W.G. Burchett

PEOPLE'S DEMOCRACIES

Publisher's Note

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

As the title indicates, this book is about the people's democracies. It is based on an eyewitness account of the developments there as observed by a correspondent of leading London newspapers, who has been a frequent visitor to Eastern Europe since the end of the war, and who has lived in Eastern Europe for more than a year in 1949-50. Most of the book deals with current events, with an occasional dip into background, where it has a specific bearing on the events described. The author was present at all major political trials in Budapest and Sofia during 1949.

The book covers a period beginning with the Greek elections in 1946 and ending with the funeral of the Bulgarian Prime Minister, Vasil Kolarov, in January 1950. The author has written mainly about Hungary and Bulgaria, the two countries he knows best.

Events are not necessarily described in the order in which they occurred; sometimes chapters are arranged to make clear parallel developments in these two countries.

Characters described are real people, although in some cases names have been changed.

The book is dedicated to the peoples of the new democracies in the hope that a long period of world peace will permit them to build the new future, the foundations of which the author has seen firmly laid.

W.G. BURCHETT
Budapest, April 1950

PROLOGUE

Spring came early to Greece in 1946. Snow was still deep on the ground when I left Occupied Germany by an RAF transport plane. Spring had already begun when I arrived in Occupied Greece by RAF transport plane, two days later. My assignment was to report on the elections to be held at the end of March. Mr. Bevin had rejected appeals to postpone the elections because he wanted to end the occupation, he said, as soon as possible and withdraw British troops.

Athens in March 1946 was a city of brilliant sunshine, of china-blue skies, of miserable people and starving children. In Berlin, too, people were starving, but there the shops were empty. When food was available in Berlin, it went straight into the stomachs of the hungry. In Athens stomachs were empty but shops were full. At night, if one were not careful, one stumbled over little figures whimpering with hunger, huddled together for warmth outside shops bulging with food, including UNRRA supplies at black market prices, which none but the wealthiest could afford. There was no food rationing.

Two days before the elections, M. Sophoulis, the Prime Minister, who reminded one both by his role and his appearance of Marshal Petain, received correspondents. Like Petain he was an extraordinarily vigorous old man. At 85, with a neatly clipped white moustache, he stood leaning against a mantelpiece for an hour and a half, pulling at his pipe and answering correspondents' questions.

The left-wing parties had been demanding a postponement of the elections, at least until new voting lists could be prepared. There had also been open terrorism against anti-monarchist speakers in the countryside. Left-wing and moderate speakers, even members of Sophoulis' Liberal party had been beaten up and election meetings dispersed. Sophoulis surprised corres-

pondents by revealing that he had sent a last-minute appeal to Bevin, asking permission to postpone the elections for two months.

"But," he said, "Mr. Bevin insists that the elections take place as scheduled on March 30. He says he wants to withdraw British troops from Greece as soon as possible, but only after the elections have taken place and we have a new government."

The left-wing EAM coalition of parties which led the resistance against the Germans had demanded that new voting lists be prepared and foreign troops withdrawn from the country before elections were held. The fascist gendarmerie, the same which had served the Germans, would never have dared to carry out excesses in 1946 but for the protective presence of British troops in the country. They would not have lasted one week without the new protectors who had taken over the role of the Germans in the sense that the gendarmes know any actions against them would bring British troops to their defence.

When the request was refused, EAM decided to boycott the elections. A correspondent asked Sophoulis in view of the boycott, how many people he thought would vote. He took a long pull at his big black pipe and answered with acrid humour:

"You may be sure that at least 20,000 dead will vote." Asked to explain, he added, "It is farcical to carry out elections with voting lists which have not been revised since 1935. You can be sure that a vote will be cast for the monarchists by every person who has died since the lists were drawn up 11 years ago."

The elections were duly held on March 30, but British troops did not leave the country as promised. They remained until 1949, by which time the Americans had effectively taken over the role of policeman.

I went to Salonika, capital of Greek Macedonia, on election eve to watch the voting. My interpreter and guide there was Grigorious Stachtopolous, who was afterwards sentenced to life

imprisonment for alleged complicity in the murder of an American radio correspondent, George Polk. Salonika, like Athens, was basking in warm sunshine. The streets were lined with baskets full of glowing golden oranges, crates of eggs and poultry. There were plenty of hungry-looking people standing around but few buyers. Stallholders chased people down the street begging them to buy just one orange. The footpaths at night were covered with hungry, homeless waifs.

The British Information officer, Mr. Coates, assured me that everything was quiet in Salonika. The electioneering, he said, was conducted in an atmosphere of complete calm. Those taking part in the elections held their meetings without interruption, those that opposed them were free to carry out their propaganda. I mentioned M. Sophoulis's statement two days earlier, and asked about the EAM supporters who had been arrested in Salonika itself the previous night for sticking up "*Apochi*" (Abstain) posters. He pretended to be surprised, then shrugged his shoulders: "Of course, this is the Balkans, old boy. This is not a London County Council election."

Among the more lurid posters was that of General Zervas' party, which showed a red dragon labelled EAM, with a sword being plunged into its body. The sword bore the name of Zervas' party and was a frank expression of the general's electoral program.

By noon on election day in Salonika, polling had been very light, except in the fashionable part of the city. By midday too, over a hundred young men had been arrested for distributing "Apochi" leaflets. I was once rounded up myself by mistake with a small group. The police started to use their rifle butts before they discovered I was a foreigner. We were all taken off to a police station where ten or twelve others were being questioned. The police captain also made a mistake in thinking that I was an official observer. (English, French and American observers

were supposed to supervise the voting.) The police captain, in response to my questions, agreed that all parties were free to make propaganda for or against the elections, but said it was prohibited to distribute leaflets on polling day. It was pointed out that at every polling booth, agents of the monarchist parties were handing out leaflets to everyone that came to vote. The captain was sure this must be a mistake, and after some more polite exchanges about the reasons why the other young men were arrested, we were all released.

In the afternoon, the gendarmes and other officials were busy visiting homes and prodding the abstainers out to vote. The threats were varied. To one it would be that his business would be closed if he did not vote; to another that he would lose his job; to others just plain threats of police action against them after the monarchists won. (The main issue in the elections was the return of King George.)

In Salonika however, things were relatively quiet. Truck-loads of gendarmes dashed about the city, then gendarmes singing chauvinistic songs about marching against Albania or marching against Bulgaria. The observers were mostly concentrated in Athens and Salonika so there was no overt terrorism in these cities. At EAM headquarters, as the day wore on, peasants began to arrive to tell of strange happenings in the countryside. Some of them had been beaten up, one had a bullet through his arm. And, after visits from the gendarmes, many men left Salonika that afternoon and evening for the mountains because of the threats of the sequel to their abstention from voting. They had fought the gendarmes for years, from the days of the Metaxas dictatorship, through the years of German occupation when the gendarmes acted as the bloodhounds for the Germans. They knew the gendarmes were not idly boasting when they threatened that lists would be prepared of those that had not voted and that action would be taken against them as soon

as the results were declared and the monarchists in the saddle.

A quick tour of the villages near the outskirts of the city was sufficient to confirm the reports being telephoned into EAM headquarters every few minutes that gendarmes were rounding up non-voters and marching them to the polls with tommy-guns poked into their ribs.

In the first village I visited, not ten miles from Salonika, all the men had left the village early in the morning so as not to vote. The gendarmes were said to be lurking in the neighborhood and had threatened to arrest the villagers when they returned. The women described house-to-house searches made by the gendarmes and a representative of the monarchists. But the men had gone. In one case they dragged off a 15-year-old boy and made him vote in his father's name. While we were talking at the entrance to the miserable village, a truck dashed up, ten gendarmes sprang to the ground with tommy-guns at the ready, and surrounded us, the taxi-driver, the EAM representative, my guide, myself and the women. They grudgingly lowered their guns when they found I was a foreign journalist, and eventually went back to their truck when I insisted on speaking to the women without their presence. They went off mumbling threats.

One black-clad old soul with grey hairs and a deeply-lined face wept when she heard I was from an English newspaper. "Please, sir, let them send some British troops here," she said, with a rather touching faith in what she had read of British fair play, "the gendarmes swear they'll shoot down our men-folk when they come home from the hills tonight." Others joined in the weeping as they described the gendarmes' threats.

The gendarmes had thrown a cordon round the next village early in the morning. They arrested two men and wounded a third, when the latter tried to leave the village to avoid voting. (He was the one I had seen at EAM headquarters in Salonika.)

The rest of the men were sitting stolidly at home when we called. They were forbidden to assemble in groups of more than two, but had resisted up till then violent threats by the gendarmes to try and get them to the polling station. The latter called every hour or so accompanied by the royalist headman in the village.

The last village was the most extraordinary of the three I visited that afternoon. Clinging to the side of a rocky mountain with miserable-looking vines struggling for life in the hard, flinty soil, it had largely been destroyed by the gendarmes during the German occupation. The inhabitants were suspected of sheltering partisans. Nothing had been done about its reconstruction. Poverty-stricken and neglected like all villages I saw in Macedonia, it made an even more pitiable impression than most, with its broken houses, empty shops and forlorn-looking people.

Lounging on an ancient bench in front of a tavern were about a dozen peasants in well-patched, sky-blue pants and threadbare shirts; unshaven, solemn-looking men with deep creases in their faces and calloused hands; men who had taken on the characteristics of the stony, barren soil from which they lived.

At our invitation they followed us into the tavern. We asked about the elections, if everything had been quiet. There was no reply. They looked at each other, looked at their boots through which their brown, sockless toes were showing, but no one replied. Have any people in the village voted? No reply. Were people prevented from leaving the village? Not a word. A stony silence and steadfast, stolid glances. In stalked an angry lieutenant of the gendarmerie, a brutal-looking man with a heavy odour of alcohol. He was accompanied by two gendarmes. He wanted to know what was going on, while his two satraps made their guns ready for instant action. He was all silken charm the next moment when he found a foreign journalist had "hon-

oured" the village with his presence.

"Of course everything has been quiet here," he said, and turned to the peasants, "Hasn't it?" Again the quiet, stolid glances and complete silence. It was beginning to get a little uncanny. The faces looked a little grimmer as the lieutenant started to bully them. "Go on," he shouted, "tell this gentleman how things are. That everybody voted by midday, that everything was quiet. Tell them I say." But not a word was spoken. They listened attentively to my questions to the lieutenant at first, but then one by one they slipped out of the tavern. Soon they were all gone. Not one of them had opened his mouth, but their silence and their glances at the lieutenant shouted that they were living in mortal fear.

The taxi-driver, who had remained outside, had made a discovery while we were in the tavern. He directed our attention to a square stone building, with iron grilles for windows. Inside we could hear someone groaning. The lieutenant passed it off with a laugh. "It's a drunken peasant who got into a fight with his fellows. We locked him up until he sobers up." It was difficult for him to refuse a foreign journalist's insistence to speak to the man, especially as I was the closest approach he had seen to the observers who were supposed to control the elections. The man, together with another inmate of the lock-up, could hardly stand up, but not because they were drunk, but because they had been beaten so badly by the gendarmes for trying to leave the village.

As our taxi bumped down the rough, dusty track, it was already getting dark. We were startled when a figure jumped out from behind a bush and signalled us violently to stop. It was one of the silent villagers and he wanted a lift in the taxi. He hardly stopped talking all the way to Salonika as he described the brutality of the gendarmes; the same story of threats and violence we had heard in the other villages and which was confirmed by dozens of peasants we spoke to along the road. He had not

voted but was afraid of what would happen next. He had decided to leave the village for a while and hide in Salonika, until he could judge what was going to happen. He explained that the peasants in the tavern had been frightened to say a word to us for fear the gendarmes would hear of it. They were equally determined not to say one word to support the gendarme's claim that everything was quiet and the elections were being run fairly.

The report that appeared under my name the next day in a leading London daily, while it could not contain a tenth of the things I had seen, was sufficient to bring the wrath of the British Consul and the Information Office upon my head, also the wrath of the combined monarchist press in Salonika. I happened not to be in town the day the storm burst. I had left for a three-day trip to the villages to find out what had happened further afield on election day, also to discover what had happened in the village of Litokhoran, where it was reported that armed bands had wiped out a gendarmerie headquarters.

My guide this time was a Greek poet called Papapericles, who had spent ten years in exile in the Aegean for his writings, and who I regret to say has since either been executed or put back into a concentration camp. A sturdy, sunny, middle-aged man, Papapericles was known in every village and was greeted with tremendous warmth wherever we stopped.

The whole countryside was in a state of desolation and decay. Roads were unpaved and covered with dreadful potholes, there had been no attempt to repair broken bridges. In one stretch of eight miles we drove through a river fifteen times. Villages burned by the gendarmes for helping the partisans were left unrepaired. Peasants sat hopelessly by the roadside looking at the weeds growing in their fields. It was beautiful spring weather, the peasants should have been sowing, but they had neither animals to pull their ploughs nor seed to sow if the ground were

ploughed. Seed grain had been devoured during the winter. Where were the UNRRA supplies? Few peasants had even heard of them. They had been cornered by wealthy grain dealers and were stored in their warehouses in Salonika. There was nothing, literally nothing in the village stores. It was impossible throughout our journey to buy even an orange, although they were rotting in Salonika. They came by boat from the islands and their transport to the villages represented too big a problem for the corrupt government. We followed a road which led to Mount Olympus, the mythical playground of the Greek gods. As the road wound up through the foothills, parched fields with occasional dusty olive groves gave way to neat orchards in full bloom. The country looked less desolate but the peasants we talked to by the wayside were just as desperate as those who had no seeds to sow. There would be no way of getting their fruit into Salonika even if the harvest were good.

Eventually we rolled and bumped our way into the craggy village of Litokhoran, perched high up on the slopes of Olympus, with wild, fir-clad, rocky peaks in the background. There had been a miniature battle there a few nights previously. The gendarmerie and tiny army barracks had been wiped out by an armed band which had come down from the peaks and apparently disappeared back into the mountains. Lots of villagers had been arrested on the suspicion that they had helped the attackers, although Papapericles believed the attack was a provocation staged by the Monarchists to justify a full-scale campaign against EAM. He declared it was out of the question that EAM had staged the affair, in fact he had been sent by the party to try and find out what had actually happened.

Not long after we arrived in the village, there was great excitement when it was announced that UNRRA supplies were to be distributed. A queue of miserably thin and haggard women and children, dressed literally in rags, formed in no time.

It appeared that the local officials had espied far down the winding valley, an UNRRA station wagon which could only be headed for Litokhoran. UNRRA supplies had been hoarded by the officials for months past and only handed out to a few people known for their Monarchist sympathies. At least that is what the women in the queue told us. A gendarme pushed them aside brutally, to make room for Papapericles and myself to enter the building. When Papapericles protested at his roughness, he replied: "Bah. They're all a lot of worthless partisans in this village." "Partisan," a title used proudly in other countries where the people had fought against the Germans, was still used as a term of abuse by the Greek Fascist gendarmes. (And partisan in 1946 referred only to those who had taken up arms against the Germans. The civil war had not started at that time.)

It was a big day at Litokhoran. Soon after the UNRRA inspector arrived and expressed herself shocked at the callous attitude of the officials in withholding supplies that should have been handed out to the women and children months previously, there were more whirls of dust on the road below, and presently two British armoured scout cars arrived, with a red-tabbed British colonel. He was not pleased to see a British journalist. British troops were supposed to be in their barracks, British officers were in Greece in a purely "advisory" capacity. (The British Consul later begged me to delete from my despatches any mention of British armoured vehicles in Litokhoran and other regions where I saw them on my three-day trip.) The Colonel said the many scout cars we had noticed on the road had nothing to do with intimidation at all, it was just a routine matter of "showing the flag."

On the return journey we called in at the gendarmerie headquarters at Edessa. Villagers had told Papapericles that a wave of arrests had started. We were received, after some delay, by a bleary-eyed colonel of gendarmerie, his breath heavily

charged with *ouzo* (the potent Greek spirit with a strong aniseed flavour).

"Everything is quiet in Edessa," he said, hiccoughing furiously and filling the room with *ouzo* fumes. "Elections were quiet, everybody voted. No fuss at all." Asked about the rumoured arrests, he said: "Arrests? Nonsense! .Jail's absolutely empty." And at that moment, there was a dreadful sobbing and a sound of something being dragged along the corridor and pushed through a door almost opposite the Colonel's office.

"Ah, that," said the Colonel, very red in the face and furiously angry, "well, that's a relative of one of the soldiers who was killed at Litokhoran. He just heard the news and he's very upset. That's what you heard. He was weeping."

I insisted that we must go into the room opposite. The Colonel said there was nothing inside, but his morale was not very high and he was not at all sure of my status. After all, I represented the occupying power. Before he knew what was happening, we had left his office, turned the key in the door and were in the room. It was a fairly large cell, jammed full of men, many of them with great welts on their faces, some of them half collapsed on the floor. The heat and stench was almost overpowering. The Colonel tried to hustle us out, but sturdy Papapericles stood his ground and we carried out a number of lightning interviews.

There was a college professor, a number of school teachers and journalists, small business people and workers. Mostly however they were intellectuals. Except for a half a dozen, they had not been arrested by the gendarmes but by groups of armed civilians — monarchist "vigilantes" who had pounced on them in their homes, beaten them up and dragged them off to the gendarmerie. Many of them were beaten again, interrogated and thrown into the cell. They said their ranks were being swelled every hour; that there was another cell where at least a hundred people were held. One young man dragged out

a certificate from his pocket, issued by the British War Office, thanking him for having saved an RAF flyer during the war. They had all abstained from voting and presumed that was why they had been rounded up.

The Colonel in the meantime had disappeared, leaving a lieutenant to look after us with strict instructions to tell us nothing. We tried to find the Colonel in his office, but he had "gone home." We stayed the night in Edessa and called again the next morning, but the Colonel was not available. We could get no official explanation of the arrests and had to conclude that it was the beginning of the enforcement of threats against those who did not vote.

In Salonika, the monarchist newspapers were still fuming over my first election story, which had been cabled back and splashed in the leftist press. One paper, certainly with the knowledge of the British Consul (whose function, by the way, seemed much more that of a political intelligence officer than a consul), stated that the Consul had denounced me as an impostor who would be expelled from Greece immediately. They had sent a journalist to my hotel while I was away with Papapericles and concluded that I had been thrown out so quickly that I had even left my baggage behind. When I convinced the editor, who happened to be also Reuter's correspondent, by my presence that I was still very much in Greece, he refused to publish a denial of his earlier story. As he quoted me also, excerpts of a story which I had sent to London but which had not been published, it was obvious as I pointed out to him that he had bribed someone for the privilege of reading my cables at the telegraph office.

I was visited in my hotel room on the evening of my return by a very wrath Information Officer, Mr. Coates, who after he had expressed the most pained surprise at my story, commented at the most monstrous "treachery" of all. "And when you came," he said, "we thought you spoke the same language, old boy." Mr.

Coates' comment to all I had seen in the villages and at Edessa was to exclaim, "But, good God man, how many more times must I tell you. Don't you realize this is the Balkans?" What I did realize was that in the space of a very few days, I had attended the birth of a fascist state with, to my shame and regret, a British socialist government playing the role of midwife.

My course back to Berlin was something of a zigzag. First to Vienna, grey and sad, despite the blossoming lilac in April. Vienna seemed even more depressed and hopeless than Berlin. It seemed to have resigned itself to its fate. In Athens and Salonika, there was a fierce anger about things, one felt the people would go down fighting or win through. In Vienna one sensed a nation that was prepared to pass out under an anaesthetic.

From Vienna to Belgrade, and there, in late April 1946, for the first time in postwar Europe, I felt at home. There were cheerful, friendly, optimistic people in the streets. There was poverty as bad or worse than in Berlin, Vienna or Athens, but there was a verve and dash about the people, a feeling of faith in the future that warmed up the city and made one's blood run quicker. A fresh young people, stripped of any elegance or decadence, Yugoslavs felt themselves part of the Slav future. They had fought hard and well, they were cousins of the Soviet Union, the Slav and communist world was coming into its own. There wasn't enough to eat. Never mind! Next year we'll have plenty and if not next year, then the year after. They worked at a pace frightening to see, as if they wanted to build their new century in six months.

I only stayed a few days, but I felt glad later to have seen Yugoslavia in 1946. It was the country's happiest year, a happiness not based on any material foundations but on confidence in the future, confidence in her leaders, confidence in her friends and her own will to work.

I had to leave Belgrade a few days later to be in Trieste for

May Day. Back into the fascist wilderness and a real fascism this time, pure-blooded and well-trained with the original arrogance and racial hatreds, even the original salute and cries of "*Duce, Duce.*" In Trieste, the Americans shared with the British the role of nursemaid to a lusty infant fascism.

The May Day parade was staged by Slovene and Italian anti-fascists; good-looking blond young Slovenian peasants from the hills outside the city, Italian workers from the shipbuilding yards of Monfalcone; workers from the city itself. It was a good parade, disciplined and gay, with lots of banners and transparents. The footpaths were jammed from curb to the shopfronts with people whistling, jeering and spitting. The Venezia Giulia police, the pride of the British police-training mission to Trieste, stood with linked arms to prevent the crowds from overflowing onto the streets. Above their shining helmets fascist arms were flung out like swords in an honour guard, giving the forbidden salute.

The cry, "*Duce, Duce,*" swelled from one end of the city to the other, as the whole Trieste middle-class demonstrated its race and class hatred. When the Slovene girls who were to take part in a sports demonstration marched past in their neat sports uniforms, the spitting and shouting reached a climax. "*Schiave, schiave*" (slaves, slaves) jeered the crowd, using the fascist corruption of the word for Slavs, whom they had long enough regarded as their slaves.

In the evening, groups of young toughs, twelve or fifteen strong, roamed the streets with bludgeons under their coats and knives in their pockets to attack any individuals or small groups they could outnumber. The streets were still lined with jeering, spitting pro-fascists who applauded any attacks on the Slovenes, returning to their villages. The police stood by grinning when girls had their sports slips ripped off their backs.

The demonstrators had charge of the streets in Trieste on

May Day, but the fascists, one could say, had charge of the police and the footpaths.

A strange incident occurred a couple of weeks later which passed unnoticed in the Western press, but which was the direct result of tolerating such scenes as in Trieste on May Day. British press officers were busy day and night handing out stories about new "incidents" provoked by the communists or Slovenes, but they kept silent about this particular event.

It occurred in Venice. A British cruiser dropped into the canal city on a courtesy visit. An admiral aboard, hoping to popularize the British flag, arranged for the cruiser's brass band to give a concert in the Piazza San Marco. The Union Jack was unfurled on the highest flagpole in the famous old square. The admiral in dress uniform and the city's mayor in his robes of office appeared on the tribune and the concert started. In the middle of the first item, a great mob attacked the band, hauled down the British flag and replaced it with the Italian flag, sang the forbidden fascist song "*Giovanezza*" and chased the admiral and his band back to the cruiser where it lay tied up to the wharf. There they threw stones with good enough aim to break the glass house and several portholes, and covered the cruiser's spick paint with mud and filth.

During the evening, mobs chased British sailors in the streets and any Italian girls found with them had their hair lopped off and were thrown into the canals. This was at a time when Mr. Bevin was defending Italy's case tooth and nail against Mr. Molotov over the issue of Trieste. I stepped aboard the cruiser and first asked a young naval lieutenant how it had all happened. "It was a shocking 'do,'" he said, "Fascist ruffians.... Lucky none of our chaps were hurt... but I think, before I say any more, I'd better take you to the commander."

The Commander said, "Very bad show indeed... Time we taught these fellows a lesson... But I think you'd better talk

about it to the Captain."

The Captain said, "Well, I think we should forget all about the incident. The Mayor has apologized handsomely... The whole incident was provoked by naval cadets who are annoyed about Italy losing her fleet. After all, wouldn't our chaps be annoyed if their fleet was taken away? Now be a good chap and don't write a word about all this. It will only make bad blood and play into the hands of the communists."

Such tenderness and understanding for rioters who had attacked His Majesty's Navy was something new indeed. It was impossible in this case for the press officers to blame the communists. The singing of the "*Giovanezza*," the proof that the incidents were staged by officers and cadets from Mussolini's Navy, was overwhelming, so the British had instructions to hush the whole matter up. It would never do for public opinion in Britain to know that this Italy, which was being so stoutly championed by Mr. Bevin, was well back on the road to fascism, which was even taking an anti-British turn. The British press relations officer regarded me almost as a traitor when I announced my intention of reporting the affair.

On May 30, I was in Czechoslovakia to watch the first elections held there since the war. After Greece, it was as the difference between day and night. I drove from Bratislava through Slovakia to Prague, through well-ordered farm lands, along roads lined with cherry trees laden with black fruit ready for the picking, through neat, white-washed villages where the ravages of war had been repaired. Flocks of plump geese hissed at the car as it passed. Every square metre of land in the rolling hills was cultivated, strips of black freshly-ploughed earth neatly laid between strips of green where maize was already above ground and strips of gold where the wheat was ripening. Roads were in good order, bridges had been repaired. In Catholic Slovakia, stolid peasants clad in their shiny black Sunday best, with

their kerchiefed wives in colourful wide skirts and embroidered blouses went to the polling booths, registered their votes and solemnly continued on their way to Church. Polling day, as is usual in Europe, was on a Sunday.

In the afternoon, by the time I had reached Bohemia, many of the village polling stations were already closed, as everybody on the registers had voted. The Czechs are a dour, serious people, without the dash and verve of their brother Slavs in Poland and the Balkans. But there was plenty of gaiety in Prague that night, with spontaneous dancing in the streets outside the Communist Party headquarters in Wenceslas Square, as the results came through to give the communists 38 per cent of the votes, which made them easily the strongest party in the country. Even the Western legations, stunned though they were by the results, could find nothing to criticize in the way the elections were conducted.

The results of these first elections, with the communists in the leading position, were a guarantee that the program drawn up at Kosice by the Provisional Government in 1944, agreed to by all political parties would be put into operation. It called for expulsion of the Germans, a radical land reform, the nationalization of industry and the closest relations with the Soviet Union.

The Czech elections were the last item on my program before I returned to Berlin after an absence of an instructive two months. In the space of two months, less than a year after the end of the war, I had seen the re-birth of fascism in one country under Allied control, the fostering of fascism in a second country under Allied control, the birth of a new type of state, a "people's democracy" in a third country where the people had been left to choose for themselves the type of state they wanted.

In the years that followed, it was natural if I watched almost with the eye of a godfather the developments in this new type

of state, of which Czechoslovakia was a prototype and which came into being all over Eastern Europe.

CHAPTER ONE
THE NEW LIFE BEGINS IN POLAND

Slubice on the Odra and Frankfurt on the Oder used to be one and the same town. The sluggish brown river which flows through the centre of the city now divides Poland from Germany. In the spring of 1947, the Oder divided two worlds, one still stunned and demoralized from defeat only just beginning to re-awaken, the other bubbling over with vitality. Frankfurt and Slubice, however, looked much the same. It had been a frontline besieged city in the centre of the heaviest fighting in the Soviet advance on Berlin. The whole area from Kustrin to Frankfurt was still littered with the wrecks of German Tiger tanks, lying where they had been destroyed in the fields by diving Stormoviks and Soviet artillery. Every house in Slubice seemed to be destroyed, the only inhabitants were a few Polish frontier guards and customs officials.

Half a mile outside of Slubice, however, the new life was well under way. Peasants were toiling in the fields, ploughing under the remnants of last year's harvest. (In the changeover of five million Poles to replace three million Germans in the ceded territories, some land had gone uncultivated, some crops unharvested for a season. It was inevitable in such a gigantic transfer of populations.)

