade, it considered returning straight to Moscow, but Khrushchev insisted that they stay on. The following day he explained to Tito that the speech was the work of the Soviet Presidium and he had no choice but to give it.²⁹

Khrushchev's willingness to come clean about differences within the Soviet Presidium improved the atmosphere enormously, especially after Khrushchev conceded that the 1948 dispute began 'accidentally, on the basis of false information'; this, after all, had been Yugoslavia's public stance in March 1948.³⁰ As the talks got underway, Tito moved from the public explanation of the break to what he had always seen as its essence, the Great Power approach of the Soviet Union to politics as manifested in its wartime agreements with the allies, and in particular the percentages agreement which, without consulting Yugoslav politicians, had allocated Yugoslavia 'fifty-fifty' between Britain and the Soviet Union. Mikoyan took the wind out of the Yugoslav sails at this point by informing Tito that the percentages agreement had actually helped Tito, since the British had at first suggested that Yugoslavia be allocated to them 100 per cent. Khrushchev used his talks with Tito to stress that, no matter how much Yugoslavia had

suffered from Stalin's whims, those working closely with him had suffered more. He catalogued the malign influence of Beria, and revealed to Tito that Stalin had once accused even him of being a Ukrainian 'bourgeois nationalist'.³¹ He talked of the thousands of innocent Party members released from prison and recently taken back into the Party. Khrushchev assessed Stalin at length, his absolute commitment to the cause of the working class, but the terrible things which had been necessary to correct after his death; perhaps it was better not to judge him according to the stage of his life when he had betrayed weakness, Khrushchev mused. Khrushchev also made clear to Tito that 'some people' had opposed him coming to Belgrade, but he was determined to look into the heart of the matter and take things further'.³² On the third day of talks, Tito rewarded Khrushchev's candour with a concession. As they drove around Brioni in one of Tito's many cars, he made clear that progress on ideological issues would come, but it would take time; he would initiate an exchange of letters. Khrushchev pounced at once and Tito agreed to Khrushchev's suggestion that this letter should be written before the Soviet delegation left Belgrade. The Yugoslav side was concerned at the way in which the Soviet side kept stressing the need for solidarity among socialist countries if socialism were to survive, and so the letter the Yugoslavs presented explicitly raised the question of the future of the Cominform.³³

The Belgrade Declaration, signed at the end of the visit, established the principles of sovereignty, equality and non-interference in the affairs of each other's state. Khrushchev returned to Moscow to face the fury of Molotov. Addressing the Soviet Presidium on 7 July 1955 he elaborated the view that 'it is possible that different countries can apply different forms and methods of building socialism', but that communist parties needed 'tight' relations so that they could 'closely co-ordinate action'. There was no disagreement when the following day Khrushchev cancelled Yugoslavia's outstanding debts, but Molotov was determined to raise what he saw as issues of principle.³⁴ Mikoyan urged him to back the Presidium, but Molotov was determined on a more outspoken course.³⁵ A Soviet Communist Party Plenum was underway and would hear Khrushchev's report on Yugoslav affairs; Molotov resolved to disrupt that Plenum. In his speech, Khrushchev addressed head on the role played by Stalin. He made clear that although the first letter sent in 1948 had gone out in the name of the Politburo, he had never seen it. Khrushchev also commented although 'we all respect and will continue to respect Comrade Stalin', in his last years, 'when Stalin was greatly incapacitated', many wrongs took place. 'True, we have now rectified things,' he said, 'but how many honest people have we lost'.³⁶ There was also the issue of misinformation provided by Beria, and Khrushchev expressed the conviction that if Stalin had been correctly informed 'he would have studied the situation in more depth and not allowed a break with Yugoslavia'; Beria had fabricated the Rajk trial, which meant that the 1949 Cominform resolution was 'unjust and mistaken' and that the only choice was now 'to return to the positions of Marxism-Leninism'. Khrushchev's only note of caution was that care had to be taken during the process of normalisation, since views alien to communism had been allowed to take root in many organs of the Yugoslav press.³⁷

Molotov then addressed the plenum, making a long speech which repeated his view that in 1948 the Yugoslavs had abandoned the policies they had followed since 1945, and had turned towards nationalism; the current concessions now being made to Belgrade meant turning away from Marxism–Leninism. In line with the principles of solidarity which applied to the Soviet Presidium, in turn first Bulganin then Mikoyan, then Shepilov and finally Suslov all attacked Molotov. Next, in a piece of theatre, Pavel Yudin, the former editor of the Belgrade based Cominform journal, was brought out to explain how Žujović not only reported on Yugoslav Politburo sessions to the Soviet embassy, but even smuggled to them important documents; it was understandable that the Yugoslav side resented this, Yudin explained. During the debate, Khrushchev tried to clarify his remaining disagreements with Tito. 'It is an absolute theoretical nonsense that there is a Russian, Chinese or a Yugoslav road', he said. Forms could be different, but 'the essence is one'. The Yugoslavs were disregarding Marxist–Leninist principles when they propagate 'the false view that Yugoslavia can develop as a socialist country independently from other countries in the socialist camp'. Closing the Plenum, Khrushchev made no direct reference to Molotov's behaviour but noted the need 'to make the Presidium a little younger'.³⁸

Throughout part of August and the whole of September 1955 more trade talks continued between the two countries and during these talks Mikoyan, who led the delegation, held a meeting with Tito. During this meeting Mikoyan went well beyond the question of trade, indeed the complete range of ideological issues were discussed. On his return to Moscow, he sent a copy of his report on this meeting to Khrushchev, then on holiday in Yalta. Although progress seemed to be being made, as preparations for the Twentieth Congress of the Soviet Communist Party began, Mikoyan urged caution. The Soviet Presidium planned a statement 'On certain achievements in the normalisation of relations with Yugoslavia', which would be used as the basis for discussion with representatives of the fraternal parties at a meeting in January 1956, to be held prior to the congress. This document noted that despite the continuing existence of 'erroneous views' on a range of issues, important steps had been taken by Yugoslav comrades 'to correct their mistakes'; Mikoyan, however, added a preface which made clear that 'Party' issues still presented a stumbling block which would not be resolved quickly.³⁹

What suddenly accelerated the improvement in Soviet–Yugoslav relations were the decisions taken by the Twentieth Party Congress when it assembled on 14–25 February 1956. The Yugoslav ambassador was enthusiastic about Khrushchev's opening report, which in his view raised the issue of different forms of transition to socialism in different countries, but it was the Secret Speech on Stalin's personality cult which transformed the situation. In this speech Khrushchev included a statement to the effect that the affair with Yugoslavia 'was invented from beginning to end' and had no political foundation; Stalin had boasted to Khrushchev, 'I flick my little finger and there will be no more Tito'. There were issues with the Yugoslavs, Khrushchev stated, but these had been absurdly exaggerated by Stalin. Khrushchev gave a copy of his speech to the Yugoslav ambassador and asked him to send it to Tito.⁴⁰

Tito responded to Khrushchev's Secret Speech by appointing a new ambassador to Moscow, Veljko Mićunović, formerly head of the Soviet Department of the Yugoslav Foreign Office. On his appointment Tito told him personally not to quarrel with Khrushchev, but to do everything possible to work with him.⁴¹ On 13–14 March the Yugoslav Party held a plenum to analyse the Secret Speech, and Tito explained that 'events in the Soviet Union had evolved much faster than we could have expected'. It would be 'easier to talk with them', he suggested and referred to the 'Khrushchev group' which had initiated 'very important and brave deeds'.⁴² Commenting on what Khrushchev had said about Yugoslavia, Tito stressed that for all its brevity 'it gives the essential recognition that they behaved incorrectly towards us, mistakenly; that has enormous importance, not only for us and for the whole world proletariat, but for the Twentieth Party Congress as well'. Tito then outlined what he saw as the enormous difficulties faced by the Khrushchev leadership, which, after more than twenty-five years of the Stalin period, when not only members of the Communist Party but the whole Soviet people were brought up 'on the cult of one unsinning personality and the system he created', had decided to cast everything aside. After 'perhaps the darkest period in the history of the Russian people, and not only the Russian people but the international workers' movement', it was understandable that this was not easy. They would change gradually, but once 'they have thrown off all that negative ballast, which still holds things back', then the Soviet Union would be able 'to play the role in the world of the carrier of socialist thought and earn the authority which in that case no-one could deny it'. What was more, Yugoslavia could say that 'it played a decisive role in breaking that system'.⁴³

Tito clearly felt Yugoslavia was playing a crucial role in the gradual de-Stalinisation of the world communist movement. As he told his Party Executive on 2 April 1956 'we were quite right in our expectation that, right from the beginning, we should help those anti-Stalin forces working for agreement with us'. After the Belgrade Declaration, the Yugoslavs had been 'rather cautious towards them', but now, after the Twentieth Party Congress, 'the situation has changed'.⁴⁴ For Tito it was clear that what was happening in Moscow was not a result of new tactics or a manoeuvre, but represented true intentions. Thus he felt 'we should give support to the Khrushchev group' for 'excessive reservation from our side will only feed bureaucratic, Stalinist elements in the Soviet Union'. And Tito was not alone in feeling this obligation to the wider communist cause. Discussions within the Executive revealed how the process of de-Stalinisation, which had begun in Moscow, aroused unprecedented enthusiasm among the Yugoslav leaders. One member, Tempo, recalled later how 'we genuinely believed that we had been proved right and as true communists felt an obligation to help the comrades in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe'.⁴⁵

Even as the Yugoslav Party Executive was meeting, events in Moscow were gathering pace. On 2 April Khrushchev informed Mićunović that the Cominform would be dissolved. Khrushchev felt there needed to be something in its place, and what was being floated in Moscow was the idea of establishing four regional organisations, one for Western Europe, one for Asia, one for Latin America and 'one for co-operation between the communist parties in power in Eastern Europe';

Khrushchev asked for Tito's views and Mićunović suggested they were likely to be negative. Taking this on board, Khrushchev simply dissolved the Cominform on 18 April. The following day he wrote to Tito suggesting he visit Moscow on 1 June, and enquiring rather cheekily whether he wanted to be invited as head of party, government or state. Then, towards the end of April, Mićunović gained the impression that Khrushchev's position in the Soviet Presidium was weakening, and right enough, the prospect of Tito visiting Moscow had prompted another outburst from Molotov. On 25 May the Soviet Presidium met and heard Molotov criticise Yugoslavia and in particular an off-hand comment Tito had made about events which had taken place 'under the tsardom of Stalin'. Although Molotov won no support from potential allies such as Kaganovich and Malenkov, Khrushchev decided to press home his advantage and pushed through a proposal that Molotov be dismissed as Foreign Minister and replaced by Shepilov. Mićunović, who noted how Khrushchev seemed to be under very great pressure, was surprised at his success in dismissing Molotov.⁴⁶

Tito visited the Soviet Union from 2 to 23 June 1956, accompanied by Kardelj and Koča Popović. From the Soviet side he met Khrushchev, Mikoyan, Bulganin, the new Foreign Minister Shepilov, State President Kliment Voroshilov and, despite his dismissal, Molotov. One of the outstanding issues between the two countries was the leadership of the Hungarian Communist Party. Khrushchev had already conceded on several occasions that the Rajk Trial was a fabrication and that the 1949 Cominform Resolution which stemmed from it untenable, and yet Rákosi and those who had organised the trial were still in power. The Yugoslavs were unhappy with this and since the end of 1955 had been in touch with Rákosi's deposed rival, Imre Nagy.⁴⁷ When Tito arrived in Moscow, Khrushchev informed him that Suslov would shortly be visiting Hungary to sort the matter out. Hoping that this would satisfy Tito, Khrushchev turned to what he saw as the key issue for the Soviet side, how to organise relations between communist parties now Yugoslavia was back in the fold and the Cominform had been dissolved. Khrushchev essentially repeated his views expressed at the July 1955 Plenum of the Soviet Communist Party, stressing that communist countries needed to co-ordinate their actions; in this sense, therefore, the Cominform had played a positive role. Molotov insisted bluntly, as he always had done, that there could only be 'two camps' and the Yugoslavs needed to make up their minds which camp they were in.

Tito explained that Yugoslavia would not formally join any camp, but that it did see itself as part of the socialist world; it did not see the need for the Warsaw Pact, but had no ambition to dismantle the Warsaw Pact, or to 'detach' the rest of Eastern Europe from the Soviet Union. Khrushchev was eager for a compromise. He suggested that in the place of the term 'socialist camp' another term be used such as 'socialist front', or as Mikoyan suggested, 'socialist commonwealth'. Under continuing pressure to accept the need for some sort of organisation of communist parties, Tito played his trump card, arguing that at present Yugoslavia had no relations with the other East European communist parties so any such idea was by definition premature. It was then left to Kardelj and Mikoyan to draft a declaration which both sides could sign. Progress was made only after Khrushchev agreed to work with the Yugoslav draft, explaining to

Tito on 9 June that 'what was allowed to the Yugoslavs would not be allowed to the others'.⁴⁸ In the end, the text of the declaration was a clear victory for the Yugoslavs, which the Soviet side accepted rather reluctantly. The Soviet Presidium agreed 'to tell the Yugoslav comrades that we are not pleased with the text of the declaration but will not argue about it'.⁴⁹ The Moscow Declaration marked an important milestone. It ended any sense in which the Soviet Communist Party could claim to remain a 'directing' party within the communist movement. The text made clear:

Believing that the ways of socialist development vary in different countries and conditions, that the wealth of the forms of socialist development contributes to its strength, and proceeding from the fact that any tendency to impose their views as regards the ways and forms of socialist development is alien to both sides, the two sides have agreed that the aforementioned co-operation should be based on complete voluntariness and equality, on friendly criticism, and on comradely exchange of views on contentious issues between our parties.⁵⁰

Given the radical tone of the Moscow Declaration, it was perhaps not surprising that after Tito's departure, Khrushchev was immediately on the defensive. On 21 June, while Tito was returning to Yugoslavia via Ukraine, representatives of the 'camp', the communist parties of Eastern Europe, were called to a conference in Moscow. Khrushchev outlined the reasons for the dissolution of the Cominform and, as he had warned Tito he would, he explained that the Moscow Declaration was not generally applicable. A week later rioting broke out in the Polish town of Poznan on 28 June. This was the first sign that the Secret Speech and the de-Stalinisation campaign were having a destabilising effect on Eastern Europe and Khrushchev came under even more pressure from his hardliner opponents in Moscow. Mićunović noted how a statement issued in Moscow on 30 June about the cult of personality seemed to draw back from what Khrushchev had said in the Secret Speech and 'signalled the resurrection of the hardline faction'. On 6 July, Khrushchev confided to Mićunović that 'the whole Presidium is watching me; for the moment they are still not saying anything, just watching me'. As a result when on 10 July Tito summarised the Moscow talks for his government ministers he stressed that Khrushchev still faced opposition, 'a second faction' was evident and whenever a question relating to the Party was discussed 'Khrushchev would immediately look at the others'.⁵¹ Indeed, on 13 July the Soviet Central Committee issued a letter to the fraternal parties which stressed the 'forced nature' of the Moscow Declaration; from a Soviet viewpoint, East European parties did not have the right 'to be led by the Yugoslav example'. At the same time a similarly worded resolution was to be sent to all Soviet Communist Party branches and read out at closed Party meetings. This made clear that the Yugoslav draft of the Moscow Declaration had included many 'incorrect postulates', among them a refusal to accept that relations between communist states were by definition of a special kind; the Soviet Union had gone along with this draft 'in order not to inhibit further the improvement of relations'. This resolution also added that it had been 'premature' for Bulganin to refer to Tito as a 'Leninist' as he had done during one of the toasts made during Tito's visit.⁵²

As part of this campaign to hold the line on the concessions made to Yugoslavia, Khrushchev's promise to Tito that the leadership of the Hungarian Communist Party would be changed also ran into resistance. The same day that the Soviet Central Committee clarified 'the forced nature' of the Moscow Declaration, Khrushchev warned Mićunović that he had not been able to secure Rákosi's dismissal. Suslov had gone to Budapest on 8 July, but had returned empty handed. Mikoyan would soon visit Budapest to try again, Khrushchev promised. Good as his word three days later Khrushchev could inform Mićunović that 'we have fared better than we expected'; Rákosi would be dismissed and Rajk would be rehabilitated. Khrushchev then explained that Mikoyan would like to travel from Budapest to Brioni for talks with Tito on 21–22 July and hoped this could be agreed. Tito said yes to Mikoyan's visit as part of his conscious strategy of supporting Khrushchev. He felt that to reject Khrushchev's personal request could further weaken Khrushchev's standing within the Soviet leadership. While Mikoyan was at Brioni, Rákosi's replacement Erno Gerő wrote to Tito admitting past errors and requesting talks.⁵³

Not long after Mikoyan's visit, Tito decided to undertake a new initiative to bolster Khrushchev's position, informing Mićunović on 9 August that he planned to invite Khrushchev to holiday in Yugoslavia. There was not an immediate response, so on 20 August Tito invited Voroshilov as State President to visit Yugoslavia in October. This prompted Khrushchev into action and he replied on 23 August that he would be in Crimea at the start of September, but he would come to Yugoslavia after that; he added that Tito should then return with him and continue the holiday in Crimea. Tito hoped that a *tête à tête* exchange with Khrushchev would help maintain the momentum of their rapprochement and enable him to exert a positive influence on the Soviet attitude towards developments in Poland and Hungary. Successful de-Stalinisation in Eastern Europe could determine the future of the communist movement.⁵⁴

Khrushchev arrived at Brioni on 19 September, but it was only on the 26th, the day before the two leaders were due to depart for Crimea, that he raised the concerns he still had about Yugoslav policy. He explained that he was trying to repair Stalin's mistakes and wanted to do so in a way that would strengthen not weaken the camp. Yugoslav propaganda about 'de-Stalinisation' and 'democratisation' did not help because the West intervened by deliberately championing Yugoslavia; at the same time counter-revolutionaries in Eastern Europe also identified with Yugoslavia. To ensure 'unity of action' the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia should not compete for influence in Eastern Europe. Tito responded by noting that the process of de-Stalinisation seemed to have stalled. In particular, he could not understand why Nagy had not been returned to power in Hungary. There then followed a tetchy exchange with Khrushchev accusing Tito of sympathising with 'anti-regime elements' in the people's democracies of Eastern Europe, and Tito responding that no-one could question the Yugoslavs' commitment to Marxism–Leninism.⁵⁵

This contretemps did not prevent the holidays continuing as planned. Tito stayed in the Crimea until 5 October. After the event he recalled that during his stay on the Black Sea coast, Khrushchev had made another concerted push to persuade him to

reintegrate Yugoslavia into the 'camp', and that his refusal caused open consternation and frustration among the Soviet leadership. It might have done. Khrushchev still faced opposition from within the Soviet Presidium to the policy of reconciliation with Yugoslavia, as Bulganin warned Mićunović shortly after Tito's arrival, and any stubbornness on Tito's part would only reinforce the arguments of those opposed to reconciliation. However, Tito's negative memory of the meeting could be skewed by hindsight, for the few contemporary records showed some positive achievements. Khrushchev told Mićunović that not long after Tito's departure he had written an extremely positive report on the Crimea talks for the Soviet Presidium, although the two men had not been able to reach a common opinion on Stalin's personality. Indeed, at the start of the visit Mićunović had noted in his diary that 'things appear now to be going better for the Russians than they did in June during Tito's official visit'. Tito certainly felt under pressure when Khrushchev engineered an apparently chance meeting with Gerő, who was also visiting Crimea at this time. However, this meeting meant that Khrushchev was involving Tito in the politics of the de-Stalinisation of Eastern Europe. Gerő used the occasion to inform Tito that Nagy was to be invited to rejoin the Party, and on the strength of this Tito agreed to receive a Hungarian Party delegation in Budapest on his return.⁵⁶

Although on Tito's return to Yugoslavia *Borba* referred to 'outstanding questions' between the two sides, Tito did thereafter receive delegations from Bulgaria, Romania and Hungary in quick succession showing that he had agreed to restore relations with the fraternal parties.⁵⁷ Indeed, it is arguable that as a result of this visit, Khrushchev started work on a document which would grant to the whole of Eastern Europe the relationship with Moscow accepted by the Moscow Declaration. Yugoslav influence can certainly be seen in the Declaration by the Soviet Government on the Principles of Development and Further Strengthening of Friendship and Co-operation between Socialist States which stated:

United by the common ideals of building a socialist society and by the principles of proletarian internationalism, the countries of the great commonwealth of socialist nations can build their mutual relations only on the principles of complete equality, or respect for territorial integrity, state independence and sovereignty and of non-interference in one another's internal affairs. Not only does this not exclude close fraternal co-operation and mutual aid among the countries of the socialist commonwealth in economic, political and cultural sphere, on the contrary it presupposes these things.⁵⁸

This declaration was issued on 30 October at the height of the Hungarian Revolution as part of a last ditch effort to help Nagy negotiate the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Hungary. The Hungarian Revolution had begun on 22 October when Gerő was in Belgrade for the talks agreed in Crimea. As events in Hungary unfolded, the Yugoslav Government welcomed the appointment of the Nagy Government, especially the decision to establish workers' council, something Tito had urged on Gerő at their talks. However, as the level of violence increased, Tito began to fear things were getting out of control. On 28 October he told a visiting delegation that twenty communists had been hanged in Hungary, it was 'a terrible bloodbath'. On 31

October the Yugoslav ambassador to Budapest told the Hungarian Government of its 'concern' at the drift to the Right and urged that 'no further concessions be made'. The Hungarian declaration of neutrality issued on 1 November Tito dismissed as 'a stupid manifesto'.⁵⁹

On 2 November Khrushchev and Malenkov flew to Yugoslavia incognito in a small Ilyushin 14 plane; they were taken to Brioni where they were met by Tito, Kardelj, Ranković and Mićunović. The meeting, of which no formal record was kept, lasted from 7 pm that evening until 3 am the following morning. The Soviet side did not hide the fact that they were preparing to intervene militarily in Hungary in a couple of days time; whether Nagy 'was a dupe or an agent of Imperialism' was not yet clear. Some political possibilities existed, the Soviet leaders explained. János Kádár, one of Nagy's ministers and the new Hungarian Party leader, had arrived in the Soviet Union and was on his way to Moscow, the Miskolc miners remained loyal to the communist cause; but any political initiative around such forces would have to be accompanied by force. Khrushchev was open about the fact that some of the Soviet leadership, especially among the military, felt that since 'they', the Khrushchev group of reformers, had come to power, things had gone from bad to worse – and now Hungary looked like being lost. The Yugoslavs responded at first by suggesting that if the correct action had been taken in Hungary earlier, the current crisis could have been avoided. Then they outlined their position. They had backed Nagy's first government and the replacement of Gerő, but they now recognised that the Right was in the ascendancy, that things were moving towards counter-revolution, and that intervention was essential. They urged that any intervention should not be by force alone. Political preparations had to be made in 'an effort to save what could be saved' by establishing 'something like a revolutionary government composed of Hungarians who could give the people some kind of political lead'.

Khrushchev pointed out that such a government was indeed being formed, under Ferenc Münnich, the former Hungarian ambassador to Moscow whom Khrushchev had got to know well in the 1930s. The Yugoslavs suggested Kadar was a better bet. Khrushchev accepted this, as well as the Yugoslav insistence that this new government should categorically condemn Rákosi. However, the Soviet side did not accept the Yugoslav proposal that Geza Loszonczi, one of Nagy's close advisers, be included in the new government. As Mićunović recalled, 'it emerged from the discussion that the Russians know that Loszonczi is in contact with us and regard him as one of Nagy's doubtful characters'. Khrushchev and Malenkov urged Tito to try and influence any of those surrounding Nagy with whom the Yugoslavs had contact, and this the Yugoslavs agreed to do. As Mićunović recorded it, 'we do not know what opportunity we may have to influence Nagy and try to reduce the number of casualties ... but we agreed that we would try'.⁶⁰

OVERCOMING THE NAGY INCIDENT

What was agreed at Brioni was that the Yugoslavs should help lessen the perceived counter-revolutionary danger in Hungary by isolating Nagy from the Right and persuading him to make a statement in support of the proposed new Kadar

Government. All present at Brioni knew that some of Nagy's supporters intended to seek asylum in the Yugoslav Embassy, if the situation deteriorated. The Soviet military intervention against Hungary began on 4 November and when Nagy himself sought sanctuary in the Yugoslav embassy in Budapest early that morning, the local diplomats considered this was a suitable way of both isolating him and bringing pressure to bear on him, so they raised no objections. Later that day Kardelj asked Moscow if a statement by Nagy was still needed, but he was told things had moved on, that a statement was no longer needed, and that Nagy should be handed over to the Soviet authorities. A crisis point had been reached in the understanding of how and when national sovereignty could be suspended for the good of the communist cause. Tito was adamant that Yugoslavia's national sovereignty made it impossible to hand over Nagy, although he had had few qualms about the Soviet Union violating Hungary's sovereignty by invading the country.