Gangs of men and women were busy filling in potholes in roads which had borne the brunt of Hitler's conquest of Poland, which were the main supply routes for the invasion of the Soviet Union; the roads along which the remnants of Hitler's armies retreated back to Berlin. The Poles seemed to be tackling everything at once. They were working in the fields, on the roads and at reconstruction in the villages. Houses and shops, churches and schools were being repaired by bustling people who seemed charged with a ferocious energy.

It was puzzling at first to notice that children and even some of the peasants seemed frightened of cars and would leap off the roads or get behind trees when one approached. Horses invariably shied and I had the impression that I was in a land where cars were novelties. Only after passing Betsche on the old German-Polish frontier was my car accepted as a commonplace. The settlers who have now come furthest west into the former German territories are those who have come from the most backward part of Poland, east of the Curzon Line in the lands which have now been returned to the Soviet Union. The only cars children had seen on those roads in the East were those of the German Army, so it was a small wonder if they still hid behind trees when one approached.

The new settlers had been given up to 35 acres of land per family and it was evident by the intensive cultivation that they intended to prove fictitious the propaganda in Western Germany that the land was not being tilled by the Poles and should be handed back to the Germans. Implements were primitive, draught cattle were scarce — most of the peasants had a cow and a horse yoked together pulling plough or harrows — but the soil was being turned over and winter wheat was well above the ground. The whole countryside seemed charged with electric energy; the peasants and their animals seemed to be working at double the tempo of life in Germany. Speeches by the U.S. Secretary of State Byrnes and by other Americans, hinting that the new territories might be handed back, at least in part, to the Germans, had spurred the new settlers on to justify possession by tilling every inch of soil.

Posnan, the main target of my visit to Poland, was another ant heap of activity. The city had been more than fifty per cent destroyed, mostly by German troops during their withdrawal. It lay on their main line of retreat. The amount of rebuilding that had been completed by early 1947 was astonishing. Build-

ings which had looked hopeless cases were being tackled as they stood, as long as engineers certified that the foundations were firm. Most buildings in the city had an odd patchwork effect where new walls and pieces of walls had been built in, parts of roofs recovered. Half the city seemed to be swathed in scaffolding, the other half enveloped in dust, as irreparably damaged buildings were pulled down to make way for new ones.

The most heart-warming thing for a visitor was the enthusiasm with which all sections of the population, regardless of political affiliations, threw themselves into the work of reconstruction and were really proud of what they had achieved. The sadism of the German occupation, the cold-blooded ferocity of their attempt to exterminate the entire population (and the nazis did kill one Pole in every five) brought the people together during the war and a new feeling of solidarity was carried over into the postwar years.

One of the first people I visited was an 80 year old Professor of Philosophy, Dr. Louise Dobdzynska-Rybicka, a frail, white-haired old lady, who walked with difficulty but had a mind as sharp as a razor and the heart of a lion. To my amazement, she was back at her old faculty at the University, from which she had resigned in 1937 at the respectable age of 70.

"They are so short of staff now," she said, "I felt I had to do my bit. The Germans killed off so many of our intellectuals." A devout Catholic, she went first to mass every morning and from church to the University. How had she survived the war? Not only had she survived, but together with some of her colleagues, she had cooperatived clandestine University classes, under the noses of the nazis, who had closed universities throughout Poland. (What was the use of educating people one was going to exterminate?)

The underground classes were of such a high quality that when the University reopened after the war, students who had

attended them were credited with two years' studies. How could a devout Catholic co-operate with the communists? "Firstly," replied this astonishing old patriot, with her frail body and twinkling eyes, "we are all Poles. Secondly they don't interfere with my religion and don't object although they know I attend mass daily. Thirdly, when I see that they do so much and work so hard for the material good of the people, I feel the least I can do is to help in my own sphere. Fourthly, philosophy is a universal subject and I have no quarrel with the textbooks issued by the Ministry of Education."

My next visit was to the Bishop of Posnan, a chubby round-faced prelate, Bishop Francisek Jedwabski. Posnan was the cradle of Christianity in Poland and the Bishop escorted me round the ancient Cathedral, the first in Poland, dating back to the 10th century. Posnan was the first capital of the ancient Kingdom of Poland and the Cathedral is an historic gem. The Germans had forbidden the Poles to use it and had used it themselves as an ammunition dump. It was largely destroyed before the nazis left, but reconstruction was well under way. In clearing away the rubble, architects found part of the original 10th century building, beautiful Gothic arches and 11th century frescoes, hidden away behind walls built in the 15th century.

Bishop Jedwabski had been arrested by the nazis in 1942 and sent to various concentration camps. He was in Dachau when the war ended. I asked him about relations between himself and the government.

"Why shouldn't I support this government?" he said, "there has not been the slightest interference with religion. They have given us a generous grant to restore the Cathedral. In general they have given help in restoring churches all over the country, not only financial help. They have cooperatived labour brigades who have given thousands of work-hours in rebuilding church property. We hope to have our Cathedral here ready for Christ-

mas service in 1948. Our people have freedom of conscience. Our newspapers and weeklies publish what they want, and sometimes they carry very sharp attacks against Marxism. We have our own church schools and seminaries. Church lands were respected when land reform was carried out. The government does not interfere with us and my own view is that the Church should not interfere with the government. We have no quarrel with their really great efforts to rebuild our country and to raise the living standard of the people. No Christian or Catholic can do anything but applaud such efforts."

"But surely, this is a different attitude to that taken by the Vatican on the question of cooperation with communists," I said.

"You must remember," he replied, "that Poland is 90 per cent a Catholic country. The nazis came here to destroy us, to destroy our culture and our religion, to destroy us physically. There are many Catholics here who felt the Vatican did not make its voice heard enough at that time in protecting the interests of Polish Catholics."

This was a viewpoint which I heard expressed often in Poland, and is one of which the Vatican must take notice when it tries to direct the affairs of Catholics in Eastern Europe. The Vatican has come out four square against communism in a way that it never did against the nazis when the latter were wiping out millions of Catholic workers and peasants in Eastern Europe.

My reason for coming to Posnan was to visit the International Fair. All the activity I had seen elsewhere was nothing compared to what was going on at the fair grounds. The Germans had used the site for a Focke-Wulf factory, and on Easter Sunday, 1944, when no workers were on the job, the RAF blasted the plant and buildings out of existence. The nazis never even tried to repair them. Masons, carpenters, plasterers, painters,

electricians and exhibitors were now frantically making final preparations for the opening by Premier Cyrankiewicz. They worked until half an hour before the Premier arrived and then, as if by magic, scaffolding disappeared, and bright new stuccoed buildings were displayed, hung with welcoming banners. In the last half hour, a typically Polish touch was added — a small garden, complete with flowers and blossoming trees in tubs, was laid down in front of the main pavilion.

The Fair provided a good example of other results of Polish energy. Unlike most European trade fairs in the first postwar years, where goods were displayed but were not available for purchase, at Posnan there were 20,000,000 dollars worth of goods available for immediate delivery, mainly foodstuffs and textiles. The best display was that of foodstuffs from the Polish Cooperative Societies. Scores of varieties of cheese, fine hams, butter, eggs, bottled and dried fruits — all to be had for cash purchase and a rare sight in Europe of 1947. Just over half the space at the Fair was taken up with exhibits from the newly formed state enterprises, 34 per cent by private firms and 10 per cent by the cooperative and foreign firms.

It was the first international fair to be held in Poland since the war and was really a milestone in the development of the country which had registered the quickest economic recovery of any in Europe. It was impossible not to feel a thrill of emotion on the opening night, to join in with Posnan's citizens at a celebration in their ancient Town Hall. In a beautiful old Italian Renaissance building, partly destroyed by the Germans, but still with the date of its construction, 1556, embossed in the tile mosaic ceiling of the banqueting hall, the people of Posnan came together to rejoice at the first tangible evidence that the days of peace had come again and that the days of plenty were just around the corner.

Workers and peasants whose labours made the fair possible

rubbed shoulders with city officials and visitors from Warsaw and abroad. Under old smoke-stained beams, at oak tables, polished by elbows for many centuries, they set aside their labours for a short pause and drank and ate of the good things set out before them — sucking pigs, poultry, hams and cheese, fine Polish pastry, cherry and raspberry and a dozen of other flavours of potent vodka — fine-tasting symbols that Polish farms and Polish industry were in production again. And as they ate and drank, they could look back over the nightmare years that lay behind them, the years in which practically every Polish family lost at least one of its members. They could look forward too to the years which lay ahead and many toasts were drunk to the new life that was being built.

Next morning, after a full night of music, feasting and dancing, Posnan's citizens were back on the job again, rebuilding, repairing and producing.

Nadia was one who did not take part in the reconstruction; neither did she rejoice to see the city being rebuilt. She lived in an eight-room villa, in a little resort about 10 miles from Posnan, on the banks of the leisurely Warthe river. Young, very beautiful, with a madonna face, black hair parted in the middle and worn low over her ears, with green-flecked brown eyes, vivacious and charming, Nadia was the wife of Zladislaw, a former landowner.

"Poor Zladislaw!" she sighed, "He was not able to adjust himself to the new life at all, after the estates were taken. I wanted him to stay and wait; but he insisted on leaving. He works now with American Counter-Intelligence in Frankfurt." I had arrived at the villa at lunch-time and was invited to a "snack" of roast duck with green salad and lots of cream, followed by magnificent plums preserved in wine and smothered with more fresh cream.

"They have left us with nothing, nothing at all," Nadia said,

as she piled more cream on my salad; "All our land, the castle, houses, everything gone." And her lovely eyes filled with tears. "Nothing, nothing for the children when they grow up."

I asked about the villa. "It's the only thing they've left us. We used it as a fishing lodge in the old days. And," she whispered, "I'm spied on all the time. Already the peasants will have reported that there's a foreign car at the gate. We used to be so happy with our peasants in the old days. Now they are so unfriendly and suspicious, I hardly dare go out."

We did go out, however, for a stroll along the river bank and it seemed to me there was more amused contempt than malice in the glances of the peasant women we passed, watching their flocks of geese and ducks along the river bank, their hands busy with needlework. They were now installed as small independent landowners of part of the 3,000 acre estate Zladislaw and his family had owned for generations.

"The whole country is run by Russians," Nadia assured me. "Of course, you wouldn't know because one doesn't see them in the streets. But every high official and every officer above the rank of captain in the Army is Russian. When the Americans come, the whole Polish people will rise up and help them throw out the Russians. And Zladislaw will be with the Americans. I told him to wait here quietly until the Americans came, but he is so impetuous, he had such difficulty in adjusting himself that he went off to Germany, as he said, to help the Americans come that much quicker."

Not far from Nadia's village was a palace built by Greiser, the Gauleiter of Danzig, a bloodthirsty villain, personally responsible for the death of tens of thousands of Poles. He was eventually hanged at the old fort which overlooks Posnan. I wanted to have a look at his palace, but Nadia begged me not to go. "It's the headquarters of the secret police," she said, "and most of them are Russians." When I was insistent she gave me

a silent young man who had also been a luncheon guest, as a guide, but begged me to drive straight past without stopping. She would remain at the villa. After more solemn warnings to the young man, she clasped my hand and begged me to be careful.

It was a fine-looking, white stone building which might well have adorned the Riviera, set back amid well-kept lawns and gardens bright with flowers. The beautiful wrought iron gates were invitingly open, there were children playing on the lawn and it seemed improbable that they were secret police in disguise. The sight of the children cheered up the silent young man, who had grave misgivings at first, when I stopped the car. We strolled over the lawns and were hailed with shouts of glee from half a dozen toddlers, gay in white suits embroidered with Poland's national colours. A German-speaking Polish nurse appeared and eventually an official who showed me over the place. Since the end of the war, Greiser's palace had been an orphanage for children whose parents he had executed.

Nadia was very astonished when we returned and related what we had seen, but she was convinced that it must have been only a few days previously that the secret police moved out and the orphans were moved in.

The silent young man, who seemed to be very much at home in the villa, turned out to be the living symbol of that adjustability which Nadia had and which was lacking in Zladislaw. He was a good motor mechanic it seemed, and Nadia partnered him in a small garage and repair shop in Posnan. His talents could be employed during the "waiting period."

There are many Nadias in Poland, beautiful, vivacious and well-educated. They usually speak English or French, they are easy for Westerners to contact and it is from their lovely, pouting lips that the Western public is mainly informed about conditions in the country. They are completely isolated from

real life; they know nothing of what is going on, but in certain circles their opinions and information are valued as fine gold. Who, among foreign visitors, can speak to a peasant or worker? What peasant or worker can express himself with one-tenth of the grace and ease of a Nadia, with infinite expression in every gesture and glance. She came to the car to bid me farewell and whispered:

"I hope next time you come, we can welcome you back on the old estate and that Zladislaw will be here."

For Nadia's sake, I felt it would be better if she built her future around the silent young man, who was able to earn money with his hands.

An interesting sidelight on the thoroughness with which the nazis set about their barbaric task of destroying anything to do with Slav culture was to be seen at Biskupin, a small village about forty-five miles north-east of Posnan. In 1934 Polish peat-diggers found they were constantly hampered by striking against wooden logs buried a few feet under the surface of a rich peat bed. Over a large area on a peninsula which jutted into a small lake, they found their diggings blocked by masses of timber which seemed to be laid in regular patterns.

Two archaeologists were eventually sent to the scene, Professors Zladislaw Rajewski and Tadeusz Krazewski. Their findings on the peninsula made world news at the time, for after a few months of work they began uncovering a wonderfully well-preserved, wooden fortified village built by Slav settlers between the years 700 and 400 B.C. The timber, mostly oak, had been kept in excellent condition by the peat bog. The two professors were joined by a team of twenty scientists and a hundred workmen. The work was slow because each cubic yard of soil removed was full of treasures for the archaeologists. There were pots and pans of the iron age, ornaments and coins showing the early inhabitants of Biskupin had commerce with Egypt, bones

and pieces of harness which showed they kept herds of domestic animals.

By the time the Germans invaded Poland in 1939, more than half the village was uncovered. The present peninsula had once been a small island in the lake, completely covered by the village which was surrounded by a circular breakwater of rows of pointed logs. Inside the breakwater the village was encircled by a high wall of horizontal oaken beams mortised into massive corner posts. The whole thing was a beautiful example of town planning by some unknown Slav architect 2,500 years ago, for a society in which every man was the social equal of his fellows. Streets were parallel, regularly spaced and of even width, running east and west except for one wide paved road which encircled the village inside the parapet wall. The sixty houses uncovered up to the time of the German invasion were of equal size and evenly spaced. Each was thirty-three feet long and twenty-eight feet wide. The houses faced south to give maximum benefit from the sun and each had sun porches and a large stone fireplace in an identical position in every house. All the streets, nine feet wide, were paved with round logs.

The archaeologists estimated that there were altogether 105 houses with a total population of 800 to 1,000 people; a classical agricultural community, which tilled the surrounding soil, cultivated several varieties of grain, kept domestic animals and represented a close-knit, cooperatived society.

The professors had listed 300,000 fragments of pottery, including many complete pots and bowls, 120,000 pieces of bone, 240 portions of domestic plants and seeds, traces of wheeled carts, of children's clay rattles and toy tea-sets before their work was interrupted by the nazi invasion. A special Biskupin section had been established at the fine Posnan Prehistoric Museum. Then came the nazis, sworn to exterminate Slavdom and to eradicate any traces of Slav culture.

The dignified and scholarly Krazewski changed his name, fled from Posnan and worked as a waiter in various restaurants. Rajewski, the younger of the two, also changed his name and fled to a distant part of Poland where he set up as a street hawker, selling shoelaces, matches and razor blades.

The nazis looted the Museum, destroyed or stole anything of value. (Posnan was only 60 miles from the German frontier and was overrun before there was time to remove any of the city's treasures.) At Biskupin, the nazis, self-styled standard bearers of Aryan culture, laid down special rail tracks and dumped thousands of tons of sand and earth into the excavations, covering up the whole area so that no trace of a pre-historic Slav settlement should be found. The plans of the excavation, they also destroyed.

Krazewski and Rajewski miraculously survived the war and the extermination camps. They were sent back to continue their work.

Krazewski escorted me around the restored part of the Prehistoric Museum, Rajewski took me out to Biskupin to see the start which had been made on the difficult task of digging out the hundreds of cubic metres of sub-soil with which the nazis had undone five years of painstaking labours.

"Side by side with building the new in Poland," Rajewski said, as we tramped over the site of the ancient village, "our government cares for the old. They immediately sought out Krazewski and myself, put us back in our old positions with ample funds to carry on and uncover the streets and homes of the ancient Biskupinites. We plan to leave half of the village in the state we found and reconstruct the other half according to the plan of the original architect."

Neither of the professors was a member of a political party, nor were they the slightest bit interested in politics, but they were enthusiastic supporters of the government.

"They give us every help," Krazewski said, "not only in the work at Biskupin and at the Museum, but at the University and they help the students too. In the old days, unless a student was the son of a wealthy landowner or industrialist, he starved, or he worked so hard outside the University to pay for his tuition that he couldn't absorb his lectures. Now they get top ration cards and are even paid for studying. We never have had a government before which gave learning and culture such a high place."

I related my visit to Nadia and her tales about all high officials and army officers above the rank of captain being Russians. "Nonsense!" said Rajewski and laughed. "In one way or another I've been in touch with almost every high official in Posnan, getting building supplies, arranging labour permits, ration cards for my workers, import permits for books, special transport facilities. I know them all from the Mayor down. Not a Russian amongst them nor ever has been. About the officers it was true of the original Polish Army which fought its way through Russia and helped chase the Germans back to Berlin. Most of the Polish officers from the original Army, caught by the Russians, went to the Middle East to fight under the British. But many of the troops and non-corns stayed in the Soviet Union. The Russians built a new army out of them, promoted the non-coms to officers up to the rank of Captain, created non-coms from the ranks and put Polish-speaking Russian officers at the top. After all, they were fighting as part of the Soviet Army. But during the fighting, Polish officers were gradually promoted and as soon as the war ended, all Soviet officers were replaced by Poles. The Polish Army which helped liberate Posnan on the way to Berlin had Soviet officers as battalion commanders, the Army which returned had Polish officers. Your Nadia is not quite up-to-date on the matter."

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The Poles seemed to have struck a nice balance between state planning and private initiative in the way they had tackled the rebuilding problem. Citizens of Posnan did not have to fill in forms and wait for building permits to start repairing their shops or houses, as was the case in England after the war. If they could get hold of carpenters and masons, they were free to do so. If they could build with their own hands and unskilled labourers so much the better. The city administration made basic materials, bricks, cement, timber and glass available at rigidly controlled prices, so there could be no black-marketeering. The government said in effect: "Here are the building materials, find your own labour and get to work." And that was the explanation for the furious assault on damaged buildings.

Twenty per cent of the population had been wiped out. Thousands of the wealthy and the very few who had collaborated with the Germans had fled to the West. If a homecomer to Posnan found his home destroyed, but found another flat which could be made habitable with repairs, he could register a claim at the Town Hall. If the records showed the owner no longer existed or had fled the country, the homecomer could claim that flat as his own, repair it and move in.

The Mayor of Posnan assured me that 90 per cent of the building was being carried out by private initiative. If a householder could not finance repairs himself, he could apply to the government for a grant up to half the value of the completed house or apartment. He could then buy the materials at fixed prices, employ private labour to do the work or do it himself. It was a realistic system that combined the benefits of state control and individual effort. It was a good system that worked, as every street in Posnan could testify.

A similar compromise system was in operation with rationing. In 1947, there was still food rationing in Poland but on a scale which allowed those with money to eat as much as they

liked at very high prices, ensured ample supplies for all workers but encouraged the workers to earn as much as possible, therefore to work as hard as possible, by giving them something to spend their excess wages on. And it encouraged the peasant to produce.

Workers registered with trade unions, government employees and students had ration cards with which they could buy their basic foods at very low prices in state shops. Professional people, doctors in private practice, lawyers and private businessmen got no ration cards.

There was ample food in private shops at prices three or four times as high as that in the state shops, where only ration-card holders could buy. If state buying could not keep pace with the appetites of those holding ration cards, if there was not enough food in the state shops to honour the cards, workers were given extra money to buy on the free market. A two-pound loaf of bread in 1947 cost, for instance, 5 zloty (threepence) with ration card, but 25 zloty (1/3) in the private shops. For other foodstuffs the difference was not so great, but 1947 was a bad year for breadgrains.

In restaurants there were two prices for everything. Those with ration cards could eat an excellent three-course meal for 30 zloty (1/6), otherwise one must pay 8/- to 10/- for a meal which would certainly be much more adequate than any served in a London restaurant in the postwar years.

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Wroclaw, when I had last visited it in 1939, was called Breslau and it was in Germany. I liked the atmosphere of Polish Wroclaw in 1947, although it was one of the most destroyed cities in Europe, better than that of Breslau eight years previously. For nearly three months, Soviet artillery slowly crunched

Breslau to pieces. As in Budapest, the nazis held on in one of the great siege-battles of the war, although they were given chances to surrender often enough to save the city. It was destroyed literally house by house. Official figures state that 80 per cent of the city was wiped out, but it was hard for a visitor in 1947 to find the 20 per cent not destroyed, unless it was represented in a few undamaged rooms here and there amidst the wreckage of public buildings and apartment houses. Driving through street after street of nothing but gaunt wrecks and rubble, it was hard to believe that there were 216,000 people already living in the ruins and they were being added to at the rate of 10,000 a month.

Apart from the immense destruction, a great change had come over the city as it was gradually transformed into Wroclaw: in fact it was probably something unique in history that the character of a great city should be so speedily and completely changed. The 600,000 Germans who used to live in Breslau had been replaced by 200,000 Poles in the new Wroclaw. There were only 10,000 Germans left when I visited the city and they were preparing to leave.

It was a solemn, stodgy city in 1939, a place that reeked of austere middle-class respectability which had now given way to a shabby, ill-clad but warm vitality. Life had emerged from behind the prim facades of the Silesian burgers' homes and elegant shops and poured out onto the streets. In 1939, I was there semi-furtively to try and get news of some Jewish friends who had been dragged off to concentration camps. In 1947 Jews took their place with other citizens in the streets. There was even a Jewish theatre already playing and a newspaper published in Hebrew.

The enormous energy of the new Poland was not so apparent in new or repaired buildings because any effort was swallowed up by the enormous extent of the destruction, but it was

startlingly apparent in the street markets. Wroclaw is in the centre of a region more devastated than anything in Europe outside the Soviet Union. Only 3 per cent of the horses and 5 per cent of the cows survived the three months of battle and the German retreat. The whole area had started off from scratch only two years previously, with completely new settlers and such humble equipment and animals as the government could provide. Most of the settlers had actually spent only one season on their new holdings.

In the morning markets one could see the first fruits of their work. Peasant women began arriving in the early hours, white kerchiefs over their heads, black shawls around their shoulders and huge bundles on their backs. Hand-drawn and horse-drawn carts joined in the convoys converging on the city. Soon after dawn the wares were laid out on crowded footpaths. There were crates of squealing sucking pigs and squawking poultry, huge baskets of eggs, lettuce, cucumbers and onions. On street corners, stout peasant women sat over cans of milk and cream, boxes of butter and soft cheese, selling at prices well within reach of normal consumers. And Wroclaw was a city of normal consumers. There were no settled wealthy classes as in Posnan, in this completely new community.

What the solid burgers of German Breslau would have said if they had seen their footpaths cluttered up with pigs and geese, fat peasant women squatting with their milk-cans at every street corner; Jews and even an occasional gypsy in the streets, one can only guess. The Wroclaw street markets were, of course, reproduced in every town and village I visited in Poland, but they were the most striking in Wroclaw as an indication of the immense progress made in a region of total destruction. They represented a triumph for the resettlement scheme of giving each settler enough land to work with the minimum of implements, a few heads of poultry and pigs and telling them to

go ahead and produce food. There was far less state interference with the peasants in New Poland than with farmers in England, where sale of poultry, pigs, eggs or dairy produce without government permission was and still is unthinkable. Maximum prices for produce were fixed and as there were no restrictions, there was, of course, no black market.

In 1945, the first Poles started moving into Wroclaw in lumbering peasant carts. They came from east of the Curzon Line and from Central Poland into the shattered and still smoking ruins, with wrecked tanks and charred bodies lying in the streets. All the public utilities, gas, electricity, water supply, sewerage and tram services were 90 per cent destroyed. By 1947 they had all been restored to 70 per cent of prewar efficiency. Theatre, opera, a university with six faculties and an excellent philharmonic orchestra had been established. Town planners, architects and builders were hard at work repairing the damaged buildings and planning a new, more beautiful city for the future. Their first target was to repair about half the damaged buildings to accommodate 250,000 people, and they were well within sight of accomplishing that. The areas which could not be repaired would be pulled down and turned into parks and gardens.

When the battle for Breslau was over, the last shell fired and the last defender dead or captured, the greatest rolling-stock factory in Europe, the Linke-Hoffman works, lay a heap of smouldering, blackened rubble, melted glass and twisted machinery. German experts said it was impossible to rebuild the giant plant, which had once employed 20,000 workers. Not one wall remained standing, not one machine intact. All the equipment, from overhead rolling cranes to delicate lathes, were reduced to scrap metal. Breslau became Wroclaw. Polish engineers pored over the remnants of machines, builders tested the foundations, workers scratched around in the rubble looking

for material that could be salvaged. It was decided to rebuild.

Workers were just leaving the plant the day I arrived. It was April 30, and by mid-afternoon work had stopped to give the workers a chance to prepare for May Day celebrations. Normally they worked three shifts throughout the 24 hours. Some of them turned back, to show me the plant, when they knew I was a stranger with little time to spend in Wroclaw. There was a tender pride as they showed me what had been done, how this machine had been repaired; that workshop built in record time. Every hour, for twenty-four hours a day — except on a workers' holiday like May Day — they assured me, a new 20-ton railway truck rolled out of the doors of the finishing shed. Every twenty-four hours round the clock, eighteen locomotive tenders were completed. Almost half the original buildings had been rebuilt, in brick with glass roofs to give maximum lighting. There were 5,000 workers employed again, many of them unskilled when they arrived. They received specialized training at a technical institute attached to the plant.

The workers lived together in a colony of cottages for which they paid no rent. For their community, they had their own restaurants, cinema, shops and schools for their children. Factory canteens provided them with one hot and substantial meal, free each day. Needless to say, the Linke-Hoffman works had become the property of the Polish state. Their rapid reconstruction represents one more monument to the boundless energy and enthusiasm of the Polish people, building with their bare hands a new state.

"Tell the Americans," said one of the workers who had escorted me round the plant, "that we haven't sweated to rebuild this for the Germans."

I left Wroclaw in the middle of its May Day celebrations. There were no fascists, as in Trieste the previous year, packing the footpaths to jeer, spit and throw stones at the parading

workers and peasants. There were, in fact, very few people on the sidewalks. Most of them were marching with their unions or behind their party banners. The whole city was given over to genuine and justified rejoicing for the substantial and visible fruits of the past year's work. Peasants in national costume poured in from the surrounding villages on foot and in farm-carts covered with flowers and greenery. Slogans demanded that the new territories remain Polish. Secretary Byrnes' speech at Stuttgart in December 1946, hinting that America would support German claims to recover the ceded territories, was still fresh in people's minds. That speech lost America more friends in Poland overnight than any other single action by America since the war. 1,300,000 Poles had settled in Lower Silesia alone, 800,000 of them on the land. Wroclaw is the capital of Lower Silesia which would have been the first region to suffer if any new frontier changes were made in Germany's favour. The Poles were not rebuilding the villages and cities, tilling the land and creating new industries, to hand back to the Germans. They had taken root and would defend their homes against all comers. Secretary Byrnes made many friends for the Soviet Union by his Stuttgart speech, as every Pole knew the Soviet Union was the only great power he could trust resolutely to oppose any new frontier changes.

It was with real regret that I drove away from Wroclaw, with its gay flags, waving banners and swarming streets. Not even the sombre ruins which normally overshadowed everything could take away from the vitality of this city of workers and peasants. Perhaps it was partly due to the fact that the whole population was made up of newcomers, all of whom had suffered much, all of whom were taking part in the work of reconstruction, that the city breathed a friendly community spirit. The direct contact between the workers and peasants in the street markets — with no middlemen cheating both sides — also symbolized the

new worker-peasant state and created a warm, close-to-earth atmosphere that placed Polish Wroclaw in another world from German Breslau.

My route lay to the south, to Dziedzoniow near the Czech border, where the largest concentration of Jews in Poland is now settled. Every village and town through which I passed was celebrating May Day. Village squares were crammed with peasants listening to May Day speeches or watching the younger folk dancing.

Of Poland's 3,000,000 Jews, only 180,000 survived Hitler's gas chambers. That is for every 17 Jews in Poland, 16 were murdered by the nazis. Thirteen thousand of the survivors now live in the Dziedzoniow region, about half in the town itself (formerly Reichenbach), the rest on farms in the surrounding villages. It is the first time in modern Polish history that Jews have been able to settle on the land.

In Dziedzoniow, the May Day procession was in full swing, with Jewish textile workers marching alongside other trade unionists, Jewish intellectuals mixed up in the groups from the various political parties. Most of the 13,000 Jews in the area had been freed from a large concentration camp at Dziedzoniow. In almost every case, they were sole survivors of their family. They had nowhere to go, no relatives left in the world. Jobs and land were offered, so they settled where they were. For some time Dziedzoniow had also been a sort of clearing station for Jews passing along the "underground" route: to Palestine via Czechoslovakia and Germany. It is conveniently situated in a corner where three frontiers meet. Some of those seeking to leave the country changed their minds and settled with the concentration camp survivors.

The Jews were given land on the same basis as everybody else, 17 to 35 acres according to the quality of the land — and size of family in the rare cases that they had families. In theory

each unit got one cow, one horse, a couple of pigs and light farm implements. In practice, many of them went short of animals because there were simply not enough to go round. I visited the village of Pietrowice, where 48 Jewish families had taken up farming, to see how things were working out. The leader of the community, Igor Horowitz, was an energetic little man, realistic about the difficulties, but full of optimism. He was the sole survivor of a large family, destroyed in the gas chambers.

Horowitz and his friends had just returned from a neighbouring village with which they had pooled forces to stage a May Day parade.

"Of course we have our difficulties," he said, "getting our people to settle down on farms. First of all we had a hard fight against those who see no future in Europe and only wanted to go to Palestine. In every village, and ours is no exception, there is one faction that believes in pushing on to Palestine and another believes our job is to settle down and help our other comrades build a new life together in our own country, Poland. In the beginning the first faction was stronger, but now that people see how the government helps us and that our non-Jewish neighbours who are also newcomers respect and help us, the second faction has become the stronger.

"Most of us," he continued, "now believe in a socialist solution to the problem of world Jewry. We support the Palestine Jews in their fight for independence, but we do not support Zionism as such. We believe Jews should settle down and take part in all phases of life in whatever country they happen to be in."

With great pride, Horowitz and his neighbours showed me their beautifully tilled fields, good-looking crops of rye and wheat, luxuriant vegetable patches which were keeping the village supplied with greenstuffs, spotless stables and dairies. His big surprise was kept till the last. "I'll bet you never expected

to find Jews raising pigs!" he said, and laughed. "Some of our more orthodox compatriots would be shocked, but after all we are known as good business people. A cow gives one calf a year, a sheep occasionally twin lambs, but from a pig in one year we can have two litters with anything up to a dozen piglets each time." In a cooperative piggery dozens of grunting white sows were being pestered by hundreds of pink, hairless little pigs which within three months would be transformed into famous Polish hams or export bacon for the British breakfast table.

"The best tribute to our success here," Horowitz said, after I had admired the pigs and their owners' break with tradition, "is that believe it or not, Jews are beginning to come back to Poland just because of our experiments with life on the land. A couple of young chaps that came here to learn something about farming before continuing on to Palestine also decided to stay. The government has just allotted us another 37,000 acres of land in this district for families who left Poland after the war for Germany and Czechoslovakia to wait their turn to continue to Palestine. Now they are coming back home. If they are willing, we will make good farmers of them in no time."

Every settler but one in Pietrowice had been in concentration camps. The exception was a brawny little man, whose chest was covered with medals, earned fighting throughout the war with the Soviet Army. He was one who had come to learn and decided to stay.

According to Horowitz, there was not the slightest feeling of anti-Semitism in the district. "We are all newcomers who have suffered and started off life together," he said, "Jews are in a minority here, but there have been no difficulties or incidents. We sit together on the village council, we work together to improve village life. There are no questions at all where a religious or racial issue could arise. Our children go to the same schools. We all have the same interests and the same problems. And

if there were any signs of discrimination against us on racial grounds, we would have the law on our side, just as they would have the law on their side if the reverse were the case.

"Many of our people were disillusioned when a pogrom was carried out last year at Kielce. But the government quickly tracked down those responsible and executed the ringleaders. This showed our people that the constitution which granted equal rights to all people regardless of race or religion was not just a lot of empty phrases. All in all, we reckon we've found the right way out for Jewry in all countries. The workers and peasants and progressive intellectuals, share their fights and problems, work for the progress of all the people."

One could have no quarrel with Mr. Horowitz on that score, except that all countries were not yet people's democracies, and all countries did not have written into their constitutions specific guarantees providing legal sanctions against anyone discriminating against his fellows for racial or religious reasons. Indeed, in the Western world, it would be regarded as an infringement of liberty if the press were to be restricted from its periodic function of whipping up racial prejudices.

The visit to Pietrowice was the last item on my spring tour of Western Poland. With my car packed with gifts of eggs, hams and cherry vodka from the hospitable new settlers, I had to turn back to my base at Berlin. At Slubice on the Odra, I drank my last cherry vodka with two forestry workers who had both fought with the Anders Army and had returned from England. They were old comrades, had worked in the forests together for 20 years and fought in the war together. Why had they come back from England?

"We were both in a camp in England," said Boreslaw, "and both miserable. We wanted to come home, but everybody said we should be arrested by the communists and sent to Siberia. Then one of our friends had a letter from his brother who had

gone home from Belgium. He had been a miner. He said it was all lies and that life was good. We talked it over and agreed we had no future in England. We couldn't even talk to anybody and we liked Poland. Frantisek said he would go home and see what things were like and would write to me." And Frantisek took up the narrative to say he had been interrogated at first to make sure he hadn't fought with the Germans, and then he was given a good job in the forests.

"So I wrote to Boreslaw and when he came, I got him a job alongside me just like in the old days."

They insisted on paying for my several drinks, as I was the guest of the country and begged me to publish in the papers that "it's all lies about Siberia and the rest," so that some more of their comrades would come home.

A footnote to my Polish trip is that I travelled where and when I liked, stayed at hotels without prior warning, just by presenting my passport when I arrived. I travelled with fewer formalities than in many countries in Western Europe. There were no difficulties with car travel, my English Royal Automobile Club carnet was honoured, there was no rationing of petrol, which was freely available in every town. Apart from passport and visa being checked at the frontier, my papers were never looked at.

It was to be the expulsion of Tito from the Cominform more than a year later which gave me my next excuse for a visit to the people's democracies.

CHAPTER TWO
BACKGROUND TO TITOISM

I landed in Belgrade on July 3, 1948, five days after the Cominform resolution. Physically, the city had changed much in two years. On the way in from the airport, the gigantic new administrative buildings of New Belgrade were slowly beginning to rise out of the sandbeds of the Danube. In Belgrade itself tramlines and the avenues of trees which made a three-lane street of the main Red Army Boulevard had been pulled up. There was now a wide thoroughfare, along which skimmed bright new red Fiat buses, received as reparations from Italy. Shops had even less in them than in 1946, when UNRRA goods made a brave showing. People in the streets looked a little more hollow-cheeked and the tempo of life and work had definitely slowed down. The city was gay with enormous red stars, illuminated at night on all the main streets and public buildings. Belgrade was preparing for the first postwar Congress of the Communist Party. Enormous portraits of Stalin and Tito, side by side, still dominated everything else in the city.

The text of the Cominform resolution was too vague and general for the mass of the population and ordinary Communist Party members to understand what had happened. Nobody knew what had actually happened except Tito and a few other leaders. There had been no discussion about it in Party circles, although as became apparent a few weeks later, the quarrel had been looming for months past. Within a few hours of my arrival I visited an old friend whom I had known from the days when he was in exile. He was a communist of long standing. He reflected the views held at that time by most communists and indeed by most Yugoslavs:

"It's a misunderstanding," he said, "which will quickly be cleared up. You mustn't be misled by the tough language. Com-

munists are used to the most brutal criticism from their closest colleagues, but this does not affect their personal relations. After all, it is only the Cominform that has done this, not the Soviet Union. We still have the closest relations with the Soviet Union. We regard it as the Communist Fatherland and Stalin as our leader. You will see, everything will be cleared up at our Party Congress."

He was very far from the mark, but could not know any better. The background to Tito's expulsion, which went back at least as far as 1942, was carefully concealed from everybody but the party leaders. Part of the background came out a few weeks later in Belgrade with the distribution of a pamphlet, which Tito's police promptly seized, giving the text of letters sent to Tito from Moscow from 1945 onwards. Part was revealed only in March 1950, when Moše Pijade, trying to discredit Soviet aid to Yugoslavia during the war, released the exchange of telegrams between Tito and the Soviet High Command in 1942-43.

In June 1948, however, not five persons in a hundred in Yugoslavia believed the Cominform resolution represented anything more than a tiff between lovers. Racially and politically the Yugoslavs looked to the Soviet Union as a good Muslim looks to Mecca. For me, there was time only for a few furtive meetings with acquaintances who were more puzzled than hurt by the dramatic turn of events, and then I had to leave the country. I had arrived with a transit visa only. The Yugoslavs did not want any foreign correspondents in Belgrade during the Party Congress, so I had to continue to Sofia, with the promise of a return visa in time to attend the Danube Conference, due to start in Belgrade on June 30. The newspapers were carrying remarkably uniform telegrams from all parts of the country assuring Tito of undying support from Party and People's Front organizations.

As I passed the Yugoslav-Bulgarian frontier station of

Caribrod, I noticed a huge central portrait of Tito, flanked by small photos of Stalin and Dimitrov.

The telegrams exchanged between Tito and Moscow in 1942-43 throw an entirely new light on the development of the quarrel. It is certain that Moše Pijade, member of the Yugoslav Politburo, and one of Tito's ablest apologists, intended only to support Tito's case by releasing the text of these messages before the elections in March 1950.

In effect they show that Tito became disenchanted with the Soviet Union in 1942 when Stalin was not able to meet impossible demands Tito was making. They show that Tito had no grasp of the overall political situation in the war against Italian and German Fascism. They support the Cominform case that Tito began to take an anti-Soviet line at that time because he was forced to rely on Western rather than Soviet military support in the early stages of the partisan war. From that it is not difficult to follow the further developments in the split as revealed by the exchange of letters between Stalin and Molotov on the one hand and Tito-Kardelj on the other, and the final breakaway by Tito in attempting to form a great rival bloc to the Soviet Union as indicated in the trials of Laszlo Rajk and Traicho Kostov. But first one must go back a little in time.

In 1940, when Hitler began to put pressure on the Balkans and seemed about to send his panzers in the direction of Yugoslavia, the Soviet Union ostentatiously concluded a pact with King Peter's government, and by a series of declarations let it be known that the Soviet Union regarded the Yugoslavs as brother Slavs, for whom she had the friendliest, fraternal feelings.

This pact remained in force after the nazis invaded Yugoslavia, the Yugoslavs resisted and an exile government under King Peter was set up in London.

The pact was still in force when the Soviet Union was attacked. The Soviet Union fought the war on the basis of its al-

liance with two other world powers, England and the United States. Stalin, Churchill and Roosevelt were pledged to fight together to destroy German, Italian and Japanese fascism. Doctrinaire questions of proletarian revolution in this country or that had to be put on ice until the chief aims of the great alliance were achieved and the forces of aggression were crushed. Political questions could be settled later. By Tito's messages to Moscow in 1942, it is clear he never grasped this point. The Soviet Union was fighting a life and death struggle, the outcome of which would also settle the fate of Yugoslavia regardless of what Tito and his partisans could do. This is an indisputable fact and to state it is not to belittle in any way the heroic struggle waged by partisans in Yugoslavia and in Bulgaria or by the Maquis in France. It is against this background of a three-power military alliance to defeat fascist aggression, that one must view the following exchange of messages. And it must be remembered that the Soviet Union still had an alliance with King Peter's Yugoslav government, then operating in exile in England, with a Minister in the Soviet Union and with an army fighting in Yugoslavia.

During February and March 1942, Tito sent many messages to Moscow, stating that a partisan movement had been started and asking for supplies to be dropped at a certain airfield in east Yugoslavia. Pijade complains that instead of help, Tito received a rather cool message from Moscow, which mentioned nothing about help but reproached Tito for splitting the national resistance movement. "In looking over your information," the message from Moscow stated, "an impression is obtained that followers of the English and Yugoslav governments with some justification suspect that your partisan movement is taking on a communist character and is directed toward the Sovietisation of Yugoslavia. For example, why was it necessary for you to form a special proletarian brigade? The basic and immediate

aim now is to unite all the anti-Hitler elements, to smash the occupier and to gain national liberation... Are there no other Yugoslav patriots aside from communists and their sympathisers with whom you can unite to fight the enemy? It is difficult to accept the charge that London and the Yugoslav governments are siding with the occupation forces. There must be some big misunderstanding. We request that you seriously consider your entire tactics and see whether you have done everything possible to create a united front of all the enemies of Hitler and Mussolini."

Pijade (and one must remember that all these messages were revealed by him in *Borba*, the official organ of the Yugoslav Communist Party, in mid-March 1950, a few days before the Yugoslav elections in an effort to prove that the Soviet Union cold-shouldered Tito during the first years of his struggle) said that on receipt of this telegram Tito wrote to him that "Grandfather (Stalin) seemed to bank a great deal on the alliance with England and America." Tito told Pijade that Moscow had requested him to change the wording of a proclamation he had prepared. The changes suggested by Moscow were (a) In the beginning of the second paragraph eliminate the lines "which were cooperatived by the Communist Party"; (b) add to the fourth paragraph "Hitler will not withstand the powerful coalition of America, England and the USSR, around which all the freedom-loving nations are gathering"; (c) Change the end of the last paragraph in this way, "The victory of the heroic Red Army is a victory of all people of Europe but we too must fight to help the just cause of the USSR, England and America and by this to accelerate our own liberation"; (d) Eliminate the slogans, "Long live the uprising of all the enslaved peoples of Europe against the occupier," "Long live the heroic Red Army," "Long live Comrade Stalin" and "Long live the Soviet Union."

In another message Moscow put its finger on the weak

point in Tito's position when they told him, in March 1942, "Do not consider the struggle only from your own national point of view, but from the international point of view, from the Anglo-Soviet-American coalition. Stop the pro-communist and exclusively pro-Soviet line. Remember you are part of a world anti-nazi front."

The Soviet Union had no intention of weakening the grand alliance by intriguing behind England and America's back to foster a revolution in Yugoslavia against a government with which both England and the Soviet Union had diplomatic relations.

Throughout the spring of 1942, Tito kept pleading for weapons from Moscow at a time when the Germans were battering at the gates of Moscow and Leningrad and were overrunning a large part of European Russia. On March 29, Moscow made it clear that Tito could expect no help in the immediate future,

"Every effort is being made to help you but there are huge technical difficulties. Unfortunately do not count on them being overcome in the near future. Please bear this in mind. Try and capture weapons from the enemy and use sparingly those that you have." But Tito kept sending off desperate appeals every few days, although he well knew the only way to send help was by air, the nearest Soviet aerodrome was 1,200 miles away, the whole flight would be over German-occupied territory; every plane, rifle and bullet was needed for the enormous battles raging in the Soviet Union. On April 23, Moscow sent another reply:

"As we have already told you, you cannot count on getting munitions and weapons in the near future. The main reason is the impossibility to ship them. Exploit all existing possibilities to supply yourself on the spot... as regarding unmasking the activity of the Chetniks. This is necessary but at present it would

be better policy to do this by a general appeal to the Yugoslav government to unite all elements."

Less than a month later, however, Tito sent another appeal with apparently scant grasp of the critical situation in the Soviet Union itself, and no conception that the size of operations there made his own activities look like village brawls. On May 24, he reported: "The situation is critical; the soldiers are worn out, there is no ammunition." Six days later: "The Italians were repelled with great losses. 60 Italians and 25 Chetniks were killed." The Soviet High Command did not use the word great unless 10 or 12 enemy divisions had been wiped out, so it was hardly to be wondered if they did not take Tito's messages very seriously.

Tito kept sending messages for help and also requests for Moscow to denounce the Chetnik leader Mihailović, and the London government which supported him, but Moscow was not prepared to do this unless it had absolute proof that Mihailović was, in fact, a traitor collaborating with the Germans. Denouncing Mihailović meant breaking agreements with the Anglo-American allies unless the latter, too, could be convinced by watertight proofs, that the Chetniks had gone over to the other side. Tito received a message in September 1942, as follows: "Urgently inform us of a summary of the documents you have on the role of Mihailović. Confirm the authenticity of these documents. It can be that the Germans are greatly interested in inspiring the struggle between Partisans and Chetniks. It is possible that they have forged certain of these documents."

Pijade finds it monstrous that the Russians were suspicious of their reports about Mihailović and he accuses the Russians of perfidy because, in November 1942, they were negotiating to send observers to Mihailović's headquarters. This seemed the logical thing for the Russians to do. They would have been in the best position to check whether the Chetniks were fighting

with the Germans and if so, to express them without upsetting their agreements with the Allies. The Soviet request incidentally was turned down. Pijade again unwittingly pays tribute to the absolute correctness of the Soviet attitude vis-a-vis her British and American Allies, when he quotes from an exchange of telegrams between the Yugoslav governments in London and their Ambassador, Simić, in Moscow, in December 1942. The exchange was in reference to the Soviet request to send a mission to Mihailović.

King Peter's Foreign Minister in London sent a message to the military attaché in Moscow: "There can be no talk of any cooperation until the campaign against General Mihailović is stopped. This is a prerequisite for further work. All efforts of the Ambassador and the military attaché should be directed towards these aims."

Ambassador Simić replied: "Please keep me informed about the campaign against General Mihailović. Here in Russia it is not possible to hear or read anything against him. If there is a campaign against him in foreign papers, it is not mentioned here... the only thing noticeable here is that his name is not mentioned either in the press or on the radio." Until an official line on Mihailović had been agreed by the three Allies, the Russians were not taking sides on the issue which Tito wanted to pose at the most critical time in the war. When the Russians were fighting for every room of every house at Stalingrad, Tito was fighting to transform the war into one in which the Soviet Union and Tito's partisans would be lined up against King Peter, Mihailović and the Anglo-Americans. And Tito must have been a political illiterate if he did not see that.

Within two months the mercurial Tito had changed his attitude from the depths of despair with not enough bullets for his rifles or bread to eat, to the heights of optimism, with well-armed divisions and talk of setting up a government. Moscow

had to restrain his ebullience again.

On September 8, 1942, Tito had sent another desperate plea for help. On November 12, however, he notified Moscow that: "We have already cooperatived 8 divisions of 3 brigades each in the territory of Bosnia, Croatia and Dalmatia... All these divisions are well-armed, even including artillery. These arms were taken in battle... We will now cooperative something in the way of a government..." Moscow advised caution, a few days later, according to Pijade. After approving the idea of a committee of liberation, the message said, "Do not consider that committee as a government but as a political body of the national liberation struggle... Do not oppose the Yugoslav government in London at this stage, do not raise the question of the removal of the monarchy. Do not put to the people the question of the regime in Yugoslavia. It will be solved after the destruction of the Italo-German coalition."

Two months after Tito's high optimism, he was again in black despair. At the end of January 1943, there was a sharper note in his pleas. "I must again ask you," he radioed, "is it really impossible to let us have any kind of help. Hundreds of thousands of refugees are threatened with hunger and death... Do everything you can to help us." Moscow, with the decisive battle for Stalingrad still raging, replied: "You must not doubt for a moment that we would help if there existed the least possibility to send you material help... We have personally with Joseph Vissarionovich (Stalin) examined the means whereby we might offer you help. Unfortunately up till now there has been no way to successfully overcome the insurmountable difficulties... As soon as there is a possibility we will send you all that is most essential. Can you really doubt that? Please grasp correctly the existing situation and explain it to the comrade fighters. Do not grieve but exert all your strength..."

This was an honest and sincere appraisal of the situation

which Tito must have realized if he could read maps and understand the radio, but two weeks later he sent another even more imperative plea for help. On March 4, he asked, and again on June 12... "We are now eating horses without bread... The enemy is making his last effort to destroy us, but he will not succeed. We ask your support in this most difficult trial."

The Russians were not able to send assistance until early in 1944 when their mission arrived at Tito's headquarters.

Pijade concluded his long account by a grudging admission of Soviet help in liberating Belgrade, Banat and Bačka. "But," he added, "this was unavoidable for the Red Army because without it they would not have been able to continue to take Budapest and Vienna." To which Marshal Stalin might well retort, "Without Tito, we would still have been able to take Belgrade, Budapest and Vienna."

Emerging from this exchange of messages are three interesting points: (1) Moscow believed that Tito's policy was incorrect in that he weakened the resistance movement by trying to carry out a revolution and fight a war at the same time. Support by Moscow of such a policy would have weakened the Three-Power Alliance; (2) Moscow was wearied with repeated pleas for help after she had plainly stated that with the best will in the world such help was impossible to deliver; (3) Tito became more and more disgruntled with the Soviet Union as help did not arrive and as he saw that Moscow did not have a high opinion of his political judgement.

What happened in the first years after the end of the war is a smooth continuation of what transpired during the war, with Tito making impossible demands on the Russians and being rebuffed more and more coldly each time.

There was a flutter of excitement among correspondents gathered in Belgrade for the Danube Conference, one sultry Saturday afternoon, when it became known that Tito's police

were scouring Belgrade, trying to collect pamphlets which had suddenly and mysteriously appeared all over the city. They had been printed by the *Pravda* publishing house in Moscow and contained copies of letters sent by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union to the CC of the Yugoslav Communist Party. One copy which had been left in the French reading room in Belgrade soon found its way into the hands of correspondents.

These letters gave the first indication up to that time that the quarrel dated back further than the Cominform resolution, and they destroyed the illusions of my Yugoslav acquaintances who thought the rift was a "lovers' tiff." The contents of the letters, at least their trend, should have been known to Party members months previously. If they had been perhaps Tito would have been forced to take up a different position as regards the Cominform. It seems very likely that Moscow had deep suspicions about Tito as a result of his attitude during the war and that the Cominform headquarters was set up in Tito's capital for the same reason that Moscow had earlier suggested setting up a mission with Mihailović — to have trained observers on the spot to watch a suspiciously confused situation.

One of the most interesting references was to Trieste where Tito tried to embroil the Soviet Union in a similar affair to that of breaking with Britain and America in 1943 over King Peter's government. The letters reminded Tito of a speech he had made in Ljubljana in 1945, in which he said, "It is said that this was a just war and we have so regarded it, but we demand also a just conclusion. We demand that everyone shall be master in his own house. We don't want to pay other people's accounts, we don't want to be mixed up in any spheres of interest." Tito was referring to Trieste and had been bringing his heaviest guns to bear on the Soviet Union to secure Trieste for Yugoslavia.

"This was said in connection with Trieste," said the letter

from the CPSU (Communist Party of the Soviet Union), "after a series of territorial concessions for the benefit of Yugoslavia had been extracted by the Soviet Union from the Anglo-Americans. The latter along with the French rejected the proposal of the USSR to hand over Trieste to Yugoslavia, and they occupied it with their own forces from Italy. When all other means had been exhausted the Soviet Union was left with only one means of effecting the transfer of Trieste to Yugoslavia — that of starting a war with the Anglo-Americans over Trieste, to take it by force. The Yugoslav comrades could not fail to realize that after such a serious struggle the USSR could not enter a new war. It was this circumstance which evoked the dissatisfaction of the Yugoslav leaders and Tito's statement above was directed not only against the imperialist powers but also against the Soviet Union:

"The Soviet government was obliged to draw the attention of the Yugoslav government to Tito's statement. The Soviet Ambassador in Belgrade received instructions from the Soviet government to make the following statement to the Yugoslav government, which he did on June 3, 1945. 'We regard Comrade Tito's speech as an unfriendly attack on the Soviet Union. Tell Comrade Tito if he should again permit such an attack on the Soviet Union we shall be forced to reply with open criticism in the press and to disavow him.'" As early as June 1945, before the war ended!

The Soviet Union continued to support Tito on the question of Trieste by every possible diplomatic means and at the United Nations, but Moscow objected to being called in to support an armed adventure by Tito to seize the city. And that is what he wanted to do.

The first of the series of letters published was dated March 27, 1948, and referred to a Yugoslav request to reduce the numbers of the Soviet Military Mission to Yugoslavia by sixty per

cent. The letter from the CPSU to Tito and the CPY (Communist Party of Yugoslavia) reminded Tito that the Soviet had sent its mission only at the invitation of the Yugoslav government and had sent far fewer officers than had been requested. The four reasons given by the Yugoslavs for reducing the mission were: (a) Soviet advisers were too expensive; (b) The Yugoslav Army did not need the experience of the Soviet Army; (c) the regulations of the Soviet Army were stereotyped and of no benefit to the Yugoslav Army; (d) Soviet advisers were being paid for nothing since they were of no use.

The letter pointed out that in such circumstances, the Soviet Army was discredited and a situation had been created in which it would be impossible to leave Soviet military advisers in Yugoslavia. Accordingly the whole mission was withdrawn. Đilas, Tito's propaganda chief, at a meeting of the Central Committee had also made disparaging remarks about Soviet officers as compared to British officers.

In a letter dated April 13, the CPSU had some acid remarks to make about Tito's modest claims to have developed a new type of warfare which made unnecessary military advice from the Soviet Union. "The Yugoslav leaders even claim they have supplemented Marxist science on war with a new theory according to which war is a mixture of operations by regular troops, partisan detachments and popular uprisings. This so-called theory is as old as the world and is not new to Marxism. The Bolsheviks applied it to our civil war in Russia and on a much greater scale than in Yugoslavia. But the Bolsheviks never claimed to have added anything new to military science because this method had been applied long before the Bolsheviks by Field Marshal Kutuzov against Napoleon's troops in 1812. Even Kutuzov did not claim to be an inventor in this respect since the Spaniards had adopted it in 1808." It was, of course, on the basis of the "new theory" of warfare which Tito had developed

that the Soviet military advisers were regarded as superfluous.