Tito replied to Moscow on 5 November that handing over Nagy was impossible, but suggested instead that Nagy be given free passage to Yugoslavia. Unable to appreciate why Tito was being so precious, the Soviet leadership immediately began to question his motives. Mićunović noted in his diary on 6 November, immediately on his return to Moscow from Brioni, that 'the Russians have started to accuse us of protecting the "leaders of the counter-revolution" in our embassy'. The following day Khrushchev informed him bluntly: 'the Yugoslav attitude to resolving the problem of Nagy will determine whether relations between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union would continue to develop in a friendly way or in the opposite direction'. As he saw it, giving Nagy asylum suggested that Nagy and his advisors 'had long been acting on instructions from Yugoslavia and that Yugoslavia was responsible for what they had done'. Khrushchev complained to Mićunović that he had struggled in the Soviet Presidium to get them to condemn Rákosi, and now it looked as if the Yugoslavs were trying to establish a new government opposed to that of Kadar.⁶¹

It is easy to understand Khrushchev's point of view. Not only did Nagy's presence in the Yugoslav Embassy appear, at first sight, to suggest that the Yugoslavs might be interested in establishing a rival government to that of Kadar, but much of the resistance within Hungary was being led by factory councils which, although they operated completely unlike the factory councils in Yugoslavia, did claim to have been inspired by this different vision of socialism. On 8 November, Tito made clear that he understood many of Khrushchev's concerns, but felt that Khrushchev had done little to try and appreciate Yugoslavia's predicament and its 'readiness to resolve this issue in the spirit of reciprocal friendly relations'. Tito's letter recapitulated what the Yugoslav side had said in Brioni, reminded Khrushchev that he and Malenkov had agreed that some of the communists working with Nagy, if not Nagy himself, could be rallied to the Kadar government, and on the basis of this 'we took some measures in Budapest on the afternoon of 3 November'. The letter spelled out that one of those Hungarians approached by the Yugoslavs had asked previously if he could take refuge in the Yugoslav Embassy, and permission was granted. However, on the morning of the 4th it was not just one man who had turned up at the embassy but Nagy and fifteen other government leaders. In the general confusion it was felt that this had opened up the

opportunity of persuading Nagy to issue a statement in support of Kadar. Thereafter the Yugoslavs repeatedly asked Moscow side for guidance. Tito concluded: 'Despite the malevolent interpretation some people put on our relationship to Nagy and the rest of the group in Budapest, we want to emphasise that we have absolutely no connection with this group, nor with the events in Hungary'. If individuals in Hungary had spoken favourably about Yugoslavia, that did not mean Yugoslavia was responsible for internal events in Hungary 'which had very different causes'.⁶²

Tito was still keen to influence the power struggles in Moscow in Khrushchev's favour, and the lesson of the previous year was that it was worth taking an initiative to which Khrushchev could respond, thus taking the process of de-Stalinisation a stage further. So in Pula on 11 November, Tito decided to explore what exactly was meant by de-Stalinisation. In this Pula speech, Tito commented that Khrushchev had approached de-Stalinisation as a question of the personality cult and 'not as a question of a system'. This had been brought home to him while in Crimea when he realised that the Soviet leadership had 'a wrong understanding of the causes of the developing crisis in Poland and Hungary'. This speech constantly referred to Stalinists and non-Stalinists among the Soviet leadership, for as he explained to the Soviet ambassador, his purpose had been to point out the divisions within the leadership and thus to help those 'who are thinking in a new way'.⁶³ He badly miscalculated. He underestimated both the weak position of Khrushchev within the leadership and the Soviet Presidium's instinct for solidarity under foreign pressure.

When Khrushchev met Mićunović on 12 November he compared the Chinese way of doing things favourably to that of the Yugoslavs, saying 'they do not boast about themselves or try to impose their experiences on others as the Yugoslavs do'. Although he had not yet heard what Tito had said in Pula, he was particularly angered at the way the Yugoslav press repeated the terms 'de-Stalinisation and Stalinism'; the problem was, he said, that now 'everybody in the East wanted to measure things by Yugoslav standards'. He took the same line on 17 November when the two men met to discuss Tito's Pula speech. The speech was all about 'Stalinists', suggesting that the whole system, not just the cult of personality, was at fault. Tito's letter to the Soviet Presidium of 8 November had been 'comradely and friendly', why had things changed? Ignoring Mićunović's explanation that the change was because *Pravda* seemed to support the view that 'the Yugoslavs were responsible for Hungary', Khrushchev made clear that, as a result of Tito's Pula speech, he would have to join those in the Soviet Presidium calling for a public response to Yugoslavia, and this would open up a new conflict which would be hard to stop; a couple of days later he told Mićunović that the Soviet Presidium was divided into those who wanted to go back to 1954 and those wanting to go back to 1948.⁶⁴ When the Soviet Presidium met on 20 November it decided on a U-turn on policy towards Yugoslavia, delaying recently promised economic credits; all Khrushchev could do by way of mitigation was to suggest that a planned letter to Tito needed to be 'tactful'. This change was quickly manifest on the pages of *Pravda*. On 23 November the Soviet daily wrote that the unrest in 1956 had not begun with justified workers' concerns, as Tito suggested, but was the work of counter-revolutionaries. The article went on to stress that the personality cult was just

that, a failing in Stalin's personality; there were no deficiencies in the Soviet system. In fact, *Pravda* went on, it was the Yugoslavs who sought to impose their system on other states by constantly writing about a 'Yugoslav road to socialism'.⁶⁵

On 22 November, when the Yugoslavs had received a written understanding that Nagy was free to return home, an undertaking agreed with the Soviet Presidium, Nagy left the Yugoslav embassy and was promptly arrested by the Soviet military as he boarded the bus awaiting him. Khrushchev commented in the Presidium on 27 November that it had been a mistake for 'our officer to get on the bus'.⁶⁶ He also seems to have been genuinely saddened by this turn of events, saying to Mićunović on 17 November 'if only you knew how I expected relations between us to improve' after the Crimea talks. Khrushchev felt Tito's ambition was to blame. He later wrote in his memoirs that 'Tito and his comrades aimed at acquiring a leading role in the communist movement, in any case, that is what I then thought.' He told Mićunović on 3 December that 'Tito harboured ambitions to assume the leading role in the communist movement and impose the Yugoslav model on others'. When two months later Mićunović and Khrushchev met up once again, Khrushchev spoke at length about how 'Tito had overestimated his strength' at the time of the Pula speech and 'had expected a different outcome'; it was for that reason that 'he had divided us into Stalinists and anti-Stalinists within the Soviet leadership'.⁶⁷ As Svetozar Rajak, the first historian to explore these events, has noted, 'both leaders were simultaneously comrades and rivals'. Khrushchev 'could not discard Stalin's precept that the cohesion of the bloc and its ideological uniformity were an essential precondition for Soviet security and the survival of socialism as a global system', while Tito 'felt obliged to help others discard Stalinism'.⁶⁸

Behind the scenes Khrushchev worked to keep the new dispute within bounds. On 27 November 1956 he told the Soviet Presidium that he saw no point in continuing to berate Tito over the Nagy affair: it was, in any case 'Hungary's affair'. However, when on 3 December Tito sent a letter complaining about the worsening state of relations, Khrushchev could not prevent the Soviet Presidium asking Suslov to draft a reply sent to Tito on 28 December. Although this letter was supposed to be 'friendly' in tone, the issues the Soviet Presidium wanted Tito to address included the charge that 'you gnashed your teeth in Hungary and things got out of control', although 'you had said you would do everything to liquidate it'. Among Soviet hardliners, the fear of what Tito's Yugoslavia represented was always there. Thus when on 27 March 1957 Molotov raised in the Soviet Presidium the possibility of Rákosi returning to Hungary, Kaganovich objected to the proposal on the grounds that then 'things will get worse and they will turn towards Yugoslavia'.⁶⁹

On 6 April 1957 Zhukov had told Mićunović that 'something must be done to get our top people together' and on 16 April Khrushchev's comments on Yugoslavia at a diplomatic gathering were assessed by Mićunović as 'very restrained and conciliatory'. So once again, Tito decided to try to take the initiative. Speaking on 19 April he stressed that in 1955 and 1956 he had appealed for patience in the process of normalisation. The Soviet Union, he said 'should not cling to every word put down in some newspaper, which unfortunately keeps recurring against our will'. Some leaders,

like Khrushchev, appeared conciliatory 'whereas we are suddenly faced with Suslov's attack because of our alleged "revisionism" and "national communism"'. This time Tito's tactic of intervening on Khrushchev's side worked.⁷⁰

The initial response was not good, for on 21 April the Soviet Union cancelled plans to construct a fertiliser plant in Yugoslavia, but when Khrushchev informed Mićunović of this, the ambassador 'gained the impression that Khrushchev does not personally approve the decision' but could not confront 'the solid majority at the top of the Soviet system which is against Yugoslavia'. However, Khrushchev was preparing to move against that solid majority. Molotov's suggestion of March 1957 that Rákosi should be allowed to return to Hungary clearly violated what had been agreed at Brioni on 2 November, as well as the subsequent Soviet Presidium decision. If passed, it would have been a very clear victory for the 'Stalinists'. On 25 April 1957, Khrushchev took a first swipe at these 'Stalinists' by bringing to the Soviet Presidium a proposal for the rehabilitation of Marshal Tukhashevskii and other Red Army generals purged by Stalin; he asked pointedly of his colleagues 'let the old members of the Politburo tell us how they decided to bring him to trial, how that first step was taken'. A week later, on 3 May, Khrushchev welcomed a speech Tito had recently made on Brioni to delegates of the Socialist Alliance and the following day invited him to Moscow for a private visit. Then on 31 May he presented the Soviet Presidium with an agenda item 'On Yugoslavia'. Khrushchev explained to his colleagues that in connection with the fortieth anniversary of the October Revolution the Soviet Union would be taking the initiative in calling a meeting of the leaderships of all communist parties of the socialist countries. As part of the preparations for that meeting the Yugoslav leaders were being invited to holiday in the Crimea. After the Presidium meeting the Secretariat was instructed to prepare an appropriate letter and to instruct the press to pay greater attention to Soviet-Yugoslav affairs.⁷¹

Khrushchev's apparent revival of interest in restoring relations with Yugoslavia was just one of the issues which prompted Molotov and the so-called 'Anti-Party Group' to attempt to depose Khrushchev when the Presidium met on 18–21 June. Although Molotov could muster seven of the eleven Presidium votes against Khrushchev, Khrushchev insisted his fate could only be decided by a full Central Committee Plenum, and by using a certain amount of intrigue he was able to encourage leading members of the Central Committee to stage a lobby demanding that such a plenum be held. The plenum began on 22 June and continued for a week; by the end of it Malenkov, Kaganovich and Molotov had been removed from both the Presidium and the Central Committee. It was a triumph for Khrushchev. At the height of the crisis, Khrushchev had hosted a reception for a visiting Yugoslav military mission, at which Khrushchev 'behaved almost cordially', thanking 'Comrade Tito' for the gift of a hunting shotgun. When on 8 July 1957 the rejuvenated Presidium discussed the question of whether or not Khrushchev should meet Tito, all agreed that a meeting should be planned for 3 August. In fact preparations were already underway. On 7 July Ranković and Kardelj arrived in Sochi for 'a holiday'. The Yugoslavs were optimistic. Kardelj informed his negotiating team that the defeat of the Anti-Party Group 'was not only a victory for Khrushchev but also for the Yugoslav line', because Khrushchev had

clearly referred to his opponents as 'Stalinists', and this was a categorisation he had objected to until then. The issue of a venue for the Khrushchev–Tito meeting took up much of the early discussion, but on 15 July 1957 the Presidium agreed to ask for Romania's help in finding a suitable neutral spot. On 19 July Khrushchev joined Kardelj and Ranković at their Black Sea resort.⁷²

The meeting between Tito and Khrushchev took place on 1–2 August in Snagov, near Bucharest. It had been essentially a Party meeting, to confirm that the two sides were working to improve relations on the basis of the Belgrade and Moscow Declarations. There was no mention of the planned Moscow meeting as such, just the 'special significance' of unity among the international working-class movement.⁷³ The communiqué, drawn up by the Soviet side, was accepted by the Yugoslavs, including the promise of support for Kadar's government in Hungary; the Yugoslav side, although somewhat reluctantly, was even ready to sign an official record of the talks a few days later. As Mićunović concluded, 'the talks themselves were smoother and more friendly than any we have had so far'. In essence 'friendly relations were restored' between the two countries and, more importantly, 'friendly personal relations were re-established between Tito and Khrushchev'.⁷⁴

THE PROGRAMME OF THE LEAGUE OF COMMUNISTS

Despite the optimism on both the Yugoslav and Soviet sides prompted by the ouster of the 'Stalinist' Anti-Party Group, the honeymoon scarcely lasted a month. Although discussion of the Moscow meeting of communist parties had been avoided in Bucharest, Khrushchev was keen for the Yugoslavs to attend. As late as 2 October Mićunović noted in his diary that it was 'not yet clear whether we will take part in the conference'. Khrushchev sent a delegation to hold talks in Belgrade, but on 18 October the Presidium was informed that these talks had broken down and the Yugoslavs had decided not to attend the Moscow meeting. Then on 29 October Tito cancelled his plans to travel to Moscow, as well as a planned tour of Asia, because of an acute attack of lumbago; this illness was widely perceived to be diplomatic. Khrushchev did not give up, deciding on 2 November that the Presidium should press on regardless, hold its meeting and sign a declaration at the end of it 'even if the Yugoslavs do not agree'. He even felt it was worth sending the delegation back to Belgrade with a copy of the draft declaration in case the Yugoslavs changed their minds. Still the Yugoslavs would not sign.⁷⁵

For the Yugoslavs, the declaration revived the concept of a bloc in which one party had a position of hegemony; it also made indirect criticisms of Yugoslavia while remaining silent on Stalin's crimes. Nevertheless Kardelj headed the Yugoslav delegation to Moscow for the fortieth anniversary celebrations, and, speaking in Russian, was one of those delegates allowed to address a special session of the Supreme Soviet on 6 November. Two days later Khrushchev used a dinner for the Yugoslav delegation to put yet more pressure on Kardelj's team. As he had promised the Presidium he would do, he made clear to the Yugoslavs that a declaration would be produced whether the Yugoslavs signed it or not. Kardelj explained once again why the Yugoslavs would be unable to sign it, arguing that what was described as a joint

declaration was no such thing since it had actually been drawn up by Soviet diplomats. Despite the bitterness of this exchange, Khrushchev offered a possible way out: the Yugoslavs could sign the declaration and then make public their reservations. The result was more talks on 10 and 12 November, at which Kardelj repeatedly stressed that the Yugoslavs felt that the declaration went beyond what had been agreed in Bucharest. Khrushchev's tactic almost worked, for it was only on 14 November, after regular exchanges with Belgrade, that the Yugoslav delegation decided that there were absolutely no circumstances in which they would sign. Yet there were clearly those on the Yugoslav side who had favoured signing: Mićunović noted in his diary on 17 November that 'complete agreement has been reached between our delegation and comrades in Yugoslavia', which suggested that this had not always the case. Khrushchev himself picked up rumours that Kardelj had been ready to sign but that Tito had personally vetoed the idea, which surprised Khrushchev since he felt he and Tito were getting along. After all his efforts had gone to waste, not surprisingly Khrushchev once again told Kardelj and Ranković that the Yugoslavs could not go on 'sitting on two stools'.⁷⁶

Despite this very public rebuff, Khrushchev remained surprisingly resilient. Addressing the Supreme Soviet in December 1957, he stated that although the Yugoslavs' failure to sign the declaration was 'negative', the ideological differences between the two countries were fewer than before and could well disappear entirely in the future. When on 17 February 1958 Mićunović raised the issue of the oft-postponed but long planned visit to Yugoslavia by the Soviet Head of State Voroshilov, Khrushchev made no objection. And yet, Mićunović sensed that Khrushchev had put Soviet-Yugoslav relations on hold until after the Yugoslavs had held their Seventh Party Congress. This congress was to adopt a new programme, and, if that programme contained an ideological statement, then, from a Soviet perspective, it could be a serious snub; the Yugoslavs would have failed to sign up to a joint ideological statement of communist beliefs, but were more than willing to draw up their own definition of the Yugoslav road to communism.

A draft version of the new programme was prepared in advance and widely circulated for amendment, not only within Yugoslavia but in translations abroad. On 4 April Mićunović visited Voroshilov to give him a copy prior to his state visit. While in the Kremlin, Mićunović met Mikoyan who told him rather sourly that he hoped the final version of the programme would be a dramatic improvement on the draft which, as far as he was concerned, represented 'a step backward by comparison with what we agreed and signed at the meeting in Romania'. Three days later Mićunović was informed that a Soviet delegation would no longer be attending the Seventh Party Congress. It was the Soviet view that the programme contradicted the declaration drawn up in Moscow on a large number of issues; it also implicitly opposed the idea of unity within the working-class movement, one of the principles agreed at Bucharest. In particular, in Bucharest it had specifically been agreed that the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia would not criticise each other in public, and the programme clearly did criticise the Soviet Union. A week before the Seventh Congress opened, Tito wrote to Khrushchev. As six months earlier, Khrushchev concluded from the letter that Tito

understood his position and that the programme was all the work of Kardelj. So Khrushchev suggested to Mićunović that Tito had not focussed properly on what was being proposed, and that if it were possible to postpone the congress, Soviet criticism would cease. Mićunović was non-committal, but conceded that moving from the draft to the final version of the programme was taking time and it could even be that the final version would be sent to a commission for consideration and confirmed only after the congress had ended. Nothing came of these schemes for a last-minute compromise and the Seventh Yugoslav Party Congress opened on 22 April. When the Soviet Presidium met on 24 April it decided that its response should be 'substantial criticisms in a comradely tone, without attacking individuals'.⁷⁷

At the Seventh Congress Tito reported that relations with the Soviet Union were still improving, but Kardelj's remarks were sharply critical of the socialist countries and Ranković's comments prompted those East European diplomats who attended in the capacity of observers to walk out in protest. The most controversial section of the programme dealt with the issue of 'bureaucratic tendencies'. The programme noted that 'our experience, as well as the experience of other socialist countries, has shown that the management of the economy and of the whole of social life by the state machinery exclusively leads, perforce, to greater centralisation of power, to an even closer merging of the state and party machinery, to their further strengthening, whereby they tend to become independent and impose themselves as a force over and above society'. The result was that 'bureaucracy and the tendencies of bureaucratic statism' tended to distort the development of socialist relations, by maintaining, extending and restoring various forms of state capitalist relations or methods of management in conditions when such relations were no longer tolerated by either the productive forces or the workers'. The result, 'inevitably', was a divorce between 'leading political forces and the working class'. It followed from this, the programme asserted, that the 'withering away of the state' arose as 'the fundamental and decisive question of the socialist system'.⁷⁸

When it came to evaluating Stalin, the programme was clear that 'Stalin, for both objective and subjective reasons', did not fight the bureaucratic-statist tendencies but became himself 'their political and ideological protagonist'. Stalin, instead of addressing the need for the state to wither away, looked to its continual strengthening, giving it 'a role which sooner or later must lead to the fettering of social and economic development'. Thus in resisting Stalin in 1948, the Yugoslav communists 'were not only fighting for their right to pursue free socialist development, but were also offering their contribution to the indispensable struggle against statist-bureaucratic and other anti-socialist distortions of socialism'. The programme asserted forcefully that 'the interests of further socialist development 'demanded free socialist democratic relations between the parties of the socialist countries'; and in a not very subtle reference to the Soviet Union noted that in the struggle for the victory of socialism, 'the working class of one or another country may, for a certain period of time, be the standard-bearer of that struggle, its vanguard', but that did not entitle it to 'a monopoly position in the workers' movement, least of all to a monopoly in the sphere of ideology'.⁷⁹

Even before the congress closed on 26 April, the programme was submitted to line-by-line criticism in *Kommunist*, the theoretical journal of the Soviet Communist Party. The crux of this critique was that the experience of the Soviet Union and other socialist countries had 'fully confirmed the teaching of Marxist–Leninist theory stating that the processes of socialist revolution and socialist construction are based on a number of major laws of development of socialism'. The journal went on to declare that it was 'wrong to say that Stalin maintained that the state does not wither away and that it should be continually strengthened in all spheres of life', and quoted Stalin's speech to the Eighteenth Party Congress in 1939 as evidence that he had maintained that the state would disappear under socialism 'if there were no capitalist encirclement'. It was thus clear that in posing the problem of the withering away of the state, the Yugoslav communists had failed to take into account the experience of other socialist countries, and the 'nature of imperialist aggression against socialist countries'. The programme had also repeated the reassessment of the role of the Party agreed at the Sixth Congress, that the Party was no longer 'a factor of power' but 'a factor in the development of socialist consciousness'. This, the journal maintained, was a clear 'deviation from scientific communism' for Lenin had been clear, 'the Party is the directly governing vanguard of the proletariat'. The critique ended with the rather pious hope that such 'comradely criticism' would provide 'no obstacle to the further development of friendly relations between our parties and countries'.⁸⁰

When the Soviet Presidium met on 4 May Khrushchev made his anger clear: 'now there can be no question of Voroshilov paying a visit', he declared. Khrushchev proposed a letter to the Yugoslavs making clear that after Stalin's death 'we took the first step for a meeting' and that 'the conflict arose not simply because of Stalin, the Yugoslavs gave some cause'. The Soviet Union held to the view that 'we should not look to the past but firm up friendship', so the declaration had been signed, economic contacts even sacrifices had been made, but the Yugoslavs responded 'in a utilitarian manner' and then 'with attacks (the Hungarian events)'. The letter would ask 'whose initiative was it to meet in Bucharest?' The Yugoslavs were delighted that we did not want to cause them difficulties; 'we showed them our draft, they did not show us theirs'. They refused to take part in the November meeting and then published a draft programme 'thrusting us into polemics'. The Seventh Congress had turned into 'a hysterical campaign of insults'. The Soviet Union would do all it could to maintain friendship, 'but it did not only depend on us'. In the meantime all economic contacts would be re-evaluated and only those profitable to the Soviet side kept in place.⁸¹

Once Khrushchev was no longer fighting the Yugoslavs' corner relations quickly plummeted. *Borba* responded in mid-May, arguing that Soviet–Yugoslav co-operation had been developing successfully until, all of a sudden, the Soviet press made it conditional on 'the elimination of ideological differences', which, in practice meant that 'we are being asked to renounce our views' and this was exactly what was sought in 1948. The article concluded that the Soviet response to the new Party programme was an attempt 'to resurrect concepts and practices that are alien to socialism and contrary to the decisions taken by the Twentieth Congress of the Soviet Communist Party'. When on 3 June Khrushchev attended the Seventh Congress of the Bulgarian

Communist Party, he contradicted all his earlier statements about Yugoslavia and argued that the 1948 Cominform resolution offered just criticism of the activity of the Yugoslav communists on a number of questions of principle and was 'fundamentally correct'. The subsequent conflict had shown errors on the Cominform side, errors which were subsequently corrected. However, 'the burden of the past was too heavy for the Yugoslav leaders', Khrushchev went on, 'and during the counter-revolutionary rebellion in Budapest the Yugoslav Embassy became in substance a centre for those who started the war against the people's democratic regime in Hungary'. According to Khrushchev, in Bucharest, the Yugoslavs had agreed to take part in the November meeting but then 'retreated from the positions agreed upon', subsequently issuing their own programme 'opposed to the co-ordinated views of the Marxist-Leninist Parties'. Khrushchev's only concession was to conclude that 'we would like to reach mutual understanding and co-operation at Party level'.⁸²

In a speech made in the middle of June, Tito acknowledged that at issue was not simply the Seventh Congress and the Party programme but the refusal to sign the declaration. He maintained that 'it does not follow that because we did not sign the declaration and join the socialist camp we are against the best possible co-operation with all socialist countries', and he went on to express 'deep hurt' at hearing Khrushchev justify now things he had condemned at the Twentieth Party Congress. Again, Tito decided to adopt the line of honest bewilderment at what had occurred. 'It appears that it is our fate to have to build socialism in our country under constant blows from all sides, and the worst blows are coming from those who should be our most loyal and best friends.' He concluded: 'we did not want this fight, we have enough worries; but since the fight has been imposed on us, we will defend ourselves and nothing will frighten us away from the struggle for the victory of what we believe is proper and just'.⁸³ Mićunović met Khrushchev on 19 June, when he was considering how best to respond to Tito's speech. He warned Mićunović that 'some people in Moscow' were now suggesting he had been wrong to put his faith in Yugoslavia and that Molotov 'had had better judgement'. If at the Seventh Congress Tito had 'just said one word about the Soviet Union's aid to Yugoslavia, it would not have come to this'.⁸⁴

On 8 October 1958, at his final meeting with Mićunović, Khrushchev again said that 'everything would have been all right between us if we had not published our programme' and gave the impression of being genuinely upset at the way things had turned out. Khrushchev made clear that the only way out of the current dead-end was for a high-level meeting, something he was quite ready for, but this time the Yugoslavs would have to come to Moscow.⁸⁵ Why, after the reconciliation in Bucharest, did Tito refuse to sign the declaration and push ahead with formulations in the Party programme which were bound to upset Moscow? Clearly in November 1957 the Yugoslav delegation was on the verge of signing. The clue is Tito's comment that it did not follow from Yugoslavia's refusal to sign the Declaration that Yugoslavia did not want co-operation with the socialist countries. Tito wanted co-operation, but a Declaration, signed in Moscow, however loosely worded, would have been perceived as accepting Soviet hegemony. And the Yugoslavs did feel that their experience was not of

relevance to Yugoslavia alone, but the wider socialist world. They had understood the danger of a bureaucratic state emerging and had addressed the issue of 'the withering away of the state' through the establishment of workers' councils and the development of self-management and this could not be put at risk. That 'Stalinism' was not just an issue of personality, but a systemic problem of Soviet communism, needed to be codified.