Other letters referred to a hostile attitude towards Soviet representatives by government officials who treated them as representatives of western capitalist states instead of a fraternal communist state; Soviet officials, including Yudin, the Cominform representative, were shadowed by Yugoslav police; in the Yugoslav Ministry of Foreign Affairs there were officials known to the Russians to be Western spies and as they had access to all correspondence that passed between the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia the Russians would no longer conduct open correspondence through the Yugoslav Foreign Office; the Soviet Ambassador was refused information about the work of the Yugoslav Communist Party. Tito and Kardelj had sent a letter to Moscow in April 1948, stating: "We consider that the Soviet Ambassador has no right to demand information about the work of our Party from anybody. That is not his business." The Soviet reply pointed out that the Yugoslavs were identifying the Soviet Ambassador, representing the communist government of the Soviet Union, as an ordinary bourgeois ambassador, and that by doing so they seemed to see no difference between the foreign policy of the Soviet Union and that of the British and Americans.

One of the main complaints of the CPSU was the fact that Tito did not come out into the open with his own criticism, and on the other hand would not accept criticism of himself. "We readily admit," the first letter stated, "that every Communist Party, including the Yugoslav Party, has the right to criticize the CPSU, just as the CPSU has the right to criticize any other Communist Party. But Marxism demands that criticism be aboveboard and not underhand and slanderous... the criticism by the Yugoslav officials is neither open nor honest, but underhand and dishonest and of a hypocritical nature. While they discredit the CPSU behind its back, publicly they praise it

pharisaically to the skies… We are disturbed by the present situation inside the Yugoslav Party… decisions of the Party organs are never published in the press neither are the reports of Party meetings… there is no democracy within the Party… It is characteristic that the Cadres Secretary of the Party (Ranković) is also the Minister of the Interior. In other words party cadres are supervised by the Minister of State Security while, according to Marxism, it is the Party that should control all organs of the State, including the Ministry of the Interior…"

The CPSU pointed out that the French and Italian communist parties had also been submitted to severe criticism by the Cominform and that they had honestly admitted their mistakes and corrected them. "The CPSU believes that the reason for the unwillingness of the Yugoslav leaders to admit their mistakes lies in their unbounded arrogance. The services of the French and Italian communist parties to the revolution are not less than that of the Yugoslav party and if the French and Italian people have so far had less success than the Yugoslav party, that is not to be explained by any special qualities of the CPY, but mainly because, after the destruction of the Yugoslav partisan headquarters at a moment when the partisan headquarters was passing through a serious crisis, the Soviet Army came to the help of the Yugoslav people, crushed the German invader, liberated Belgrade and created the necessary conditions for the CPY to take over power. Unfortunately, the Soviet Army could not render such assistance to the French and Italian parties. If comrades Tito and Kardelj bore this fact in mind, they would be less boastful about their successes and would behave more modestly."

The Russians announced their intentions of raising the whole question of Tito's leadership at the next meeting of the Cominform and circulated to Cominform members some of the correspondence between the CPSU and Tito and Kardelj.

The Yugoslavs refused to attend the conference, which was held in Bucharest with the results that startled the communist world as much as the non-communist world.

The Bolshevik Party had been a long time making up its mind about Comrade "Walter," as Tito was known when he was an émigré in Moscow. He was a relatively unknown and untried communist when he was sent off, in 1934, to one of the least important communist parties in Europe, and one with the worst reputation. The partisans suffered much and fought well under his leadership during the war. Of 12,000 Communist Party members when the war started, only 3,000 survived, and out of these 3,000 Tito created a party half a million strong. Strong numerically but not ideologically, for it is impossible to mass-produce communists. He created, in any case, a Tito party half a million strong, with the best-equipped police force and best-equipped army in Eastern Europe to take care of any trouble. A high proportion of the 3,000 survivors of the prewar Communists are in Ranković's jails today and several thousand of the new recruits as well. Western Embassy estimates in the summer of 1949 were 10 per cent of all communists (50,000) in jails and internment camps. None of them has been tried. The arrest of two communist ministers, Andrija Hebrang, Minister of Light Industry, and Sreten Žujović, Minister of Finance on May 8, 1948, brought the quarrel with Soviet Union to a head: Both were old-time communists who had fought well in the Liberation Movement, both were known to have been critical of Tito's policies for months previously. They have been in jail two years now, but Tito has not dared bring them to trial.

It was in this stunned atmosphere of Belgrade, with communists being arrested every day, propaganda war starting up between Tito and the Cominform countries, and western diplomats seeking good fishing in the muddied waters, that the Danube Conference brought M. Vyshinsky from the Soviet Union,

Anna Pauker from Romania, other important communists from Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria, and top-flight diplomats from England, France and the United States, in day-to-day contact for almost three weeks, as guests of the Yugoslav government. Few conferences have been held under stranger circumstances. Decorations were still in the streets from the Communist Party Congress, which finished a few days before the Danube Conference started. All the visitors were there officially to attend the Conference but most of them were far more interested in the Tito-Cominform split. It was rare enough for Tito to open wide the gates of his capital to foreign visitors, especially to journalists and everybody was determined to make the most of the opportunity. The Danube conference could not have been held at a better time or place.

CHAPTER THREE
TITO'S "NATIONAL COMMUNISM"

The Danube Conference had been called to set up a new Commission to control navigation rights and maintenance of the Danube as an international waterway. When peace treaties were signed with Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria, it was agreed that questions affecting claims, property and everything to do with Danube shipping should be settled at a special conference.

It was a unique affair, not only because it was being held in Belgrade a few weeks after the Cominform resolution, but because it was the first international conference at which the Soviet bloc would have a complete majority. It was the United Nations Assembly in reverse. England, France and America were attending as signatories to the peace treaties. Austria was attending as an observer without voting rights because no peace treaty had yet been signed with her. The Soviet Union was attending in a dual capacity as a signatory to the peace treaties and as a Danubian power. (The Danube flows through the Moldavian Republic, formerly Bessarabia.) The Ukraine, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary and Yugoslavia attended as Danube powers (or riparian states in the language of the conference). The voting strength would be 7 to 3 if the Yugoslavs voted with the Soviet bloc, otherwise 6 to 4.

From beginning to end, M. Vyshinsky dominated the proceedings. Pink and affable, in splendid form despite the stifling heat which reduced most delegates and the correspondents to a state of inertia, Vyshinsky was tireless in debate and just as energetic when listening to others as when speaking himself, making notes, looking up reference books, reaching for files, whispering with his team of advisers. He never missed a point; good humoured and witty he answered with apt quotations the sallies of Sir Charles Peake, who as Ambassador to Belgrade,

headed the British delegation.

On the first day, things began to go wrong for the Western powers, presumably because they had not coordinated their plans beforehand. Sir Charles Peake received western correspondents an hour before the conference was to start and said the British line, as the Western powers were heavily outnumbered, would be to avoid a vote in the early stages. "We would like," Sir Charles said, "to explore the whole field of work, to salvage as much agreement as possible, naturally without giving up any of our rights, but at all costs to avoid early divisions."

After the conference was formally opened by M. Simić, a nonparty former Foreign Minister to Tito, and before that King Peter's Ambassador to Moscow, M. Vyshinsky was on his feet and proposed that the official languages of the conference should be French and Russian. The chief of the U.S. delegation, Mr. Cavendish Cannon, the American Ambassador to Belgrade, jumped up and proposed that English should be added to the official languages. This was supported by Sir Charles, who added somewhat inconsequently that he represented an Empire where English was spoken by hundreds of millions of people. Vyshinsky then made a compromise proposal which should have set the whole tone of the conference, had it been accepted. He suggested that English should be added as a working language, that is a language in which speeches could be made and into which they would all be translated on the floor of the conference, but to save time, English would be dropped as an official language so that the documentation of the conference would only be prepared in French and Russian. This, as Vyshinsky pointed out, would save the translators many hours of work each day.

Contrary to Sir Charles' declaration before the session started, the British and American chose to make their first fight on this issue. Eventually, Vyshinsky reminded them, good-hu-

mouredly, that at the last Danube Conference, in Paris in 1921, "to which the imperialist powers did not invite Russia, although the Russia of the Tsars had always been represented in the past," French was the only language used both as a working and an official language. "I can't believe," Vyshinsky said, smiling across at Sir Charles and Mr. Cannon, "that my Western colleagues understand the French language less well than their predecessors in 1921."

The whole of the first day's proceedings was taken up with the wrangle on languages and at the end the first fatal vote was taken, 7 to 3. The pattern for the conference was set. From then on it boiled down to a struggle between old-fashioned imperialism, with its demands for special rights and privileges and the new democracies, who wanted to manage their own affairs without Western interference.

After the language question was settled, the chief of the French delegation, M. Thierry, head of the International Rhine Commission, announced that his government would not accept any changes which were not based on the 1921 Convention. The latter gave non-Danube powers like Britain and France the right to do what they pleased on the Danube, including the right to send gunboats if they felt their privileges were endangered. Vyshinsky was quickly on his feet to point out that the conference had been called to discuss a new Convention and it would get nowhere by delegates throwing down ultimatums that they would accept a new Convention only if it were the same as the old one.

"We are living in new times," he added, "and new times demand new tunes. But you are still singing the old tunes of imperialism which have no place in the era of the people's democracies."

The members of the Austrian delegation looked as if they had stepped straight out of Emperor Franz-Joseph's ante-rooms.

They were headed by a silvery-haired Count Rosenberg, from the Austrian Foreign Office. The rest were distinguished-looking elderly gentlemen with high white collars, black coats and striped pants. Although it had been agreed beforehand that the Austrians came as observers and without voting rights, Count Rosenberg kept getting up and making speeches to ask that Austria be allowed to vote, claiming that Austria was the most important Danube power, whose dominant position on the Danube had been established for hundreds of years. Eventually, for the only time throughout the conference, Vyshinsky lost his good humour. He turned on Rosenberg and reminded him that the Allied Powers had just finished fighting a long and bloody war against the forces which the Count represented, that the people's democracies had suffered for centuries under Hapsburg domination, and that it would be better if he stuck to the role allotted him for the rest of the Conference. The outraged faces above the high white collars and the dropping monocles as the Austrian delegates exchanged shocked whispers during Vyshinsky's speeches showed that some of the shafts had struck home. Count Rosenberg did not get to his feet again.

After several days of fruitless discussions, Vyshinsky proposed what seemed to the Western delegates to be a novel and monstrous proposal, that the Danube should in future be controlled by Danube states, that a Commission should be set up with its headquarters at Galatz in Romania, comprising one representative from each state through which the Danube flowed. Germany and Austria would be admitted when peace treaties had been signed with those countries. Vyshinsky pointed out that the Soviet Union did not insist on representation on the International Rhine Commission, although the Soviet Union had trade interests in the countries through which the Rhine flowed.

The Soviet Union had not asked for seats on the board con-

trolling the Panama or Suez canals. The Danube would be open to shipping of all countries which would, however, be subject to the local regulations of the country through which the ships passed. No warships of any non-Danube state would be allowed in the river without permission from the Danube Commission. Wags summed up the proposals as “Vyshinsky turns the Danube red.”

In the end after many acrimonious speeches by Mr. Cavendish Cannon and Sir Charles Peake, Vyshinsky’s proposals were adopted and for the first time in their history, the Danube states became the legal masters of their own waterfronts. The Vyshinsky draft was accepted by 7 votes to 1. The Americans voted against, the British and French abstained. All three Western powers insisted on the validity of the 1921 Convention (settled at a conference to which Russia was not invited) and said they would refuse to sign the new Convention.

Until the conference started there was some speculation on the role of Yugoslavs. But Aleš Bebler, the Yugoslav Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, made a point of being first on his feet after Vyshinsky and supporting him in every point. He went so far that at one stage Vyshinsky intervened to tell him that the Soviet Union was quite well able to present its own case and defend its own interests.

The highlight of the conference was a reception and banquet to delegates and foreign correspondents, given by the Yugoslav government. Up till the last moment, nobody knew who would be there. Perhaps Tito! Would Vyshinsky and the heads of the delegations from the people’s democracies accept, or would they send minor delegates? The pamphlet containing the letters from the CPSU to the CPY had been distributed a day or two previously. Yugoslav foreign officials were livid with rage at the time and said the pamphlets must have been brought from Moscow in the plane that brought the Soviet delegates.

The letters were a painful reminder, in the midst of the Eastern European solidarity at the conference and a Belgrade adorned from end to end with portraits of Stalin and Tito, side by side, that the Cominform split was on and that Tito, Ranković, Kardelj and other top Yugoslav leaders had been excommunicated.

During pauses at the conference sessions, the Yugoslav delegation always remained isolated from the busily discussing little groups which formed on the one side from the Western delegations, on the other side from the delegates of the Soviet Union and the people's democracies. In such an atmosphere, it seemed the Yugoslavs were running something of a risk in staging a reception.

It took place at the Yugoslav Officers' Club, on Red Army Boulevard, in the centre of the city. Tito was not there, but Vyshinsky and all the top representatives from East and West delegations were. Dr. Ivan Ribar, the non-party President of the Republic, was the official welcomer. It was a stiflingly hot night. (Throughout the conference the temperature hovered around 100 degrees, with not a breath of air outside and no electric fans indoors.) Those guests who turned up in formal attire were red-faced and perspiring by the time they arrived. Silent waiters padded around with plenty of ice-cold wine, fiery šljivovica and vodka for those who could drink it in the oppressive heat.

Early in the evening, the animated buzz of conversation in a dozen tongues seemed to halt as if at a signal. Waiters with their trays full of drinks, caviar and smoked salmon sandwiches passed by unnoticed. The Western diplomats had gravitated to one of the reception rooms and were slowly circling around a small group, like watchdogs guarding a flock of sheep. Vyshinsky was having an animated conversation with Kardelj, and Ranković was looking on.

The Western diplomats hovered on the edge of the group,

striving to catch every word while pretending to be examining oil paintings on the walls, and motioning furiously for their Russian language experts to get as close as possible. Vyshinsky was talking quickly and earnestly and whatever he was saying it was something that Kardelj did not relish. Kardelj, who is Tito's Foreign Minister, is a little man with a small moustache, and is said to fancy himself as a Yugoslav Molotov, by adopting the same rigidity of manner as Molotov. He was shaken out of his pose by whatever Vyshinsky was saying to him, his face was red and he had an uneasy half-smile on his lips. Vyshinsky is a mild-looking man, with fine white hair and a moustache. He could be a Presbyterian Moderator opening a synod when he addresses a conference. But he had a severe look on his face as he spoke and listened to Kardelj's nervous replies. Ranković, a stocky man with the face of a bully, stood with his hands folded in front of him, shifting from one foot to the other, his head inclined to Vyshinsky as though to catch every word, although it was obvious Vyshinsky had not included him in his conversation. Probably it is the role of a good Minister of the Interior to check on his colleagues, no matter what their rank — and Kardelj is generally rated next to Tito.

The conversation lasted perhaps fifteen minutes. A journalist colleague of mine avers that the French Minister — with a magnificent curling beard — sent off a running commentary to the French Foreign Office, by writing little notes throughout the dialogue and sending them to his Embassy by junior members of his staff among the guests. In the background hovered the Czech Foreign Minister, Clementis, puffing furiously at a smelly pipe, Anna Pauker and Eric Molnar, Hungary's Foreign Minister at that time. Eventually the group broke up and the room became animated again as if the guests were puppets set in motion by clockwork. The diplomats started chatting about the heat, waiters were in great demand again. Ranković and

Kardelj drifted off together. Vyshinsky took the arm of Anna Pauker and guided her out to the garden where tables laden with caviar, cold roast duck, fish in aspic, cold joints of pork and beef and dozens of varieties of salads and other delicacies, were set out under the trees. Anna Pauker, by the way, is a much more attractive personality, seen socially, than one would judge by the stern photos one usually sees and by the idiotic tales about her, currently in the Western press. With a shock of grey bobbed hair which persistently falls over her forehead, she has a strong, intelligent face, wide-set steady eyes and a very warm smile. She looks like a woman who has suffered much and who would be prepared to suffer much for her convictions. She had served eight of a ten years' sentence in Romanian jails when the Russians managed to get her released in an exchange of prisoners in 1941.

At the banqueting tables, the Yugoslavs had so arranged things that Eastern and Western delegates were rigorously separated. This was a great disappointment to the Western diplomats who had hoped to pick up all sorts of fascinating titbits of the Cominform-Tito quarrel when sufficient wine and šljivovica had flowed to loosen tongues. Sir Charles Peake indeed wandered into the wrong compound and was promptly returned to his own domain where he had to be content with comparing notes with his colleagues on the Vyshinsky-Kardelj dialogue.

A few days after the banquet, the Yugoslavs circulated to a few party members their replies to the letters from the CPSU, also in pamphlet form. They, however, added nothing new to what had already been said. They were written in a hurt and offended tone and were chiefly denials of the Soviet charges. Without citing new facts, the letters, mostly signed by Tito and Kardelj, maintained that the Soviet Union was misinformed about the position in Yugoslavia. They rejected suggestions that there was anything to criticize in the CPY and stated that their

case was prejudged by Cominform members, hence there was no point in their trying to defend themselves and they would not attend the Bucharest meeting.

The text of the letters was not important. The fact that they had been distributed indicated that Vyshinsky had not presented Kardelj with an olive branch at the banquet, and if any olive branch had been proffered by Kardelj, it had been rejected by Vyshinsky.

It was not easy to find out what was going on in Yugoslavia. If the Russians complained that they were unable to obtain information, one can imagine what chance a Western journalist had of keeping track of developments. It seems more than probable indeed that Tito himself was so occupied with plans for a Greater Yugoslavia, in the first years after the war, that he himself did not know what was going on in his own front garden. An outsider could at best gather impressions which occasionally helped to interpret known facts. In my own case, I visited the country over a period of three and a half years. Once in 1946, twice in 1948, and four times in 1949, including a return motor journey from Subotica on the Hungarian border, right through the country to Caribrod, on the borders of Bulgaria.

Yugoslavia was the most difficult of the people's democracies for a journalist to work in, with the exception of Romania, which has rarely opened its doors at all to Western journalists. Until the summer of 1949, when Tito's need for Western aid became acute and journalists were welcomed to the country, correspondents in Belgrade lived in a sort of "purdah." It was almost impossible to move out of the capital, official contact was limited to one press officer at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

As I usually visited Yugoslavia on my way to and from Hungary and Bulgaria, it was possible to make some comparisons with those countries from personal observations.

The greatest change of atmosphere in Belgrade itself was

between the summer of 1948 and the summer of 1949. The warmth and vital enthusiasm which had attracted me so strongly in 1946 had given way to a puzzled diffidence in 1948. Work had slowed down, people were no longer sure whether they were going. But in 1949, diffidence had been replaced by a bitterness among the workers. Their cheeks were hollower than ever, food prices were still rising, rations were sinking and morale was low. The four years of enormously hard work had yielded the workers nothing but admonitions to tighten their belts, work still harder, produce more for export. They were getting nothing back. There were still the outward trappings of enthusiasm, plenty of red stars in the streets, slogans on bright red banners. But there was no enthusiasm among the brigadiers marching out to mix more concrete for the totally unnecessary prestige project of a new administrative capital at New Belgrade, or for those leaving to work on the Belgrade-Zagreb autostrada. Over the years since 1946 real rations had not increased, food prices on the free market spiralled steadily upwards and it was difficult to live without buying on the free market.

In Bulgaria, Hungary and Poland, the opposite was the case. Food rations were steadily increased (in Poland and Hungary ration cards were abolished altogether). Prices spiralled steadily downwards, workers' cheeks gradually filled out. And this difference could not be explained by economic sanctions by the Cominform countries against Tito, as he did not import any food from the Cominform area.

Tito had in fact developed and applied his own theories of Marxism in Yugoslavia and in the early days, instead of basing his strength on the industrial workers, he tried to favour the peasants by exploiting the workers. Tito kept his peasants happy at the expense of his workers, whereas in the other people's democracies, the leaders had adhered to the strict policy of a worker-peasant alliance in which the industrial worker, as the more

advanced politically must play the leading role — and whose needs must be satisfied even at the expense of the peasants.

The linked-price system introduced by Tito was one of the means by which the peasants were favoured at the cost of the workers. It was a means of encouraging the peasants to sell their produce to the state at a fixed price and coupons with which they could buy consumer goods at very low prices. The number of coupons they could acquire was limited in effect only by the amount of produce they sold. Rich peasants were in theory excluded from this system but they received their coupons from the smaller peasants by allowing the latter to market a proportion of their produce. There was no similar privilege for the industrial worker from whom superhuman efforts were required if the Five-Year-Plan were to be fulfilled.

The peasant was able to eat well of his own produce; to buy up the fruits of the worker's labour not only in the form of farm implements but also shoes, textiles and general consumer goods; to sell his surplus products at uncontrolled famine prices on the free market. The worker could not buy the products of his own labour; could not pay the famine prices for food on the free market but he sold his labour for inflated currency and a ration card on which even the meagre rations inscribed were often not available.

The workers were carried along by their elan for the first year or two but this gradually disappeared as they saw their families getting thinner and the peasants getting fatter as they saw the Belgrade and Zagreb shops crammed with middle and wealthy peasants buying up everything available in consumers' goods. And even with the formation of the cooperatives, the system did not change; the peasants were still a greatly favoured class compared with the industrial workers. In the spring and summer of 1949, food prices started rocketing up again. The government had made a serious miscalculation and shipped

thousands of tons of lard to Austria and Italy. (Later Tito had to import fats from America.) There was a serious shortage of fats, meat and sugar in Belgrade. Prices in restaurants doubled in two months, and jumped thirty per cent in one night.

In June 1949, I visited a cooperative farm at Kraljevičevo, only 25 miles from Belgrade. It was an example of the impetuosity of the Yugoslav leadership and partly explained the food shortage in Belgrade. It was, I was assured, a show cooperative, one of the "highest" categories, in which boundary stones had been pulled out, the peasants had completely pooled their land and were paid according to the number of days they worked, according to the fulfillment of their norms. The cooperative farmers were newcomers, former labourers from all parts of the country. They had replaced German settlers who had been expelled from the area. The soil was good, the farmers prosperous. I was shown the beginnings of new buildings which would have the new communal dairies, barns and machine shops. A striking thing was that the farm had practically no machinery, not even a tractor. (Yugoslavia's 6,000 cooperative farms averaged less than one tractor per farm, in Hungary the average is three tractors to each cooperative.) It is not Yugoslavia's fault that she has no tractors but the essence of a cooperative farm is large-scale cultivation; maximum soil well-tilled with the greatest economy of labour. In Hungary and Bulgaria, the governments deliberately retarded the growth of the cooperatives until production or purchases of machinery would enable them to be worked on a large-scale in keeping with the development of a socialized agriculture. Large-scale farms worked with hand-labour could only be wasteful to the economy, even though it might be profitable to the individual members, reaping the benefit of organized buying and selling.

After tramping for several hours over the fields I was invited to the village tavern to wash some of the dust from my throat.

Rough tables and bench seats set out in a pleasant courtyard, shaded by mulberry trees, were packed with uproariously merry peasants. Busy waiters, with great trays of beer and wine, could not keep pace with the shouted demands for drinks. In one corner of the yard a group of blinded war veterans sang a song about Tito. It was all very jolly, but it was only six o'clock in the afternoon of a midsummer day and all the thirsty customers were members of the cooperative. On any farm I have ever visited anywhere in the world, in midsummer the farmers were working from dawn to dark, hauling in the crops, turning the grass hay, planting new crops or ploughing in the stubble of the old one. The war blind were the only ones who had a right to be idle at that time of the day; not the eighty or ninety uproarious peasants when there was a desperate shortage of food throughout the country.

With my interpreter, I sat next to one red-moustached peasant, sitting in his shirt sleeves with his great freckled hands clasped around a mug of beer. White mulberries dropped like pale, fat grubs on our table, as we spoke or shouted at each other through my interpreter above the din of the blind chorus and peasants slapping each other's backs and yelling for more drinks.

My neighbour was very content with life on the cooperative. "We have a new life here," he roared, when I asked how it was possible that peasants were drinking at six o'clock on a summer afternoon. "We work like the town workers do. Eight hours a day and no more. The old days are finished, we're our own master now." He began to tell me how much he had earned in cash, what he had bought with his coupons, and added: "And with all that I've got 200 kilos (440 pounds) of sugar stored away and grain enough to last me a year."

This cooperative had started off by turning its members into individual "kulaks," concerned only with working as little as possible and storing away commodity goods which could be

sold on the free market when prices reached their peak. After ten minutes talk with my neighbour, it was obvious that no political work had been done to explain about the socialist conception of a cooperative farm, or the workers-peasants alliance to build a socialist country. The workers were just people who lived in the city and could be held to ransom for food. The whole atmosphere of the tavern breathed this spirit. The tractor machine stations and rationalized farming would bring the day when peasants too, could work only eight hours a day throughout the year, if necessary working two shifts in the summer when harvesting demanded that full use should be made of the sun. But that day was far off at Kraljevičevo, where the standard equipment was still the hoe and sickle. By mid-summer 1949, I had visited many cooperatives in Hungary and Bulgaria and in comparison this was a sham.

It looked like a cooperative on paper, or in the Press Office of the Foreign Ministry at Belgrade, when one described it with so much land, so many members, boundary stones pulled up, total earnings divided up among the members after running costs had been deducted, with a percentage set aside to take care of the aged and cripples. On paper, sure enough, this was a cooperative and Tito had boasted he had built 6,000 of them in Yugoslavia. Much faster, as he has pointed out often enough, than the rate in the other people's democracies. What I saw was not a socialist cooperative, however, because it was not linked with the general development of the state. It was a limited company of peasants for the exploitation of the soil and the industrial workers, for the exclusive profit of its members. As such it was completely isolated from socialist development.

One could not presume to say on the basis of a visit to one cooperative that all the peasants in Yugoslavia were getting lazy and wealthy. The majority were certainly poor, frugal and hard-working. The Kraljevičevo farm could not be taken as a

typical cooperative either. In general peasants were not better off in the cooperatives and resisted fiercely the attempts to force them in by all sorts of threats. But the Kraljevičevo farm was something new, something created from scratch by the government and it was built on a false foundation. It existed right under the noses of Tito's administrators, and seemed to be the new type of society they wanted. Either that or Tito's men were interested only in counting heads. Once they formed the cooperatives, they seemed to take no further interest in them, as long as the numbers mounted up to be published in the propaganda leaflets.

The peasants at Kraljevičevo were, however, living in a fool's paradise and so was Marshal Tito. In 1949, grain and produce deliveries were far below that planned. In some areas only 40 and 50 per cent of quotas were delivered. Tito found that he could not appeal to the political consciousness of the peasants, as he had been able to do over the years with the workers, demanding ever more sacrifices for the future. He had exploited the workers' enthusiasm and social conscience until they were near breaking point. He had done nothing to build up a similar political consciousness among the peasants — and soon he ran into trouble with them.

One can only suppose by the admissions which Tito himself made in the spring of 1950, that in the Party and People's Front organizations, the workers began to criticize very seriously the policy which led the rich farmers to fatten at their expense. In the beginning no doubt such criticism would be denounced as "Cominformism" and the critics arrested.

The Cominform had been particularly severe in their remarks about Tito's policy towards the "kulaks." Despite arrests, empty bellies have a way sooner or later of making their rumblings heard. Production began to fall, and Tito began applying the big stick to the peasants, seizing food stocks from their

barns and larders. Promptly the peasants retaliated. Even the poorer peasants were becoming "kulak"-minded. If they could not do what they liked with their produce they would not cultivate the soil. The government struck back by forcing them to do army work; by sending the recalcitrants into the forest to cut timber for export. The year 1949 and early 1950 produced something like a 180 degree turn in Tito's relations with the peasants. He began to oppress them — just at the time when in the other people's democracies, restrictions were being lifted and the peasants were given a much greater share in the fruits of the new life.