THE SECOND RECONCILIATION

Khrushchev only began to reconsider his stance when in summer 1960 relations between the Soviet and Chinese Communist Parties took a dramatic turn for the worse. Mao Zedong, as a loyal Stalinist, had always denounced the Yugoslavs as revisionists, but more than that, Mao had infuriated Tito by developing Albania as a client state, constantly denouncing the Yugoslav leader from within the country Tito had once planned to absorb. Joint disdain for Mao, gave Khrushchev and Tito common cause. In September 1960 both Tito and Khrushchev attended a session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York and resumed personal contact. Six months later, on 30 March 1961, a new five-year Soviet–Yugoslav trade deal was signed, and the following month it was agreed that foreign ministers would exchange visits. Kosta Popović visited Moscow on 7–13 July 1961 and the subsequent communiqué stressed the 'friendly atmosphere'; on his return to Belgrade Popović spoke of 'frankness, cordiality and friendship'. Although the Twenty-Second Congress of the Soviet Communist Party, 17–31 October 1961, passed a resolution criticising the 'ideology of revisionism most fully embodied in the Yugoslav Party Programme', Khrushchev's speech mentioned the Soviet wish to consolidate relations with Yugoslavia, although he was careful to add the key words 'along state lines'. Tito felt he could respond at once.⁸⁶

The Twenty-Second Party Congress was the occasion on which Khrushchev elaborated his vision for the communist future. He too had drafted by then a new Party programme, which committed the Soviet Union to establishing an 'all people's state' where the class struggle, and the purges associated with it, would be a thing of the past; there was even talk that this notion would be enshrined in a new constitution. The congress saw renewed, open discussion of Stalin's personality cult and the Anti-Party Group was formally condemned, something which had not happened at the Twenty-First Party Congress in 1959. Finally, as a symbolic gesture that Stalinism was now a thing of the past, Stalin's body was removed from Lenin's mausoleum. Speaking in Skoplje, Tito noted that although Yugoslavia had often been attacked at the congress, 'we saw in the work of the congress a positive course; I think that this congress has and will have a great importance for a further movement in a truly democratic and progressive direction not only in the Soviet Union but in the world in general'.⁸⁷ The next Yugoslav Central Committee Plenum paid 'particular attention' to the 'positive impact' of the Twenty-Second Congress, and on 27 November the Party issued a statement assessing it as 'a significant contribution to the progress of socialism'.⁸⁸

Thereafter relations improved dramatically. Gromyko visited Yugoslavia from 16 to 21 April 1962, and Khrushchev instituted a major change in policy by dropping all references to Yugoslav 'revisionism'. In May 1962, while in Varna, Bulgaria, Khrushchev stated 'that the Soviet Union, as a country building communism, must do everything to co-operate with Yugoslavia and thus help her to consolidate her socialist position', after this the anti-Yugoslav polemic ceased in the Soviet press. On 24 September Leonid Brezhnev, the Soviet Head of State, arrived in Yugoslavia for the visit Voroshilov had never managed to make. On the day of his arrival Tito commented that 'certain differences' which existed between the two countries need not be a barrier to good relations. Brezhnev stressed that Soviet policy was based on the principles outlined in Khrushchev's Varna speech. When he left on 4 October it was announced that Tito would visit the Soviet Union in December. A trade deal announced the same day superseded an agreement signed in Moscow in July 1962, which in turn considerably expanded the 1961 agreement.⁸⁹

Tito arrived in Moscow on 4 December 1962 and held talks with Khrushchev in the Kremlin on the 6th and 7th. After a tour to Volgograd, both men addressed the Supreme Soviet on 12 December. Khrushchev spoke first, and made clear how flexible he was prepared to be now he was thinking about his contribution to the communist project. He stressed that the Soviet Union had always maintained, and now repeated, that most of the guilt for the deterioration in Soviet–Yugoslav relations had been the responsibility of Stalin, although he noted 'we would not be quite sincere if we did not say that the Yugoslav comrades bear their share of guilt'. Currently relations with Yugoslavia were good; each Communist Party 'tried to apply creatively the principles of Marxism–Leninism to the concrete historical and geographic conditions in each country'. Keeping this in mind, 'it would be wrong to work out some set pattern and keep to it in relations with other socialist countries; it would be a mistake to brand as renegades all who do not conform to that pattern'. Finally, he turned to his residual opponents in the Presidium and noted that 'some people' contended that Yugoslavia was not a socialist country even though 'it is impossible to deny that Yugoslavia is a socialist country, and it is from this that we proceed in our policy'. Tito had little to do but agree, and that is what he did saying simply: 'we agree in the main with what Comrade Nikita Sergeyevich said in his report about the relations between our two countries. I should not like to speak about the past, but in so far as there are still certain disagreements we shall jointly remove them through constructive co-operation'. Khrushchev then accompanied Tito to Kiev, where he stayed from 18 to 20 December, arriving back in Belgrade on 22 December. Back home he stressed that disagreements with the Soviet Union would disappear over time: 'we are returning from the Soviet Union with much greater optimism'. On 30 December Tito told factory workers that 'our mutual relations must be based on realism and not exaggerated expectations', but 'we have common aims – the realisation of socialism'.⁹⁰

Khrushchev's reference to 'some people' was no accidental aside. Not all members of the Presidium were agreed on Khrushchev's renewed policy of reconciliation. In April 1963, when the May Day slogans were being prepared, Khrushchev was horrified when on 8 April the May Day greetings to Yugoslavia published in *Pravda* referred

simply to 'brotherly greetings to the Yugoslav workers'; this was corrected on 11 April to 'brotherly greetings to the workers of Yugoslavia, who are building socialism; long live the eternal, indestructible friendship and co-operation between the Soviet and Yugoslav peoples'. Behind the scenes, Khrushchev and Frol Kozlov, the Leningrad Party Secretary and new hardliner in the leadership, had a blazing row. Tito faced no such problems. When the Yugoslav Central Committee Plenum met on 18 May, Tito, supported by Ranković, defended the policy of closer relations with the Soviet Union and called on Yugoslavia's younger generation, raised in an atmosphere of enmity between the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, to display greater confidence in the first country of socialism. Tito told the plenum that relations with the Soviet Union had gradually improved, 'thanks to Comrade Khrushchev and his associates'. He went on: 'we welcome the decisions of the Twentieth and Twenty-Second Congresses; we welcome these decisions not only because of the condemnation of Stalin's mistakes, but also because of the launching of a new process in the development of economic and social relationships in the Soviet Union, directed towards a more comprehensive and speedier development in all spheres of economic and social life'. He believed the current improvement in relations was 'profound, far-reaching and positive, of significance not only for Yugoslavia and for the socialist countries concerned, but also for the revolutionary working class and progressive movements in general'.⁹¹

Khrushchev paid his return visit to Yugoslavia from 20 August–3 September 1963. Tito's welcoming toast was effusive, stressing how 'we consider that today all the necessary conditions exist for our co-operation to develop even more extensively as it has been proved that certain differences in views on individual matters and problems were no obstacle to the development of our relations'. Khrushchev was upbeat. On his first full day in Yugoslavia, accompanied by Ranković, he visited the Rakovica motor and tractor factory near Belgrade and gave an extremely wide-ranging speech, referring to the origins of the communist movement in labour solidarity, the 1848 revolutions and the Communist Manifesto. He then declared that 'we are not only class brethren, we are comrades in a joint struggle to build a new society'. In the past, relations had not always been smooth, but 'there is no reason why we should not march together in the same rank of all the peoples who have set out on the road to socialism'. And he went on, 'yes, comrades, I am a communist and therefore I agree with the Yugoslav communists that only human labour can create the prosperity required to satisfy both the material and spiritual needs of man'.⁹² This was the essence of self-management, that workers created wealth and should therefore also dispose of it. Indeed, journalists present noted that Khrushchev took great interest in the self-management system while at the factory, telling the workers that the Soviet Union was considering new forms of factory management, but ones that would preserve 'Leninist principles of unity and leadership'. This 'progressive institution' of Yugoslav self-management would be studied by a delegation of Party, trade union and economic council leaders who would report to the Soviet Central Committee: 'our situation is now ripe for democratisation of management enterprises', Khrushchev said.⁹³

When visiting Split on 24 August Khrushchev turned to relationships between socialist states. 'The Yugoslav people is building socialism under its own practical

conditions and that is why the methods it uses in the building of socialism do not have to be like those used by the Soviet people'. Not only was there now no particular socialist model to be followed, Khrushchev conceded that 'there can of course be disputes between fraternal parties of socialist countries'. However, what concerned him was that if these got out of hand, they could be exploited by others: 'the more disagreements there are between socialist countries, the more this is going to encourage our class opponents in the capitalist world'. Khrushchev said this on the eve of his talks with Tito which took place at Brioni on 25–28 August. At the closing press conference on the 28th, Khrushchev threw in as an aside that blocs and the like were essentially temporary phenomena. Reflecting on the Brioni talks, on 30 August Tito told the workers' council of the Velenje mine near Ljubljana that 'when we speak about workers' self-management, we do not speak about the problems and needs of a single country seen in isolation; social management lies at the basis of the ideas of Marx, Engels, Lenin. Comrade Nikita Sergeyevich is right in paying attention to this problem'. Khrushchev told the same miners 'we Soviet communists cannot have fundamental contradictions with the Yugoslav communists because both our countries are socialist'.⁹⁴

Khrushchev confirmed in his memoirs that on this visit to Yugoslavia he had decided to experiment with self-management. 'The forms the Yugoslavs have chosen for managing their economy are more democratic than ours', he wrote and while 'previously we had spoken out against this, now I wanted to look into the matter more closely'. Although many key decisions continued to be determined centrally by the government, the Yugoslavs argued that their form of managing the economy was more attractive to the people and 'these arguments deserved consideration'. For that reason 'in later years I did feel that need for some changes, to make the management more dependent on the workers and the enterprises and to involve working people more actively in the economic plan'. As he had told the Rakovica workers he would, back in Moscow, Khrushchev informed the Presidium on 4 September that he would be sending a delegation to Yugoslavia to consider the role played by workers' councils and how a proposal might be drafted for introducing self-management into Soviet enterprises.⁹⁵

As Khrushchev noted in his memoirs, 'of course' nothing was said in public about the idea of the Soviet Union developing self-management. In fact, Soviet–Yugoslav contacts seemed to have stalled, for Tito, unlike other socialist leaders, did not travel to Moscow to celebrate Khrushchev's seventieth birthday in mid-April 1964. Then, out of the blue, Khrushchev summoned Tito to talks. Tito was in Finland on an official visit when he was contacted by Khrushchev and asked to meet him in Leningrad on 8 June. Belgrade radio was enthusiastic about this 'most important visit'.⁹⁶ These talks seem to have encouraged Khrushchev to embark on what was to be his last campaign to reform the Soviet Union. Plans were drawn up to introduce an experiment in market socialism for the entire light industrial sector of the Soviet economy. On 24 July Khrushchev told the Presidium that in future economic plans 'everything should be set out in a progressive way', only qualitative indicators would be used, 'in other words, everything should be done not as it is done now'; three weeks later he dismissed

a draft administrative reform of the economy as 'out-dated'. At the same time Khrushchev started a programme of constitutional reform. On 11 July Brezhnev was replaced as Head of State by Mikoyan in order, Khrushchev said, to speed up the process of introducing a new constitution. As Khrushchev told a government commission on 16 July, 'the new constitution must give a guarantee of the strict observance of socialist legality and prepare the conditions for a transition to general communist self-management'.⁹⁷

Workers' self-management, market socialism, communist self-management – with Khrushchev actively experimenting with ideas which made explicit that the Stalinist system was the problems in the Soviet Union, not just the character flaws of one individual, Tito's dream of defeating Stalinism once and for all and exporting Yugoslav socialism to the rest of Eastern Europe seemed on the point of being realised. Then, on 13 October 1964 Khrushchev was deposed, defended in the Presidium only by Mikoyan. Tito was understandably very nervous. He once told a Soviet diplomat that he knew that both Molotov and Suslov opposed the improvement of bilateral relations in 1955; Molotov had been removed in 1957 as part of the Anti-Party group, but Suslov remained a key figure in the Soviet leadership. 'We in Yugoslavia', he said, 'were very concerned about how relations between our two countries would evolve after Khrushchev was moved aside'.⁹⁸ With Khrushchev removed, all prospects of Yugoslavia influencing the process of de-Stalinisation in the Soviet Union vanished. Tito would have to concentrate on perfecting the Yugoslav road to communism, and as he looked inwards to re-examine the essence of Yugoslav self-management, he sided with those who wanted to raise the Yugoslav experiment to a new level.

REFORMING COMMUNISM

ADMINISTRATIVE SELF-MANAGEMENT

When Khrushchev said farewell to Mićunović in 1958, he had made clear that Soviet–Yugoslav relations would only improve once Yugoslavia took some sort of clear initiative to mend its ways. By early 1963, as he again tussled with his Presidium about the question of improving Soviet–Yugoslav relations, Khrushchev believed that Tito had indeed taken such an initiative. On 29 January 1963 the Presidium noted that ‘on Yugoslavia, time has passed, the situation has changed’ and a subsequent article in *Pravda* on 10 February was even clearer: ‘the steps taken by the Yugoslav Party leaders in the sphere of Party life, economy, home and foreign policy have rectified much of what the international communist movement regarded as erroneous and harmful to the cause of building socialism in Yugoslavia. This is an indisputable and very positive fact’. The paper praised Tito for recognising that Yugoslav communists ‘had let the leading role slip from their hands’, but the Yugoslav Central Committee had taken measures ‘to strengthen the leading role of the Party in all spheres of the country’s life’.¹

The changes *Pravda* was referring to, and Tito’s reported comments on the leading role of the Party, dated back to a speech he made in Split on 6 May 1962, a speech made to help resolve a particularly acute disagreement within the Yugoslav Party leadership that had reached crisis point two months earlier, but had its origins in the economic reform introduced in 1961. For most of the 1950s, the Yugoslav economy had functioned pretty well. There were strong elements of state control, but much of this power was decentralised. At local level, the market operated, but it was a guided market. Workers’ councils made decisions, but within a rigid framework. The 1953 constitution confirmed that federally prescribed accounting regulations would circumscribe what firms could do with their profits, and also define which items they could include in their costs. And when it came to investment decisions, the bulk of funds used to finance investment were not derived locally from voluntary savings but from the taxes which federal and local governments levied on the enterprises themselves: firms largely sought investments from the state controlled General Investment Fund. Nevertheless, self-management succeeded in creating what a Western economist called ‘at least an island of involvement in a sea of apathy’. Local elites, by and large, did reflect the underlying interests of the rank and file. The only major strike of the 1950s, at the Trbovlje mine in 1958, was directed neither at the firm’s workers’ council nor at its management, but at the Federal Price Commission, which finally resolved the dispute by raising the price of coal. Self-management seemed

to be working, even though the desire for increased enterprise autonomy came through loud and clear at the 1957 Workers' Council Congress.²

However, by the 1960s, the economy was well past its post-war recovery stage and increased consumer demand needed to be met if the socialist system was to deliver a rising standard of living. The result was competition for the relatively scarce investment funds controlled by the state. The government's initial response only made things worse. The theory behind the economic reform proposed in March 1961, and this would become a theme for most of the 1960s, was that 'the working class and working people, who already managed the means of production, should directly decide on the distribution of income'. Kardelj stated towards the end of March that the planned reform was as momentous as the post-war nationalisation or the establishment of workers' councils; as a result of the reform 'emancipated labour would be given a broader, firmer material basis'. When allocating investment funds 'income according to labour would become the foremost motive power'; in other words, investment funds would go to enterprises which made a profit, not those which argued a good political case. However, when he addressed parliament on 21 April, Kardelj seemed to suggest the very opposite, noting that it would be a mistake if 'we were to forget that it is also necessary to consolidate and develop all the centralised functions of the social community'. The reform was both about centralisation and de-centralisation and its contradictory nature was ultimately its undoing.³

Investment funds were devolved from the centre to republican banks, but these banks, rather than opening their door to investment requests from successful local firms, quickly fell under the sway of local political elites. This gave rise to the 'political factory', prestige enterprises with no clear market rationale; one inevitable consequence of such uneconomic policies was a sharp rise in inflation.⁴ In a speech made as early as 9 June 1961, Tito criticised local Party organisations 'which want to start building before they have secured both the plans and the money'; by mid-November he was even clearer: 'we are building various enterprises, larger and small, often without proper thought as to whether these enterprises will always pay for themselves and whether we should build enterprises of the same kind, enterprises that will produce the same type of products even when there is no demand for them'.⁵ That same month Kardelj made clear that he was beginning to have concerns about the compromise nature of the reform. In his view the 'state-administrative' approach to running the economy was flawed by contradictions, and although there were problems with self-management, it was the only system which opened up a clear long-term prospect for the future. It was therefore necessary 'to stabilise the changes already made'. This meant overcoming 'bureaucratic-technocratic resistance' to devolving decisions on the distribution of income and responding to the market rather than 'acquired privilege'.⁶

As sides began to be taken on the direction in which economic reform should go, the trade unions emerged as the leading defenders of the powers of workers' councils into the area of investment decisions. When at the end of 1961, the 1962 Social Plan was adopted, the Trade Union Council criticised it for recentralising decisions on investment. Addressing trade unionists in Montenegro in mid-January 1962, the trade union leader Tempo made clear that 'the basic intention of the new economic system –

that an increase in personal earnings should depend on a proportionate increase in productivity – has not been fulfilled in the application of the new system'. This was essentially because the reform had not been sufficiently thought through. Different branches of the economy were operating under different conditions, without uniformity in how enterprises accumulated reserves for investment. He proposed that it was time to undertake nationwide experiments in devising uniform mechanisms for increased working-class involvement in investment decisions.⁷

All these issues came to an explosive head on 14–16 March 1962 when there was an Expanded Meeting of the Party Executive. Besides the members of the Executive itself, the session was attended by the organisational secretaries of the republican parties, presidents of the republican governments, presidents of the socialist alliance, presidents of the trade union councils, members of the Party organisational-political secretariat and 'some other members of the Central Committee'. According to the laconic press statement issued afterwards, 'the session thoroughly discussed current political and economic questions, above all from the point of view of taking steps for greater stability in economic trends, and greater and more organised activity by the Party [including] more resolute steps towards respecting legality and greater responsibility of individual leading officials'. This bland summary did not stop rumours circulating that 'Serbs and Macedonians were at pistol point' and that there were 'threats by Slovenians to secede'.⁸

Tito noted in retrospect that it had been a mistake at this meeting 'not to see things through', and the compromise nature of the decisions reached is reflected in the fact that contemporary Western observers saw the meeting as both a defeat and a victory for Ranković, accepted by all as the defender of an administrative approach to running the economy.⁹ The meeting was presented with two very different concepts of what the future should look like. Ranković and his supporters saw a solution to the crisis in resisting any further decentralisation of powers and retaining control over investment decisions at the centre. The other group, whose ideas were best articulated by Kardelj, argued that the way to deal with 'political' factories and other unprofitable investments was to devolve power right down to enterprise level and make investment decisions a responsibility of workers' councils. The compromise reached reflected Tito's own view in 1963 when he said: 'I have not raised my voice against modernisation in general, but against the modernisation that is harmful to our correct socialist development'.¹⁰ Party members allegedly pulling guns on each other clearly required the restoration of Party discipline, but Tito's own experience as a factory worker told him there was no market for duplicate sub-standard goods.

Initially it looked as if Tito had backed Kardelj. Towards the end of April, the Yugoslav Government issued 'instructions' on the distribution of investment funds calling for commissions to be established at every level to oversee this process. In Croatia the authorities responded at once and a republican level commission was already operating by the end of April, with municipal commissions planned for 8 May. When the Trade Union Presidium met on 28 June, it was already getting impatient at the slow pace of change. Speakers stressed that 'discussions about income distribution had been dragging on for too long', while Tempo demanded that these newly

established distribution commissions should issue regulations 'as soon as possible'.¹¹ Tito did not agree and his subsequent announcements suggested he was actually more sympathetic to Ranković's prognosis. He told the July Central Committee Plenum that he accepted that 'more funds should be left to the enterprise' and that this was 'the material basis for the further development of self-management', for 'correct decentralisation and correct distribution of resources is necessary, so that people need not depend on individual officials and beg for what they need'. However, he saw no point in hurrying: 'this is no simple matter ... one should not rush in here but proceed gradually'. Indeed, he could comment at the end of the plenum: 'In the reports I miss an answer to the question of how to get out of our present difficulties'. Tito favoured a political rather than an economic solution to this crisis. Chaos in economic management was best addressed by restoring proper Party discipline.¹²

Discipline was the clear message of the speech he delivered in Split on 6 May, the speech which so impressed Khrushchev. Tito asked rhetorically, why, when so much had been achieved, 'must we again take into consideration various negative phenomena'. At the March meeting 'concern and anxiety over various anomalies forced us to make a sharp analysis', and it was clear to him that 'if we have objective difficulties and objective shortcomings, they are the results of subjective errors by leading people'. There was, he said, 'a time when the view prevailed that under decentralisation and democracy, communists no longer had a right or duty to be responsible for development', but this was wrong, 'we must again insist that communists are responsible for the development of socialism in our country'. Repeating his view that 'the main weakness is just a lack of vigilance by communists who have somehow lost their leading role', he stressed that the March meeting had not been held 'only to get things moving and then to fold our arms', measures 'should be adhered to by all'. If people abroad said 'we are again beginning to tighten up', let them say it, for 'we know what we need'. Tito did go on to criticise 'excessive investments, a situation in which everybody builds whatever he wants', but his solution was administrative, 'once more from on high we will have to ban the construction of those things that are not in the interests of the entire community'. It was only in passing that he noted that 'such anomalies as these occurred precisely because of the general weakness of the Yugoslav market', what people remembered was his declaration: 'I really cannot speak against democracy, but democracy should nevertheless develop along less of a zig-zag course than it does in our country ... there must be democracy for the stomachs too'.¹³

In June 1962 the leadership used the theoretical journal *Komunist* to distribute a letter to all Party members which demanded that Party leaders stop thinking that discipline was just a matter for the rank and file. Ranković's report on 'Implementing the decisions of the Executive Committee and the Tasks of the League of Communists' was top of the agenda at the July Central Committee Plenum, and this elaborated on Tito's speech in Split. Those who did not understand the leading role of the Party were condemned; 'often they lose sight of the fact that our socialist society and self-management system cannot develop normally without the measured guidance of the Party'.¹⁴ This tightening up was extended into other areas, even the world of culture. In

an address on 29 December 1962, Tito repeated the call for discipline and stated that he had 'carefully listened to the voice of the people' and that in future things would be tackled 'differently and more earnestly, and leaders who procrastinate or evade their duty to take the necessary action will remain leaders no more'. A key factor in explaining the current lack of discipline, he felt, was 'foreign influences'. In his view 'socialist consciousness is slow in gaining ground among a considerable part of our people; it is obstructed by foreign influences', and so he condemned 'barren intellectuals who, particularly in literature, painting and film' were 'the chief bearers of negative influences from abroad'. He concluded that 'last year we took effective measures to deal with shortcomings in our economy', and it was now time 'to take steps in the cultural field'. A month later Tito warned journalists that on the question of culture 'those who do not like what I said should not think I will retreat from it'.¹⁵

Was there an international dimension to Tito's decision to stall on further economic reform at this time? In Split he had been clearly aware that many would see the new talk of discipline as some sort of retreat towards Stalinism. Was he waiting to see what came of his renewed contacts with Khrushchev? When the Soviet Union was on the brink of introducing the first stage of market socialism, did it make sense for Yugoslavia to jump forward to a second stage? In the end, might not Ranković's administrative self-management look quite like Khrushchev's proposed radical market reform? As noted in the previous chapter, when Tito addressed the May 1963 Central Committee Plenum, he made clear that relations with the Soviet Union and other socialist countries had improved 'thanks to Comrade Khrushchev and his associates', and added that he welcomed the decisions of the Twentieth and Twenty-Second Party Congresses not only because of the condemnation of Stalin's mistakes, but 'also because of the launching of a new process in the development of economic and social relationships in the Soviet Union, directed towards a more comprehensive and speedier development in all spheres of economic and social life'. This he believed was 'of profound, far-reaching and positive significance not only for Yugoslavia and for the socialist countries concerned, but also for the revolutionary working class and progressive movements in general'.¹⁶ During Khrushchev's visit in August 1963, Tito told Ljubljana miners: 'when we speak about workers' self-management, we do not speak about the problems and needs of only a single country in isolation; social management lies at the basis of the ideas of Marx, Engels, and Lenin, and comrade Nikita Sergeyevich Khrushchev is right in paying attention to this problem'.¹⁷