What actually happened in the latter half of 1949 and the first months of 1950 can best be judged by three speeches of Tito made in February and March 1950. Things had gotten so bad that there was no chance of covering up the situation.

The first speech was at an election meeting in Titovo Užice, on Sunday, February 19, and reprinted in *Borba*. It was directed to the peasants. Tito said that 5,400,000 people on ration cards were short of food and somehow the food must be gotten from the peasants. He produced figures to show that far too much food was remaining in the villages. "Why do we have all these difficulties and irregularities?" he asked. "In the first place because there are a lot of speculators among the rich peasants and unfortunately among the middle peasants, who are unwilling to deliver their products and who hide what they have... I must tell you that there have been cases in Croatia for example, where 350,000 acres of land was not planted, because the peasants, the rich ones, did not want to plant crops..." He went on to announce a scheme to make a levy of ten pounds of lard for each pig a farmer produced, because the peasants were not delivering up enough meat and fats, and he said Yugoslavia was now in the unprecedented position where she had to import lard in a country where pig-raising is one of the principle industries. Yugo-

slavia, he said, must export foodstuffs to pay for equipment for the Five-Year Plan. (He omitted to mention the miscalculation in exporting lard and buying back a few months later at double the price.)

"We must export, comrades, in addition to providing for ourselves. We must export maize. Lard we cannot because during the past year we were forced to buy it, although it should not have been so. We can't export wheat because we need it ourselves, but maize we must.... When we try to buy things abroad we have to give them things they need. They won't always take our tobacco, for instance, but they cannot do without our foodstuffs..."

He went on to say that Yugoslavia would make a big effort to produce crude oil and thus save a lot of money in two years' time. "And what shall we do with this money in 1952? We will not exert such pressure on peasants to deliver us maize and wheat. If we don't have enough wheat and I think we will, because we will switch from extensive to intensive agriculture then we shall buy oil." (By the standard of the farm I saw at Kraljevičevo and the food shortage in Belgrade, it seemed that Tito should have been thinking of intensive agriculture for 1949 and not for 1952.)

During most of the speech he urged the peasants to make sacrifices (a) to help the workers who were building the Five-Year Plan, and (b) to provide exports to pay for basic machinery, but at the end he referred to something that most informed observers in Belgrade knew, that the Five-Year-Plan was unreal and cannot be completed. "I would like to underline one more thing," he said in conclusion, "I am able to tell you and everyone else, that should it happen that the West refuses to trade with us or to reject our agreements or put pressure on us, that we will rather do without the completion of part of the Five-Year Plan; that it will remain partly uncompleted or will not be finished in

time, rather than to abandon our principles."

This was the first indication to public opinion that the Plan was running into difficulties.

The second speech was at the Third Congress of the Serbian People's Front on February 26. After speaking about all the difficulties and the needs for still more strenuous efforts, and paying the usual lip-service to the building of socialism, he said: "They say that we are brutal. However, the birth of anything new cannot be painless... It is understood that we cannot do without certain measures, which cannot be called the most voluntary, which are indeed sometimes forceful. This concerns various purchases... Villages must produce the food necessary to our people. We must obtain these products because we need them to feed our workers, to feed our citizens..."

Tito was still more explicit in his third speech at Drvar in Bosnia and Herzegovina on March 12. He touched on the peasants' grievances against the government and his own grievances against the peasants, and lifted, if only slightly, the lid off what appears to be a sizzling situation throughout the whole Yugoslav countryside.

"I have heard," he said, "remarks by some people, that after the war we did not do enough for Drvar, and I think these remarks are justified.... The majority of your sons are in the army... It is a good thing that we created an army from general to soldiers made up of working people.... However, in this case, we took the strongest elements away from your region. Today we are in full swing of building our country and have strained our forces more than possible. I know it is tense in the forestry industry in chopping wood when a peasant must go to the forest with his ox-cart to carry lumber instead of going to the fields... However there are peasants who do not understand our needs... It is natural that we must punish such individuals... I would like to say a few words about the cooperatives... I feel that we made

our biggest mistakes in the problem of creating the cooperative farms. Our people chased after numbers, they looked to see which republic would form the most. If one formed a thousand the next one wanted to create fifteen hundred... Of course we don't have enough machinery or fertilizer and other things... No one has the right to force a peasant into the cooperatives by telling him that if he doesn't join, his taxes will be raised or that he will be sent to the forest for a longer period than necessary... Some peasants who are forced to join cooperatives make mistakes by selling their cattle or equipment or by slaughtering their cattle... I have said there have been mistakes on both sides. If people say we are demanding more from the villages, you must understand why this is necessary. We demand from the villages so we can feed the people not connected with agriculture... I know there have been irregularities, that frequently a peasant is cleaned out and left with nothing. No one thinks of giving something back to him but it is wrong to let even one man die from hunger in our country... there are irregularities in purchasing for the state. Agencies in the field are given figures and work in a stereotyped manner, not asking who has produce and who has none...

"Because of these mistakes, people are losing an interest in sowing... There are regions where they have planted nothing at all, or too little, or they have planted on ten or twelve acres what they could have planted on one or two acres. I will give you figures which will show the position. Last year there were 500,000 acres less than in 1939 and 1,125,000 acres less than in 1948. There were 350,000 acres sown less in Bosnia and Herzegovina alone, a very large figure. Why wasn't it planted?

"I know there are hardships, I know your draught animals were used somewhere else. I know there was a lack of labour but there was not enough interest in sowing. What will the government do if things continue like this? Where will we get out

wheat, maize and other things to feed the workers...?"

Tito had never spoken like this before. He was not one to make pessimistic speeches. On the contrary, his rare speeches had always had a boastful tinge before, but the picture he painted in 1950, of the situation in a field which had nothing at all to do with the Cominform economic boycott, was one of unrelieved gloom. What had he done with that great enthusiasm of the war years and the first years of the postwar period? Each of the other people's democracies were able to show a steady economic improvement year by year. Planned economy resulted each year in more acres sown, higher crop yields, higher percentage of harvest collected. This was not just something expressed in brightly coloured graphs but in larger rations for the workers, more consumer goods for the peasants and in several countries the end of rationing altogether.

Tito had the best start of any of the people's democracies in the sense that he started off with a population almost one hundred per cent with him in their demands to build a new socialist life. There were no big landlords, no powerful industrialists, no great middleclass, no church problems. The people were behind him as their wartime leader; they were fired with enthusiasm and prepared for sacrifices. But that early enthusiasm had been dissipated, it had slipped away like sand through Tito's fingers. By 1950, the wheels were running down, and no figures or graphs, no slogans or speeches could conceal that fact.

One had the impression that Tito had lost touch with reality, had isolated himself from his people. He was pulled up with a start in late 1949, when rumblings of trouble reached him, that had nothing to do with his isolation from the Cominform countries.

His very mode of life with his palaces and villas, gaudy uniforms and white duck suits, his jewelled fingers and bemedalled breast, seemed out of place for a leader in a people's democracy.

Tito himself seemed out of place — in the official photographs which showed him talking with poorly-clad workers with their pinched cheeks and himself always sleek and over-dressed. In this he was in marked contrast to his neighbours, Rakosi and Dimitrov, who lived simply, dressed simply and seemed at home amongst the workers and peasants.

The Danube Conference was to be the last occasion when any high-ranking officials from the Soviet Union or the people's democracies were to visit Belgrade. Whatever overture — if any — were made from either side to heal the breach they were unsuccessful. During the conference, the Cominform officials began packing their bags, moving out of their flats and transferring to Bucharest.

Relations between Yugoslavia and the people's democracies deteriorated to the point where friendship and trade pacts were broken; diplomatic relations were maintained by the slenderest threads. Tito was left to build what came to be known as "National Communism" on his own, without aid or advice from the Soviet Union or by the people's democracies. National communism was regarded by most communists all over the world as having as much to do with communism as Hitler's National Socialism had to do with socialism.

Correspondents who visited the Danube Conference in the hope of touring the country and getting a perspective of the rights or wrongs of Cominform criticism of Tito's policy were rudely disappointed. They were told their visas were valid for Belgrade only and for the Conference. Not for tours and not for official interviews. Ranković was still counting heads at that time and could not be sure how many Cominform supporters had to be arrested before the country could be regarded as secure. Later all correspondents from the West were welcomed; the more reactionary, the better. Even Ward-Price, the correspondent of the London *Daily Mail*, Hitler's chief apologist in

the British press in the 1930s, the man who prepared British public opinion for the Munich Agreement, received a visa for Belgrade in 1949 — and promptly reported that Soviet troops were massed on the Hungarian-Yugoslav border and invasion was imminent.

Times and tunes changed very quickly in Belgrade once Tito began to turn West.

CHAPTER FOUR
HUNGARY — PARADISE OF THE COUNTS

My studies of life in Tito's capital were cut short by an attack of pneumonia which laid me low at the end of the Danube Conference. After a week in a Yugoslav hospital, tended by Slovenian nurses with wide hats on their heads and hatred of communism in their hearts, I left Belgrade to convalesce in sunny, warm-hearted Budapest. It is one of the most beautiful cities in Europe, one of the friendliest and gayest, one of the most energetic. To come to Budapest in August 1948, after Berlin and Belgrade, was like emerging from a dark tunnel into spring sunshine with the scent of flowers in the air. One could sense in the first days the elan of a people striding forward with a faith in the future based on what had been accomplished in the few years since the Liberation. The physical signs of reconstruction were there in front of everybody's eyes to see, the new bridges over the Danube, whole streets repaired and rebuilt, food and clothing shops well stocked with unrationed goods. There was confidence and hope in the voices of youths and girls, marching through the streets singing their songs of liberation.

Hungary had been oppressed and liberated many times in the past, but for the first time, the Hungarian people had the future in their hands. Their first kingdom was ravaged by the Tartars, Tartars replaced by Turks, Turks by Hapsburgs, Hapsburgs by Admiral Horthy and eventually Horthy gave way to the nazis and the Szalasi fascists. The whole history of the country was of a fight against oppressors, of bloody and courageous fights. A stroll through the city and a glance at the names of streets, squares and monuments of Budapest is an object lesson in Hungary's stormy history. From the time the Turks were chased out in the late seventeenth century the Hungarians

had fought against the Hapsburgs (and as the Mindszenty trial was to show later, they still have to fight against Hapsburg intrigues). The numerous mustard-coloured buildings scattered throughout the city remind one of three centuries of Hapsburg domination; it was the favoured colour of the House of Hapsburg as most official buildings in Vienna still testify.

The revolt against the Hapsburgs at the beginning of the eighteenth century, when the whole Hungarian people rose and threw the Austrian armies out of the country for six years, is commemorated with dozens of streets and squares named after the leaders of the revolt. Rakoczi Street, one of the finest boulevards in Budapest, Kis Square, Karoly and Berzseny Streets are a few examples. These are not newly named, they are age-long expressions of the fight of the Hungarian people for an independent republic — which they now have for the first time in a thousand years.

When I arrived in August 1949, the Hungarian people were celebrating the hundredth anniversary of their great liberation war against the Hapsburgs. In the 1848-49 revolution the Hungarians led by the liberal statesmen, Kossuth and Batthyanyi, delivered a crushing blow to the Hapsburg armies. Emperor Ferdinand was forced to appeal to Tsarist Russia for help and the Tsar sent 200,000 troops with which eventually the Liberation armies were defeated. Kossuth escaped into exile, Batthyanyi was executed, 13 of the Hungarian generals were shot. Hungary's greatest poet, Sandor Petofi, died on the battlefield. The 1848-49 revolt added a new crop of heroes' names to Budapest's streets and squares. The revolt was defeated but it dealt a heavy blow to the House of Hapsburg. In 1867, Emperor Franz-Joseph was forced to grant Hungary a large measure of independence, with separate parliament and complete autonomy in purely Hungarian affairs. The Emperor of Austria, however, held the dual title of King of Hungary. The Minis-

tries of Defence, Foreign Affairs and Currency were joint Austro-Hungarian institutions. This system lasted until Hungary was dragged into World War I at Germany's side. Franz-Joseph died during the war and his successor, Charles, abdicated on the day the armistice was signed with the Western Allies.

After World War I, another attempt at revolution by the Hungarian people was successful for a short time, but eventually crushed by the fascist Admiral Horthy, with the help of Romanian, Czech and French armies. Horthy, former aide-de-camp of the Hapsburgs, hung most communists he could lay hands on, ruled the country as a Regent dictator, opened the gates to German economic penetration and eventually nazi invasion.

Hungary now recognizes two great dates in its history. March 15, 1848, when the great Liberal Revolution under Kossuth started, and April 4, 1945, when the country was liberated by the Soviet Army and the last German troops fled the country. The revolts of the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were mixed up affairs, often led by the nobility to wrench Hungary away from one Empire, only to form another one with Hungary oppressing Serbs, Croats and any other peoples they could enslave.

The nobles exploited the longings of the people for independence and mobilized them in their armies but had no intention of granting any of their basic demands for land and freedom. Except for the 1848 revolt which had some reformist aims, the issues were purely national.

Very different, however, were the aims of the revolutionary government of 1919 and those of the provisional government established at Debrecen in 1944, when Budapest was still under siege. They had their roots back still further in Hungary's stormy history. Their aims corresponded to those of Gyorgy Dozsa who, in the early sixteenth century, led the first organized peasant's

revolt in European history, a few years before the great peasant war in Germany. Dozsa's slogan was "The land to those that till it" and the peasants flocked to his banner in their thousands. Eventually the revolt was crushed with ferocious cruelty by the nobles. Dozsa was slowly roasted to death chained to a mock iron throne with the words "stinking peasant" burned into his breast under the approving eyes of the nobles and bishops.

The Debrecen government demanded an end to the monarchy and a clean sweep of all the feudal privileges still enjoyed by the aristocratic landowners. Land for the people, government by the people, were their slogans. And in 1945 the Soviet Army was in Hungary to guarantee that no reactionary forces would invade the country as in 1919 to suppress the new government. In a few years after World War II, successive Hungarian governments were able to carry out a bloodless revolution with no possibility of a foreign-inspired counter-revolution. There were no Tsarist troops, as in 1849, to come to the rescue of the defeated Hapsburgs. There were no French armies as in 1919 to set up a rival government in Szeged under Admiral Horthy, no Czech troops to invade from the north, no Romanian troops to capture Budapest so that the former commander of the Hapsburg Navy, resplendent in admiral's uniform, could ride into the capital on a white horse and start his hangman's work. In 1945, the people were able to exercise their will in a quiet, democratic fashion — to the great chagrin of the Western Powers.

In 1945 the first free and secret elections ever to be held in Hungary took place. The basis of franchise was greatly widened. In previous elections in Hungary less than 30 per cent of the population had the right to vote. In 1943 the figure was 59.7 per cent and in 1947 62 per cent. The provisional government set up in Debrecen was comprised of the four parties which had opposed Hungary's taking part in the war with Germany, the Smallholders' Party, Social Democrats, Communists and Na-

tional Peasant Party. Smallholders received 57 per cent, Communists and Social Democrats 17 per cent each, National Peasants 6 per cent. The coalition government or "People's Front" continued in office with the Communists and Social Democrats between them, holding six of the fourteen cabinet posts. It was this government which carried out the vital land reform laws, splitting up the large estates and crippling the economic power of the aristocratic landowners. Less than 1 per cent of the landholders owned 48 per cent of the land, and at the other end of the scale 72.5 per cent of landholders owned 10 per cent of the land, while 719,000 peasants owned no land at all.

In 1945 and 1946 Hungary was in the grip of the greatest inflation in history, greater even than that in Germany after the first World War. People rushed out with their whole week's salaries to buy a few bus tickets or a loaf of bread. On the initiative of the communists a currency reform was worked out and put into effect on August 1, 1946. One new Forint was valued at 426, followed by twenty-seven zeros of the old pengoes. Overnight Hungary had a stable currency which could buy real goods which now began to appear in the shops. Currency reform won the communists great prestige, reflected in the elections in 1947. Late in 1946, a conspiracy involving a number of leading members of the Smallholders' Party was discovered. The Prime Minister, Ferenc Nagy, leader of the party was abroad and refused to return. He was replaced as party leader and Prime Minister by Lajos Dinnyes, an agriculturist with a long record in the Smallholders' Party. In the 1947 elections, a number of parties in opposition to the government coalition had emerged and they were joined by breakaway groups from the Smallholders' Party. The coalition decided to contest the elections as a bloc and received just over 60 per cent. of the votes. The Communists became the strongest party with 22 per cent, followed by the Smallholders 15.4 per cent, the Social Democrats 14.8 per

cent and the Peasant Party 8.3 per cent. Later the Communists and Social Democrats merged their parties into the Hungarian Workers' Party. The coalition continued to operate with the Workers' Party holding a majority of the seats, and it is still the basis of the Hungarian administration in 1950.

To get an impression of the forces which have ruled Hungary over the centuries, I decided to try to find some members of the fabulous Eszterhazy family. I had read about them in history books as something like the Medici of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, wealthy aristocrats and great patrons of the arts. Haydn, Schubert, Mozart and Liszt, I knew, had all basked in Eszterhazy hospitality during some period of their lives. The best place to enquire about the Hungarian aristocracy obviously was the British Legation. It was easier than I had thought. There was a Countess Eszterhazy working in the Legation itself.

Over a long lunch at the famous Gundel's restaurant, she filled in some interesting details of the history of this greatest landowning family in the old Empire — and in Hungary until 1945. There was only one larger landowner in Hungary and that was the Roman Catholic Church.

The Eszterhazys between them owned 750,000 acres of which the senior member of the family, Prince Paul Eszterhazy, owned 300,000. They owned 15 castles in Hungary, several more in Austria and Bavaria. The countess had no idea how many peasants or farm labourers were employed on the various estates.

The name was an ancient one. Romantic members of the family declared it dated back to biblical times, the name means Esther's House. The original seat of the family, which was attached to the Royal Court in the early fifteenth century, was on the Austrian side of the Austro-Hungarian border area not far from Sopron. It was called Eszterhaza, but has become Austrianized into Eisenstadt.

Always loyal supporters of the House of Hapsburg, they were rewarded for their military and financial help with lavish titles for the two main branches of the family. Apparently the help of one of the branches was valued more highly than the other, because one line of dukes and princes was created, another of counts and barons. The titles were inherited by all sons, the estates only by the eldest sons — providing they did not marry outside their social caste.

My informant, the Countess, inherited the physical characteristics of the family. Very tall with pale blue eyes and a large nose which dominated the face. "You can tell us anywhere," she said, "by our eyes, noses and height." She was young, sighed for the old days, but was realistic enough to believe they would never return. She herself left the country to live off the estates in Austria or Bavaria, or the gold piled away in Switzerland, not long after my interview.

The modern history of the House of Eszterhazy started at the beginning of this century when Count Ferenc split the family property into two parts. One at Tata not far from the Austrian border was left to his eldest son, also Ferenc, the other at Papa to the second son Paul. Ferenc, the elder, incidentally, for special services to the Hapsburgs, was, during the time of Maria Therese, allowed to have his own private army, a right unique in Hungary where many of the nobles had declared themselves against the Hapsburg domination. Paul was eventually killed in the first World War, and the Papa estates were managed by a relative, former Prime Minister of Hungary, Maurice Eszterhazy, until Thomas, third son of Count Ferenc, was old enough to take over. Thomas was a gay young man, a fervent admirer of ballerinas and an equally fervent supporter of the Hapsburgs, who were having a lean period at the time Thomas succeeded his estates. According to the rules of the family, which apparently became a little lax during the first World War,

Thomas should have been disinherited. He married, out of his caste, three ballerinas in succession.

While his farm servants lived on a few pounds a year and an odd pair of trousers or shoes flung to them by an overseer, Thomas piled up gambling debts and lived the usual profligate life of the Hungarian aristocracy. He kept a permanent suite at the Hotel Hungaria overlooking the Danube in Budapest, where he obligingly left a chequebook full of signed cheques for any of his drinking companions to fill out when they were hard-pressed to raise the wind for a new carousal, or to pay up the gambling debts of the night before.

His lawyers spent several months after World War I trying to get back some of the fantastic sums drawn by his various friends, running into several millions of pengoes. Thomas's scandals in the early 1920s, however, were soon overshadowed by those of his brother Ferenc of the Tata estate. Ferenc set himself the task of restoring the Hapsburgs to the throne of Hungary. In 1921 the former Emperor Charles, who had abdicated in Vienna three years earlier, decided to try and stage a come-back in the other half of the Empire, as King of Hungary. He raised a King's Army which was joined by the Hungarian garrison at Szombathely, on the Austro-Hungarian border. Charles had previously been negotiating with the Regent, Admiral Horthy, to take over power peacefully, but Horthy for all his sympathies for the Hapsburg Monarchy, knew the temper of the Hungarian people too well to agree. Charles decided to fight.

From Szombathely, Charles and his wife, the former Empress Zita, went to Tata, where they stayed the night with Count Ferenc. Ferenc's wife's father had been a minister under Emperor Franz-Joseph. He pledged his full support in the restoration attempt.

It ended in disaster, of course, for Charles. He was seized by

Horthy and handed over to the Allies, who obligingly escorted the ex-royal couple to the charming Isle of Madeira. Count Ferenc accompanied him into exile, and spent lavish sums of his own money and some borrowed from brother Thomas, supporting Zita and the children after the ex-emperor died. Zita's eldest son, Otto, became the Pretender to the Hapsburg throne, and as we will see in a later chapter, neither Zita, Otto nor the Eszterhazys gave up hope for an eventual restoration.

After Charles died, Eszterhazy returned to Hungary and devoted himself to his ruling passions: horse breeding and music. To show his tenderness for the royal family and his faith in their eventual restoration, he bought from the Austrian government the famous Lippizana, milk-white Arab horses which had formerly belonged to the court of Franz-Joseph. Ferenc established a stud and set up the finest stable of Lippizanas in Europe. He trained riders in the Spanish school of riding, taught them to drive the smart four-in-hands, dressed in the livery of the House of Hapsburg. Everything should be ready for the return of a new Emperor of Austria, King of Hungary.

Count Ferenc fancied himself also as a talented musician and patron of the arts. In his great English park at Tata he imported whole sections of ruins from ancient Rome and had them built into the park, diverted streams through them, created little ponds and lakes, the bottoms of which were covered with special coloured rocks imported from all over Europe.

His chief delight was to bring the entire cast of the Budapest Opera or a symphony orchestra to Tata to perform in the delightful summer garden. Ferenc always insisted on conducting the performance. Only his special friends from the aristocracy were invited as guests. On the beautiful lake in the English park only close relatives were allowed to row. Peasants were occasionally allowed to enter the park on a special holiday, but the Count or his estate managers used to stroll through the

grounds and woe betide any peasant sitting on the ground. A beating and fine would be the minimum punishment.

Apart from two castles and a hunting lodge on the Tata estate, Count Ferenc had a private theatre, a racecourse and a champagne still there.

The head of the family in 1948, Prince Paul, had been a close friend of Admiral Horthy, for whom he used to organize hunting parties. In general, he lived a quieter life than his roistering father and uncle, supervising the accounts of his 300,000 acres of land, several hundred houses and villas, and a few small factories. After the liberation and the distribution of the estates among the landless farm labourers, Prince Paul even tried to pass for a democrat. He shared his father's taste for ballerinas and married the prima-ballerina of the Budapest Opera, Melinda Ottrubay, in 1948.

"Just as well there are no estates for him to succeed to these days," said the Countess, "it was a shocking blow to the family when he, too, married a dancer."

She shuddered when I asked what had happened to the properties at Tata. "It's too dreadful to speak about." she said. "The castle has been turned into a lunatic asylum, the beautiful old Hunting Lodge has become a Communist Youth Hostel, the English Park was turned into a training ground for the Olympic team, because they said the atmosphere and climate was like that of England and would help the team that was going to England for the Olympic Games. The parks are all thrown open, anyone can wander through them," and her china-blue eyes filled with tears.

"What about the thousands of farm labourers that have got land now?" I asked, "probably they are pleased with their new life."

"Certainly not," replied the Countess, "in the past they got everything free, good food, lodging and often clothes, as well as

money. They did not have to think about anything. No worries, just do what the overseer said. No responsibilities at all. Now, who gives them food? The government takes it all away from them. The farms are all going to ruin because peasants are not used to thinking and planning for themselves."

I took a tour of some of the Eszterhazy castles to see for myself what was going on. Tata is a beautiful village, about ten miles off the main road between Budapest and Vienna. Sure enough the main castle had become a hospital for the insane, the Hunting Lodge was full of gay young people, including a group of Canadians who had been working on one of the volunteer youth brigade projects. It was Sunday, in mid-summer, the two magnificent parks were crowded with villagers and peasants, reclining in the shade of massive oak and elm trees. More peasants and some workers from the nearby Tata coal mines (Eszterhazy property before they were nationalized), were splashing away in a fine swimming pool that had formerly been a private preserve of the Eszterhazys.

In the keeper's Lodge at the entrance to the park was living another Eszterhazy, Count Miklos. But he was not at home. "Poor fellow," said his soldier-butler, a veteran from the Hapsburg armies, "the lad must have something to do. He spends his time swimming these days."

"In the pool?" I asked.

"Of course not. With them hooligans? He swims with his friends in a little stream, some miles away from here."

The old butler went on to tell me that "poor" Miklos didn't have a penny to his name anymore. "He's only got one suit to stand up in." Actually the Count Miklos was busy liquidating 55 houses which belonged to him and was salting the money away for an illegal flight over the border. Three times I went to visit him, but never caught him at home.

On the fourth occasion he had already fled the country. Be-

fore he left he threw a great party to which a well-known Budapest actress was invited. When the party reached its height, Count Miklos bathed the actress in a bath filled with champagne from the Tata champagne still, as a final salute to the old days.

Peasants from the Tata region are mostly dour, unsmiling Schwabs, Schwabian Germans, but they smile readily enough if one asks them if they want to return to the status of farm servants on the Eszterhazy estates. Their lives are still hard, they still work from dawn to dark and have little enough at the end of the month to buy clothes or other necessities with. They are still plagued by priests who tell them it's sinful to have taken the land of their masters, and that God and the Americans will punish them for it.

"My boy's at the university," said one brown old peasant, squatting on the ground in the English park at Tata. "He's learning to be an engineer. D'ye think I could ever have managed that in the old days? If I'd saved up everything and could sell a pig or two, I couldn't even keep him at school after he was twelve. Now they even pay him for learning. He's at one of the People's Colleges and they pay him enough that he sends me and the missus a bit on the side."

Of the land reform, he said, "We could have done with a bit more land. It's hard to make do without 10 acres, but we live all right. We eat better than we ever did and there's always something to take to the market to sell. If there's not eggs, there's grapes, if there's not grapes there's apples or melons. And we're our own bosses now. Nobody to come along and rouse us out and say 'Do this' and 'Do that,' and a cuff on the ear if you don't do it quick enough."

At the village of Eszterhazy the castle had been turned over to an Agricultural College. On the Sunday I visited it, there was a big Mothers' Day meeting in progress. In the castle courtyard,

seats had been set out in the warm autumn sunshine, and parents were watching a performance by the school children. On other Eszterhazy estates, parks had been thrown open to the public, in some cases used as plant research stations, castles used as hospitals, schools, orphanages, youth hostels.

The princes, counts and barons, for the most part speculated on the black market, intrigued for the return of the Hapsburgs, plotted to transfer their money and later their persons abroad.

The fine Lippizana stud of Count Ferenc was taken away by the Germans to Bavaria, from where many of the best stallions and mares were shipped to America. But stable hands managed to hide others in various parts of the country and the stud has been reconstituted again by the Ministry of Agriculture. The new stud, however, is not breeding and training horses to draw Emperors' coaches, but it is crossing them with sturdier breeds to step up the quality of horses all over the country.