Khrushchev's dithering about the scope of his reforms, followed by his removal from power brought Tito back down to the ground with a bump. Dreams of close co-operation with Khrushchev as the two economies were gradually realigned had to be put on one side and Tito could no longer ignore the work of the commissions on investment allocation, which still had made no important decisions. Reformers resumed the struggle to push things forward in spring 1964. Addressing the March Central Committee Plenum, Kardelj criticised the fact that investment 'still has an administrative character'. It was still the case that those resources earned by an enterprise and ear-marked for investment, were effectively taken away 'by fiscal means' and transferred to the political rather than the economic sphere. Moves were currently

underway, he said, to establish the premise that resources for investment 'should be governed by the same rules as apply to other basic resources of working organisations'.¹⁸ In mid-April the government announced that major changes were indeed to be introduced in matters of investment, to enable working organisations 'to exercise independent control over the income they realised'. The trade unions were quick to associate themselves with these moves. Tempo recalled in his memoirs that the trade unions were determined to address all the problems involved in developing self-management and were criticised by some at the time for being 'too ambitious' and acting like 'a second Central Committee' within a 'shadow government'. When Tito met the trade union leadership, he too quipped that 'you've created a Central Committee'.¹⁹

Opening the Fifth Trade Union Congress on 20 April, Tempo said: 'we shall achieve permanent success in the struggle against various unsocialist phenomena if we create conditions in which it will be unthinkable to make decisions on the business of an enterprise or the fate of an individual by anyone except the working collective'. One of the two aims set by the congress, he told one of its commissions, was to 'increase the role of workers' organisations in the process of disposing of global earnings', in other words investments. Tempo's May Day greeting to Tito on behalf of the trade unions referred to 'strengthening the working man's position in the self-management system'. Interviewed on 4 May, Tempo commented that the Fifth Congress had called for a clear decision in favour of bringing investment decisions closer to the working collective, although he recognised that precisely how, and in what form, this would happen was a question for future discussion. The congress, however 'had demanded that this problem should not be shelved, but that a solution should be found as soon as possible'.²⁰ On 20 May the parliament asked the government to draft proposals for changes in the way investment funds were controlled, and for these to be brought back for debate as soon as possible.²¹

Reformers had renewed their pressure on the question of investment funds over the spring and summer of 1964 because preparations were already underway for the Eighth Yugoslav Party Congress. At the March Central Committee Plenum, Tito's closing remarks had been non-committal on the issue of investment reform; he noted simply that economic growth was essential and that production could no longer stagnate at 50 to 60 per cent of potential capacity. He told the Fifth Trade Union Congress at the end of April that it was 'high time' that investment policy was addressed, since it was 'not normal' that working collectives could only dispose of 30 per cent of investment funds. However, he made no specific proposals, commenting only that 'our working people feel that they have the right to a yet higher standard of living than they have today'.²² By the opening of the Eighth Party Congress in December, Tito was fully committed to the cause and the congress took a clear decision to implement economic reform as of 24 July 1965; the centre-piece of that reform was that henceforth enterprises would retain 70 per cent of their income for investment. Tito was now clearly behind Kardelj. In his speech to the congress, Tito made clear that 'workers' self-management had reached a level at which it would be unable to carry out the functions which society had entrusted to it' if work collectives were denied the

opportunity to dispose of 'the necessary means for further developing and expanding production'. He stressed 'that a great mistake is made by those comrades who think that the problem of accumulation solely concerns political agencies and who insist stubbornly on retaining the present system, the system of centralised accumulation'. There would be occasions on which 'technological considerations would demand a greater measure of centralised management', but that should not be a pretext for bureaucratic interventions. And he concluded that 'the non-implementation of Central Committee decisions by individual communists holding executive positions' would not be tolerated.²³

The reform was finalised by the June Central Committee Plenum in 1965, and concomitant with the basic decision on enterprise responsibility for investment, radical changes were introduced in the banking system, the planning system and the pricing system. One immediate response to the reform were rumours of shortages and consequent panic buying. In a press interview a Party leader reported that 250,000 workers would lose their jobs.²⁴ Not surprisingly sabotage of the reform on the part of Ranković and his supporters continued. That sabotage was referred to repeatedly in speeches made during the last two months of 1965. In Varaždin on 7 November, Tito recognised that the first three months of the economic reform had been difficult, and assured his audience that experts told him that things would begin to stabilise early in 1966. Demanding that the reform be implemented consistently, he stated clearly that 'it cannot be that reforms are strictly implemented in one republic while in another republic people continue to work as they did before'.²⁵

A week later Tito repeated his view that the first year or so of the reform would be difficult, but it was 'not as critical as it was as it seemed at the beginning' and a few positive improvements were already apparent. Kardelj, understandably, was more upbeat. He told the press at the end of November that 'as long as a major part of national income was distributed in a bureaucratic manner, republican and communal interests would be directed to winning as much as possible for themselves, resorting to every means at their disposal'. Following the market, letting labour productivity alone determine investment would 'open the road to de-territorialisation', there was, he argued, 'no other way to merge national, republican and communal interests into the interests of every individual working man and each collective'.²⁶

However, as the leading Croatian communist Vladimir Bakarić told an audience at Zagreb University on 27 November, although the reforms had stemmed from the Communist Party, it was communist organisations which were leading the way in obstructing its implementation; on 3 December the Belgrade City Party Committee heard criticisms of 'some individuals who want to keep various privileges and commanding posts, especially in such an important field as the distribution of income'.²⁷ On 20 December Tito made clear that it was not workers who were putting up obstacles to the reform, but 'political factors'. Communists were themselves responsible for the shortcomings, and yet communists should 'strive for the consistent implementation of the plans which have been adopted'. This was the essence of democratic centralism, 'what a majority has decided we should do, the minority should necessarily carry out'.²⁸ The issue came to a head at the February Central Committee

Plenum in 1966 summoned to discuss 'Pressing Problems concerning the Party's Struggle to Implement Reform', which was originally scheduled for the 16th, but actually assembled ten days later on 25–26th. After two days it adjourned so that the Ranković-led Serbian Party could hold an emergency session, and then reconvened on 11 March. In his address, Tito reminded members of the Central Committee that the Eighth Party Congress had obliged members to ensure the successful implementation of the economic reform; the problem was that some Party members were at best passive or working against the reform: 'workers expect from us, at this plenum, that once and for all we do as we say'. The economic reform, he stated, 'is not yet standing on its feet, and we must put it on a firm footing, that is what our citizens expect'.²⁹

Tito's call to battle was echoed by the trade union leader Tempo. The trade unions were desperately keen to see decisions on investments taken closer to the work place. Tempo reminded delegates that the Party had been wrestling with the issue of income distribution for years. For him the question was simple: 'I think there are elements in our Party, who have got used, especially in the administrative period, to their bureaucratic place, to power over people ... the Party must open battle because we want self-management, ending power over people and transferring power to working people'. The facts were these, he said: 'the Fifth Congress of Trade Unions in April 1964 adopted a formula on distribution which has become very popular among the working class ... but [today] this Central Committee Plenum is still being told that the question of distribution is not yet clear, that statutes are contradictory. It seems to me the basic question is – will the line of the trade unions become the line of the Eighth Party Congress?'³⁰

It seems that Tempo and the trade unions took the lead in bringing matters to a head. Tempo was not alone in considering that Ranković was engaging in 'factionalism within the Party' aimed at retaining administrative structures, but he was prepared to take determined action. According to Tempo, whenever the question of how to extend self-management through the dispersal of investment funds came up, Ranković would stop the discussion and say that the Party should not involve itself in such matters, or that the question was still not clear. So Tempo had gone to see Tito, who told him in clear terms that the Party had to concern itself with self-management and the question of investments. Later Tito had asked to see Tempo and told him that his relationship with Ranković had taken a dramatic turn for the worse. He had established a technical commission which had reported how Ranković was bugging Tito's office, his house, and even his bedroom. Tito brought this report of the technical commission to the Party Executive on 16 June, and on the basis of the clear 'deformations' in the work of the security organs that were uncovered, a second commission was established by the Executive. The next Executive session on 22 June heard the report of that second commission and Ranković offered to resign; his resignation was accepted. These developments were confirmed when the Central Committee Plenum met on 1 July and all Central Committee members learned that Ranković had used his control of the security services to influence appointments and ensure that, wherever possible, leading officials owed loyalty to him. In this way a parallel administration had been established. When Tito and Ranković were in agreement, this had hardly mattered, but

once Tito had committed himself fully to economic reform, and Ranković to its frustration, the parallel structure was being asked to resist economic reform and therefore Tito's policies. Ranković hoped that, if the reform led to chaos, then Tito would again appeal for the restoration of discipline as he had done in 1962. The Ranković parallel network was not evenly distributed throughout the country; his position in Serbia meant that it was far greater there, and in the other republics with a strong Serb presence.³¹

REORGANISING THE PARTY

During the height of the Ranković crisis, the July Central Committee Plenum established a Special Commission on Party Reorganisation. Ranković had not only been one of Tito's longest serving lieutenants, he was someone always known for his ideological conservatism. Did his dismissal mean the very nature of the Party and its role in society was to be reconsidered? Straws in the wind suggested this might be the case. In 1966 the July–August issue of the Party's theoretical journal *Socijalizam* published an article referring to the Marxist Party, not the Marxist–Leninist Party. Bakarić noted in the daily *Borba* on 14 August that 'it is difficult to stop at the half-way mark, as was previously done; in my opinion the Eighth Party Congress stirred up the whole country, and the July Plenum stirred it even more deeply – this is so because the problems now being discussed are such that previously nobody dared discuss them'. A month later he speculated more clearly that this was only the first step in reorganising the Party: 'No political organisation', he wrote, 'has ever renewed itself by means of a formal rotation, but rather by means of the creation of a new revolutionary situation; and we are precisely now in a new revolutionary situation, for which reason we have all the conditions for renewing the Party'.³²

When the Commission on the Reorganisation of the Party was first set up, it was assumed that it would spend the best part of a year doing its work. According to one of its members, Miko Tripalo, another Croatian communist but representing a younger post-partisan generation, 'ideologically speaking there are still great and little Rankovićs' who saw the essence of the Party as establishing 'strong arm' rule. In his view the Yugoslav Party was 'gradually being turned from a classical political party, ruling in the name of the working class, into a force which is developing the self-management of that class itself'.³³ At the commission's first meeting on 15 July others were still more forthright, speaking of 'the disappearance of the working class as a class' and what this might mean for the Party. Tito was not keen on such speculation. The second meeting of the commission took place on 16 September and heard more radical voices. Its chair Mijalko Todorović warned that bureaucratic forces were already regrouping and that only 'ideological confrontation' would defeat the enemy; Bakarić again insisted this was 'only the first step' in the reorganisation of the Party. Despite these implied calls for more time, Tito cut things short. On 19 September, he presided over an Executive meeting which discussed the commission's draft resolution; it was decided to allow only brief public discussion, with the next plenum deciding the matter on 4 October.³⁴

Tito wanted to restrict debate to the very practical issue of how best to implement the leading role of the Party, articulating the difference between the Party 'exercising a leading or a guiding' role. He explained the difference on 4 September: 'guiding' meant giving ideological direction 'for which it is necessary to be politically and ideologically educated'; 'directing' was something far narrower, understanding a technical or organisational process, and that did not require communist training. Apart from this, Tito's interest in Party reorganisation was restricted to organisational change at the very top. In this speech, Tito proposed the establishment of a Party Presidium. It seemed Tito wanted to root discussions of reform firmly in the practical rather than drifting into the philosophical. The nature of the Party's leading role might change, but the concept of the Party's hegemony in society would not be challenged. And so the October Central Committee Plenum expelled Ranković from the Party, accepted the report of the Special Commission on Party Reorganisation, and appointed a new thirty-five member Central Committee Presidium to replace the former Executive Committee.³⁵

Yet the question of Party reorganisation had not been kicked firmly into touch. The report of the Special Commission on the Reorganisation of the Party had been accepted, but the Central Committee then established a further commission to develop 'Theses' for its implementation. Tito was himself partly responsible for this rather confusing situation. He warned the Central Committee, rather as Tripalo had done, that far from all the culprits being punished he thought that behind Ranković there 'stood a rather large queue', and so an intensive ideological struggle was essential alongside the organisational one. And he also urged the Party to study Marx, for 'if Marx were here now, he would also change many things'.³⁶ The advice to study Marx prompted an extraordinary ideological ferment which the planned Theses struggled to encapsulate. Due to be discussed at the January 1967 Central Committee Plenum, it was not in fact until April 1967 that the 'Draft Theses on the Further Development and Reorganisation of the Yugoslav League of Communists' were published. The delay in agreeing the Theses was caused by the wide disagreement within the leadership, and that disagreement was prompted by the undeniable fact that an important aspect of the 1965 economic reform had been left unresolved. When Kardelj explained the economic reform to the Eighth Party Congress in December 1964, he touched on the issue of what he called 'a new form of democratic centralisation'. In his view, in future the trade unions would have 'increasingly to assert themselves as part of the machinery of self-management'. This was because he felt:

It would be a great mistake to regard investment reform exclusively in the light of decentralisation. While it is true that decentralisation must be the point of departure for this reform, a new form of democratic centralisation on the basis and with the framework of self-management must also be one of its component parts. Precisely such an approach ensures that our system is not a sort of socialist variation of the economic liberalism of the nineteenth century, which some short-sighted critics of self-management persistently keep alleging. [It will be] the starting point of a democratic system of planning in which the guiding factor is the elementary interest of the working man in his work and not the subjective will of non-economic factors.³⁷

However, the 1965 reform offered no 'democratic system of planning' nor 'a new form of democratic centralisation on the basis of self-management'.

Thus inevitably the question of reorganising the Party got caught up with discussions about 'a new form of democratic centralisation'. In the Ranković system of minimal decision making at enterprise level, central direction was given by the Party. In the post-Ranković world, was there to be no central direction of the economy with the market left entirely unfettered, or was direction to be provided by the working class rather than the Party? Kardelj insisted that central direction was needed, but never made clear how it could be implemented. Thus far workers' self-management had only operated at a local level, but if central direction was no longer being given by the Party, should not a hierarchy of workers' self-management bodies be established so that the workers' voice could be heard at the centre, a voice guided by the Party and operating within the self-management structure? In the jargon of the day, should self-management have an element of 'verticality' or 'integration'?

The trade unions had been at the forefront of calls for reform and now were especially concerned with the need to strengthen the verticality of self-management. The crux of the economic reform had been to return funds to enterprises so that workers through their enterprises, could make decisions on investment themselves, rather than the state making those decisions on their behalf. Funds for large-scale investments were devolved to banks to which enterprises could turn for finance. However, once the reform was underway a series of rapid bank mergers created what economists have argued amounted to 'a centralised oligopoly controlling the vast bulk of Yugoslav capital', an oligarchy which acted as a law unto itself. As commerce and finance rose in importance, so the concerns of blue-collar workers fell in importance.³⁸ By autumn 1966 the trade union leader Tempo was determined to organise working class resistance. In his memoirs he recalled that, immediately after the dismissal of Ranković, he called together the trade union leadership and proposed that a Conference of Self-Managers be held because elements of self-management had stagnated and the system needed to be developed if it were to be revived. He told *Politika* on 14 October that it was the duty of trade unionists 'to organise workers and mobilise them for a struggle for the creation of relationships beneficial for workers', and spelling out what that meant in television interviews on 13 and 20 October, he made clear that workers would no longer tolerate such things as the high salaries paid to managerial personnel. The trade unions were, he said, campaigning for what he called 'direct workers' self-management', and they hoped to present their case to a Self-Managers' Conference scheduled to be held in June 1967. Workers needed 'to fight against the bureaucrats until they have succeeded in becoming the actual managers of their factories'.³⁹

Tempo concluded his interviews by stating that it was pointless for the critics of the trade unions to brand them 'the anti-managerial Workers' Opposition'. He saw no shame in echoing the demands of the trade unions of Soviet Russia in autumn 1920 when they argued that, in a workers' state, the trade unions should play a key role in running the economy. Tempo was not alone. Writing in *Socijalizam* in December 1966 another leading trade unionist made clear that it was in his view, and the view of

the trade unions more generally, that the powers of self-management bodies needed to be strengthened at every level. In particular what was needed was an innovation in the system of representative democracy, an element of what he termed 'parallelism' to provide 'a strong vertical line' at the core of self-management. According to an informed contemporary account, what guarded talk of 'parallelism' or 'a strong vertical line' actually meant was this: 'trade union leaders had demanded that self-management organisations should replace parliaments'. Within the trade unions, and in the discussions about the need for a Conference of Self-Managers, there were repeated demands that self-management needed to be 'consolidated vertically' and meshed into the democratic system, possibly making conferences of self-management bodies a permanent representative institution. The resulting 'higher self-management agencies' would have the power to over-rule decisions made lower down the hierarchy if these decisions were not in harmony with the general social interest. Clearly, if parliaments were not to be replaced, they would have to work alongside 'vertically consolidated' self-management structures.⁴⁰

By December 1966 an unpublished Memorandum was circulating within the Party leadership as a basis for the Theses on Party Reorganisation which was still not finalised. One phrase used in that document was of particular concern to those arguing for a stronger workers' voice. Writing in the November issue of the journal *Naše teme*, Milan Škrbić noted how, although traditional concepts like 'the historic mission of the working class' were mentioned in the Memorandum, there was a tendency to refer to 'working people' and play down references to the working class. He accepted that in contemporary Yugoslavia workers were 'atomised', but put this down to the stagnation of self-management over the previous decade and insisted that class would again be an important concept as self-management entered a higher phase. Using Marx's distinction between the 'working class in itself' and the 'working class for itself', he stressed that the working class had acted dynamically as a class 'for itself' only periodically in the history of the Yugoslav revolution, now was the time for 'a long frozen psychology' to be changed and for the working class once again to move from acting as 'a class in itself' to 'a class for itself', in other words in a revolutionary way, asserting its class rule.⁴¹ Škrbić was not the only commentator to draw radical conclusions from Tito's command to study Marx. Writing in the December issue of the same journal, Ivo Brkljačić also raised concerns about the disappearance of the concept of class from the Memorandum. It was jumping far too far ahead into the communist future to see self-management just as the concern of individual groups of 'working people'. Workers, unlike the intelligentsia, still needed to associate together, and to display unity in their relations with other forces in society. Market relations, essential for self-management, inevitably produced contradictions and issues of class solidarity would stem from these. The leading role of the Party would be about resolving such contradictions, Brkljačić argued.⁴²

Yet the Memorandum, essentially a compromise document hammered out after fairly bitter clashes, argued that 'self-management means the destruction of the state-political organisation of society' and its replacement with self-management 'from the commune to the federation'. Here the phrase 'from the commune to the federation'

was crucial. Did it imply 'a vertical element to self-management'? Did this mean that the ideas of the trade unions were finally on the agenda? Turning the Memorandum on Party reorganisation into agreed Theses was certainly proving difficult. Due in December 1966, the Theses were not ready and so could not be discussed by the January 1967 Central Committee Plenum.⁴³ That plenum, which Tito did not attend, was clearly worried that in the discussion on Party reorganisation 'demagogy, a pseudo-revolutionary spirit and pseudo-democracy' were all being invoked 'by the class enemy' intent on 'exploiting objective difficulties and weaknesses'. Work on reorganising the Party needed to be more tightly focussed, the Plenum concluded: 'in the future discussion, extremes, aimless searches and negative tendencies should be effectively suppressed; the Commission on Party Reorganisation is advised that it must define precisely the key problems in its Theses so as to direct all positive efforts in a single direction'.⁴⁴ After that plenum Tito told a television audience that it was very important that people at lower levels of the Party think about Party reorganisation. Once again, he wanted to get away from the philosophical speculation produced in the hothouse atmosphere of the Commission on Party Reorganisation and return to everyday practicalities. In his view, the problem was that 'small, scattered Party units cannot grasp the process of production, they cannot see the scope of the problems, only the narrowest part'. Something broader was needed, but Tito offered no clear guidance. Party units should at least embrace the whole factory, but could not be 'closed within the factory' but open towards the commune in which they were based.⁴⁵

At the end of January 1967 Tito visited Moscow and the Theses were again shelved until his return. Views were as far apart as ever and clearly whether increased powers for workers' self-management was consistent with the leading role of the Party remained extremely problematic. In the journal *Gledišta* for January 1967 there was speculation that the Party might evolve into some 'new organisation', in the struggle to establish self-management, democratic centralism was no longer an essential organising principle, it suggested.⁴⁶ Then suddenly, on 21 February Tempo resigned as President of the Trade Union Federation stating that his decision was 'a natural consequence of the rotation of officials'. There was clearly far more to it than that. Tempo's earlier television broadcast had caused disagreement within the Party Executive, especially when he had argued that a trade union representative should help draft an Executive statement on the current political situation. On that occasion, Tito had defended Tempo, preventing decisions being taken against his interests; Tito felt Tempo's broadcasts had been 'harsh but true'. By February, Tito no longer defended Tempo, and it was soon rumoured that Tempo had gone because he could not persuade Tito to make self-management a more genuinely workers' government by introducing the elusive 'vertical element'. Logically enough, the idea of a Conference of Self-Managers to be held in June disappeared from the agenda with Tempo's resignation.⁴⁷ Yet the dilemma raised by Tempo remained as apposite as ever. On 12 March 1967 *Borba* published an interview with Kardelj, who recognised that as the economy was reformed, there would be 'a need for guidance and planning'. These operations, he stressed, would be of an economic not an administrative nature. To achieve this there

would be a need 'to change some of the existing forms of economic relations and to establish new ones, or supplement them'. However, still no details were forthcoming.⁴⁸

When on 17 April 1967 the Draft Theses on the Further Development and Reorganisation of the Yugoslav League of Communists were eventually published, Tito reminded Belgrade communists that 'the Communist Party is the vanguard of the working class and its role will for long be an important one'. Yet such a restatement of orthodoxy did not help guide the open discussion which the Theses now called for. True, radical proposals like those of Tempo had been ruled out, but the key question of how best to embed the Party in a self-management system with far greater economic power than before still remained open. Tito was keen to bring this prolonged discussion of Party reorganisation to an end. On 26 March, he stated that 'this is a simple thing, this can be solved very quickly, it is less a problem of words than of getting on with the job'. Communists, both in enterprises, factories and everywhere else, should understand that they could not as it were issue orders as in the past, but had to 'learn and learn' in order to convince others. The following day he noted that the Party reorganisation had 'evolved rather slowly', and because of this slowness 'some people had appeared who wanted to thwart our consolidation'. Yet Tito could not prevent the publication of the Theses sparking off a new round of speculation.⁴⁹

Just prior to the publication of the Theses, Todorović had argued that the Party had to operate from below, 'from the self-management basis through the direct democratic political activity of the working people, working of course for the development of the assembly system'. Was this reference to the 'development of the assembly system' a veiled hint that alongside the existing assembly hierarchy there would need to be a self-management hierarchy? The Theses themselves included a rather obscure reference to 'the new self-management production relations being the skeleton of the entire system'.⁵⁰ The Theses made very clear that Yugoslav society was entering a new phase of development characterised by the further extension of self-management to strengthen the role of working people in disposing of the results of their labour, and that Party reorganisation was an essential element of that process. The Party could no longer act from outside, but had to be 'an internal factor' which, by force of its ideas and arguments, influenced the decisions of self-managing bodies. Although the Theses referred both to 'working people' and the 'working class', it was clear that although the boundaries between blue-collar workers, white-collar workers and the intelligentsia were increasingly blurred, a class interest remained. The Theses accepted that the further development of self-management would inevitably mean disagreements between elements of the working class, but these were non-antagonistic contradictions, not irreconcilable differences and could be resolved through the appropriate self-management mechanism, with the help of the leadership given by the Party. Leadership of this kind would require a different understanding of democratic centralism, with every member taking part in decision making so that genuine 'action unity' was achieved; the time for 'mechanistic unity' and 'blind obedience' within the Party had gone. At a practical level, the Theses suggested, the focus of Party activity should be the commune, below which there would be both industrial and territorial structures; workers could be represented both where they lived and where they worked.

At every level leaderships would be elected and mechanisms adopted to ensure the regular replacement of cadres.⁵¹

When discussion on the Theses began, comment was divided between those who thought them too theoretical, too abstract and incomprehensible to the rank-and-file activists, views which echoed Tito's comment that the reorganisation of the Party was quite a simple matter, and those who thought the Theses addressed very real issues. Amongst the many events to popularise the Theses, the Party held a seminar in Belgrade from 5–10 June 1967. Here Todorović explained that, in his view, Party reorganisation would not be a single act based on one decree, and he dismissed the suggestion that the language of the Theses was 'too academic'; communist workers had shown themselves fully able to understand their essence. Todorović stressed that Yugoslav society was entering a qualitatively new stage, which was not just about decentralising bureaucracy, but empowering the workers. This was the opening phase of a new era, and it was pregnant with contradictions between old and new sources of authority; the key to the future was 'to integrate the Party into the self-management system, without it losing its identity'.⁵² The seminar also heard a report on democratic centralism by Latinka Perović, a young Party leader from Serbia. She stressed that democratic centralism could no longer be based on the fetish of a monolithic Party, but 'required open discussion at all levels'. In future, democratic centralism would be more complex than issuing instructions, democratic relations were essential at every level and that meant 'challenging the mentality of every one of us'. Democratic centralism could only operate on the basis of the participation of the broad ranks of Party members in every aspect of decision making, without fear of straying from an agreed line or having to negate their own proposals. In short, democratic centralism should not look like subordination but be in fact 'democratic agreement and conscious action' without which true unity was impossible.⁵³

A report on the Theses was presented to the July Central Committee Plenum and its Conclusions and Theses were finally accepted by the September Central Committee Plenum. Reflecting on this on 30 September, Tito again showed his irritation at how slow the process had been, noting that 'organisational forms have recently been discussed too much and over too long a period'; it was 'high time to understand that the main activity of communists was to be carried out at their places of work', he said. Polemics about this were still continuing and this had resulted in 'a lack of clarity and even confusion' among working people.⁵⁴ Throughout October and the first half of November Central Committee discussion of the Conclusions and Theses moved to republican Party organisations and on the eve of the November Central Committee Plenum, which opened on the 23rd, Tito again criticised the slow pace of the reorganisation, repeating that 'we have been too slow in approaching concrete solutions to the tasks we set ourselves'. For Todorović, on the other hand, the long debate had been beneficial. Speaking on Belgrade Radio on 7 December, to mark the thirtieth anniversary of Tito becoming leader of the Yugoslav Communist Party, Todorović stressed that the activities of recent months had shown that the Party was already reviving in many ways, with 'its internal life becoming more and more dynamic'.⁵⁵

Tito was concerned that there were forces which were exploiting the discussions on Party reorganisation to undermine the Party itself. In a speech on 4 October he noted that 'among the intellectuals in certain circles' there were those who suggested the process of organisational and ideological change within the Party was about 'the withering away of the Party'. The Party had been relaxed about this at first, he said, but he now thought 'we have given them enough space and time to behave like this but now it is high time to deny them the opportunities for such activities'. Conceding that these were strong words, Tito stressed that 'some have thought that the revolution has been completed and that they can do whatever they like, but I believe that precisely now, in the phase of our prosperity and rapid progress, communists must be more than ever united in thought and action'. And he again repeated, 'Party reorganisation is a very simple matter' and people were thinking up all sorts of complications, complications 'hatched in the heads of people who do not know what communism is or what a communist should be like'. The great majority of Party members who did not think the reorganisation such a complicated matter should get on and implement it in practice. He concluded: 'we must transform ourselves without delay; we must not wait for the Ninth Party Congress'.⁵⁶

THE PHILOSOPHERS, STUDENTS AND WORKERS

In his speech in Belgrade on the eve of the November Central Committee Plenum, Tito complained not only that there had been too much discussion on the topic of Party reorganisation, but that many people outside the Party had decided to join in. If some of the ideas coming from within the Party were radical enough, those outside the Party were putting forward very radical ideas indeed, not so much reorganising the Party as reforming communism itself. Although the immediate cause of Tito's comments was an article in the journal *Gledišta* for August–September 1967, which openly called, as Djilas had once done, for the establishment of two socialist parties in Yugoslavia, more concerning still was the philosophical journal *Praxis*. This first appeared late in 1964 and between 1963 and 1968 the group of philosophers associated with it organised a series of annual summer schools on the island of Korčula. They had not always been seen as a troublesome force, for it was partly due to the work of the *Praxis* philosophers that Marx's writings on alienation were accepted by the Party as a new orthodoxy. As one of the group's leading members Mihailo Marković noted, alienation was a central problem for Marx since it addressed the key question of 'how to realise human nature by producing a more humane world'. Mankind essentially consisted of beings capable of free creative activity, through which the world could be transformed. The discrepancy 'between the individual's actual existence and potential existence, i.e., between what mankind is and what it might be, is alienation', Marković explained, and the Party had no problem with ideas such as these. Indeed, for Kardelj the very logic of the economic reform was to address at a very practical level the question of alienation. If workers controlled 70 per cent of investment funds rather than just thirty per cent, the control they had over their destiny would be that much the greater and their level of alienation would be significantly reduced. This practical solution to Marx's philosophical dilemma would give workers back control over their

lives, and put an end to those vestiges of capitalism which treated labour merely as a commodity.⁵⁷

What *Praxis* dared to do during the debate over Party reorganisation, was to question whether self-management, even the reformed variant post 1965, was not itself a cover for a new form of alienation. Its philosophers argued that many of the country's difficulties stemmed from weaknesses inherent in the very theory of self-management. Responding to Marx's plea that philosophers should not only interpret the world but change it, Marković and others insisted that 'the basic task of philosophy is to critically analyse the phenomenon of alienation and to indicate practical steps leading to human self-realisation'. For him, that could also involve criticising Yugoslav self-management. 'The bourgeois state was not transcended by [establishing] a network of self-management bodies but was only modified into a bureaucratic state which allows a greater or lesser degree of participatory democracy in atomised units of social organisation', he argued. Real suppression of political alienation 'will materialise only when all monopolies of power are dismantled, when authoritarian and hierarchical organisations like the state and Party gradually wither away and are replaced by self-governing associations of producers and citizens at all social levels.'⁵⁸ Svetozar Stojanović, editor of *Gledišta* but also a key member of the *Praxis* group, was equally forthright in his writing: 'complete and unadulterated truth threatens only the usurpers of the revolution, never the revolution itself. Marx was clear, Stojanović said, human beings ought to have control over their activity. In its initial phase, the revolutionary state served to open the path to 'disalienation' by expropriating private property; but the state then became 'Janus-faced, both alienating and disalienating' until under Stalinism 'the apparatus' not only employed the labour force, 'but exploited it; the personal share of each representative of the ruling class in the distribution of surplus value was proportional to his position in the state hierarchy'. The self-management system had still not managed to end this situation completely.⁵⁹

As early as 1965, Tito had criticised such views. Speaking to public prosecutors that February, he asked out aloud whether 'writers of bold articles' had not formed 'some sort of organisation' and warned against 'Djilasism in a new form'. A year later in his speech to the February 1966 Central Committee Plenum, Tito included *Praxis* and *Gledišta* among his examples of decadence and petty-bourgeois ideology which were 'left-overs' from the past and which had reappeared because of 'our lack of vigilance'. He went on 'what we once fought against with rifles in our hands is still alive and must be finished off', although he conceded that today 'finished off' meant 'disempowerment through ideological struggle' rather than anything more sinister.⁶⁰ *Praxis* was closed from July 1966 to March 1967, but when it reappeared, it was determined to keep under discussion the ideas advanced by *Tempo* and the trade unions, which had disappeared from the agenda with *Tempo*'s sudden resignation. *Praxis* continued to call for radical change, insisting that rearranging Party committees into a structure more responsive to working-class pressure was simply to rearrange the deck chairs on the Titanic. The Party had to cease to act as the ruling party of the state and extend self-management to the point where it instigated the Marxist concept of the state withering away.

The question is posed: will the communist organisation remain the vanguard of the working class and working masses, or will it degenerate into a party of the new ruling, statist class. A socialist solution to this dilemma demands nothing less than that the political organisation which possesses the complete monopoly of state authority should initiate and develop social self-management, i.e. gradually let state power out of its hands. A socialist, self-managing society can only be created by an organisation which itself is based on the same principles. In the Party, just as in a self-managing society, the structure and process of adopting decisions must grow from below.

Stojanović, just like Tempo, looked for inspiration back in revolutionary history to the Russian Workers' Opposition of 1920. The workers' voice had to be heard when running the economy, for the free market was not in the view of *Praxis*, self-regulating; indeed Stojanović was clear that 'in order to preserve a given society's socialist character ... [the market] must be placed within the framework of serious planning, regulation and co-ordination'.⁶¹

Calls to strengthen what trade unionists had called the vertical authority of self-management became a consistent demand of the *Praxis* group. In its view a 'Yugoslav Workers' Opposition' had first begun to emerge in 1965 with the first suggestions that a congress of self-managers needed to be elected as a new supreme legislative body. Writing in *Praxis* for September 1967, Stojanović argued that socialism could not be built without 'integral self-management, the basic cells of which would be workers' councils', and he reminded his readers that the relationship between the Communist Party and workers' councils had not always been a happy one. In 1905 the St. Petersburg Soviet had emerged despite the best efforts of the Bolshevik Party, he reminded his readers, and argued that Marxists had never really analysed objectively the role of the Party and the trade unions during the Workers' Opposition crisis of autumn–winter 1920. The trade unions in Yugoslavia were still 'instruments of communist organisation', he wrote, and this had to end: a form of socialist pluralism which included independent trade unions was essential and would help pave the way for 'integral social self-management', which would construct socialism around the core of workers' councils.⁶²

Stojanović developed these views further in *Praxis* for January–February 1968. It was, he argued, impossible to speak about social ownership if self-management was reduced to 'group self-management', if 'every self-managing group has the sole ambition to increase its net income and to realise its interests on the market', then there was a danger of these interests opposing one another and interest group factions emerging as opposing oligarchies. Far from disalienation of the labour force, such a system would lead to 'real alienation from the means of production as a whole'. So, he went on, socialism could not be constructed without workers' self-management 'constructed as an integral social system; this means, first, that it must embrace all parts of society and second that in addition to the self-government of individual elements, it must be seen as the self-government of society as a whole'. For him, 'only horizontally and vertically integrated self-government will enable the working class to become the dominant social force, [for] so long as integration, co-ordination, regulation and planning are not inherent in self-government, these functions will have to be

performed by an alienated part of society, the state'. Therefore what was needed was 'the construction of vertical associations of self-managing groups, the outgrowth of representative organs from below, the placing of all state organs, including the military and the police, under their control, a fundamental democratisation of political organisations and above all the Party'. Continuing the campaign in this way was not appreciated by the Party. After an intervention by the Croatian Party Central Committee, at the end of April 1968 the Croatian Committee for Cultural Activity decided to reduce funding for *Praxis* and the journal ceased to appear.⁶³

Closing the journal down did not put an end to its influence. The journal had an enormous following among students and by summer 1968 what the press liked to call 'New Left' students shook Tito's regime to the core. The 'June crisis' began with an apparently trivial incident. On Sunday 2 June an open-air full dress-rehearsal for a pop concert was due to take place near one of Belgrade's many new suburbs. Young working class construction volunteers had been invited to attend the dress-rehearsal free as a reward for their commitment to the cause. However, students felt that, since this was a dress-rehearsal and would take place in the open air, there was no reason why they could not also attend. At the last minute, the organisers, allegedly keen to earn as much cash from the planned concerts as they possibly could, and dropped the idea of an open-air dress-rehearsal and moved it to a small hall, admitting only those who could prove they were construction volunteers. Disappointed students tried to force their way into the hall, the police were called. What happened next was always disputed. The students argued that the police were the first to use violence, prompting the authorities to evacuate the construction volunteers by bus, with some students then pursuing the bus and trying to wreck the construction volunteers' temporary accommodation. The police denied all charges of violence and accused the students of simple hooliganism. The following day, students decided to march to the city centre to protest against police violence. Stopped by a police cordon set up at a strategic underpass, there was more violence. On this occasion it is more certain that the police attacked and dispersed the demonstrators in an unprovoked manner, while they were in the process of listening to appeals to turn back voluntarily.

By Tuesday 4 June the two sides were at loggerheads. The police banned all demonstrations and meetings in Belgrade public spaces, and the students occupied the university campus and other university buildings, with unrest quickly spreading to other cities. By the end of the day the students had produced a Political Action Programme, drawn up by several *ad hoc* committees, including the University Committee of the Union of Students and the university's Party organisation; perhaps significantly, students in the Department of Philosophy, where *Praxis* was best represented, rejected the final Political Action Programme as not radical enough.⁶⁴ The students addressed the following demands to Tito:

Comrade President! From the gatherings of student of Belgrade University, which as of today 4 June 1968, following a proposal of the students, is called 'The Red University of Karl Marx', we would like to let you know about the aims for which we have been pleading. We are not fighting for our material interests. We are embittered because of enormous social and

economic differences in our society. We are against the fact that the working class alone, bears the burden of the economic reforms. We are in favour of social self-management, from top to bottom, which cannot be realised if self-management and parliamentary bodies are not composed of representatives of direct producers. We are against an ever increasing enrichment of individuals at the expense of the working class. We are in favour of socialist ownership and against attempts to create capitalist joint-stock companies. We are pained by the fact that thousands of our people have to emigrate in order to serve in and work for world capitalism. We are embittered that bureaucratic interests tend to destroy the brotherhood and unity of our peoples. We shall not allow any confrontation between workers and students. The interests of the working class are general interests and these are the only true interests of socialism. Our programme is the programme of the most progressive forces of our society, that of the Party and the constitution. We demand their full implementation. Comrade President! We greet you and, trusting your revolutionary spirit, we believe you are going to understand and support us.⁶⁵

‘Social self-management from top to bottom’ was a clear reference to the need for strengthened ‘verticality’, but the philosophy students seem to have wanted this to be even more tightly defined.

The initial response of the authorities was to try to play workers against students by encouraging the appearance in the press of resolutions passed by workers urging the students to end their protest. However, on 7 June the trade union newspaper *Rad* publicly questioned whether any of these resolutions were genuine. According to the students’ own version of events, workers were sympathetic to their cause: on 3 June when the Party’s chief ideologist Veljko Vlahović was attempting to open up a dialogue with the marching students, he was approached by a worker who said: ‘Comrade Veljko, today the students went out into the streets; you can expect the same from the workers because they have reason to demonstrate ... I am a proletarian, and you were one – once’. On 9 June Tito acted, coming down firmly against confrontation. He made a televised appeal to the students, embracing their action, promising change, but warning that there were ‘Maoists’ and other ‘unhealthy elements’ who were trying to infiltrate them. Most students then returned to their studies and by 10 June the demonstrations were over.⁶⁶

That many workers sided with the students, in spirit if not in deed, was clear when the Sixth Trade Union Congress gathered at the end of June. In the run-up to this assembly the press had continued to stress that it was time for the trade unions to play a new and more important role in society. The question of the vertical integration of self-management may have been pushed off the agenda, but genuinely independent trade unions would be able to achieve much even without this structural change. Thus in May 1968 an article in *Gledišta* stressed that trade unions should now become ‘the correct bearer of worker self-management’, while the June–July issue of *Gledišta* was almost wholly devoted to trade union matters, with one writer stressing that it was time to stop using Lenin’s writings on the trade unions as a block to further discussion of how the trade unions should evolve. In a discussion article for *Naše teme* in May, Škrbić again took up the theme of the disintegration of the working class into the concept of the ‘working people’ and argued that there was a progressive wing in the Party which was ready to stand by the proletariat: the defensive mood among workers

and the radicalisation of the intelligentsia and young people showed that people were ready to support genuine reform, but 'the key was to re-engage with the proletarian base', and in this process it was essential to revitalise the trade unions. Škrbić warned, however, that Tempo's experience showed that this was easier said than done, because Tempo had been opposed by both the press 'and the political structures'. The problem was that 'we did not support him sufficiently firmly, sufficiently decisively and sufficiently unambiguously', Škrbić wrote, 'and in spite of the undivided support of the working class, he had to go'. The only way forward was to assert class solidarity over market relations. Another written in the same journal took this idea to its logical conclusion: a strike could result in 'pressure on the superstructure' and could force a clear definition of the interests of the working class. This revolutionary way forward was an entirely practical solution to the problem of 'changing the petrified bureaucratic structures which sabotaged the development of workers' self-management'.⁶⁷

With this talk of a revolutionary general strike in the air, not to mention the student protest, as delegates assembled for the Trade Union Congress, they were in angry mood, with many still determined to raise Tempo's demand for more 'verticality' in the self-management system. A metal worker delegate stated on 29 June that 'he had had enough of theoretical socialism' and wanted what he termed 'full self-management'; in his view 'workers have had enough of stories that something is going to be done, because these stories have always been told by the people who have enriched themselves at the cost of the working class'. Even Dušan Petrović, Tempo's replacement as President of the Trade Union Council, managed a coded comment: self-management, he said, could not be 'shut within a narrow framework'; an appropriate change in the system of social planning still had to be found, and 'far more than hitherto' the trade unions should advance their own demands to help workers implement self-management 'at all levels'. Indeed, the final congress resolution called for self-management 'to be promoted as a functional system which would enable the working man to participate in decision making at all levels'. Calls for the vertical integration of self-management just would not go away.⁶⁸

When he addressed the congress, Tito was conciliatory. He began by stating at once that 'it would be wrong for us leaders to adopt sack cloth and ashes and then go on as before'. It was clear that 'various negative phenomena had so accumulated that they have provoked revolt among our people; I know this revolt from below has been present for several years, but now it has come to a near explosion among our young generation. The working class, he said, had reacted in one way and youth in another – 'workers are responsible for their enterprises, for what they manage, and of course they could not come out into the streets'. But 'a surgical knife' was needed to remove 'the phenomena which are provoking this'. 'Certain capitalist elements' had indeed appeared in Yugoslavia's socialist society and that 'would not be allowed to go on'. The students had 'roused us from stagnation', but the working class, 'wisely and maturely' did not take to the streets. However, as far as Tito was concerned, the ideas offered by *Praxis* were part of the problem, not part of the solution. He ignored their views on 'vertical integration' and used his speech to accuse *Praxis* of 'proclaiming a movement

in the university' and hoping to establish a multi-party system; 'we will not let them plot any more', he said.⁶⁹

THE PRAGUE SPRING

Tito ended his speech to the Trade Union Congress by turning to events in Czechoslovakia. When Alexander Dubček came to power in Czechoslovakia, and the Prague Spring began, the Soviet Union was keen to isolate Czechoslovakia from any possibility of Yugoslav influence and as part of this strategy began a press campaign noting how, since the 1965 economic reform, elements of capitalism could be seen re-emerging in Yugoslavia. Ridiculing this concern that capitalism was being restored in Yugoslavia, Tito went on to state clearly that 'what is troubling them, actually, is something else, our self-management system; that is what is troubling them; for it is rather a catching thing if this self-management system is successful'. The Soviet leadership was indeed convinced that Yugoslavia was influencing the events of the Prague Spring, in particular Dubček's Prime Minister was believed to be 'under the complete influence of the Yugoslav ambassador'; a fortnight after Tito's speech, the Hungarian communist leader noted that the situation in Czechoslovakia was worsening and that the political system there 'was beginning to resemble Yugoslavia'. Tito saw Czechoslovak–Yugoslav relations as a one-way street, with the Yugoslavs influencing the Czechoslovaks; when he called Yugoslav self-management 'a catching thing', he added simply that 'in our country self-management is going to be even more successful than it is now'.⁷⁰

However, earlier in the year the Yugoslav Prime Minister Mitja Ribičić had suggested that the Czechoslovak–Yugoslav relationship was reciprocal. He praised the 'creative socialism' of the Czechoslovaks and went on to say that 'our people are aware of the fact that every success of the *bona fide* socialist forces strengthens not only socialism in other countries, but also our country'. The expansion of socialist democracy in Czechoslovakia was of extraordinary significance for Yugoslavia itself, for it 'created possibilities for our own further democratic development'. Events in Czechoslovakia confirmed that Yugoslavia had followed the correct path, but also obliged it 'to go forward faster and without compromise'. The clear implication of what Ribičić said was that events in Czechoslovakia had strengthened liberal forces in Yugoslavia. *Praxis* supporters were even clearer that the Czechoslovaks were going to influence the Yugoslavs, as well as *vice versa*. As Stojanović recalled, the Czechoslovak Action Programme anticipated both radical economic reform and elements of self-management: 'before the Prague Spring, Yugoslavia had a monopoly on socialist avant-gardism in Europe, as a result of which it had allowed itself to be lulled into sleep with self-satisfaction; from January 1968 to August 1968 Czechoslovakia opened up the possibility not only for closer co-operation, but also for competition with Yugoslavia in the initiation of revolutionary change'.⁷¹

The Yugoslav attitude to the Prague Spring was first made clear on 18 March and changed relatively little as the months passed. The official press agency Tanjug issued a statement which said there is 'no danger that the socialist achievement of Czechoslovakia might suffer defeat', and in the following week the Yugoslav press

stressed repeatedly that there was no comparison between the unfolding events in Czechoslovakia and the 1956 crisis in Hungary. In the view of the Yugoslavs, 'West Europe is so absorbed in its own complex internal problems that it would hardly have any interest in changing the European status quo'.⁷² After a tour of Japan, Mongolia and Iran, Tito held talks in Moscow with Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev on 28–30 April. When Brezhnev expressed concern that in Czechoslovakia there was a 'danger that the bourgeois state will be restored as a result of imperialist ideological subversion', Tito made clear that 'he could not share those fears'. He reminded Brezhnev that, as a young man, he had travelled to Bohemia to seek work and had 'become aware of the political maturity of the Czechoslovak working class'; he therefore 'had faith in the Czechoslovak Communist Party and the ability of its leadership to inspire and muster the initiative and activity of the working class to ensure the prompt implementation of the Action Programme'. Towards the end of May, Tito was keen to try and set up an early meeting with Dubček, either in Belgrade or Prague.⁷³ The Soviet Politburo discussed this possibility on 27 May and decided 'to think up ways' to make Tito understand he should stay at home. As a result little progress was made on the question of Tito–Dubček talks until July, when the whole issue got caught up in the broader question of the appropriate response to the radical Two Thousand Words manifesto, published in Czechoslovakia and calling in essence for the Prague Spring to be followed by a Prague Summer of continuing public protest. The Yugoslav attitude to the Two Thousand Words was clear: it condemned what it saw as a call for 'anarchist violence', but praised the moderate and measured response of the Czechoslovak leadership. The Yugoslavs therefore condemned the decision of the Warsaw Pact to summon Czechoslovakia to attend a special meeting to discuss the Two Thousand Words and the situation developing in the country.⁷⁴

Dubček declined the 'invitation' to attend these talks, and when Brezhnev informed the Soviet Politburo of this on 9 July he added that Dubček had justified his decision by referring to the need to hold talks with Yugoslavia. Tito's visit had indeed been fixed for 19 July, and on the 16th the Yugoslav Central Committee held a plenum which issued a statement echoing what Tito had said when he had met Brezhnev at the end of April, making clear that 'the Central Committee is profoundly convinced that the working class and progressive forces in Czechoslovakia are sufficiently strong to counter all attempts to jeopardise the achievements of socialism and further socialist development'. From a Soviet perspective, it looked as if Tito was encouraging Dubček not to attend the planned Warsaw Pact meeting. With a lavish reception prepared and Tito already at the airport ready to take off, the Soviet Union pressurised Dubček into postponing Tito's visit at the very last minute.⁷⁵

As the crisis unfolded, Dubček was persuaded to meet Brezhnev at Cierna nad Tisou in Slovakia from 29 July–1 August. There Dubček agreed to cancel Tito's visit, but this was not known to Josef Smrkovsky, the Chairman of the Czechoslovak National Assembly, when he addressed a mass meeting on 3 August and, responding to a question from the crowd, said the dates for Tito's re-scheduled visit had finally been fixed. Tito visited Czechoslovakia from 9–11 August, reminisced about his time in Prague as a young man, praised the local beer, mentioned possible future trading links,

but was careful to sign no agreement which might antagonise Brezhnev. Brezhnev, however, remained absolutely convinced that Tito was giving active support to Dubček, and that the two men were determined 'to sign some sort of document' on future collaboration among reform communists; the fact that Tito had not signed any such document did nothing to prevent the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia starting on the night of 20 August.⁷⁶

Tito condemned the invasion outright, 'a heavy blow had been dealt to the socialist and progressive forces of the world'. He reiterated that 'during my stay in Prague and my talks with the Czechoslovak leaders, headed by Comrade Dubček, I realised that they were determined to prevent any anti-socialist elements which might impede the normal growth of democracy'. Yugoslav opinion was agreed that the invasion was aimed at destroying all attempts at reforming communism. According to the Central Committee's official statement, whatever the Soviet side had been said about 'the danger threatening from the West', the truth was 'that [the invasion] was motivated by the danger that democratic socialism might prevail'.⁷⁷ Individual responses were even more outspoken. Tempo told the press on 1 September that the invasion was brought about by bureaucratic leaders anxious to preserve 'their social and material positions'. *Praxis* was even clearer. For Stojanović the occupation of Czechoslovakia was 'the Stalinist oligarchic counter-revolution', for him 'the last socialist mask had fallen from the face of the oligarchic-statist system', a system which could not tolerate any innovation; the problem was that 'love for the October Socialist Revolution had been turned into a narcotic, preventing Marxists from seeing the real character of the present'.⁷⁸

What would have happened if there had been no invasion of Czechoslovakia and interaction between the Czechoslovak and Yugoslav reform movements had continued? It is possible to argue that at the time of his visit to Czechoslovakia, Tito was still uncertain how to respond to the depth of popular anger displayed by the students and by the workers at the Sixth Trade Union Congress. The students had referred to Tito's 'revolutionary spirit'. This was partly flattery, but there were plenty of occasions during Tito's career when he had been ready to take risks. During the student demonstrations there were frequent calls among the leadership for firm action; but according to most reports it was Tempo who had insisted during leadership discussions that this was not a counter-revolution – 'it is our children out there', he is reported to have said, and Tito seems to have concluded that he was right.⁷⁹ In his speech to the Sixth Trade Union Congress he spoke of being 'roused from stagnation' by the students and being aware of 'a revolt from below present for several years'. On this occasion, as he had done previously, he stressed that things would 'not go on as before', but the recognition of the depth of genuine popular unrest – rather than rhetorical references to remnants of petty bourgeois ideologies – suggests the need for a pause for thought.