The Eszterhazy art treasures have been turned over to the public galleries where all the people can admire them instead of a few chosen aristocrats.

The final act in the drama of the House of Eszterhazy was to be played in the People's Court at Budapest a few months after my conversation with the Countess, with Prince Paul as one of the chief actors still in the traditional Eszterhazy role of defending the interests of the Royal House of Hapsburg.

My five weeks convalescence in Hungary in the summer of 1948 provided me with the right background to appreciate the dramatic events which followed in February 1949, and which are described in subsequent chapters.

As Hungary is supposed to be shut off from the Western world by a heavy clanking "Iron Curtain," with freedom of any type suppressed, it may be interesting for western readers to learn how I was able to enter Hungary in the first place, how

I was able to arrange for permits to move about in the second place and in the third place how I, as a tainted westerner, was able to talk to people. I applied for a visa and received it like many other western correspondents — and I applied from Belgrade, which in the summer of 1948 was not a healthy spot from which to be asking for a visa to a Cominform country.

I flew from Belgrade to Frankfurt in the U.S. Zone of Germany, applied for and received a transit visa through Czechoslovakia and drove to the Hungarian border. At the border I presented the Royal Automobile Club carnet for my car, was handed enough petrol coupons to take me to Budapest, and told to report to the Hungarian Automobile Club, which would provide me with further coupons. For a foreigner there was no limit to the number of coupons I could draw — by the time I returned to Hungary the following year petrol rations had been abolished.

Once in Hungary, I found I was free — as indeed are all other people, Hungarians and foreigners alike — to drive when and where I liked. Probably some frontier areas were out of bounds, but I never discovered any limitations on movements at all. Normally, I would have arranged visits through the press section of the Hungarian Ministry for Foreign Affairs, but as I was in Hungary on holiday, I arranged nothing through official channels. Apart from paying purely a courtesy call at the Press Office, I did not once make use of their facilities during my five weeks' stay.

With a hired interpreter, I toured the country, stayed at hotels and ate at restaurants unannounced, went where I wanted and spoke with whom I wanted. Some of my visits must have branded me as reactionary, for instance, those to the Eszterhazy family and later to Cardinal Mindszenty. As far as I know there was never any control on my activities, certainly I was never aware of it. Nor have I been aware of such controls in subse-

quent visits to Hungary. I visited cooperative farms near the border of Romania, gypsy settlements near the Czech border, the Eszterhazy estates on the border of Austria. Wherever I went I took plenty of photographs of normal activities of life, peasants in the fields, public buildings. At the end of five weeks, I left Hungary without writing one word, good or bad, about the country; I was on leave and if I made it a working holiday, that was only for my own background. It was my first visit to Hungary, I was completely unknown to the authorities. I was, and am still in 1950, as free to drive about Hungary as I am in England — more so in fact because my travel in England would be limited by petrol rationing, and in Hungary petrol rationing, as all other forms of rationing, has long been abolished.

In twelve months living constantly in Budapest, there has been a steady stream of western journalists, members of parliament and other visitors, all of whom have exactly the same facilities, without the slightest restriction on their movements. Excellent plane, coach and rail services connect Budapest with other main cities in the country and one can travel from city to city without the slightest formality by public transport if one is not fortunate enough to possess a car. If after the revelations of Western espionage brought to light during the trials in Eastern Europe in 1949 and 1950, and after scandalous articles by journalists who have never visited the country, the Hungarian authorities are beginning to scan more carefully the visitors to whom they grant visas, one can only commend them for their caution.

CHAPTER FIVE
THE CARDINAL AT HOME

In September, as the church-state quarrel was reaching its climax, following the decision to place education under state control, I went to see Cardinal Mindszenty. It took three trips to the Cathedral City of Esztergom, about 50 miles up the Danube from Budapest, to arrange the interview. (Esztergom was the first capital of Hungary and the birthplace of Hungary's first King — St. Stephen.) Cardinal Mindszenty's secretary telephoned first to the British Legation to check that I was a respectable journalist from a suitably right-wing newspaper. I passed all the tests and the visit was arranged.

The cardinal received me in his palace overlooking the Danube. I was not permitted to take my interpreter into the Cardinal's study, Dr. Zakar, who later appeared in Court with the Cardinal, acted as interpreter. Occasionally we spoke directly to each other in German.

Underneath the trappings of the purple skull cap and the red-rimmed cardinal's cloak, I had an impression of a morose, conceited man of limited intelligence. With drooping jowls, deep-set, brown eyes, a heavy jaw, and sadistic chiselled lips and sonorous voice, the Cardinal seemed to belong to the era of the Spanish Inquisition rather than to that of the People's Democracies.

At first the Cardinal did not want to discuss specific questions, but preferred to deal in generalities, the impossibility of any sort of cooperation with the government, the dreadful persecution of religion and the ungodliness of the regime. Slim young Dr. Zakar, pleasant, soft-spoken, constantly washing his hands with invisible soap, eventually interpreted my question.

"What do you regard as indispensable conditions for collaborating with the state?"

The Cardinal pursed his lips, rolled his eyes and answered, "When the state recognizes the rights of the church in education and religious life. In addition to education there is the question of cultural life and of associations."

"Have you had any discussions with the government on these questions?"

"No. Before there are any negotiations the schools must be returned to the church. We demand the right of the church to own schools as physical property, we demand the right to teach, we demand for the parents the right to give children the type of education they want."

"In most western countries, primary education has been in the hands of the state for a long time, Cardinal. In England, Australia, America more than 90 per cent of children receive their primary and secondary education in state schools. Why don't you think this system would be suitable for Hungary?"

"Our church schools are centuries old, the state only started teaching here in the middle of the last century. We have special teaching orders with a tradition of giving instruction in accordance with the laws of God."

"As far as I have understood the government decrees, I believe the government wanted the monks and nuns from the teaching orders to remain at their posts, to continue teaching, and it was you, Cardinal, who forbade them to do that?"

"It is impossible for Catholics to take part in teaching which is under the control of a materialistic government. Better that the schools be closed and the children remain untaught."

"In your pastoral letter, read in the Hungarian churches last Sunday, Cardinal, you said that any negotiations with the state for the return of Catholic schools and colleges would mean an abandonment of Catholic and Christian principles. The Lutheran and Evangelical churches did negotiate and did have their secondary schools returned to them. Could you tell

me what principles the Protestant churches abandoned in these discussions?" And I quoted the following paragraph from the Pastoral letter:

"For the return of our fifteen colleges they wished to stipulate conditions, the fulfilment of which would have meant the giving up of our principles. At the cost of principles, by means of abandoning principles, the church would not touch even her own schools. The army of Catholic educators can be neither the factor nor the active participant of an education not approved by the church. Even if they (the government) were to promise that the school will not be anti-religious but neutral, that if they continue to teach, our monks and nuns will not come into conflict with their conscience, we ask where is our guarantee for these promises."

"What were these conditions which the government used as a bargaining counter for the return of your fifteen colleges?" I asked.

The Cardinal hedged the question many times and finally, as I was insistent on this point which seemed to me to contain the crux of the whole quarrel between church and state, he said, "I myself don't know what these conditions were. Those who are concerned with educational problems took part in the discussions, but in any case I know they were such that no Catholic and no Christian could accept."

"But it was in your name that the Pastoral Letter was read out, and in your name that many thousand monks and nuns lost their positions overnight. Surely only the Cardinal himself could decide whether conditions were anti-Christian or not. And after all, the Christian Lutheran and Calvinist bishops did accept these conditions and did have their properties returned and must be considered as Christians."

"I am quite content to leave such decisions in the hands of those who are competent in educational questions," said the

Cardinal, adding, "I cannot busy myself with every facet of church affairs."

Either the Cardinal was dodging the issue or he had thrown down his sharpest challenge to the government, the spark that touched off a full-scale battle between church and state, without knowing what the real issues were.

The conditions I received only later from Protestant sources. The government decree established the principle of state education and sanctioned the seizure of all church schools. The view taken was that for centuries the state had heavily subsidised the church for educational purposes. The people had paid in taxes many times over for the schools built by the churches with State money. But the government offered to return secondary schools, the church colleges, Seminaries for training priests and pastors were not affected by the decree. There were three conditions attached to this return.

(1) The Church recognize Hungary as a Republic.

(2) The Church recognize the fact of land reform.

(3) The Church recognize the fact of nationalization of industry.

Recognition of these three facts entailed naturally the obligation not to agitate against these reforms, none of which came into conflict with religious practice.

It was impossible for Mindszenty to accept the first condition as at that time he was actively conspiring for the return of the Hapsburg Monarchy to Hungary. His priests, certainly on Mindszenty's instructions, were carrying out a constant whispering campaign against land reform and in the early days warned those peasants who accepted their masters' land that they would be hung from the tree-tops when the British and Americans came.

The Cardinal was not at all comfortable discussing school and church questions. I asked him for specific examples of per-

secution of religion, and he cited five instances. In a former Catholic College, St. Margaret High School for Girls, the new headmistress, Madeleine Ligety, once "wrote a pornographic book for small boys and girls." Pressed for the name of the book, he said it was called "Sexual Pedagogy." On the first day of the opening of the newly-nationalized schools, all teachers were forced to read a statement which contained anti-religious remarks. Catholic workers were being forced to join Marxist organizations. Catholics in the United States sent many parcels of food and clothing for poor Catholics in Hungary, and the government insisted on supervising their distributions. The government was sabotaging religious festivals. On checking afterwards found all these charges were false.

The Cardinal then rose from his study table, strode across to the window, and flinging it open, invited me to join him. Down below flowed the broad brown Danube.

A great steel bridge, leading across from the Hungarian side ended in the middle of the river, the other half had been destroyed by retreating Germans.

With a sweeping gesture, indicating a cluster of mustard-coloured houses on the far bank, now gleaming with the rays of the setting sun, he said: "Hungarian for a thousand years and now Czechoslovakian. The government which has deserted those poor people has committed a mortal sin and I hold this government collectively responsible for it."

He closed the window and spread out an old atlas on the table, and warmed up to a subject much closer to his heart than a discussion of church, school and state problems. The atlas showed Hungary of the prewar days, the Hungary of the Hapsburgs, Hungary before the Treaty of Trianon. When he spoke of Bratislava he gave it its ancient Hungarian name of Pozson. "For two hundred years the capital of Hungary and now part of Czechoslovakia," he said.

"That should be the role of you journalists today," he continued, tracing with his finger the old frontiers of Hungary, the bits that had been clipped off after the first World War, the changes since the last war.

"Hungary was a bastion against Slavdom, a bulwark against communism. She should have remained that way, and what have you done? You have split her up among the Slavs and installed a communist government. Vojvodina to the Yugoslavs, Slovakia to the Czechs, Transylvania to the Romanians, an anti-Christian and godless government installed in Budapest. Instead of keeping us as a bastion against the Slavs, you have made of us a Slav spearhead of communism. You have allowed the most cultured nation in Central Europe to be split up amongst barbarians. The Hungarians were only 9.2 per cent illiterate, and you handed them over to Yugoslavia who are 42 per cent illiterate, and Romanians who are 44 per cent illiterate. In Czechoslovakia, in that very village we looked at a few minutes ago, Hungarians are persecuted because they welcomed peaceful Hungarian troops in 1939 with flowers. Would not English people have welcomed liberating English troops with flowers and song? Was it not England herself that agreed at Munich to Hungary regaining her lost lands in Czechoslovakia? Did not Benes himself agree to right this century-old injustice?"

I had to interrupt the Cardinal for long enough to point out firstly that people in England blush when they hear the Munich Agreement mentioned these days; secondly, the Munich Agreement contained no word about the Hungarians joining in with the German wolves to bite chunks out of Czechoslovakia; thirdly, that Benes had accepted the Munich Agreement only under extreme duress; and fourthly, Hungarian troops had not gone in peacefully with their rifles slung over their shoulders as the Cardinal suggested, but had killed, robbed and raped and flung all Jews and leftists into concentration camp. But nothing

could stop the Cardinal who, by this time, was showing himself as ill-informed on historical and political matters as he had admitted himself to be on matters which affected the church more directly.

"600,000 Hungarians have been expelled from Czechoslovakia by force," he continued, "and whether the Hungarian government gave its permission for this willingly or unwillingly, this expulsion is a sin and is held to be a sin by the church. It is a sin against human rights. If the great powers and nations would carry out their statements about freedom and human rights, many of the wounds of Hungary, both internal and external, would be healed." And he repeated his plea to me as a journalist to press in my despatches for a revision of Hungary's frontiers that she should be restored as a bastion against Slavism and communism.

"Journalists and newspapers don't change frontiers, you know," I said. "Frontiers are always changed as a result of military action. Hungary's frontiers were changed because of World War I, and again after World War II. Do you believe these frontiers can be changed again without a World War III?"

He looked at me fixedly with his brooding brown eyes and said slowly in German: "I believe there will be a new world war and one should have a clear idea already what sort of a new world one wants in Europe. In deciding that the journalists have a role to play."

The Cardinal permitted me to take a picture of him at his desk before I left him. I did not see him again, nor Dr. Zakar until they appeared before the People's Court in Budapest four months later, charged with espionage, conspiracy and black marketeering.

I drove back from Esztergom, profoundly depressed after my interview with the Cardinal, along the Danube to Budapest. The leaves were turning gold. In every village, stalls were

piled high with melons, grapes, apples and pears. Sturdy children coming home from school were stuffing themselves with fruit picked from trees along the roadside. A group of brigadiers in one village was busy restoring the steeples of a church. Street markets in the villages and wayside farms were bubbling over with vitality. Peasants along the road or working in the fields smiled and waved as the car went past. Cowherds from a cooperative farm were driving a large herd of cows from their grazing grounds along the banks of the river back to the cooperative dairy for milking. The Cardinal was willing to destroy all that. He was not content with stopping the clock of history; he wanted to turn the hands back five hundred years, and if Hungary were to be plunged into a blood bath the like of which she had not known in her thousand years history, to restore church dominance and the church estates, he would not shrink from giving the signal. He and his followers were already paving the way for a new war. The Cardinal had deliberately cut himself off from the people and from the new life that was being built. He preoccupied himself with questions that had nothing to do with religion or the spiritual needs of the Hungarian people. He was unable to give me real facts about the persecution of religion in Hungary because there was no such persecution. Long overdue changes were taking place in church-state relationships which Mindszenty could not accept.

The Roman Catholic Church had always played a dominant role in Hungary's affairs. The Hapsburgs were Apostolic Kings, recognizing the church as the supreme power. All Hungarian kings, from the time 1,000 years ago when Stephen was crowned by the Pope, were Apostolic kings. Throughout the centuries no important political decisions were ever taken without the prior approval of the church, often enough on the direct orders of the leading Catholic dignitary. Various Catholic orders maintained a state within the state. Abbots and Bishops

were laws unto themselves, administered their estates as feudal landowners responsible to no one. As long as they paid tribute to Rome, they were inviolate. The system did not change under the Regency of Admiral Horthy, although the latter was a Protestant. Church and state were identical and it must have been a severe shock to Cardinal Mindszenty to find in 1945, that he was not always consulted when important political and social decisions were taken.

In 1945, 50 per cent of all schools belonged to and were controlled by the Catholic Church. The church was also the largest single landholder in the country, owning six per cent of all the arable land, just over one million acres. Most Hungarians, 60 per cent, are Catholic. Another 20 per cent are Presbyterians, 16 per cent Lutherans, but the Protestant churches were not large landowners and their political influence was negligible. Church institutions despite their enormous wealth were not self-supporting but were heavily subsidised by the state.

To understand more closely how this system worked, I paid a visit to the Abbe Istvan Justh, who lived in a large mansion at Felsoors, overlooking Lake Balaton. I knew that Justh had been a large landowner, and was responsible for various churches and schools. I left him more mystified than ever as to the relations between church and state in the old days.

Abbe Justh received me cordially and seemed glad to be able to practise his excellent English on me and to offer me a cup of English tea. Justh was almost as angry about the regime as was the Cardinal, and with perhaps more direct personal reasons. The government had “robbed” him of 4,000 acres of land at Felsoors and at the neighbouring parish of Dinnyes. It appeared that the estates had been in the hands of the Batthyanyi family since the 15th century and Justh’s mother was a Countess Batthyanyi. They were what is known as “endowed” properties, and could only be passed on to a member of the family who

entered the church as priest or Abbe. Justh's accession to the properties was the most puzzling to me, when he explained that he had been an army officer in World War I. Afterwards, as he was in the line of succession for the estates, he changed his officer's uniform for a priest's soutane and inherited the fabulously wealthy estates.

An abbey, it seems, was founded by a Countess Batthyanyi in the 12th century, and later King Matthias Corvinus gave the lands to a priestly descendant of the Countess, who had been his tutor. The lands were taken away during the Reformation, but were restored to the Batthyanyi family during the Counter-Reformation.

The estate, as Justh explained it, was a completely autonomous enterprise. He sublet Felsoors to a tenant, the Dinnyes holdings were divided between two tenants. They worked it as large landholders and paid the rent to the abbe. The abbe himself lived like any other large country landlord, and converted the abbey into a fine modern home with electric light and sewerage. Families were hired out to the three tenants and worked for their food and lodging and the equivalent of about five pounds a year. Justh and the members of the Batthyanyi family who owned the properties before him had no obligations other than those of maintaining two churches and two schools in the two parishes — and for this they received large subsidies from the state. He was not responsible to any other church authority in Hungary, nor to the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs.

"I or my forebears made a trip to Rome every five years, and paid the Peter's Pence, but apart from that I had no official dealings with the church," he told me. "Bishoprics and abbeys were never required to contribute to the Hungarian Church. They and the various lay orders were quite autonomous undertakings."

The 1945 land reform however cut Abbe Justh down to a little over 100 acres. The 500 acres at Felsoors was mostly forest land, but 15 families were given ten acres each of arable land, another 35 given plots of land for building.

"Even my 100 acres they are taking gradually away from me," complained the Abbe as we strolled around the grounds of his mansion to admire his pet donkey, "there's a new law now that a landowner can only have as much land as he can conveniently work himself. The rest must be rented out to the former labourers for a nominal rent."

"What about your relations with people in the village, now that you're a middle class farmer abbe and no longer a powerful landowner? Do you have better contact now than before? Do more or less people come to church than before?"

"The communists would like to have closer cooperation with me," he answered. "They asked me the other day to attend the opening of a new school: they always ask me to attend any local festivities, but I am always able to find some reason or other for not attending. I don't want to lend the prestige of the church to any of their functions. Church attendances are perhaps even better than before. Communists still come to church and people who didn't used to come attend now because the church has become a political rallying point for them."

When I asked about specific anti-religious activities Abbe Justh said there were none and that compulsory teaching of religion in school still gave the church plenty of scope to influence the children. He was critical of the Cardinal and said the latter could have obtained much greater concessions from the state if he had played his cards correctly.

He then made a remark which I was to remember eighteen months later when Abbe Justh stood in a Hungarian Court and admitted having been a British agent since 1947, having worked with Mr. Edgar Sanders, sentenced by the same court to 13

years imprisonment for espionage and sabotage.

"The situation of the Church here, bad though it is," he said, "is still better than it is in Romania. I had some visitors here recently," and he added quickly, "but you must not say anything about that. They were passing through from Romania and they painted a dreadful picture of the difficulties of Catholics there."

In the Budapest Court in March 1950, Justh admitted to having been paid 3,000 forints (almost one hundred pounds) for sheltering some British agents from Romania, while they passed illegally through Hungary to Austria in the summer of 1948.

The Abbe Justh, a big man with a large Roman nose dominating his face, impressed me at the time as a much more intelligent and cultured man than Cardinal Mindszenty, a man who could have been a more dangerous opponent of the government than the vain and foolish cardinal. But Abbe Justh could not get used to living as a modest small land owner. Partly for money, partly, as he told the court, because he belonged to one of the noblest families in Hungary, he became a paid British agent and is now serving a ten years' prison sentence in Hungarian jails.

The Abbe was a fine connoisseur of wines and as I left him, he begged me to return the following month when the new wines would be ready.

With even abbes living in medieval splendour until 1945, it is small wonder that the organized church opposed every reform the government tried to introduce. At first, however, the Bishops laid low. They partly believed the propaganda of Horthy and his successors that if the Bolsheviks came, all priests and bishops would have their throats cut, the nuns raped, cathedrals turned into anti-God museums and churches into roystering taverns. When the Soviet Army chased out the Germans and none of these things happened, immediately the church leaders began to fawn on the Soviet leaders and the Leftist government.

A statement was issued by all the Hungarian Catholic Bishops on May 24, 1945, which said, "We have observed that the Soviet military command has paid considerable attention to religious life. Our church buildings stand and divine services are performed without interference." That statement holds good in 1950 too. There has not been the slightest interference with the exercise of religious functions in Hungary.

As the time went by, however, the Hierarchy saw that nothing unpleasant was planned against the church, that no throats were cut, there were no rapings and no desecrations of church properties. On the contrary, communist-led brigades helped repair scores of village churches and in several cases completely rebuilt them. The government church-leaders became more aggressive and opened the counter-attack shortly after Mindszenty was appointed Cardinal in September 1945.

Elections were to be held in November 1945, and on the last Sunday before polling day, Mindszenty let loose a pastoral letter, which partly in veiled terms, partly openly, attacked everything the coalition government had done. And in this government, communists were in a decided minority. He attacked the institution of the republic, attacked land reform, attacked the policy of punishment of war criminals. He launched a bitter attack on the laws which liberalized divorce procedure. In the past it had been virtually impossible to obtain a divorce at all in Hungary.

"It is our greatest sorrow and our most cruel wound," wrote the Cardinal in his election-eve pastoral letter, "that the provisional Hungarian government has loosened considerably the indissolubility of marriage... What can we expect of the democracy, of those parties which, without authorization and competency, presume to interfere with so fundamental a pillar of healthy communal life?" The whole letter was a direct church intervention in the election and aroused the hostility of all except the most bigoted Catholics or those who expected their

estates to be restored by the Cardinal's western allies. From that day on, despite repeated friendly overtures from the various governments, Mindszenty carried on a ceaseless war against the state.

The church was left with more privileges in Hungary than it enjoyed in most Western countries. After the land reform, bishoprics were still left with 300 acres, abbeys with 100 and rural parishes were allotted between 15 and 30 acres. For many of the smaller clergy this was more than they had owned in the past. The state, even after the predominantly communist regime was elected in 1947, still offered to subsidise the church, but with decreasing payments for twenty years, by which time the church was supposed to make itself self-supporting, as it is in most countries. The Protestant churches gladly accepted this arrangement. Mindszenty himself was given a salary equal to that of the Prime Minister, archbishops fifty per cent more than that of a Cabinet Minister, Bishops the same as Cabinet Ministers, and lower grades of clergy correspondingly high salaries. There was no interference with the church seminaries, religious instruction was compulsory in the schools. (It was only in late 1949 that this was abolished and religious instruction put on a voluntary basis.)

To suggest that there was any interference with religious processions or with those of the faithful who wished to attend Sunday services was nonsense. The feast of St. Stephens which coincided with the Youth Festival in Budapest in 1949 was attended with the same fervour as in previous years. Indeed this was used as propaganda by the church as "a courageous expression of faith by the believers." Churches in town and country are still well attended on normal Sundays and packed out for any special occasions. Certainly it is mostly the older men and womenfolk who attend, but this is due to natural causes and certainly not to any threat of persecution by the government.

Processions and special festivities were always advertised well beforehand in the Catholic papers as if to challenge the government to try and stop them, but no obstruction was ever put in their way. The government has never interfered with the exercise of purely religious functions. On the other hand it has invited the church to participate in various constructive functions in which the church and its followers could take part, without any sacrifice of religious principles.

It was Cardinal Mindszenty however, who forbade in a Pastoral Letter any Catholic Youth organization to take part in the great project to build a canal between Hungary's two major rivers, the Danube and the Tisza. The government had appealed for volunteer youth brigades to help with this project. In the first year after Hungary's currency reform the government spent more money repairing and rebuilding churches than it did on building clinics, but this was not met with reciprocal gestures on the part of the church headed by Mindszenty. When the Catholic Boy Scouts groups started to cooperate with other youth organizations of which Cardinal Mindszenty disapproved, he dissolved the Boy Scouts. His policy was to isolate the church and Catholics as a whole from any movement which spelt progress.

When members of the National Teachers' Union were given the opportunity to discuss the project for nationalizing the schools, Cardinal Mindszenty threatened to excommunicate any Catholic teacher who even took part in the discussions, and any parents who dared advocate secularized education. He refused to allow the monks and nuns from the teaching orders to use the new textbooks prescribed by the Hungarian Minister of Education. Mindszenty was determined to preserve the church as a state within the state, a law unto itself, responsible neither to the government nor to the electors; a state responsible only to Cardinal Mindszenty. Priests who opposed his wishes

were excommunicated. The churches gradually became centres of political intrigue and propaganda rather than places of worship. Peasants and workers were taught that the new, brighter life they were living was sinful. For the peasants it was a mortal sin that they had laid hands on the property of the former landowners. The workers were told obliquely that they sinned in working at the benches of factories whose owners had been expropriated. The parish priests told them privately that they would soon be punished when the British and Americans came.

In the background, the Cardinal was quietly intriguing. Foolish, vain and impudent, he became a willing tool of the Americans who would not have hesitated to brush him and his hero, Otto of Hapsburg, aside, as soon as they had played their roles of opening the frontiers of Hungary to American forces. The Cardinal's hopes and plans were laid bare in the trial which completely discredited Mindszenty in Hungary but aroused violent passions abroad.

CHAPTER SIX
THE TRIAL OF CARDINAL MINDSZENTY

There had never been a trial in world history like that of Cardinal Mindszenty and Prince Paul Eszterhazy. The last Cardinal to face a court was Cardinal Wolseley in England in 1530. But that was a trial with all the pomp and ceremony that sixteenth century England could command. Powdered wigs and scarlet ruffles and maces, courtiers and dandies. And in the end a Cardinal sentenced to death.

Here in the People's Court in Marko Street in Budapest there was a minimum of ceremony and no trappings at all. Except for the uniformed guards only four people were not in civil dress and they were the Cardinal, his secretary, Dr. Zakar; Dr. Baranyai, Dr. Bela Ispanky. They all wore priestly dress and the Cardinal his ruby cardinal's ring. The courtroom itself was small and rather gloomy. The prisoners sat on a long bench opposite the panel of five judges, separated from each other by grey uniformed prison guards with purple bands round their caps.

First the Cardinal, morose, ill at ease and glowering, but in a slightly obsequious way. Next to him, Dr. Baranyai, ruddy faced with twinkling eyes behind his glasses, looking like an irritable university professor. Prince Paul, tall, languid, fair moustache, and the long hooked nose and blue eyes which are the distinguishing marks of the Eszterhazy family. Completely self-possessed and in a way dignified. Zakar, well satisfied with himself, smiling and seemingly on good terms with the prison guards. The others were relatively unimportant except perhaps the sleek Bela Ispanky. Their roles were incidental to those of the chief accused. Toth, of the Catholic Action Society, had to listen to all the proceedings with a hearing aid.

Mindszenty and Eszterhazy represented the most powerful

forces in Central Europe for centuries. After the church, Eszterhazy was the greatest landowner in Hungary. The church and the aristocracy were brought to bay before a People's Court. Sitting alongside the one professional judge, Vilmos Olti, were representatives of the political parties and trade unions, all in ordinary civilian clothes. Between the accused and their judges on the right sat the counsels for the defence. On the left was State Prosecutor Gyula Alapi, swarthy with close-cropped black hair and a sonorous accusing voice. Judge Olti, who directed the proceedings, is a youngish, pleasant-looking man, whose friendly manner inspires the accused with confidence, but who is liable at any moment to whip in a sharp question which will trip up the unwary if he has not been telling the truth.