When the July Central Committee Plenum gathered on the eve of Tito's planned departure for Czechoslovakia, it also discussed the student disturbances. Todorović introduced the topic, stressing that the action by the students showed that the process of Party reform could not stop half-way, the Party really did have to become 'an integrating ideological force', but that meant confronting 'counter-revolutionary

activity' and opposing that 'small group of intellectuals around individual journals who for years have been forming and working out their own theoretical and ideological platform which directly contradicts the Party platform'. The tone of the plenum was wholly negative when it came to intellectuals. The editor of the Bosnian journal *Oslobodjenje* was criticised for supporting the students, one of the two chief editors of *Praxis* was expelled from the Party, and the Party organisations in Belgrade University's Departments of Philosophy and Sociology were disbanded. At the plenum, one of the delegates, a respected novelist, accused Yugoslavia's philosophers of having studied 'both in the West and East', yet knowing nothing of Yugoslavia. He compared their demands to the 'petty-bourgeois smokescreen' of the Two Thousand Words which the Czechoslovaks had rightly condemned.⁸⁰

Yet, despite the fury of this attack on *Praxis*, and the ease with which it could be identified as a scape-goat for the student unrest of the previous month, shortly after this the July–August issue of *Praxis* was published. The Croatian Committee for Cultural Activity agreed to give the journal a short-term subsidy to allow it to reappear. This suggests that the issue was not yet closed, and that if the Prague Spring had not been crushed, pressure for reform, especially press reform, could have resurfaced. One of the student slogans in June had been 'do not believe the newspapers', and as Radio Free Europe commented, 'in fighting for further liberalisation many elements of the Yugoslav Party would like to achieve what Czechoslovakia has allowed, a free press'. The irony was, however, that those same intellectuals and students who looked forward expectantly to Czechoslovakia influencing Yugoslavia, had no choice but to give their full support to Tito when it came to standing up to Moscow and defending the right of the Czechs and Slovaks to follow their own road to socialism.⁸¹

ACTUALLY EXISTING SELF-MANAGEMENT

During the Brezhnev years, defenders of the Stalinist system operating in Eastern Europe used to contrast the 'actually existing socialism' of those states to the revolutionary dreams of the New Left. After 1968 Tito gradually adapted the self-management system into something that 'actually worked' but had little to do with workers overcoming the alienation of their labour. In August 1968 the reform movement in Yugoslavia stood at a crossroads. At the July Central Committee Plenum the *Praxis* philosophers had been denounced for fomenting student unrest, yet *Praxis* itself was allowed to reappear. The Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia not only stopped moves towards reform communism in Czechoslovakia, but in Yugoslavia as well. The effervescent euphoria of the post Ranković era, the talk of a Workers' Opposition, of 'genuine self-management', all this evaporated overnight. After the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, Tito repeated more than once that not only the reform of the 1960s, but the reform of the Party begun back at the Sixth Party Congress in 1952 had been a mistake. As socialist experimentation was replaced by nationalist excess, so Tito responded by the re-establishment of orthodoxy.

OPENING THE DOOR TO NATIONALISM

Tito's instinctive reaction to the invasion of Czechoslovakia was to reassert traditional Party discipline. When the Ninth Party Congress gathered in March 1969 Tito surprised delegates by announcing the formation of a new Executive Bureau to head the Party; the proposed Party statutes arising from the work of the Commission on Party Reorganisation made no mention of such a body. This organisational change was part of his call for stronger leadership and the need 'to oppose all those who, by invoking socialist democracy try to lessen the leading role of the Party' or those 'who interpret the reorganisation as meaning the Party becoming some sort of discussion club'. The situation in the world today demanded, he said 'an energetic and strong leadership and the liquidation of all deviations; it is necessary to have in the centre a new, strong leadership'. Speaking in Zadar six months later he suggested for the first time that at the Sixth Party Congress in 1952 the reconsideration of the role of the Party had actually gone too far. 'It was too often said,' he suggested, 'that the Party should not command, but instead should become an orienting and educating force; this was not understood by many communists, who became confused on how to perform this orienting role'. Many had wrongly concluded 'that it was enough to write or to speak, without getting involved in daily practical work'. Tito stressed that the Party is still 'the vanguard of the working class'. Those who had hoped that the

reorganisation of the Party might result in radical change were firmly put in their place.¹

Working class discontent did not vanish overnight, but the neutralisation of Tempo's ambitions pushed it towards frustration rather than creativity. In 1969 there was a dramatic increase in the number of workers involved in strikes, along with their greater organisation and politicisation. The Rijeka dock strike that June was particularly bitter, and on 20 September the Party Presidium and the Trade Union Federation held a joint session to discuss the appearance of 'anarchism, anarcho-syndicalism and the initial forms of violence during recent strikes'. A rank-and-file trade unionist was quoted in *Borba* in October 1969 as saying 'wherever you discuss the problems of the trade unions you hear the workers saying yes, we need trade unions, but not in the form they are now; we want different, more militant, more courageous, more energetic trade unions, capable of wrestling with our concrete problems of life; we need trade unions which would fight and give guidance as to where one should seek the solution to our problems'.² The same month a prominent Party leader stated bluntly: 'perhaps never before have the workers been so dissatisfied as they are now ... The workers do not consider that their position actually coincides with what the Party, as the leading force in our society, proclaimed it should be'.³

When Tempo decided to bow out of politics completely at the end of 1968, his swansong was to make a rallying call to defend the working class nature of the regime. In an interview with *Borba* on 14 December 1968, he called for the democratisation of the Party: 'the revolutionary struggle has never been waged by people afraid of losing their positions, but rather by people who, in such a struggle, have nothing to lose but rather everything to win; this means that we have to rely on the workers'.⁴ *Praxis* authors were as iconoclastic as ever. Marković argued in January 1969 that it was 'unimportant whether the surplus of labour achieved by the working class was appropriated by capitalists in the form of profits and on the basis of their ownership of the means of production, or by the bureaucrats in the form of extremely high salaries and privileges which they enjoyed thanks to their unlimited power in controlling the work done by society'. Yugoslavia was still only in 'the initial phase' of self-management, he said, and revolution was something 'much deeper than the assumption of power'; he went on this time not to praise the Workers' Opposition of 1920 but the Kronstadt sailors of Soviet Russia and their attempt in 1921 to resist the growing authoritarianism of the Bolshevik state. This sort of speculation was too much for Tito, who on 11 December 1969 declared that the Party would 'ideologically settle accounts with those individuals who, under the guise of freedom and democracy, try to lead our social development astray'. The Belgrade Party Committee then passed a resolution condemning 'anarcho-liberals from the Belgrade Philosophical Faculty', accusing them of establishing links to the surviving Cominformists.⁵

Tito had concluded his speech to the Ninth Party Congress by saying that the Party should 'now look for those ways which could speed the implementation of the economic reform'. Just prior to this, in December 1968, the Yugoslav Constitution had been amended in a way which was supposed to strengthen the voice of the working class within the self-management mechanism. Workers no longer had to elect

the rather cumbersome management committees of old, but could elect their own self-management bodies and define their jurisdiction. During 1969 an increasing number of workers' councils began to elect small 'business committees' to take over the day-to-day administration and very soon a measure intended to support working-class aspirations for leadership, actually led to a strengthening of the power of 'technocrats'.⁶ Even though the Party Presidium debated the matter in November 1969, and Kardelj gave an interview on the subject in *Borba* in which he conceded that 'the technocrats have assumed power', most enterprises continued to use the constitutional amendment to replace the managing board, a body elected by the workers' council from the firm's labour force, with a business board on which only enterprise executives sat.⁷

Keeping the working class at a distance meant looking to alternative sources of legitimacy. As a Radio Free Europe commentator argued at the time, 'the Party itself played the role of midwife at the birth of renewed nationalism in Yugoslavia, [for] Yugoslav Party leaders, especially those in Croatia, supported nationalist forces, directly or indirectly, in order to prevent a nationwide New Left movement which might have led to some really radical changes in the country of a more anti-liberal nature'.⁸ The 'truckers' affair' was a case in point. One of the promises made to the protesting students in June 1968 was that efforts would be made to root out capitalist elements of the economy. The authorities chose an easy target, one that was both short-sighted and dogmatic. It was decided to make an example of the petty capitalist traders who owned private trucks and to limit the size of privately-owned trucks to five tons. Protests by private truckers took place throughout July 1969 in Croatia and on 7 July eight-hundred private truckers demonstrated in Ljubljana. This apparently social issue quickly became entwined with questions of nationality. The Croatian press decided to defend the truckers from the 'dogmatism of influential politicians in Belgrade' and as a result one chamber of the Yugoslav Parliament, the Council of Nationalities, decided to postpone implementation of this decision; however a different chamber, the Economic Chamber, insisted the legislation should go ahead. In Slovenia and Croatia the authorities agreed to a fudge, allowing trucks over seven tons to continue to operate, so long as they carried only five tons of material. Croatia's leading weekly commented on 16 July that 'a Maoist–Stalinist–centralistic mixture of slogans proclaimed at Belgrade University in June 1968 – of which only those protesting against bureaucratic gods should have been accepted – ended with a hasty change of the law as a result of which private transporters, craftsmen and inn-keepers were placed as sacrificial lambs at the altar of the gods of "equality"'. At the other extreme, the debates in the Economic Chamber heard stories of millionaire truckers owning villas on the Adriatic.⁹

As this affair made clear, politicians had a loathing of Rankovićite bureaucratic centralisation, but dismissed trade union calls for 'strengthened verticality' within self-management as 'Maoism'. From here it was an easy step to opposing all central 'interference' in the way local markets were run, and thus to adopting an essentially nationalist position. The most controversial nationality issue of summer 1969 was the government's decision on how to spend money provided by the Bank for International Reconstruction and Development. Although in the past there had been negotiations

between the republican leaderships prior to such big investment decisions being made, there was no constitutional obligation for this to happen and in July 1969 funds were allocated without preliminary talks. The Slovenes were furious. They argued that the money should have been used to complete work on the Slovene motorway project, but the government insisted that, even though earlier tranches of this money had been used to help finance the Slovene motorway, and indeed road construction in Croatia and Macedonia as well, the final tranche should be used to help the three remaining republics, namely Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Montenegro. Slovenia threatened to secede from Yugoslavia and it required the personal intervention of both Tito and Kardelj to persuade the Slovenes to back down.¹⁰

THE CROATIAN NATIONALIST CHALLENGE

Incidents such as these convinced some Party leaders that nationalism was a growing problem. In November 1969 the Belgrade-based Croat politician Miloš Žanko wrote a series of articles in *Borba*, also Belgrade based, suggesting that the Croatian Party was not being firm enough in the struggle with nationalism, and in particular had failed to respond to the growing influence of *Matica Hrvatska*, the respected and indeed ancient cultural organisation for Croats. Another visit by both Tito and Kardelj was needed to defuse this row, which ended in the clear victory of Croatian Party leader Miko Tripalo. Tripalo insisted that all suggestions that nationalist extremism had been increasing in Croatia were deliberate exaggerations actually aimed at preventing the implementation of the economic reform and reintroducing a Ranković-type strong-arm regime; Žanko was therefore disciplined at the January 1970 Plenum of the Croatian Central Committee.¹¹ This meeting not only condemned Žanko's supporters as 'Cominformists' but called on Croatian communists to launch an all-out struggle against the sort of 'unitarism' displayed by Žanko. However, what was new about this struggle was that it would be undertaken by 'mobilising both communists and non-communists', building bridges and opening dialogues with nationalists 'without a single compromise with anyone'. Yet support for economic reform and for Croatia's national ambitions were quickly elided. The target for the campaign would be to promote 'the right of every nation to dispose of its own realised surplus value'. The nation rather than the working class was the driving force of self-management.¹²

The amendments to the Yugoslav Constitution agreed in April 1970 were largely the work of the Croatian Party leaders. The constituent republics of Yugoslavia were recognised as 'sovereign' and new procedures established for the negotiated resolution of inter-republican disputes, so as to prevent any repetition of the Slovene motorway crisis. When campaigning for these reforms, the Croatian Party leaders had usually been able to rely on the support of the Slovenes and the Macedonians. However, once the new arrangements were in place there was no guarantee that these two republics would continue to support the Croats. The Croats were indeed alone when they pushed on with their next proposed reform, the allocation of foreign currency earnings. The target for the Croatian leadership was the foreign currency earnings of the Dalmatian coast. Under the existing arrangements, authorised banks took 90 per cent of foreign currency earned and converted it into dinars; firms then had to apply to

those same banks to purchase foreign currency. The Ninth Party Congress had resolved in principle to free foreign currency from state influence, but how that was to be done in practice had not been resolved.¹³ The determination of the Croats to push ahead with their demand for a reform of banking and foreign currency arrangements deprived them of their former Slovene and Macedonian allies. Being put into a position where they were not only forced to act alone, but for that very reason never able to achieve a negotiated solution, played into the hands of the Croatian nationalists and meant that it was always they who set the agenda. The nationalists would hector the Party leadership as it tried to advance its cause, and when it inevitably failed, it had the ready made explanation to hand, that this was because the Yugoslav Federation, now effectively a Confederation, still had too much power, leaving Croats to draw the logical conclusion that the only ultimate solution was secession.¹⁴

The year-long Croatian crisis began at the very end of December 1970, when the elections to the post of student pro-rector at Zagreb University were won by an independent candidate. As a result, the elections to the university's student union were postponed because the University Party Committee was anxious that these elections too might be lost. In February 1971 the first of many 'closed' meetings of the Croatian Party leadership took place, at which Tripalo and his supporters insisted that, while there had been a few nationalist excesses, these were marginal and the cautious alliance with moderate nationalists would continue. However, the situation at Zagreb University remained difficult. On 27 March, Marko Veselica, a member of parliament and a thirty-five year-old economics lecturer at the university, addressed an unofficial rally attended by about a thousand students. He attacked 'unitarists' within the Croatian Party leadership, who 'betrayed' Croatia; at his instigation a resolution was passed condemning those who supported 'Stalinist and unitaristic' views. When the student elections finally took place on 4 April, the students chose not the official list of Party dignitaries, but a list drawn up at the meeting of 27 March. Again Veselica spoke, this time accusing 'Leftists' of 'selling the Croatian coast'.¹⁵

Events at the university reinforced the latent disagreements which were already apparent within the Croatian Party leadership. Essentially the disagreements amounted to this: could Croatian nationalism, by intelligent manipulation, be incorporated into progressive Yugoslav socialism, or was nationalism *prima facie* reactionary? In this debate, young people played a crucial role, it did tend to be them who argued that 'if we were only free from Serb exploitation we would be as rich as America'.¹⁶ Yet, before the divisions within the Croatian Communist Party could become entrenched, unity was dramatically restored when the entire Croatian leadership came under attack. One of the strongest émigré ustaše organisations was based in West Berlin and led by Branko Jelić. Recently Jelić had claimed in his periodical *Hrvatska država* 'that no Western power has been willing to help the Croat émigrés', and so he had turned to support to Moscow. In its February–March 1971 issue, *Hrvatska država* published a report from its alleged Moscow correspondent 'Croatia in the East' which discussed 'the incorporation of Croatia into the defence concept of the Warsaw Pact' and argued that the Warsaw Pact would defend Croatia's independence, allowing it to be 'sovereign and neutral, like Finland'. On this new socialist basis, Jelić now argued that,

in resisting pressure from Belgrade, the Croatian communist leaders in Zagreb were in 'common cause' with the ustaše abroad. Some sections of the Yugoslav security services, especially in Serbia and among Croatian Serbs, took claims like this at face value and attempted to prove that Croatian communist leaders were indeed 'collaborating' with the ustaše. What seems to have happened on this occasion was that a member of the Yugoslav Military Mission in Berlin, a vestige of Yugoslavia's allied status at the end of the Second World War, had reported Jelić's claims to military intelligence, along with a list of his supposed Yugoslav contacts, some of whom were in fact working for civilian intelligence.

When the charges were first investigated by the Party Executive on 24 March, it was quickly decided that there was no case to answer. For reasons of their own, the Croatian Party leadership decided not to abide by an agreement that this affair should be quietly buried and on 7 April announced the discovery of a plot by both domestic and foreign forces to destabilise its administration 'by spreading slanderous claims about alleged contact between the Croatian leadership and the ustaše emigration'. The Croatian Central Committee then demanded a further investigation, to be undertaken by the government. What heightened tension at this time even more was the unrelated killing the same day of Vladimir Rolović, Yugoslav ambassador in Stockholm; Rolović, a Serb from Montenegro, was killed by two young Croat migrant workers.¹⁷ Tito seemed to despair at the situation. Speaking on 14 April, he said he could hardly believe the situation the Party was in. 'Our very existence is in question', he said, and 'where can we lay the responsibility for all this except on the communists'. He summoned the Presidium to Brioni on 28–30 April 1971 after which a statement was issued which reaffirmed the loyalty of the Croatian communist leaders, and cleared them of conspiracy charges, although it was also made clear that the security services had behaved entirely properly. Officially 'full unity' had been reached within the Party Presidium, but rumours quickly circulated that in fact the Croatian Party leadership had been carpeted by Tito for going public on the issue. However, the Croatian Party leadership took care to communicate to its Central Committee only the official statement, and not Tito's true concerns.¹⁸

Both at home and abroad, the activity of those favouring Croatian nationalism, and those fearing it, increased while the April crisis played itself out. In West Germany on 17 April 1971, Jelić spoke at a rally in Munich to mark the 30th anniversary of the founding of the Independent State of Croatia. On 15 April *Matica Hrvatska* launched a new weekly newspaper *Hrvatski tjednik*; in the following weeks public meetings in many localities throughout Croatia celebrated the establishment of new local *Matica Hrvatska* organisations; sixteen commissions and thirty-three initiating committees were established in quick succession. The founding of these local branches was always accompanied by pomp and processions, and often timed to coincide with suitable national anniversaries.¹⁹ Rather than resisting *Matica Hrvatska's* move to extend its organisation, even into factories, Tripalo shared a platform with the editor of *Hrvatski tjednik* Vlado Gotovac. Events such as these prompted *Prosvjeta*, the cultural organisation of Serbs living in Croatia, to adopt a programme demanding greater constitutional recognition for Serbs within Croatia. It called for a Council of

Nationalities to be established within the Croatian Assembly, while the April–May edition of its journal *Prosvjeta* mooted the idea that, just as within the Serbian Republic where there were autonomous provinces for minority groups like the Kosovo Albanians or the ethnically mixed inhabitants of Voivodina, so there should be a Serbian Socialist Autonomous Province within Croatia.²⁰

Tito clearly wanted to bury the April crisis, telling an audience on 5 May that if the proceedings of the Brioni Presidium meeting had been published, it would just have ‘confused the general psychosis – which has been created artificially in our country, especially in the big cities – and would have created such a mess that nothing would have been achieved’. But when Tripalo addressed the Croatian Central Committee Plenum on 14 May 1971, he displayed no such caution and repeated his charges against unnamed state security organs saying that ‘the thesis that we have invented this problem is untenable’.²¹ Tripalo was going on the offensive. Although this plenum condemned nationalism, which prompted *Matica Hrvatska* to describe the meeting as a ‘triumph of conservatives’ and to call for an extraordinary congress of the Croatian Party, the condemnation was entirely routine and marked no challenge to Tripalo’s nationalistic course. Two conservative voices were heard, Jure Bilić, and Josip Vrhovec, but their opposition could not stop Tripalo declaring in his speech to the plenum that ‘nation and class are identical’.²² Once again Tripalo raised the issue of foreign currency earnings, declaring that ‘big business and big banks in Belgrade should be nationalised once again’, so as to bring them back under popular control. With Belgrade embarrassed by the intelligence affair, the time seemed right to launch an offensive on the issue of foreign currency. A few days earlier Veselica had told a stormy student assembly in Zagreb that ‘centralists, together with Croatian bureaucrats are selling Croatian coastal lands’.²³

Tito’s response to such developments was clear, even if for now it was being ignored. On 14 May 1971 he told the newspaper of Yugoslavia’s Hungarian minority *Magyar Szó* that ‘much is said today about whether class or national interests should be given priority [but] I still give priority to class’ and he reminded readers that, alongside the Party, Yugoslavia also had an army ‘which is innocent of nationalistic tendencies’. When the Party Presidium met on 2 June 1971 to review events since the Brioni meeting in April, Tito firmly rejected any idea of matching the confederalisation of the state with the confederalisation of the Party. The idea of independent republican party organisations was firmly rejected with the words: ‘we should have a single Party!’²⁴ Yet nationalist control of the Croatian student movement meant that disunity within the student movement was on very public view. When the Ninth Conference of the Yugoslav Students’ Union assembled on 5–7 June 1971, no agreement could be reached on a new programme or statutes, because the Croatian delegation refused to accept any proposals which did not recognise separate republican based student unions, linked by a mere co-ordinating committee. The mood of Zagreb students was also shown to the outside world at an International University Conference held in Dubrovnik at this time, when the president of the Zagreb Student Organisation explained Croatia’s case in the dispute about foreign currency earnings and appealed for foreign delegates to support ‘devastated and exploited Croatia’.²⁵

These were very public embarrassments to the regime and on 22 and 26 June two marathon secret meetings were held of the Croatian Party leadership devoted to both the student problem in Zagreb, the rise of *Matica Hrvatska* and the constitutional position of Serbs in Croatia. Little was achieved other than simply to air diametrically opposed views.²⁶ Tito attended a further session of the Croatian leadership on 4 July and, according to one of those present, said this:

This time I am going to speak first ... Under the cover of national interests, all hell is assembling. Others are watching. Are you aware that others would immediately be present if there were disorder? You have allowed *Matice Hrvatska* to transform itself into a political organisation ... I am for prohibiting the political activity of *Matice Hrvatska* and *Prosvjeta*. The Party is not ideologically united. A surgeon's scalpel will be necessary, and I won't hesitate to use it, believe me I won't.

Believing that his message was clear, Tito decided not to issue any public statement. When on 12 July 1971 the Croatian Party held a report-back conference, the summary of Tito's views presented to delegates was extremely bland, giving no impression of his anger.²⁷

The divisions within the Croatian Party were becoming difficult to hide. At the meeting on 4 July 1971 Jakov Blažević, President of the Croatian Assembly, spoke of 'nationalist elements' infiltrating editorial boards, the press, *Matica Hrvatska* and *Prosvjeta*. At the other extreme, even though Veselica had been expelled from the Party on 23 July for the speeches he had been making to students, Tripalo remained ready afterwards to share a platform with him, even though his expulsion had prompted student protests embarrassing to the Party.²⁸ On 30 July *Hrvatski tjednik* personally attacked the long-term Croatian Party activist Vladimir Bakarić, someone known to be close to Tito. In an attempt to restore unity, on 2 August the Croatian Party Executive published an Action Programme which accused some people around *Matica Hrvatska* of using it as 'a cover for oppositional activities, for another political party', thus becoming 'a conspiratorial group against both the Croatian and Yugoslav Parties'; the Action Programme criticised the idea of a 'national movement' and 'a general Croat reconciliation' as contrary to the Party's class teaching. Tripalo gave this Action Programme scant publicity, and *Matica Hrvatska* mischievously argued that it was at variance with Tito's views. Although Tripalo risked infuriating his own Executive, it was made clear to Party members that the Action Programme would not be mandatory on committees until after the next Central Committee Plenum planned for November.²⁹

By September, a very contradictory situation was emerging in Croatia. On 15 September the weekly *Vjesnik u srijedu* devoted eight pages to an exposé of the activities of nationalist groups. One incident between Serbs and Croats in northern Dalmatia had ended with people in the villages 'armed and afraid to meet each other'. Such clashes were often provoked by *Matica Hrvatska's* campaign to impose ethnic employment quotas on Croatian industry, in order to ensure that there was no 'Serb domination' of employment. For many Croats it was a grievance going back to the

construction of the country's railway infrastructure after the First World War, that railway jobs had always gone to Serbs. Putting right this historic anomaly was bound to affect a Serbian town like Knin, where many railway workers had been recruited, and the national movement soon gained a foothold in the nearby Croatian town of Drniš.³⁰ And yet, after his ten-day tour of Croatia, Tito commented on 16 September 1971 that it was 'absurd' to talk of the flourishing of nationalism there. 'All kinds of stories about Croatia – that there is no unity, that people think differently, that there is blooming nationalism – are completely absurd,' he said.³¹ While in Varaždin, Tito made an important concession. He stated that the foreign currency issue could soon be resolved and he implied that this would be in Croatia's favour.

This is not merely the concern of the Republic of Croatia and the factories on this territory. This is the concern of producers in all republics. Some republics, however, would like to use these funds for different purposes – not for the benefit of workers' collectives, but for various ambitious aims. I will no longer tolerate this. Since you have placed your confidence in me, I must justify it ... you have to go begging for foreign currency to be able to modernise your textile industry. This is a unique state of affairs which makes no sense whatsoever.

After Tito's visit, Tripalo suggested, the Action Programme was obsolete.³²

Matice Hrvatska and the Zagreb students used Tito's September comments to launch another assault on the 'hardliners' still in the Croatian Party leadership. Through *Hrvatski tjednik*, which by the autumn had a bigger circulation than the official daily *Vjesnik*, Croats were told which communist leaders they should support and which they should not. Tripalo encouraged such interference when he made a speech in October criticising those in the Party who feared nationalism. He then went on to elaborate clearly his own vision of the current situation. He stressed 'the Party created that movement, it leads it and with its activity it guarantees its socialist orientation'. For him, the popular support he had attracted was 'an affirmation of socialism', for socialism could not be built 'without the massive participation of working people'; for Tripalo it was Stalinists who thought of the people as passive 'transmission belts', but 'one can claim with certainty that this our movement is the direct successor and continuation of the mass movement of the national liberation struggle'. Any talk of nationalist excesses was an attempt to divert the leadership from the path of 'reforming the political and economic system'.³³

As the November Plenum of the Croatian Central Committee approached, each side prepared for battle. Blažević and Bakarić were determined to enforce the August Action Programme on the Party and thereby settle accounts with the nationalists. Equally, *Matice Hrvatska* heightened still further its attack on 'centralists and unitarists' within the Party. Tripalo faced the difficult choice of moving with the 'hard-liners' on the Party Executive against *Matice Hrvatska*, or to move with *Matice Hrvatska* against the 'hard-liners'. He opted for *Matice Hrvatska* against the 'hard-liners' in the hope that local Party organisations, especially in Dalmatia, would back him if a confrontation developed with the Executive.³⁴ At the plenum on 5 November, Tripalo's ally, the Croatian Party President Savka Dabčević-Kučar portrayed the nationalist movement as a sign of positive support, proving that 'a unity of nation and

Party' had been forged. She denounced as 'sectarians' those who argued 'that we should behave with reserve towards that mass support or even reject it in the name of some abstract revolutionary "purity"; the Party's programme spoke of the working people being active creators of policy, and this could not be left as an empty proclamation. As to the question of foreign currency earnings, she claimed that the current system for foreign currency circulation 'is in opposition to the principles of the market economy'.³⁵ However, she had not got her speech agreed in advance by the Executive, nor had she taken on board amendments put to her by Bakarić. The 'hard-liners', therefore, insisted that the plenum endorse the August Action Programme, but this was ruled out of order. Only two delegates were ready to criticise this manoeuvre openly; one of them, Jure Bilić, made clear that the time had now come for a parting of the ways with the nationalists arguing that it was not secret that 'there exists a union, a deliberate union with nationalistic, rightist-nationalistic forces'. The other vocal opponent was Dušan Dragosavac, who represented Croatia's Serb minority.³⁶

Matica Hrvastka was determined to raise the stakes still further. Before the November Plenum, it had encouraged students to hold an All Saints' Day vigil at the grave of Stepan Radić, the leader of the Croatian Peasant Party assassinated in 1928. After the plenum *Matica Hrvastka* published its proposals for constitutional amendments and started a campaign to have them adopted, these included the formation of 'a sovereign national state of the Croatian nation' complete with the 'right to self-determination including secession'; ethnic proportional representation in employment; control of all taxes and only voluntary contributions to the federation; a Croatian State Bank; and the right of army recruits to serve only in Croatia. It also demanded that only the Croatian language be taught in Croatian schools, and that Croatia have its own representation at the United Nations. *Hrvatski tjednik* praised the current 'positive' mood among Croatian communists and looked forward to the purge of the likes of Bakarić and Bilić.³⁷

Bakarić had responded to the plenum by putting his considerable prestige fully behind Tripalo's 'hard-line' opponents. He toured Split, Karlovac and Šišak, making speeches which warned of the dangers posed by a nationalist group 'which knows its programme and which is for the moment on the offensive'. Shortly afterwards, he resolved to contact Tito to ask for his personal intervention, but by then Tito had already decided to act. Tito returned from a trip to the United States and Canada on 8 November and by the 15th was taking a short break in Bosnia, where leaders of the Yugoslav Army showed him uncensored television footage of rallies organised by the Croatian communists. At these rallies only Croatian flags were shown, nationalist speakers were present on the platform with communists, and anti-Tito slogans, songs and chants were heard. Coincidentally or not, also on the 15th, Tito received 'as a guest' Dušan Dragosavac.³⁸

An expanded session of the Croatian Central Committee met in secret session from the 17–23 November, but could agree no common line. Meanwhile *Matica Hrvastka* and the students decided to act. On 22 November Zagreb University students met to debate possible constitutional amendments and gave the floor to *Matica Hrvastka*. This led to demands that Croatia have a seat at the United Nations, and a declaration that 'a

state without its own army is not a state'. As to immediate demands, they singled out Bakarić for attack, accusing him of sabotaging Tripalo's foreign currency campaign and thus 'losing the confidence of the nation'. The next day a second student meeting called for a strike to demand foreign currency reform.³⁹ The resolution passed by the students noted that 'students of this Croatian university accept all the changes in the socio-political system which establish Croatia as a sovereign, national state of the Croatian people' and offered its support to the stance taken by Savka Dabčević-Kučar at the November Plenum. They then suggested, that, in ceasing to attend lectures, they were exercising a right to strike that Tito has insisted workers had when 'demanding the realisation of their rights'. They argued that they 'were forced to take this action because of the constant delay on the part of bureaucratic forces in solving these problems', forces which were 'opposing the interests of the working class and the course chosen by the Croatian communists, by the Yugoslav communists and by Comrade Tito himself who pledged immediate attention to the solution of the foreign currency, banking and foreign trade system'. The students also condemned all who presented their 'leftist' movement as national chauvinists and separatists.⁴⁰

The strike seems to have been a rather desperate attempt by *Matica Hrvastka* to pressurise the Tripalo leadership into making an irrevocable move before Tito acted. The possibility of a strike had been much discussed within *Matica Hrvastka*, but the timing for this had originally been set for immediately after Christmas; then, it was hoped, thousands of emigrant workers, back home for the holiday and fired up by Croatian émigré propaganda, would support the action. The strike idea was hurriedly brought forward to take advantage of Tito being out of the country on 23–24 November for talks in Bucharest with President Ceausescu. If this was the case, it was a miscalculation. The strike made the Tripalo leadership look weak and more open to the charge that 'the Croatian nationalist tail was wagging the Croatian communist dog'.⁴¹ When the strike began, Tripalo was in Zadar. Back in Zagreb by the 25th, he toured student meetings urging them to return to their studies, explaining that the cause of foreign currency reform was just but their methods wrong. The Zagreb Party Committee called on the students to end the strike, and on 29 November, Yugoslav National Day, Savka Dabčević-Kučar made a public appeal for a return to normality. Speaking on the island of Hvar the same day Tripalo was unrepentant, saying 'our opponents think that they can change policy by dismissing some leaders [but] it would be necessary to change a thousand leaders'. The policy being conducted in Croatia could not be changed 'because this would involve a change in the feelings and opinions of a huge majority of Party members, the working class, and people; we have taken destiny in our own hands and we intend to keep it in our hands'. He also reassured Dalmatian leaders that, should Tito be too critical of their actions, they could call an extraordinary party congress.⁴²

Tripalo made this speech before leaving to join the rest of the Croatian Party leadership at a crisis meeting called by Tito at Karadjordjevo, his hunting lodge in northern Serbia. Tito made clear that he had no faith in their ability to restore unity or confront *Matica Hrvastka*. Then, on 1–2 December, the full Party Presidium met in emergency session and endorsed Tito's view that the Croatian leadership had

'vacillated' in the face of the nationalist challenge. Tito made clear that the student strike 'had been prepared for a long time, for several months, but it was contemplated passively and no adequate measures were taken'; the press had even written that a strike was at hand. Tito stressed that the strike was not just a matter for the students, there was 'a group of already known negative people' who stood behind it and a trail 'running outside our country'. It was a question of a lack of vigilance and 'rotten liberalism' towards such elements. Tito made clear that *Matica Hrvastka* had created 'a very powerful parallel party [interested in establishing] a Pavelić type state'. He insisted that two-thirds of the Croatian Party backed his views, but Tripalo's leadership had failed to reflect this. His broadcast to the nation on 2 December called for the restoration of normality in view of the danger of 'counter-revolution'.⁴³

The students called off their strike and Tripalo at first acted as if he could still keep power. The Zagreb City Party leadership met on 4 December, 'welcomed' Tito's speech and proposed forming a Party cell within *Matica Hrvastka* as the best way of bringing the organisation to heel. Using his control of the press, Tripalo highlighted the minority of telegrams coming in from the Party rank and file which supported his leadership. When the Croatian Party Executive announced that it agreed with what Tito had said, but made no response to his reference to counter-revolution and offered no practical proposals for confronting *Matica Hrvastka*, it was too much for Bakarić. He decided to break ranks publicly and in a speech made on 6 December he denounced Tripalo, accusing him of forming a faction within the Party tied to an external movement which opposed Party policy; and he made clear to his audience that he was speaking with Tito's backing. When the Yugoslav Party Executive met on 8 December it could conclude with some justification that 'in some cases Croatian communists are displaying inconsistency' in implementing the decisions adopted at Karadjordjevo. Thereafter calls for Tripalo's resignation multiplied.⁴⁴ On 11 December, Tito received his leading generals; the same day the student strike leaders were arrested, and with these basic preparations taken, the Croatian Central Committee met on 12–14 December and Tripalo and Dabčević-Kučar tendered their resignations. In a speech on 18 December, Tito made clear how serious he felt the situation had become. Although ninety per cent of the students were 'honest', they had been manipulated and that 'if we had not gone into battle to prevent this, in six months time there would perhaps have been shooting, a civil war'. Once again he questioned the decisions of the Sixth Party Congress, explaining that 'from time to time' the Party would 'be a little firmer', imposing decisions 'inaugurated at the top'.⁴⁵

SERBIA AND DEMOCRATIC CENTRALISM

Speaking on the thirtieth anniversary of the founding of the First Proletarian Brigade, Tito explained how the army might help with imposing this new firm hand. 'Our army's primary task', he said, 'is to defend the country from foreign enemies; however, it should also defend the achievements of our revolution, if needed, from the internal enemy too'. Yet speaking a month later, he stressed that 'it is our Party which should be the chief guardian of all revolutionary achievements, rather than the Army', and so he began a determined campaign to recentralise power in the Party, a campaign which

met stubborn resistance in Serbia where the liberal Party leaders brought in after the defeat of Ranković continued to tolerate the ideas that had emerged during the 1960s campaign to reorganise the Party.⁴⁶ Indeed, one of the reasons why at the height of the Croatian crisis there was a gap between the Presidium meeting on 1–2 December and Tito's firm resolve to act on 11 December was that within the Presidium Tripalo had been supported by Marko Nikezić, President of the Serbian Party, and Latinka Perović, its Secretary. They had both argued that it should be left to Tripalo to sort out the situation in Croatia now that a clear stance had been adopted by Tito and the Presidium. Thereafter, Nikezić, a man of some standing as a former Foreign Minister, together with Perović, became standard-bearers of those resisting Tito's increasingly hard-line message. When the Party held its Second Conference in January 1972, it was Nikezić and Perović who organised resistance to the idea that the Executive Bureau of the Presidium should be transformed into an old style Politburo.⁴⁷

However, this was the clear direction in which Tito was working. Two days before the conference opened, Nikezić told the press that the conference would not be 'a turning point in the development of self-management'. Tito's opening remarks on 25 January, by contrast, stressed that 'this conference should be a turning point in the reform of the Party'. His message was that all the decisions of the Ninth Party Congress simply had to be implemented since 'we cannot appear at the Tenth Party Congress as we are today'. The conference was only scheduled to last two days, but went on into a third and clearly much of the debate related to the Executive Bureau. The draft resolution for the Second Party Conference talked of 'strengthening the Party Centre on the basis of democratic centralism' and as part of this, that the Executive Bureau's membership was to be reduced from fifteen to eight. The new size of the Executive Bureau was agreed, but not at this stage that it should have any new powers.⁴⁸ Significantly, no one of stature from among the Serbian leadership was a member of the slimmed down executive. The conference also adopted an Action Programme, designed to ensure that all decisions adopted at the Ninth Party Congress were implemented. The Belgrade weekly *NIN* commented rather sourly that the Action Programme 'did not say anything new, but just stressed and confirmed the principles of Yugoslav self-management'.⁴⁹

In his closing remarks to the Second Conference, Tito returned to his hobby horse of troublesome university professors; some of these people had to go, and he was 'waiting to see some action taken'. Although this purge should not degenerate into a witch-hunt, he stressed that 'it should not be allowed that a person expelled from the Party can freely circulate and make intrigues and continue to talk'.⁵⁰ And yet in Serbia that is precisely what seemed to be happening. In a speech made on 25 November 1971, Nikezić said it was time 'to free ourselves from communist conservatism' and to address economic anomalies by 'getting back to problems of ownership'; in this context the trade unions 'must become more radical in their approach'.⁵¹ This direct call for a return to the radicalism of the late 1960s was echoed elsewhere in Serbia. The February 1972 edition of the Belgrade journal *Gledišta* published the proceedings of a seminar-debate entitled 'How is Socialism Possible?', held two months earlier. The *Praxis* philosopher Stojanović was one of those who took part and he asserted boldly that the

question should really be phrased differently, how did we get into this mess and how can we get out of it. His answer was this. Although things had started to go wrong in the mid-1960s, the turning point was the crushing of the student movement in 1968. Appealing to memories of 1968 and the dreams of a reformed communism, invigorated by Czechoslovak–Yugoslav co-operation, he stressed that in Czechoslovakia Dubček had only won the clear support of the working class in May 1968 when he had promised to introduce self-management. ‘Only an opening toward the Left’, he argued, ‘presents a real possibility for Yugoslavia’, and he called for a new radical economic reform, implemented by a strong and revived Leftist movement; ‘we shall not escape this long-running crisis without the Left workers and student movement, acting, of course together with democratic socialist forces in the Party and trade unions’.⁵²

When the Party Presidium met on 28 February 1972, it returned to the question of a new Politburo. The Presidium’s secretary Stane Dolanc talked of a favourable climate existing for ‘offensive action’ and suggested in this context that the new slimmed down Executive Bureau should operate ‘as a collegial organ with collective and individual responsibility’; it should not only prepare for Presidium meetings and service its commissions, but ‘engage in political actions against all who might threaten the basic course of the Party and will struggle everywhere, at all levels and all territories wherever it may be necessary’. Meanwhile Serbia’s liberal course continued. On 23 March the Vojvodina Party leader held a meeting with Belgrade students in which he made a series of comments implicitly critical of current policies. He noted that in Yugoslavia ‘we do not have a strong-arm regime, but rather an insufficiently strong democracy’. When asked about Party purges, he expressed the view that ‘twenty people should not be allowed to expel one another’, the replacement of functionaries ‘must be decided by the people who elected them’. Most controversially of all, he urged the students to continue to remember and defend the ideas of 1968, even though, as in 1968, there would be those who argued that such ‘children’ would have to be pacified by force.⁵³

Tolerance of ‘the professors’ was not at first confined to Serbia. In Croatia *Praxis* was published in March 1972. The shake-up of the Croatian Party had led to a new head of its ideological commission being appointed, Stipe Šuvar, then in his mid-thirties. When on 27–28 June 1972 the Executive Bureau organised a Conference on Ideology, Šuvar made a speech very protective of the New Left. Not all criticism was ‘inimical or ill-intended’, he argued, ‘we must have greater understanding for everything coming from the Left; we must be for Leftist ideas, Leftist ideas, Leftist culture, Leftist intelligentsia’. This was not the message Dolanc had given at the opening of the conference, when he stressed the need for ideological unity. When the Presidium next met on 11–12 July, it passed a resolution calling for a purge of ‘all alien ideological ideas’ and demanded that this decision be implemented ‘resolutely and consistently’.⁵⁴

Šuvar promptly backed down and in July the May–August edition of *Praxis* was banned and withdrawn from circulation. However, in Serbia there was at this time a very public disagreement within the Serbian leadership about the extent of the danger posed by the New Left. Earlier in the year, three Belgrade students had been arrested as

members of a Trotskyite cell linked to the Belgian Marxist Ernest Mandel and his branch of the Fourth International. Clearly the security services took such intrigues seriously. Then on 13 July the Serbian Assembly heard the Republican Minister for Internal Affairs condemn the New Left, both in Belgrade and throughout the country, as 'a special form of the organisation of foreign intelligence services'. The following day the Serbian Deputy Premier came to the Assembly to 'correct' the minister's statement. A 'clearer attitude' was needed in this matter, the Deputy Premier stated, 'we must be fair so that we do not condemn as the agents of foreign intelligence services people to whom such a qualification must not be attributed'. Tito's views, however, were closer to those of the minister. On 10 September he spoke out against 'unhealthy elements' like professors 'who lecture abroad [and] receive dollars', professors who then went on 'to poison' the minds of Yugoslavia's young people. He was, he said, 'insisting here and now that priority in the Party must be given to purging all opportunists'.⁵⁵

Nikezić continued to see things very differently. In a press interview on 10 September he looked forward to how growing economic prosperity would lead to political emancipation and an end to bureaucratisation. However, for that to happen, he looked to the reformers of the 1960s. The main task 'was to struggle for the interests of the working class and the younger generation', which would mean changes in the role of the Party and a greater role for the trade unions; indeed weakening the power of the state could only be done by creating a powerful trade union movement. For Nikezić the problem was that democratisation was developing unevenly. The difficulties the Party faced 'could not be solved by changing one's mind', the interests of the workers could simply not be satisfied by a return to the 'old relations'. Indeed, Nikezić was clear that 'the greatest danger' at present came from talk of organisational change within the Central Committee which, because of temporary difficulties, was ready to take 'measures which contradicted the choices already made, which, for the sake of supposed efficiency, would mean a return to centralism and bureaucratic methods'. Unity was, of course, essential, but 'one must have a united policy line approved by the masses in order to create unity within the leading bodies', and democracy in policy formation was 'a condition for unity'.⁵⁶

Yet Nikezić was losing the argument. Unlike in Croatia, where *Praxis* was banned in July, in Serbia publication went ahead of the August issue of *Filosofija72*, a new journal of the Serbian Philosophical Association which gave detailed coverage to recent trials of those critical of the regime, including the defence speech made by Professor Mihajlo Djurić, from the Law Faculty of Belgrade University, who had been sentenced to two years in prison for alleged Great Serb chauvinism. Shortly after Tito's speech of 10 September, however, *Filosofija72* was also banned. When the Party Presidium met on 18 September, it effectively established *de facto* a new Politburo and the Executive Bureau reclaimed 'the Party's right to influence cadre policy directly', i.e. to purge people without first seeking the agreement of lower Party bodies. The Presidium resolved to restore discipline and carry out an audit of recent decisions to ensure they were being implemented; expulsions would follow from this audit, the meeting made clear. Speaking on television ten days later, Croatia's representative on the Executive Bureau told viewers that 'we will purge our own ranks of all those who will not

consistently implement jointly agreed Party policies' for 'this society is at a turning point'. The basis for the purge was explained on 4 October in a letter from the Executive Bureau, signed by Tito, which was sent to all Party organisations to be communicated to all Party members.⁵⁷ In the letter Tito said he wanted to eliminate 'endless discussions, pseudo-democratic procedures and rights without responsibilities'. The time had gone when decisions could be 'generic and unclear'; in future the Party would, as a matter of routine, monitor performance and purge those who did not deliver. This would be accompanied by improved ideological work and a consolidation of cadre policy. As to the press, there was to be an end to 'destructive reporting' and the dismissal of those opposed to the political course of the Party.⁵⁸

In a press interview on 8 October Tito put a personal gloss on his determination to press ahead with the new hard line. 'I do not have a lot of time,' he said. 'I am pretty sick of constantly being bothered by these individuals, and therefore I now have to do everything. And I can do it!' Once again he went back to the Sixth Congress and the 'euphoria' at that time which wanted to democratise each and every thing, to such an extent 'that the role of the Party was subdued on all important questions concerning social life' leaving the Party 'only the task of giving ideological guidance'. It thus lost control over cadre policy, allowed the class enemy to operate, and resulted in the growth of both technocracy and bureaucracy. The Party had said before that it should purge its ranks, but 'now we shall say that it must'. Tito stressed that Kardelj and Bakarić backed him, 'we old leaders of the revolution are united', it was others who stemmed from 'unhealthy intellectual centres' who were showing resistance.⁵⁹

The show-down came in mid-October. After a four-day meeting in secret between Tito and the entire Serbian Party and State leadership, at which Tito complained that the leadership was 'polemicalising directly against him', on 18 October the press published Tito's summary of the 'long conversation' he had had with the Serbian leadership the previous week. Accusing the Serbian leadership of having 'tolerated anarchic-liberal and conservative forces', Tito's theme was that the working class was becoming impatient at 'our inefficiency', thus saying precisely what Nikezić had implied he would say in his interview of 10 September. Tito singled out the role of the press in Serbia, and accused the Serbian leadership of having no sense of ideological unity and wanting to turn the Central Committee into a debating club; their second great crime was to 'disregard one of the most important obligations of the Central Committee, cadre policy'. Nikezić along with Todorović, responsible for the 'endless discussions' of the Commission on Party Reorganisation in 1967, were accused of voicing clear reservations about the policy proposed in Tito's letter. On 21 October, at a closed meeting of the Serbian Central Committee, Nikezić tendered his resignation.⁶⁰

NEGOTIATED SELF-MANAGEMENT

When the Presidium next met on 30 October, the Executive Bureau was invested with new powers, not only to oversee the Party but also the state apparatus; the new Politburo was in place. Top of the agenda was the economy. Ever since 1967, Kardelj had recognised that some sort of planning system would still be necessary within a reformed economy; however the whole issue had got side-tracked into debates first

about the trade unions and 'verticality', and then about the control of foreign currency earnings. The new leadership now put the restoration of an element of planning at the top of its agenda. On 28 September, a leading member of the Executive Bureau criticised 'the free market with no interference or regulation'. A leading Croatian hard-liner called at the same time for a new system of planning, not 'centralised state planning' but one 'based on voluntary agreements'. Another member of the Executive Bureau talked of the need for 'planning and economic intervention in order to eliminate negative phenomena'. Tito endorsed such views. His letter to Party members of 4 October had made clear that the Party 'must contribute to reaffirming the principles of the economic and social reform, the market economy and the building of a system of conscious planned direction of economic and social trends'.⁶¹

In a series of measured moves, Tito limited the power of the market and established a new planning system. As one economist put it, 'after a long crisis in methods of planning and the frequent absence of any planned activity at any level', Yugoslavia realised 'quite clearly that the future development of planning on a self-management basis was the necessary precondition for the very existence of self-management'.⁶² A planning mechanism was reconstituted on the basis of a complex inter-relationship between a variety of centres of power in which firms, governments and social-political organisations would all participate. Thus state influence over the banks was extended to the point where 44 per cent of their funds were earmarked for government projects, and between 1972 and 1974 a series of 'compacts' were established at various levels which essentially restored centralisation and planning. Resource allocation was to be based on bargaining between units whose competing interests were guaranteed by the state. While hardly a return to central planning, it was a clear step away from the competitive market, and one that after 1972 brought back the Party as the key decision-maker when appointing factory directors. The evolution of this system culminated in the 1976 Law on Social Planning which obliged all enterprises to draw up medium-term plans and these would be co-ordinated nationally and locally through the bargaining process. The key actor here would be the Complex Organisation of Associated Labour, while the lowest unit for this process would be a Basic Organisation of Associated Labour, smaller than an enterprise, usually comprising one hundred employees, and defined as 'that part of a work organisation which constitutes an economic-technical entity the results of whose work can be expressed in terms of market value'.⁶³

For managers, and for the state, this system worked. It worked for the population at large, for the standard of living was rising steadily at this time, well ahead of the other communist states of Europe. It did not, however, work for workers as managers of society. A study of the Klek works in Zagreb revealed deep scepticism about these changes among workers, who saw them as 'cosmetic' and 'purely formal'. It was a reform which 'in no way guaranteed that decisions would now reflect the preferences of workers'; it was 'all talk'. This survey also revealed that the most active, articulate and interested workers were also those most critical of self-management. Potentially of more concern to the Party was that a disproportionate share of those active and articulate workers critical of the system were highly committed Party members.