The accused were all brought in together to be sworn in, then they left the room except the one to be interrogated. The Cardinal looked physically just as he did when I interviewed him four months previously, but there was a change. Some of the arrogance was missing. Correspondents were seated ten to twelve feet behind the accused, and it was particularly interesting for me to sum up in those first few minutes my impressions of the Cardinal compared to those of my visit — and I was the last correspondent to see him before he was arrested.

I was reminded of the bully who used to tease me at school, and the expression on his face when he was faced with his superior in weight and punch power in the school playground. An expression which reflected shame, defiance, fear and appeal for mercy all at the same time. And that was the expression on the Cardinal's face, as he stood and waited for the questions to start, his hands folded in front of him, leaning slightly forward as though obsequiously eager to catch every word the Judge spoke.

To understand Cardinal Mindszenty's behaviour in the Court, one must delve a little into his personal background

and into the functions of a Cardinal in Hungary. For a thousand years a Cardinal held the next highest rank to a King. The Kings of Hungary, from the year 1000 when Stephen was crowned by Pope Sylvester, were always crowned by the Cardinal with the Holy Crown of St. Stephen. The Rev. Nicholas Boer, a great admirer and apologist of Cardinal Mindszenty, explained the position of a Hungarian cardinal in his book, *Cardinal Mindszenty*.

"The Primate is the Premier Prince of Hungary. He ranks immediately after the King as head of state. His office is the highest under the constitution. His rights were laid down in legislation dating back to St. Stephen and the eleventh century. He is the sole person entitled to crown a king and thereby is in immediate relationship with the Holy Crown of Hungary and the whole constitutional principle connected with it. The constitutional idea of the Holy Crown is a unique creation of Hungarian law, whose roots go back to the fourteenth century. It was fully developed by Stephen Verboczy in his famous Tripartium, written in the sixteenth century. In its essence the Principle of the Holy Crown of Hungary declares that in Hungary the source of all rights is the Holy Crown, which unites the whole country, people and soil in a mystical body. The Holy Crown consists of two parts, the head, i.e., the king, and the members. Up to 1848 only the nobility was included in the latter; since 1848 it is the whole nation." (The liberal revolution of 1848 under Louis Kossuth, which dealt the first heavy blow to feudalism in Hungary — and at the Hapsburg domination — was always severely condemned by Cardinal Mindszenty. — Author.)

The significance which Boer attaches to the Holy Crown is interesting in view of revelations during the trial. Neither Boer nor Mindszenty accepted the necessity for any changes in the role of a Hungarian Cardinal from the eleventh century on-

wards.

Mindszenty or Joseph Pehm, which is his real name, was a Schwabian of German origin. Until 1944, he was an ordinary priest and his parish was part of Prince Paul Eszterhazy's estates. Ten days after the setting up of the Szalasi fascist government, on March 25, 1944, Pehm was made Bishop of Veszprem, a quick promotion for a parish priest with no particular talents. He was nominated by the Papal Nuncio to Hungary, Msgr. Angelo Rotta.

After the end of the war Mindszenty posed as a hero of the resistance movement because he was arrested by the Szalasi fascists and interned for four months. When Mindszenty began to emerge as a leader of opposition to the government, he was immediately built up in the Western press as a martyr who had suffered for his faith under the nazis. In fact, as Mindszenty later told the Court and as is proven by documents in the hands of the Hungarian government, Mindszenty was not arrested for political or religious reasons, but over a dispute concerning requisition of property.

"My arrest on October 21, 1944 was not for political reasons," Mindszenty told the Court, "but because Ferenc Schiberna, Lord Lieutenant for the County of Veszprem, had found 1,800 pairs of shirts and pants, close on 100,000 pengoes worth, hoarded in my palace, and because I had a disagreement with him over the requisitioning of accommodation. For this reason he interned me."

Before the Russian troops liberated Mindszenty he wrote several letters proving his right-wing sympathies in order to try and secure his release, and pointing out that the Vatican had been the first to recognize the Szalasi regime.

In October 1945, Mindszenty was appointed by the Pope Archbishop of Esztergom which carried with it the automatic title of Cardinal, Prince Primate of Hungary. For 25 years he

had worked as a parish priest at Zalaegerszeg — and then within the space of eighteen months he rocketed from priest to Bishop, from Bishop to Cardinal. A meteoric rise to such heights was enough to make even a stronger character than Mindszenty dizzy with success. But the Cardinal saw even greater fame ahead. A Cardinal has the right to crown a King, Mindszenty was an ardent admirer of the Hapsburgs all his life — a pronounced Monarchist, or Legitimist as supporters of the Hapsburgs are called in Hungary. From priest to bishop, bishop to Cardinal, with American help crowner of kings and emperors... and perhaps the next step to be called to Rome as Pope. Such dreams went like new wine to his head; his newfound American friends supported and encouraged his dreams. The Holy Crown of St. Stephen was in American hands, the Pretender to the Hapsburg throne, Otto, was living in America. The Americans would make war on Russia, Mindszenty's friend inside the country would open wide the gates to greet the "liberating" American troops, Otto would come back, the Cardinal would set the Crown of St. Stephen on his head. Church and Crown would be united again, estates turned back to the Eszterhazys, Batthyanyis, Czirakys. Life would go back to the seventeenth, sixteenth, fourteenth centuries.

These dreams were rudely interrupted when officers of the Hungarian State Security Service called at the Primate's Palace one night and took the Cardinal away for investigation on charges of conspiracy against the Republic. This harsh reality was very difficult for the Cardinal to accept at first. He was aghast that the Hungarians would dare to arrest him, but certain that his American friends would soon rescue him. When that failed, he hoped that by admitting his guilt and expressing regret for those acts, clearly proven in the preliminary investigation by documents in the state prosecutor's hands, he could prevent the trial taking place.

Up to the last moment before the trial started it seems Mindszenty thought he would be released or rescued. It was only after he had completed his testimony that the prosecutor produced a letter which Mindszenty thought had been smuggled out of his room at the Marko Street Prison, to the U.S. Minister, Selden Chapin. It was obviously a great shock to Mindszenty when the letter was produced in Court. It had been written ten days before the trial started.

"Mr. Minister, you must take action by Thursday," wrote the Cardinal, "and I request you to do so, for a death sentence is likely and the trial will be pointed against America. They want to prove that I was paid by America for secret information. Please send a car and a plane, there is no other way out. With warmest regards. Mindszenty, January 23.

"P.S. — Please instruct Koczak immediately to meet the bearer of this letter today to discuss every detail. Mindszenty.

"P.S. — Please promise the pilot 4,000 dollars in the interest of the cause. I shall refund it. Mindszenty."

The first to be heard in the trial was Dr. Baranyai and the Cardinal's secretary, Dr. Andras Zakar. Although Baranyai pleaded not guilty, expert crossexamination by Judge Olti brought out a mass of damaging material which incriminated both Baranyai and the Cardinal. Baranyai was a lively personality who tried to deny every charge made against him, but he could not satisfactorily explain the documentary evidence. Some sections of the Western press, and especially the Catholic press, tried to present the trial as a fake, with the accused brought into court drugged and tortured, mumbling carefully rehearsed admission of guilt, expressions of repentance and pleas for mercy. Baranyai and Mindszenty on the contrary made use of their priestly training to try and wriggle out of every charge against them. They did not know what documents were in the possession of the prosecutor and Mindszenty, of course, had no idea

what Baranyai and Zakar had already revealed when he stood at the witness stand. Baranyai and Mindszenty were both rather indignant that the information they had given in the preliminary investigation would be repeated in the public court. They seemed to have regarded the investigator as a Father Confessor who would respect their confessions as confidential, as a good priest should. Baranyai was being questioned about a meeting with other Legitimists when they selected the new Royalist cabinet which should govern the country after the Americans had overthrown the Republic.

"Judge Olti: Now let us speak of the first meeting at the Csekonics' apartment. What was the object of that meeting? What was discussed there? Was it mentioned that you were to make reports on Legitimists working in the different Ministries and pass them on to Sandor Cserto, who would hand them on to Jozsef Mindszenty?

"Baranyai: This was not mentioned here.

"Olti: But you yourself said so in your statement to the police during the investigation — here it is.

"Baranyai: Are those the minutes of the investigation?

"Olti: Yes. Is this your signature?

"Baranyai: Yes.

"Olti: Please look at the text also.

"Baranyai: Well, if you please, this was not drafted by me.

"Olti: But it is your statement which was taken down. The minutes which are kept by the clerks of the Court now are not drafted by you either.

"Baranyai: I made this statement in the belief that only the minutes kept at the trial would be of importance.

"Olti: Then you do not confirm what is written here?

"Baranyai: No. I was late at the meeting because of official duties."

Dr. Baranyai then went on to discuss details of what hap-

pened at the meeting after he arrived, how responsibility for propaganda work was divided up among the various members of the Legitimist circle; of how each was allotted a certain number of counties in which to recruit new adherents, of how a shadow cabinet was drawn up with himself as Minister President.

"Olti: Now in the spring of 1945 you prepared a plan in case the democratic state were overthrown here and a vacuum would have to be filled. Your plan named the persons who were to take over power and how they were to do it. Is that correct?

"Baranyai: Please permit me to go back a little in time. The possibilities of solving the present world conditions; as everybody knows and sees that these conditions cannot last...

"Olti: Now what exactly do you mean by this? That different forms of state are evolving?

"Baranyai: I speak of world politics. I feel that the tension existing between East and West...

"Olti: The international political tension will evidently be solved sooner or later.

"Baranyai: Sooner or later. But it may well occur that the tension is solved by means of war. Well if this should happen through a war — this was our first supposition. Secondly if at the end of the hostilities the Western powers should come out victorious. The third supposition was that the Americans might take over here as military occupation authorities. The whole plan which figured in my confession and the documents were based on these suppositions only. The proclamation, the list of cabinet members, and the plan to found a party.

"Olti: And do you think it right that high ranking clerical personalities should speculate on war?

"Baranyai: I beg your pardon...

"Olti: And not only speculate but prepare for it?

"Baranyai: No, I don't think it right at all."

Baranyai strenuously denied throughout however that he

had actually helped to bring war about. He maintained he only made plans should the war start. He read to the Court a memorandum he had sent to Mindszenty!

"When the great vacuum has come about (sic, the overthrow of the Hungarian Republic) the first most important and difficult problem will be the institution of a regime resting on an ethical basis. It would be a political impossibility to base ourselves on the ruins of defeated Bolshevism. Only one point of departure would carry in itself the possibility of evolution — the Prime Primate. The dignity of the Prince Primate is consecrated in this country by the traditions of almost a thousand years. According to ancient national laws the Prince Primate is the repository of the King's power in his absence. He seems to be the only acceptable and competent authority to appoint a new government, like the Metropolitan of Athens, two years ago. He would have to appoint the new government at the beginning of the American occupation. The government appointed by him must naturally accept this decision without reservations, without manoeuvres, unconditionally and honestly. Here there are names..." (and follows the list of the proposed cabinet).

This document, like so many others produced in Court, was contained in a tin cylinder buried by Dr. Zakar, on instructions from the Cardinal, in a cellar in the Cardinal's Palace at Esztergom. Zakar disclosed the hiding place to the police a few days after he was arrested.

Zakar filled in the details of Mindszenty's intrigues with Otto and Spellman in New York. He was taken to the United States and Canada as secretary and interpreter to the Cardinal. He was not present at the hour-long interview between Otto and Mindszenty, but was present at the interview with Cardinal Spellman where Mindszenty gave a detailed account of his meeting with Otto. With Zakar's statement on the court record, it was difficult for Mindszenty to deny his meeting with

Otto or the details of his conversation with him when he was later questioned on these points. Zakar also gave details about meetings between the Cardinal and the U.S. Minister to Hungary, Mr. Chapin, about reports prepared for the U.S. Legation, and collected, usually late at night, by the First Secretary, Mr. Koczak. Zakar himself prepared the reports which were compiled from data selected by himself and material handed him directly by the Cardinal.

An amusing sidelight was presented by Zakar when he described Cardinal Mindszenty bartering a car with the Vatican Radio Station for space on the air for Hungarian language broadcasts. The car was one of three bought by Mindszenty during his trip to the United States.

"Olti: Tell me please, why did Jozsef Mindszenty give a car to the Vatican Radio Station? After all, there were the dollars. There were many dollars; why did you leave this car there?

"Zakar: Well, partly in order to... to bring home the dollars.

"Olti: But you did not bring them home and the car was left behind also.

"Zakar: On the other hand, and this was the main point, because the director of the Vatican Radio named this concretely as something they needed.

"Olti: Yes. And what did the Vatican Radio give in return.

"Zakar: This was not, so to speak, a formal deal. But the Prince Primate declared that there are news broadcasts in every tongue and why not in Hungarian. The director said there is not enough coal in Rome and not enough money either, and not enough cars to bring over the individual speakers on schedule for the program.

"Olti: And this is what it was needed for?

"Zakar: So the Prince Primate thought it best that he donate a car.

"Olti: So he left it there. And what happened after this?

“Zakar: Then they started Hungarian news broadcasts.” Zakar concluded his evidence by relating the numerous black-marketing activities of the Cardinal in bringing dollars into the country without declaring them, and selling them at high rates on the black market.

As noted earlier the Cardinal thought he could avoid being brought to trial by a repentant statement addressed to the Minister of Justice a few days before the trial was due to start.

“Dear Sir,” he wrote, “I beg the Minister of Justice to consider this announcement, or request. For some time publicly and repeatedly, there had been raised against me the complaint that I stand in the way of an agreement between state and church, and that my attitude is hostile to the present order of the state. As for the former, it is a fact that I always emphasized the prerequisites. Now I want to contribute to an improvement in the general situation. Before the trial which is soon to open, I voluntarily admit that I have committed the acts I am charged with according to the penal code of the state. In the future I shall always judge the external and internal affairs of the state on the basis of the full sovereignty of the Hungarian Republic.

“After this admission and declaration the trial regarding my person does not seem to be absolutely necessary, therefore, not because of my person, but considering my position, I ask that my case be exempted from the trial on February 3. Such a decision more than anything else would facilitate a solution, even more than the wisest judgement of the Court.

“After 35 days of constant meditation, I also declare that apart from other reasons, it may have been due to my attitude as described above that reconciliation has been delayed; and also that I consider the establishment of true peace between the state and the church necessary, as long as it has not been made. I, too, would take part in the realization of the reconciliation, according to the teachings of laws of the church, were there not com-

plaints against me just in this respect. But in order that I should not be an obstacle to reconciliation and that all efforts should be concentrated on avoiding the usual material obstacles, I declare hereby, of my own accord, without any compulsion, that I am ready to withdraw for a time from exercising my office.

"If the wisdom of the Bench of Bishops considers it best to make peace, I do not wish to stand in the way at all. Even at the Apostolic Holy See, which has the last word in the matter, I would not oppose the materialization of the cause of peace. I make this statement in the knowledge that a true state of peace can be only to the good of both the state and the church and without it the life of the country is threatened by discord and decay.

"Please accept my sincere respect.

"Jozsef Mindszenty,
"Cardinal."

The Court decided, however, after a short recess, that the Cardinal would stand trial with the rest of the accused. Mindszenty had played his last card and failed! He tried to make the best of a bad job, however, in Court by evasions and half replies, by an amazingly poor memory when it served his purpose. Asked whether he pleaded guilty or not guilty, he answered, in low, measured tones:

"To the extent that I did commit a considerable part of the activities charged to me in the indictment, or as I indicated in my letter to the Minister of Justice, which you kindly read out this morning, substantially, to that extent I feel guilty. What I have done, I do not wish to try and place in a favourable light. Of course this does not mean that I accept the conclusion of the indictment. For example with regard to the offences mentioned in Section A, I do not deny one or another part of it, but I do not subscribe to the conclusion that I might have been involved in the planning of the overthrow of the democratic State and

the Republic, even less as the indictment states, that I might have played the leading role."

He admitted to having had an anti-Jewish attitude even as a young priest after Judge Olti read some newspaper articles he had published in 1919; and admitted also that he was a supporter of the Hapsburgs and that he had strongly protested to Prime Minister Tildy in December 1945 at the proposed abolition of the Monarchy. He could not remember what he had written to Tildy but Judge Olti refreshed his memory by reading the original letter in which the Cardinal wrote:

"I understand the National Assembly will soon place constitutional reforms on the agenda, among them the question of the Republic, the plan to put an end to the thousand-year-old Monarchy. If this is true... I protest against such plans on the basis of legal rights exercised by Hungarian Primates for more than 900 years."

Mindszenty was determined from first to last to give nothing away that the state prosecutor did not know. He always waited with his replies for the Judge to put his cards on the table. There was at no time anything like the blind confession as suggested by Cardinal Spellman and sections of the Western press. When he made admissions, they were only when he was confronted by overwhelming evidence. Otherwise he "couldn't remember"!

For example:

"Olti: Did you know of a memorandum prepared by Baranyai for the American government to be signed by four persons, in which the restoration of the Hapsburgs was advocated?

"Mindszenty: I know of a memorandum, but I don't know who signed it.

"Olti: And yet you sent a special message to Baranyai insisting that Baron Ullman should sign it as a fourth signatory?

“Mindszenty: Yes, that is so.

“Olti: In fact such a memorandum was drawn up. Did you discuss it with Baranyai, and what did it contain?

“Mindszenty (after a short pause): I don’t remember its contents any more.”

He tried to hedge also on the question of the Holy Crown, which was taken to Germany by the retreating fascist forces of Szalasi. Mindszenty was counting on placing the Crown on the head of Otto Hapsburg and he wanted to keep it in a safe place till the time arrived. Judge Olti produced a letter, however, from Mindszenty to the U.S. Minister, Selden Chapin, and the latter’s original reply, asking that the crown should not be returned to Hungary but to Rome. “Since the cause is a very important one for our nation and since demands for its return and military advances might be fatal for the Crown, only Rome could reassure us.”

Mindszenty’s naive belief in the imminent advance of the U.S. military forces into Hungary was reflected again in that letter. In any case he had no business to go over the head of the Hungarian government in the matter of this very valuable and historic relic of the Hungarian people, but in the court, Mindszenty would not admit he had committed an illegal act.

“Olti: It shows that this was an illegal method and illegal activity against the state. Wasn’t it?

“Mindszenty: I’m sorry that I did not think at that time to turn to the government for help.”

On the question of having prepared regular reports for the U.S. Legation and even requests for U.S. intervention in Hungarian affairs, Mindszenty asked to be permitted to make a statement.

“As announced before,” he said, “I accept the evidence before the Court and regret having dispatched these documents. The documents themselves should be divided into three parts.

A smaller portion of the first group was completed and addressed, but was never sent off; they are included amongst the documents here.

“Olti: Will you please state if any of them were not sent.

“Mindszenty: Well then, the major part was actually sent. The primary aim of these letters was not to expose faults or to do harm or to blacken people. My intention was to help but I chose the wrong way to do the right thing. At any rate it would have been better not to have dispatched those letters. I regret having sent them and in the future I shall never depart from my basic principle — pointed out in my letter to the Minister of Justice — to observe the external and internal policy of the Hungarian state in the light of its complete sovereignty. Please accept this statement.

“Olti: We shall put it on the record and shall consider its value.”

The judge then read extracts from a number of the letters, one of which urged American intervention in the case of public officials dismissed because of their fascist past. In another letter the Cardinal wrote: “I request the help of America to put an end to the tremendous oppression and decay here, so that the unfortunate Hungarian people can be preserved for Western civilization. A solution is possible with outside help. I could indicate the ways and means of this evidence supporting my contention is at my disposal...” Mindszenty confirmed having sent an appeal to the British and Americans to send military forces into Hungary in 1946. In all these cases, the documentary evidence was overwhelming, the Cardinal seemed to have inherited the German thoroughness for filing away copies of all letters and reports.

After Mindszenty had given some meagre details of his conversations with Cardinal Spellman and Otto Hapsburg in New York (Otto denied that he met Mindszenty in the United

States), to prepare the way for Otto's return as soon as America had won the next war, the Judge tried to pin Mindszenty down on the question of his activities towards fomenting a war.

"Olti: Did you inform Otto of the situation, the activities and strength of the Hungarian Legitimists?

"Mindszenty: I spoke of that. At this meeting I spoke of that.

"Olti: Was he interested in the prospects of the Legitimist movement?

"Mindszenty: I told him I did not think the moment was ripe at that time.

"Olti: But that is not reflected in this drawing up of a list of Cabinet members, in preparing for a Regency, yourself becoming provisional head of the state, in planning the whole setup in an hour-long conference with Otto. In a matter which one thinks premature, one does not negotiate, one does not plan.

"Mindszenty: In the spring of that year, at that time it was still strongly rumoured in public opinion that an historic change might come about.

"Olti: A third world war?

"Mindszenty: A third world war. That is what they were discussing.

"Olti: You were thinking of a third world war so you could establish a system of government here which would suit you instead of concentrating all your strength here and abroad to prevent the outbreak of such a third world war.

"Mindszenty: I beg your pardon, Mr. President, I was not working for a third world war.

"Olti: The premise, this desire was the condition sine qua non.

"Mindszenty: In any case, I, as a Hungarian, dread a third world war.

"Olti: But the whole plan is based on this. You thought of a

new sea of blood. The war would break out and the Anglo-Saxon powers would win.

"Mindszenty: These ideas gained ground among the people.

"Olti: But, if you please, was there any step taken, was there even one stroke of the pen made against the outbreak of war, for the lessening of international tension?

"Mindszenty: We did so, for we always prayed for peace.

"Olti: But at the same time you drafted a whole series of petitions aimed at making the international situation worse, is that not so?

"Mindszenty: Yes, that is so."

On two other points Judge Olti drove Mindszenty into a corner and had him begging for mercy. His incisive questioning prodded the Cardinal out of every fresh position he took refuge in until he finally begged Olti not to question him further or took refuge in his oft-repeated phrase, "I've already said I'm sorry for that." One such point was the question of Mindszenty leaving the country.

"Olti: In November, 1948, Chapin came to see you at Esztergom at your request in the company of Koszak. What did you talk about then? You conferred for about three-quarters of an hour. You discussed...?

"Mindszenty: I mentioned how strong a campaign there is against me in the press and in other ways. And then we discussed...

"Olti: And what sort of statement did Chapin make? That he too had noticed this?

"Mindszenty: ...He had noticed, had seen it and... he brought up the proposal that... (and the Cardinal paused a moment)... that I should go abroad.

"Olti: And he would help you in this...?

"Mindszenty: It seemed that he would not refuse to...

"Olti: Do not give such diplomatic answers, but answer

straightforwardly. Did he offer that in case you decided to take this step he would help you, or did he say that he would not help you?

"Mindszenty: Is it absolutely necessary that I give an answer?

"Olti: No, you don't have to answer a single question. Court procedure permits you not answering but perhaps you are taking away from yourself a point of defence, something that it is my duty to call to your attention. You are not obliged to answer. If there is any question you do not wish to answer simply say, 'I do not wish to answer this.' But at the enquiry before the Prosecutor you did answer this question.

"Mindszenty: Yes.

"Olti: Do you wish to answer this?

"Mindszenty: Yes.

"Olti: Then please go ahead. Did he offer help to you to get out of the country?

"Mindszenty: He did offer, not that he would get me out, but that he would help me.

"Olti: That he would help in getting you abroad?

"Mindszenty: Yes.

"Olti: And what did you answer to this?

"Mindszenty: I said to this....

"Olti: Please speak louder....

"Mindszenty: ...That I would remain at home.

"Olti: After this did you not consider flight at all?

"Mindszenty: Please, your Honour, permit me not to answer.

"Olti: As you wish. You are not obliged to answer." The answer, of course, was the letter Mindszenty tried to smuggle out to the U.S. Minister. He did not know at this stage that the letter had been intercepted.

The question of black-market dealings in currency was an

embarrassing one for the Cardinal. He moistened his lips and looked around the courtroom when Judge Olti first touched on the currency offences. The small courtroom was packed, with relatives of the accused, correspondents and the ordinary public, workers, peasants, petty government officials, a cross section of the Hungarian population. Most of them were Catholics who a few weeks previously had regarded the Cardinal as their supreme spiritual leader. His moral stature was gradually destroyed before their eyes as he disclosed himself to be a clumsy intriguer who would not hesitate to plunge Hungary into a war and destroy everything that had been accomplished since 1945. Stripped of his scarlet and privileges, standing before the People's Court he appeared as a common criminal, a shifty parish priest caught out in anti-social crimes, trying to deny proven facts, shifting the blame on to others where he could. He was put to shame in his conduct in court by the more dignified Prince Eszterhazy and the fiery Dr. Baranyai who at least admitted openly much that they had done and spoke up in support of their own reactionary convictions. Mindszenty showed himself to be an enemy of the people in every one of his dealings, but in an oily speech at the end of the trial claimed he was never an enemy of the Hungarian workers or peasants. At the time when Hungary was struggling against an unprecedented inflation, when the state needed every ounce of foreign currency it could lay its hands on, Cardinal Mindszenty was trading with dollars on the black market.

Small wonder that he looked distressed and unhappy in some of the pictures taken of him during the trial, as details of his currency dealings were revealed.

Again he volunteered no information, everything had to be dragged out by Olti's questions.

"Olti: Let us consider the foreign currency offences. On your first trip to Rome in 1945, how many dollars did you get

from Under Secretary of State Montini?

"Mindszenty: 30,000...

"Olti: 30,000 dollars?

"Mindszenty: If I remember correctly.

"Olti: Would you rather have a rest or would you rather we continued the hearings? Can you follow?

"Mindszenty: I can. I shall answer as much as I can remember.

"Olti: Then let us proceed. Your second trip to Rome in 1946. On that occasion you received 10,000 dollars in one sum from the Holy See.

"Mindszenty: I did.

"Olti: There is an item of 3,000 dollars from Spellman, another 1,000 dollars from Gigan, one of 5,000 dollars from donations, according to Zakar.

"Mindszenty: That would be about right as far as I can judge.

"Olti: Then you purchased three motor cars for three or four thousand dollars.

"Mindszenty: Yes.

"Olti: You brought home with you 12,000 dollars. Is that correct? Did you report this to the National Bank?

"Mindszenty: I don't know.

"Olti: You don't know?

"Mindszenty: I don't know. I didn't handle the money at home.

"Olti: You gave it to Boka (manager of the Cardinal's estates).

"Mindszenty: Yes.

"Olti: I see. What did Boka do with the money? Obviously he changed it into forints. Is that so?

"Mindszenty: That is so.

"Olti: You were aware of the regulations concerning the

traffic in dollars as a foreign currency. I don't mean recent regulations but those in force for ten years.

"Mindszenty: I was.

"Olti: Please tell us, whenever you needed some cash and you had dollars, did you give instructions to sell so-and-so many?

"Mindszenty: Sometimes I did.

"Olti: Can you imagine that they would have sold part of the currency without your permission? Could Boka have done so for instance? Was he authorized to do so? Would he have dared to do so?

"Mindszenty: I don't know what he dared to do, but, if you please, I realize the mistakes and feel that...

"Olti: Please first answer the question then I shall listen to where you see the mistakes. Please answer me this: Was Boka authorized to trade or sell foreign currency without your knowledge?

"Mindszenty: From time to time I gave instructions to sell.