Workers at Klek took great care to elect their more aggressive and articulate colleagues to represent them on workers' councils and regularly fell to grumbling about the need for 'real trade unions' and proper workers' control.⁶⁴

The establishment of Basic Organisations of Associated Labour and the Law on Social Planning were just two elements of a wider programme of what might be termed legacy planning on which Tito embarked at this time. Its other key element was the 1974 Constitution. Under this constitution, a complex system of indirect elections was established, to try to reconcile workers' industrial and territorial interests. Individuals, both where they lived and where they worked, would elect delegates to so-called delegations, and the delegations would then choose deputies to go forward to the local assembly. While this indirect system of election might make deputies seem distant, it ensured high participation at grass-roots level; some 15 per cent of the population were delegates. However, if in the 1963 constitution there had been five legislative chambers at federal level, the 1974 constitution reduced this to two, reversing the trend to give greater representation to economic and functional groups. The 1974 Constitution ended once and for all the disputes between the republics by formalising the principle of unanimity among the republics in policy formation. Finally the 1974 Constitution gave the Party the sole right 'to initiate and implement political activity to protect and advance the socialist revolution and self-management relations'.⁶⁵ As Britain's leading Yugoslav historian Stevan Pavlowitch has commented, 'the endless constitutional experimentation came to an end as the system was frozen by the 1974 Constitution to ensure the survival of Tito's achievements'. Tito's 'unlimited' term of office as President for Life was made clear in the first of the 1974 Constitution's 406 articles.⁶⁶

The final decade of Tito's life also saw the consolidation of Yugoslav foreign policy around non-alignment. Until Khrushchev's forced resignation in autumn 1964, Tito had always been torn between restoring a firm alliance with a reformed Soviet Union and developing an alternative foreign policy. In an interview with an Indian newspaper in August 1953, he had first mentioned the idea of forming a universal progressive movement for peace. Early in 1954 he visited India and Burma and on his return journey spent some time in Egypt. Non-alignment was given a boost at the Bandung Conference in April 1955, and was taken further when Nehru, Nasser and Tito held talks on Brioni in July 1956. But non-alignment was always second best, and when Tito and Khrushchev seemed on the verge of reforming the communist movement together, non-alignment faded in importance. Relations with the Soviet Union then were again of paramount concern and it was not until these were again in a poor state that the non-aligned initiative was resumed and the First Non-Aligned Summit took place in Belgrade on 1–6 September 1961.

During the short-lived second Tito–Khrushchev reconciliation, foreign policy issues were less of an issue between the two states. Khrushchev had begun to take a serious interest in post-colonial countries, even to the extent of wondering whether the Soviet Union was not applying Marxism–Leninism too rigidly in its assessment of Third World leaders.⁶⁷ It was not a case of Yugoslavia being either loyal to the Soviet Union or the non-aligned movement when Yugoslavia played a full part in the Second Non-Aligned Congress in Cairo on 5–10 October 1964, the very eve of Khrushchev's

ouster. There was then no congress of the non-aligned movement until 1970, with four in the subsequent decade. Non-alignment was essentially a phenomenon of the 1970s, a firm feature of Yugoslav politics, for by then all interest in reconciliation with the post 1968 Soviet Union had been abandoned. Non-alignment was essentially something associated with Tito's twilight, his legacy years, and quickly became more rhetoric than substance. Although put rather unkindly, Stevan Pavlowitch's assessment is apposite: 'Tito wanted to be acknowledged as one of the leaders of the communist movement, because he considered that the success of the Yugoslav revolution entitled him to that status [but] since the communist world did not allow him to play that role, his government devoted enormous efforts to building up a progressive movement of Third World countries for him to lead'.⁶⁸

The last years of Tito's rule did have a surreal air, as he became 'victim as well as deity and high priest of the cult of his personality'. Aged 82 when made President for Life in 1974, he spent most of his time in his island, mountain or country retreats, recovering from the punishing round of official visits that he continued to make right up until his final illness. He ceased presiding over meetings of the Party Presidium and State Presidency in 1976.⁶⁹ Tito's official salary was insignificant, but there was no budgeted limit on his 'civil list'. He had always had, even in the days of the underground, a penchant for good living, and as early as 1949 Djilas had warned him that photographs of him in *Life* magazine – showing his villas, horses and dogs – made him look like a South American dictator. Djilas believed 'pomp was indispensable for Tito; it satisfied his strong *nouveau riche* instincts and compensated for his ideological deficiencies and inadequate education'. By 1974 the number of his official residences had grown to thirty-two, on top of which there were two Adriatic yachts, two Danube yachts, hunting and fishing reserves, and a safari park. In his youth a snappy dresser and 'remarkably handsome', he was 'always clean-shaven, neat and organised', frequently changing his clothes 'four times a day'; as an old man, he resorted to hair colour, a sun lamp and toupees.⁷⁰

During 1977 he parted from his wife Jovanka. Their relationship had begun to deteriorate in 1974 and it seems tension developed between them because she believed that Tito was being manipulated through flattery. Since 1972 his doctors had proposed that, for the good of his health, a small team of advisers should shield him from becoming burdened with affairs of state; Jovanka felt this position was being abused by those with vested interests. In Stevan Pavlowitch's acerbic judgement, 'Tito removed the best and most reform-minded communists from top posts, and then his wife as well, until he was left quite alone, surrounded by first-class flatterers and third class Party bureaucrats'.⁷¹ Tito seemed finally to have forgotten Tempo's retirement interview of December 1968 in which he called on all members of his generation to stand down and asserted: 'the revolutionary struggle has never been waged by people afraid of losing their positions, but rather by people who, in such a struggle, have nothing to lose but rather everything to win; this means we have to rely on the workers'.⁷² Aware that the end could not be that far off, at the Eleventh Party Congress in 1978 Tito put into place the system whereby the chairmanship of the Presidium would rotate among its members. Tito fell ill on New Year's Eve 1979, but because of

the endless and intrusive attempts to keep him alive, it was on 4 May 1980 that he died.⁷³

In the short term, at least, the consolidation of Tito's legacy was a success. In political terms there was 'a descent into neo-Stalinism' which reached its apogee in January 1975 when eight philosophy lecturers at Belgrade University were sacked, followed by the definitive closure of *Praxis* for alleged links with the Trotskyite Fourth International.⁷⁴ Yet the economic system did start to produce genuine prosperity, even if, in retrospect, this was founded on unsustainable borrowing from abroad. After his death, however, the system he had created atrophied further until the costs of an incredibly complicated system, which involved endless meetings, intricate bargaining, elaborate trade-offs and the toleration of inefficiency 'no longer seemed acceptable to significant sections of the elite and larger portions of the population, once prosperity stopped and the Old Man was no longer directing the band'. Titoism survived precisely a decade after Tito's death.⁷⁵

In 1973 *Praxis* tried to assess the nature of the society which was emerging in Tito's twilight years. It was clear to the journal that a new middle class was becoming established which was mutually interrelated and closely linked to the administrative apparatus and the political elite. The emergence of such a class in alliance with the part of the ruling elite, offered a real possibility that a bourgeois society could be constituted, the journal argued. The former, integrative ideology of the 'working people', which mobilised the entire population on the platform of struggle against the remnants of the dethroned bourgeoisie and its allies, had been replaced by the early 1970s with what *Praxis* called 'the bourgeois ideology of the homogenisation of all inhabitants on a national basis', accompanied by the systematic undermining of Marxism and the open propagation of nationalist ideas, despite 'official references to Marxism at all times'. The crisis in Croatia had been an attempt 'to grab power as fast as possible', but the underlying power structures seen during the Croatian crisis were asserting themselves throughout Yugoslavia.⁷⁶ This analysis proved remarkably accurate.

CONCLUSION

Tito told a dinner held after the conclusion of the first session of AVNOJ in November 1942: 'that which I have achieved is the work of the Party; I was a young uneducated man, and the Party took me under its wing, educated and uplifted me; I owe everything to it'.¹ Djilas noted the same thing: 'in communism Tito found himself, he wrote.'² Tito was a communist militant. He was there at the beginning of the communist experiment in Petrograd in 1917, and he was there when it ended as Soviet tanks drove into Prague in August 1968. Radicalised through the insecurity of life as a skilled metal worker on the eve of the First World War, the experience of that conflict, and the struggle to build a new world in Soviet Russia prompted Tito to devote the whole of his life to the communist cause. A worker militant, a practical activist, it was frustration with the time-wasting of fissiparous factional squabbles which first brought him to the fore in the Yugoslav Communist Party during 1928, at a time when the Comintern was also keen to cultivate worker activists rather than quarrelsome intellectuals.

Tito's great achievement in the years prior to the outbreak of the Second World War was to make the Yugoslav Communist Party secure, despite its illegality, and to give it a firm base in the trade union movement. That, however, was achieved at a cost. It involved an ideological clash with the then Party leader Milan Gorkić over the issue of whether building a working class base should involve concessions to the socialists, a clash which became enmeshed with Stalin's determination to remove from the Comintern those parties deemed to be penetrated by spies. Tito's love-hate relationship with the Soviet Union began here. He needed the Comintern's blessing to emerge as Party leader, but he realised at once that excessive dependence on Soviet funding could be counter-productive. Under Tito's leadership, the Yugoslav Communist Party became both financially independent and effective, to the point that, when the Second World War began and most communist parties were proscribed, its successful underground operation made it a model for other parties. However, the experience of working within the Comintern at the height of Stalin's terror, taught Tito to differentiate between Stalin and Lenin. It was Stalin's responsibility to build socialism in the Soviet Union, but Lenin's legacy which would guide revolutions in other lands.

Tito was always on the Left. Although for many communists the Left turn in the Comintern of autumn 1939 was mere window dressing for the Nazi-Soviet Pact, for Tito the abandonment of the popular front strategy and the assessment of the Second World War as an Imperialist War were steps forward since they brought closer the moment of revolution. To the intermittent alarm of the Comintern, he formulated the view that the Second World War would result in social revolution, with the Soviet

Union intervening to help communist parties establish a new order. He also argued that in the struggle for a new order, the lessons of the Spanish Civil War needed to be learned, and that meant destroying the old state apparatus and constructing a new one led by the Communist Party. Even before the German invasion of Yugoslavia, Tito had a working model for revolution.

Tito's model of revolution through war had to be adapted when the war did not evolve as he had predicted. The Red Army's reverses in 1941 and 1942 were not part of Tito's scenario. In Užice, Tito had glorified in his communist credentials, despite trying to negotiate with Mihailović; thus he was left alone to confront Yugoslav 'Reaction', which proved quite willing to collaborate with the occupier when faced with the overt threat of social revolution. It took almost a year for Tito to clarify when Leftism became sectarianism, and to accept that, in the continuing absence of Soviet support, the only way forward was to turn the rhetoric of relying on the people into a reality. Such was the significance of the Long March through Bosnia-Herzegovina and the first session of AVNOJ. Once the concept of the people's revolution had been grasped, applying it was straightforward, especially when the evolving international situation brought Tito British aid.

As Allied victory became more certain, the prospect of Tito heading the world's second communist revolution caused the Soviet Union unease on several occasions. Unaware of the extent of the understandings reached between Tito and Fitzroy Maclean, Stalin feared that the effective declaration of a new revolutionary government at the second session of AVNOJ on 29 November 1943 would disrupt the Tehran negotiations between the Big Three; Tito proved him wrong and thereafter the Soviet Union backed Tito fully. Indeed, the September 1944 agreement with Stalin that the Red Army would help liberate Belgrade and then leave the country marked Tito out clearly as an independent communist statesman. And yet he was a junior statesman. The new revolutionary government was financially and militarily dependent on the Soviet Union, something that became very clear when Tito dared to criticise the behaviour of the Red Army or took major decisions on foreign and even domestic policy without consulting first with Moscow.

Tito had told Fitzroy Maclean early in 1944 that he would not copy the Stalinist system. He seemed to do the very opposite, for in many ways in the immediate post-war years Tito slavishly copied the Soviet Union. Yet below the surface there were differences. As Djilas argued, the People's Front committees were not soviets, but tried to remain as forums through which the Party was linked to its people. More than that, Tito believed that his concept of revolution through a people's partisan revolution had the potential for export, most particularly to Greece. Tito was a realist. He accepted Stalin's advice in December 1944 that the alliance with Great Britain made it impossible to support a bid for communist power there, or indeed to form a federation with Bulgaria at that time; his consolation was that, with Stalin's tacit support, he could absorb Albania. However, by 1947 the situation was very different. In the West, the communist parties had been excluded from the governments of France and Italy, Marshall Aid or 'dollar imperialism' was being used to construct an anti-Soviet bloc, and Greece had entered a new phase of civil war; on top of that, the Peace Treaty with

Bulgaria lifted the ban on talk of a Balkan Federation. When the Yugoslavs were encouraged to take the lead in establishing the Cominform in September 1947, Tito started to act as if he were no longer a junior communist statesman but an equal to Stalin.

Tito realised straight away that Stalin's insistence that Yugoslavia join a Balkan Federation in spring 1948 was a trap. Since he had long been campaigning for a Balkan Federation, it was a tempting offer, but he realised that Dimitrov, whatever he might say, would not stand up to Stalin. Tito had seen Dimitrov at close hand, had studied his role in the Comintern at the height of the purges; he knew of what Stalin was capable. And so he decided, metaphorically, on a new Long March. He had continued to run the Yugoslav Communist Party after the Comintern had cut off its funds; he had fought a partisan war without any Soviet support; and he had done both by relying on the support he could win at home. He would build socialism in Yugoslavia without Soviet aid, and he would build a better version of socialism than Stalin's. In the process of reassessing the essence of the Yugoslav road, he launched and then abandoned collectivisation, and then he parted with Djilas. Djilas contrasted the popular essence of the Yugoslav Road, to the bureaucratic essence of Stalin's system; Tito and Djilas agreed that the Party should 'guide' rather than 'lead', and this was enshrined in the decisions of the Sixth Party Congress. But then Djilas began to argue that Lenin's concept of the Party was in part responsible for the creation of Stalin's bureaucratic state and ultimately distanced himself from the Leninist Party and called for an end to one-party rule. That Tito could not accept because for him Lenin and the concept of revolution were inseparable.

The break with Stalin was never just about independence, it was about independent roads to socialism. Once the immediate crisis provoked by the split was passed, Tito started to analyse more precisely what Marxism meant. The result was to give more concrete form to the concept of relying on the people by handing over the factories to the workers through the establishment of workers' councils, a concept which gradually developed into the concept of self-management socialism. When Stalin died, Tito linked the export of this Yugoslav Road to Socialism to the struggle for de-Stalinisation in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Once he had convinced himself that Khrushchev was a genuine force for renewal, Tito used Yugoslav diplomacy to try to influence the process of de-Stalinisation in the Soviet Union. Some of these interventions were successful, the Declaration of 30 October 1956, and some counter-productive, the Pula Speech of November 1956, but against the odds, they survived the crisis of the Hungarian Revolution. What ended the first phase of the Tito-Khrushchev reconciliation, was Tito's insistence on formalising the Yugoslav Road in a Party programme. From Tito's perspective, fixing what was to be exported made perfect sense, but this meant putting on record that the Stalinist system, not just Stalin himself, was blocking the way to genuine socialism. Khrushchev only reached this decision in 1961 with the decision of the Twenty-Second Party Congress to remove Stalin's body from the Lenin Mausoleum. Having accepted that systemic change was necessary, the second reconciliation with Tito began, and for a year or so it

really did look as if Tito's attempt to export the Yugoslav model and complete the process of de-Stalinisation might succeed.

After Khrushchev's political demise, Tito concentrated on reforming the Yugoslav vision of socialism. With the rediscovery of the early Marx and his writings on alienation, Yugoslav communists began to discuss how economic reform combined with extended powers for workers' councils, especially when it came to investment decisions, could reinvigorate the self-management system and finally bring to an end the concept of administrative or bureaucratic socialism. The trade unions were particularly enthusiastic about this idea, arguing that the system of workers' councils should be extended 'vertically' to become, in effect, a separate chamber of parliament. A new phenomenon, the student movement, inspired by the writings of Marxist philosophers linked to the journal *Praxis* also embraced this notion. Tito rejected this idea, and he was also concerned at how plans for reforming self-management were impacting on contemporaneous plans for Party reform. Since many of the established structures of economic and social administration would disappear as the self-management structures were reformed, it followed that there would have to be some sort of reform of the Party. Tito favoured a purely administrative reform, but within the Party there were many calls for something more major, renewing Djilas's discussions about the necessity of the one-party state.

When the students went on strike in June 1968, Tito decided to back their call for change and told the Sixth Congress of Trade Unions that he was ready to listen to the workers. Tito was optimistic that Yugoslav self-management 'was catching', a view shared by the Warsaw Pact when a month before the invasion of Czechoslovakia it declared that the political situation there 'was beginning to resemble Yugoslavia'. Momentarily it looked as if the reform communist movements in both Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia could become entwined.

The Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia brought to an end any notion that the Soviet Union might be reformable. Until 1968 the single most important foreign relationship for Tito had been the Soviet Union. After the break with Stalin in 1948 he had restored relations with the West and in the early 1950s he started to develop contacts with post-colonial states. These relationships were always fostered, but until Khrushchev's fall there was always the far greater prize of the Soviet Union breaking with Stalinism completely and the unity of the communist movement being restored, prospects which were suddenly renewed when Dubček came to power in Czechoslovakia. For Tito, Moscow was until 1968 always the home of the communist cause to which he was committed, and the centre to which he had reported on an almost daily basis for much of his life. After 1968, the Soviet Union became an external power, essential in pragmatic terms for Yugoslavia's survival, but that special relationship, a shared commitment to a common cause had gone completely. In 1968 the Soviet Union consolidated its Eastern bloc, and for the last decade of his life Tito committed Yugoslavia to the non-bloc politics of the non-aligned movement.

After the invasion of Czechoslovakia, Tito was able to use the sense of shock and crisis to start reasserting Party orthodoxy, stressing repeatedly that the Sixth Party Congress decisions had been mistaken. Tito's refusal to take on board the trade unions'

ideas for strengthening self-management through increased working class representation pushed the impetus for self-management reform on to the shoulders of republican administrative elites. Tito had long been nervous about relaxing central control over investments linked to foreign currency earnings. The logic of the reform was clear: foreign currency earnings were just another form of investment which should be devolved to the factories. Geo-political reality meant that most foreign currency earnings derived from Croatia's Dalmatian coast and the tourist trade, and foreign currency earnings were desperately needed at the centre to help fund investments in other parts of Yugoslavia. When Croatian politicians deliberately flirted with nationalist groups to pressurise Tito on this, Tito intervened, prompted by the Zagreb student strike of November 1971. He intervened again in 1972 in Serbia to remove from the leadership there those who wanted to revive the debates of 1968 about the reform of the Party and the role of workers and trade unions in developing the self-management system. Abandoning the decision of the Sixth Party Congress, Tito restored to the Party centre the right to make key cadre decisions and with those powers he then constructed his legacy of 'actually existing self-management'. This system brought relative, if temporary stability, but was predicated on the suppression of democratic debate, forcing underground both nationalists and democrats.

Such is Tito's life in summary and it seems hard to dispute the assessment by Djilas:

In the late 1960s, Yugoslavia had another chance, the most promising if also the most uncertain, at democratisation ... [but by] the early 1970s Tito more firmly than ever held back the movement for change; he forced creative social, national and individual potentialities to revert to the withered ideals of his youth.³

There was a telling exchange of views between Tito and Djilas on the nature of Party reform when the Central Committee met in June 1951. As part of the process which culminated in the decisions of the Sixth Party Congress, Djilas delivered a report 'On the theoretical work of our Party'. Much of the speech was devoted to showing how the socialist system in the Soviet Union had become reactionary and exploitative, and that the Bolshevik Party, because of the way it operated, was 'no longer Marxist'. But Djilas then broached the topic which would ultimately lead to his break with Tito; there was a tradition of 'monopolism' even within the Yugoslav Communist Party which was equally harmful. The Party had to be truly Marxist and democratic, for, as Djilas explained, Marx had always insisted on the free struggle of ideas. Free discussion was essential in the reformed Yugoslav Communist Party, no-one should feel that views could not be expressed. 'Being a disciplined communist,' he stressed, 'did not mean not thinking for yourself, not daring to have different views on this or that theory or from this or that communist'.

In the subsequent discussion Tito condemned the fact that there was a lack of democracy within the Yugoslav Communist Party, but gave a rather contradictory account of what should be done. He wanted 'a clean Party' in which everybody said what they thought, but he called not for free discussion but for a purge of those who

followed 'the Soviet practice'. He then reminisced about the 1930s: 'I took part myself in Party meetings within the Comintern, meetings attended by communists from all over the world. I saw it, but could never accept it. There was simply no discussion at such meetings. If there was "trouble", that person was never allowed to speak. It was quite at variance with a Leninist Party'.⁴ Tito had no time for the Party as it existed under Stalin, but he had an idealised view of how a Leninist Party should operate, and he instinctively saw solutions in terms of a 'purge' rather than open debate, always ready himself to use Party discipline to stifle discussion.

Could things have worked out differently? In January 1954, at the point of being expelled from the leadership, Djilas had said that all his differences with his colleagues would vanish if the Party were reorganised. Tito's attitude then had been that there could be no withering away of the Party 'until the last class enemy has been disarmed, until the broadest masses have been educated to socialism'.⁵ In the late 1960s the reorganisation of the Party began, and the level of debate suggested that 'the broadest masses' had indeed 'been educated to socialism', while the activities of the 'class enemies' were few and far between. The logic of events was that Tito should have been ready to contemplate relaxing the dictatorship. What would have happened if Dubček's Prague Spring had triumphed? Would Tito have enjoyed being associated with this renewal of communism so much that he would have allowed Czechoslovak ideas on freedom of the press to come to Yugoslavia? Would he have returned to Tempo's ideas on radical trade union reform of self-management? It would not have been the first time he had adapted to a fundamentally new situation, and as Phyllis Auty noted in 1968, Tito had 'the superbly valuable capacity to recognise the qualities of the times and grasped opportunity as it rushed past'.⁶ Perhaps Tito should have responded to Tempo's hint of December 1968 that the wartime generation should all resign. Aged 76 it would have been a reasonable decision for Tito to make. There would then have been division within the Party, possibly a crisis in the country, but a crisis less acute than that of the late 1980s when sores had been left to fester for twenty years and not only Yugoslav communism but the Yugoslav state fell apart.

In the great debates about Party reform in the 1960s, particularly after the resignation of Tempo, Tito seems not to have heard any workers' voices behind the intellectual cacophony coming from the *Praxis* philosophers whom he held in such low esteem. Was it that he saw the philosophers as little better than the Party factionalists he had so despised at the start of his career? When Kardelj had first proposed workers' councils in 1949 he had stressed the way the Yugoslav Communist Party had always had to rely on the broad mass of working people, and the Party's determination in the 1930s to rely on the working class and its war-time Long March, as well as the introduction of workers' councils, all bore this out. Kardelj wrote at this time that 'not even the most perfect bureaucratic apparatus ... is capable of building socialism', and yet that is precisely what Tito attempted to do from 1972 onwards as he constructed his legacy. Tito's retreat into orthodox Leninism after 1968 was an abandonment of the policies he had always pursued until then.

At the end of his life, Tito settled for second best, for something that worked. In 1951 he told the Central Committee that 'our aim is to create a happy life for our

people in our country'.⁷ He said something very similar to Phyllis Auty in October 1968: 'I have tried to devote my life to the good of the people and the country'.⁸ When Tito intervened to restore discipline after 1968 he did prepare the way for a decade of prosperity for Yugoslavs. Yet in preventing the democratic evolution of the self-management system, he also created a state that was more alienating than disalienating and which bottled up the nationalist, social and intellectual tensions which would ultimately explode. Tito believed that individuals played a crucial role in history. He once told Djilas that 'often the entire course of history depends on one person'.⁹ So the verdict of history on Tito is harsh: at the end of the 1960s he refused to recognise the maturity of his own people, he refused to accept that 'the last class enemy was disarmed' and it was time to end the dictatorship. Instead he adopted a bureaucratic rather than a democratic solution to the country's problems. As Djilas said in 1953, ultimately he was 'the standard-bearer of the bureaucracy'.