"Olti: You knew that he did not deliver and sell the dollars to the National Bank, that these dollars were not even registered at the Bank?"

Mindszenty (driven into a corner again), replied:

"Please, in my case, I take the blame for what happened. I have written to the People's Court concerning the paying back. Kindly separate the dollars that I personally handled from the currency charges against the others and the damage caused to the state...

"Olti: Whatever you did not handle, shall not, of course be charged against you.

"Mindszenty: ...I shall repay it as far as I am able.

"Olti: Over a period of two or three years you carried out a series of foreign currency deals. In my experience, the special court handling financial crimes has passed sentences of one or

two years imprisonment for amounts ranging from five to a hundred dollars. We never dreamed that there were dollar deals of this size going on. And that these should be carried out by the Archbishop of Esztergom! It is unprecedented in Hungarian jurisdiction that such enormous dollar amounts should be involved in speculation. Is this permissible according to Catholic ethics?"

Mindszenty swallowed before answering: "In any case I regret...

"Olti: Yes, you have said so before."

Altogether about 97,000 dollars were handled in the Cardinal's black market deals. Much of it had been subscribed by Hungarians in America for helping Hungarians at home who had suffered through the war. Part of the money was used to finance Mindszenty's agent in Rome, Mihailovics, who was in contact with American intelligence and to whom regular espionage reports were sent by the Catholic Action Society in Budapest. Some of the money, including a cheque of 5,000 dollars from Cardinal Spellman and endorsed by Mindszenty, was bought by Prince Eszterhazy and was smuggled through to Austria. The Cardinal got on the average four times the official rate for the dollar. To avoid suspicion he declared small amounts to the National Bank. On one occasion he registered 800 out of 15,000, on another occasion he declared 4,000 of 19,000, so there was no doubt that he knew the regulations regarding the declaration of foreign currencies.

Mindszenty was questioned for five hours by Judge Olti. He was repeatedly asked if he was tired, if he would like a break, but always answered that he felt fit. There were, however, two half-hour intervals during the session.

During those five hours, Judge Olti established for the court record from Mindszenty's own lips that the Cardinal conspired for the overthrow of the Hungarian Republic with

American help; that he openly demanded armed intervention; that he tried to ensure Hungary's defeat in the event of war by sending out espionage reports on questions of military, political and economic importance; that he plotted for the restoration of all estates up to 2,000 acres to their former owners; to re-establish fascist officials in office and drive out all Jews of public life; that on Cardinal Spellman's initiative, and without the knowledge or approval of the Hungarian government or Hungarian Catholics, he gave a written declaration appointing Otto Hapsburg the leader of all Hungarian Catholics in the event of Mindszenty himself being removed from office; that by secret correspondence with the U.S. Minister and U.S. Army authorities, he prevented the return of the historic Holy Crown to Hungary; that he had dealt extensively on the black market with currency speculation.

Many of these conclusions the Cardinal denied, but the facts and documents produced, the Cardinal's own testimony and that of his fellow-accused made it apparent to every observer in the Court that these conclusions were established.

CHAPTER SEVEN
JUSTICE EAST — JUSTICE WEST

Each of the accused in the Mindszenty trial behaved according to his background and character. If Mindszenty surprised everybody by his weakness, by not appearing as an accusing Dimitrov of the church as had been expected in the West, it was because few people knew anything about the character of the man. He had been built up purposely in the Western press on the sole ground that he was known as an uncompromising opponent of the progressive government. He was pictured as a twentieth century Savonarola, a man that would go to the stake for his beliefs. But he had never been put to a real test. When Szalasi's government arrested him in 1944, he behaved just as he did when the Republic arrested him. He wrote cringing letters trying to get out of the jail into which he had been thrown for protecting his property rights. In court he did not even have the courage to stick up for his convictions as a monarchist.

Very different from the Cardinal's display was that of the aristocrat, Prince Paul Eszterhazy. His crimes were mainly connected with large-scale black-marketeering, but he admitted that he paid Mindszenty above the normal black-market rate for dollars because he knew the Cardinal was engaged in a conspiracy to restore the Hapsburgs and needed money for the work.

Rather languid, stooping slightly, he gave his evidence in an aloof way and gave the impression that he was annoyed that he should be forced to discuss sordid money matters in a People's Court. His pale and rather beautiful wife sat in the Court, huddled up in a fur coat. She was usually the first to enter the public gallery and prayed for a few minutes before the trial started each day. The Prince told the court that before the 1945 land reform laws, he owned 250,000 acres of land and that at the time

he was arrested he estimated his fortune at 3,000,000 forints, about a quarter of a million dollars. He was, however, rather hazy about how much he owned or even the number of employees on his estate.

When Judge Olti asked him how he had tried to adjust himself to the new life in Hungary, Eszterhazy replied, "Until now I was busy with the liquidation of my fortunes. I have an office at 41 Jozsef Korut where I have an employee and a legal adviser, and from time to time we come across another small part of my property which can still be sold..."

He explained that when he was managing the estates, he employed 160 clerks and accountants to help him, but the estimates were so vast he had no clear picture of the total number of peasants or farmhands. "As the statistical reports on the estate are not at hand I couldn't recite them by heart."

Prince Paul was rather vague too when it came to the dollars he had bought from Mindszenty and other sources.

"Olti: You saved a certain amount of foreign currency during the siege? How much was that?

"Eszterhazy: I couldn't say off hand...

"Olti: About how much? You don't have to give an absolute, exact figure.

"Eszterhazy: The indictment says it was 11,000 dollars.

"Olti: Well, it seems evident that you must have mentioned that figure otherwise they wouldn't have put it down.

"Eszterhazy: Unfortunately it wasn't I who handled this sort of thing but my secretary, Dr. Horvath.

"Olti: Anyway you think this is the right figure?

"Eszterhazy: If he says so I accept it.

"Olti: You instructed your secretary Horvath in the autumn of 1945 to purchase further sums of dollars on the black market, after decree 8400/1946 was issued forbidding the purchase of foreign currency except through the legal channels of

the National Bank?

“Eszterhazy: Permit me to say in my defence that a great part of my fortune in Hungary was lost.

“Olti: A great part. But there was still much left. I don’t think anyone in this room would even dream of possessing three million forints. This is a tremendous fortune. Did you intend to liquidate your fortune in Hungary and move abroad to your estates in Austria or Bavaria?

“Eszterhazy: Theoretically I thought of this, but in practice I thought the time was not ripe.

“Olti: Ever since the autumn of 1946, your secretary, Dr. Horvath, was buying dollars on your instructions?

“Eszterhazy: Yes.

“Olti: At the end of 1947 Horvath reported he could buy cheques to the value of several thousand dollars from Jozsef Mindszenty? Is that true?

“Eszterhazy: It is.

“Olti: Did you know Jozsef Mindszenty personally? Did you know he was a Legitimist?

“Eszterhazy: I thought he was.

“Olti: Are you also a Legitimist?

“Eszterhazy: I don’t want to offend the existing form of government, but in my heart of hearts I must confess to being a Legitimist due to my ancestral background.

“Olti: In case of a Hapsburg restoration you could hope for much more favourable conditions for yourself than under the people’s democracy?

“Eszterhazy: Well, maybe I would have been given back part of my fortune.

“Olti: Yes. Well, when you heard that Jozsef Mindszenty had dollar cheques to the value of several thousand dollars and wanted to sell them, did you instruct your secretary to buy them?

"Eszterhazy: The matter was mentioned and I gave instructions.

"Olti: Was the price mentioned?

"Eszterhazy: It probably was but I don't remember.

"Olti: Do you remember whether the dollar price was higher than the black-market rate in those days?

"Eszterhazy: I suppose so.

"Olti: Why do you suppose so? Either you know it or you don't. On what do you base your supposition? Please explain.

"Eszterhazy: Foreign currency sold illegally is always sold at a higher price than the National Bank rate.

"Olti: I didn't ask you whether the price you paid was higher than the National Bank rate, but whether it was higher than the black market rate at that time?

"Eszterhazy: I think it was higher.

"Olti: You think it was higher. Now tell me, why should you have wanted to pay a higher price to Jozsef Mindszenty than you would have paid to a person unknown to you also engaged in selling dollars on the black market? Did you intend to assist Jozsef Mindszenty in this way?

"Eszterhazy: I thought that eventually the difference would be used for Legitimist purposes.

"Olti: Tell me, please, how many dollars in cheques did your secretary buy on your instructions?

"Eszterhazy: Even in my statement made to the police I was unable to give an exact answer to this. Then we reconstructed this with his help and if I remember well, it was 8,000 dollars.

"Olti: Yes, 8,000 dollars. That was the figure in the deposition.

"Eszterhazy: I received a warning indirectly that it would be advisable to send the cheques abroad.

"Olti: Was there an endorsement on the cheques?

"Eszterhazy: Yes, the signature of the last owner.

"Olti: Who was the drawer of the cheques?

"Eszterhazy: On two of them I believe it was Spellman, Archbishop of New York. The drawer of the third was someone else, an American clerical...

"Olti: An American clerical personality. You don't remember his name. And besides these did you have dollars brought from other sources than Jozsef Mindszenty? How many dollars in cheques and banknotes did you buy up and later send abroad?

"Eszterhazy: 11,000 dollars after the liberation, 18,000 before that, 29,000 altogether.

"Olti: 29,000 dollars. How did you send them abroad?

"Eszterhazy: Packed in a suitcase and with the help of a man who was in my employ and another one who is still in my employ, but they knew nothing about the dollars.

"Olti: Was it a double-bottomed suitcase specially made for this purpose?

"Eszterhazy: Yes. I had it specially made for the purpose."

Afterwards one of Prince Paul's employees testified in court that he had taken the suitcase over the frontier. He was obviously discomfited at having to give evidence against his former princely employer. Asked by the Judge if it were true that he had taken a suitcase abroad, he replied: "If you please, sir, not abroad, only to Austria." He was still living in the days of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

When he was asked if he did not know the suitcase contained dollars, he said he did not and Prince Paul got to his feet and said: "He and his family have served my family for generations. I order and he obeys. He was told to take the suitcase to Vienna and he did so. He knew nothing of the contents and I accept full responsibility for his actions."

Of the other three accused only Dr. Bela Ispanky, dean of a Catholic college, contributed really interesting evidence. Sleek and sly, he did his best with Jesuitical cunning to deny his guilt,

but he was branded as a cheap spy, who spied not for particular hatred of the regime in Hungary, but because he was paid in dollars for spying. His career, however, was not a long one. He was quickly found out and arrested. He was recruited by a French woman, Mme Pomrelot, who said she was an agent for the British Secret Service, and worked with Mihailovics, Mindszenty's Hungarian agent in Rome. She arrived in Budapest in September 1948 on the pretext of visiting the Autumn Fair. Her instructions were to contact Ispanky, and with his help recruit two agents, George Eszterhas, a member of the Catholic Action Society. Eszterhas refused to have anything to do with the project. Nagy accepted. Mme Pomrelot also brought the materials necessary to conduct secret correspondence, as Ispanky described during the questioning, when he told of a packet which Mme Pomrelot left with him.

"Olti: What happened next, what was in the package?

"Ispanky: The package contained two sheets of paper treated with chemicals, one for Dr. Eszterhas and another for Mr. Miklos Nagy.

"Olti: What was in it?

"Ispanky: Some chemical substance for developing the writing, two tubes of it.

"Olti: I see, two tubes of developing material, and what else?

"Ispanky: There were 200 dollars.

"Olti: 200 dollars. Did you open the packet while the lady was there?

"Ispanky: She opened it and gave it to me. She told me that if the two above-named gentlemen should come to see me, I was to tell them to use the chemically treated sheets...

"Olti: Louder please...

"Ispanky: ...which had been simply treated with wax, so that writing leaves no visible marks on it; they may cover the sheets with writing and if they make a chemical solution of the

pills in hot water and rub the sheets with the solution, the writing will become apparent.

"Olti: They were instruments used in secret writing, weren't they?

"Ispanky: Yes."

Ispanky decided himself he would become a spy as Eszterhas was unwilling. He opened the letter intended for Eszterhas.

"Olti: Let us go on.

"Ispanky: I found the letter of Mihailovics was most confusing, sometimes he would mention the Americans and then again the British, and at times he spoke about his intention of organizing a news agency himself.

"Olti (who had the original letters in front of him): It is all clearly stated there if you read the letters; he wanted a part of the news for the office where he would deal personally with them, to provide slanderous bits of news to the foreign press. But he also refers to another line, doesn't he?

"Ispanky: I don't remember.

"Olti: He intimated where the money for these news items came from and that there was another source which paid generously for useful information. They would pay any price. Is that so?

"Ispanky: As I merely glanced through the letters I cannot remember such details."

The Jesuit Dean eventually admitted sending out reports but tried to minimize their importance and to brush off the question that he sent them out under another name, written in secret ink and sent to a dummy address in Rome.

"Olti: So you forwarded the reports to Mihailovics, written with chemical ink, in a clandestine manner.

"Ispanky: This process was so simple...

"Olti: Simple, yet effective. To conceal secrets, just plain spying, I would call it. An honest person would only hear about

such things except in criminal trials.

“Ispanky: This was certainly no secret to the authorities for...

“Olti: To authorities dealing with spies, certainly not, but to the prefect of the St. Imre College, it certainly was. How did you send the reports abroad?

“Ispanky: By regular mail.

“Olti: By regular mail, but written in chemical ink.

“Ispanky: To be exact, on waxed paper.

“Olti: On waxed paper, so that if anyone looked at it, they merely saw an innocuous text under which the real, hidden text would be produced by the process described by the lady.

“Ispanky: If some official organ should have checked it and found it suspicious, it would have been enough to draw a line across the letter with any kind of dye or acid solution, and the writing would have been discovered.

“Olti: Do you think they do that, drawing lines across every single letter? All right! Did you write your name on the letters as sender?

“Ispanky: I wrote another address.

“Olti: You wrote another address. In this manner you sent off seven reports. Who prepared these seven reports?

“Ispanky: I prepared them, mostly from the news given to me by Laszlo Toth.

“Olti: You wrote them on an ordinary sheet of notepaper with some innocuous text on it. Did you write the ordinary text as well?

“Ispanky: I did.

“Olti: For instance what?

“Ispanky: Family matters...

“Olti: ‘My dear friend, grandmother is well,’ something like that, unimportant sentences.

“Ispanky: Neutral texts.

"Olti: To whom did you address them?

"Ispanky: I had received two neutral addresses in Rome.

"Olti: Did you know the people personally?

"Ispanky: No, I did not.

"Olti: You did not know them. Obviously they were the local members of a network of spies, is that a fact?

"Ispanky: The fact is that Mihailovics did not want to give his own address and that...

"Olti: Who gave you the addresses?

"Ispanky: The lady gave them to me before her departure."

Pressed to give an answer as to why he allowed himself to be recruited as a spy, why he had accepted the letters, chemical ink and dollars, Ispanky replied: "Please, Your Honour, the lady forced me to accept these things."

"Olti: How is this possible? How old was the lady?

"Ispanky: 45 to 50.

"Olti: You are a young man, how could she have forced you to take them? Why didn't you pick up the telephone and ask for the police 'to protect you from a secret agent who was forcing you to do things?'"

Ispanky did not apparently know that some of the reports had fallen into government hands. In court he pretended that they dealt only with church matters, but Olti was able to prove otherwise.

"Olti: Did you write the report in your own hand or on the typewriter?

"Ispanky: One could only write them in handwriting, with printed capital letters.

"Olti: With printed capitals only. I see. Would you please let us know some facts? For instance, what kind of information did you forward?

"Ispanky: The bulk of it referred to church policy.

"Olti (reading): Then there were also facts like this, 'All

men up to the age of 48 will be called up for military service.' Is that a church matter?

"Ispanky: Laszlo Toth had told me that on November 1, they would call up every man up to the age of 48.

"Olti: But you just said that you had supplied information on church policy and on matters concerning the church. I dare say the church does not draft soldiers... Let us go on. 'Several divisions of the armed forces were supplied with Russian arms.' Did you write that?

"Ispanky: Yes.

"Olti (picked up a document and started reading from it): 'Among others, I reported on the basis of my own activity that in the Vertes mountains they were searching for radioactive materials. A new runway was built in the Ferihegy airfield. In Magyarovar they were manufacturing shell fuses.'

"Ispanky: In this connection last summer I heard someone explain when offering cigarettes and striking a lighter that it was made in Magyarovar. It was a fuse lighter. He mentioned also that the Magyarovar factory was making such peacetime products for reparation deliveries.

"Olti: But why did you have to write all this abroad? Tell the Court why. Why did you report data concerning the cellulose requirements of the country and possibly military arrangements here? And you, a man with a doctor's degree, who spent years abroad on scholarship. Why, anybody would know that such information cannot be transmitted abroad. You also knew it, didn't you? Did you know that you were not supposed to pass it on? That by doing so you were acting disloyally to your country? Did you know it?

"Ispanky: I knew it."

The Americans, to whom most of this information was eventually going, must have been disillusioned in the quality of their informants when they read Ispanky's evidence. Lighter

flints become shell fuses. False reports on mobilization, false reports on Soviet equipment for "several divisions" of Hungarian troops!

I have quoted at considerable length from the evidence of the main accused to disclose not only its substance but the way in which it was extracted. Hate campaigns were whipped up against Hungary abroad by people who had not been near the courtroom. Accused were pictured as stumbling into the trial, bereft of their senses, reading prepared confessions at the top of their voices. They were supposed to have been prepared by drugs and injections beforehand, and if there was any break in their evidence, they were said to have been rushed from the room for another injection before they could carry on.

Actually in this trial, as in several others I have attended in Eastern Europe, the accused admitted just as much they knew was already known to the prosecutor. No trial has aroused such passions as that of Mindszenty and his accomplices. Mr. Truman denounced it as "infamous" and said it was held in a "kangaroo" or mock court. Mr. Bevin — forgetting Britain's traditional hostility to any attempt at political intrigues by the Catholic Church and that Catholics in England were banned from sitting in the British Parliament from the time Cardinal Wolseley was executed in 1530, till the Catholic Emancipation Act in 1823 — rushed to the defence of Mindszenty and his colleagues, denouncing the trial as a farce. Mass meetings were whipped up in New York and London, where Mindszenty was pictured as a martyr second only to Jesus Christ himself.

In an action almost unparalleled in the history of British foreign secretaries, Bevin sent a message to a meeting in the London Albert Hall in which he said that not Mindszenty but the Hungarian government was on trial. It took the official organ of the Vatican, *Osservatore Romano*, to squash some of the wilder comments of the trial by repudiating the stories of drugs

and tortures and saying that Cardinal Mindszenty had "admitted what was true and denied what was false." Mindszenty had also denied much that was true. Hungarian newspapers were accused of having prejudged the trial by attacking the Cardinal before the case came to court. British and American papers, however, had certainly prejudged the trial and published fantastic reports of torture and drugs beforehand.

A new sinister drug was used on the Cardinal, they claimed. Aktedron, the "truth drug." In fact, as I discovered the day I arrived for the trial, Aktedron can be bought at all chemists' shops in Budapest without prescription. It is the Hungarian version of Benzedrine. Three tablets helped me sit out the first long day in court after having travelled for three days to reach Budapest from Berlin.

Certainly, court procedure is different in Hungary to that in England and America, and it may be useful at this stage to explain just what happens to a suspect arrested in Hungary. It is important to understand, however, that this is not a procedure introduced since Hungary became a people's democracy, nor is it a procedure peculiar to Hungary. It is the normal routine of courts over almost the whole continent of Europe, including France. One can dispute the merits of this procedure as compared to that followed in English or American courts, but to suggest that it is a sinister technique invented by communists in Eastern Europe is ridiculous. Why are there always admissions of guilt? Why do defence counsels put up such a poor defence? How are confessions obtained? At least some of these questions can be answered. Methods used to obtain statements during police investigations may always be suspect, and a whole literature has sprung up about this particular subject in the United States where "third degree" methods of extracting information are regarded as normal.

An accused in Hungary, or Bulgaria or Austria, as far as

that is concerned, can be legally held for questioning for an unlimited period. In an espionage case, or conspiracy, where numbers of people are involved, obviously each one interrogated may implicate others. Until all the suspects have been rounded up, none will be brought to trial. Each one arrested contributes new facts to the case, suggesting fresh points for questioning those first arrested. Questioners work in teams of highly intelligent men and women with a good knowledge of psychology, a high standard of political education. In crimes of a political nature, their first task is to convince the accused of the extent of their crime against the people, they are made to feel ashamed of themselves. A picture is presented of the sufferings of the common people in the past, the ravages of war, the promising new life which is being built. The questioners are fervent believers in the new state. Part of their work is to convert the accused to their views, to get them into an emotionally ashamed state of mind.

Pastor Angel Dinev, sentenced to one year's suspended sentence at the Pastor's trial in Sofia, told me that the teams who questioned him were composed of young, highly intelligent men.

"The statement I made in court about how well treated I was, was quite sincere," he told me. I was waiting for him at his modest little home in the outskirts of Sofia when he returned from the prison. His wife, little daughter Lilia, with a brand new ribbon in her hair, and half a dozen neighbours, were all crowded round the kitchen stove waiting for the pastor to return. They were eager listeners to his account of nearly three months in jail — "I had been afraid of communists previously," he said, "but they treated me well. They are honest people that I could work with.

"They didn't argue with me about politics, but they gave me lots of books to read, and their questions always followed a

certain political line. Altogether I read 40 books while I was in prison, most of them about socialism."

"Were you beaten, tortured? Were you threatened that your wife's ration card would be taken away unless you talked?"

The ruddy-faced young pastor laughed. "Absolutely nothing of the sort. I was questioned for long hours on end. Once until late at night and, of course, I was reminded that under the law I would get a lighter sentence if I admitted freely what I had done."

At first Dinev was only questioned at infrequent intervals, as the questioners were building up their case against one of the chief accused, a Pastor Chernev. "If they found out something from some other accused or perhaps from Chernev himself, then they came straight to me to check it or take the point a shade further."

Once, Dinev was given a book to read, *Courage*, by a Russian woman, Vera Kiplinskaya. It described the building of the town of Komsomolsk on the Amur River in Siberia. Japanese agents employing local traitors tried to sabotage the work. "The interrogator kept asking me how far I'd got with the book," he said, "and told me that I would reach a certain point where I would recognize myself and my own activities. I did and I felt very ashamed of the role I had been playing."

After the casual questioning was over and the case was completed against the more important accused, the interrogators concentrated in Dinev. "I did not have to add much to what they already knew about me from the other accused. I only had to explain facts which they already had in their possession and the explanation had to be accurate." After he had made his statement, he said he was given slightly better food.

"On the whole it wasn't bad at all," he insisted. "I could buy my breakfast in the prison canteen or my wife could send it in. The other two meals were mainly soup for lunch and meat or

vegetables for dinner. We had meat every second day."

The questioners hand over the result of their work to the State Prosecutor who is already provided with all documents connected with a case. If it has been decided during the interrogation that there is insufficient evidence against an accused, he may be set free without appearing before the court. He had no redress, nor has he in the West, for wrongful arrest. In England or America, of course, he must be brought before a court within 24 hours of his arrest, which, as the police admit, makes their task very difficult. Other accomplices are immediately warned when they pick up the morning papers. The work of breaking up gangs is made particularly difficult.

The Prosecutor then decides whether he has a case against the accused. If so, a special court is convened where the Preliminary Enquiry is held. The facts established by the interrogators are then examined with the accused in court. This Preliminary Enquiry is held in camera. On the basis of this hearing the indictment is drawn up and the accused are committed for trial. The accused are given the indictment at least eight days before the trial and are permitted to name their defence lawyers who have access to them at any time without any third person being present.

The Preliminary Enquiry in such cases is held in camera presumably because a great deal of the evidence cannot be disclosed in the public interest. The substance of espionage reports, military and economic data, names of contacts in other countries must be kept secret and will not be referred to by the President of the Court where the public trial is held.

By the time the public trial takes place the prosecutor has already proved his case, in the form of the indictment which usually contains the confessions of the accused. The People's Court which tried Mindszenty was composed of a president, who was a trained judge, and four lay assessors, nominated by

political parties. The position of the presiding judge, in the Mindszenty case, Judge Olti, is quite different to that of a judge in an English or an American court. His task is to lead the proceedings to get on to the court record everything pertinent to the case which the accused have already admitted. Nothing which they have said during investigation or in the preliminary enquiry is accepted as such. It serves only as the basis for the presiding judge's examination. The accused can deny their confessions as Baranyai did in one minor point or as Traicho Kostov did in the famous Sofia spy trial. If a confession is denied, the new evidence of the accused goes on to the record, but the judge may also read parts of the original statement to get that on the record as well. By crossexamination and the testimony of other accused and witnesses, the judge will get sufficient on the record to serve as the basis for a decision later.

After each accused is questioned; he takes his seat in court. In other words he does not hear the evidence of those that have preceded him, but does hear that of all who follow him. In a certain sense the accused are already considered guilty by the time they appear before the court. Formally they are not, of course, considered guilty by the judges, but the prosecution has already proved its case against them and they have already made their admissions. If they were not regarded as guilty, they would have been released — as often happens — during some stage of the interrogation or after the preliminary enquiry.

The defence counsels have a difficult role. Their clients have invariably admitted their guilt beforehand. Under the law of the land — and not a new law — admission of guilt and assistance given to the court are regarded as mitigating circumstances which may knock several years off an accused's sentence or make the difference between a death sentence and life imprisonment — which usually means fifteen years. The defence counsel's main task is to advise his client how best to conduct

himself in court, and during the trial look for legal points which may be used to demand a lighter sentence. He is quite certain his client will not be acquitted because his guilt has already been established before the trial starts. He can point out mitigating circumstances to the judge and demand that the charge be classified under one paragraph of the law rather than under another.

The defence lawyer of Traicho Kostov gave an exposition of what he considered the role of a defence counsel in a socialist state. It is interesting, but it was not the role adopted by the defence lawyers of either Dr. Baranyai or Prince Eszterhazy, both of whom put up valiant defences for their clients, which would have done credit to any defence counsel in England or America.

"We reject absolutely the bourgeois conception of the duties of a defence counsel," said white-haired old Dr. Dyukmedsiev, Kostov's counsel. "In a socialist state we reject the idea of trying to defend a man when we know he is guilty. We reject the idea of saving a man by some legal trickery, finding some legal loophole by which the law can be cheated. We believe that the role of Judge, Prosecutor and Defence Counsel are essentially the same. The aim is to establish the objective truth of a matter." He went on to explain that his role was to see that the judge was correctly informed about the facts of the case, to see that the prosecutor did not exaggerate the crimes committed, that only objective facts went on to the court record. He was to watch that the case was judged according to the specific paragraphs of the law which it merited. Dyukmedsiev's speech was, however, probably an extreme expression of the role of defence lawyers at such trials.

After the trial of Sanders and Vogeler, the British and American businessmen intelligence agents, found guilty in a Budapest court of espionage and sabotage, there was widespread comment in the Western press that confessions would

never be accepted in a Western court without strong corroborative evidence. Apart from the confessions of Sander's and Vogeler's fellow accused, and Sander's secretary who had typed the espionage reports, a translator who had translated them, copies of quite a number of the reports, copies of money orders with which Sanders had paid off one of his agents. Within two weeks of Sanders and Vogeler being sentenced after a four days' trial, Klaus Fuchs, an atom scientist, was sentenced after a 90 minutes' trial in the London Central Criminal Court to 14 years' imprisonment on a charge of espionage. The sentence was based only on Fuchs' confession without an iota of corroborative evidence. There were no copies of reports, no dates on which he had made his reports, no names of persons to whom he had given the reports. The indictment itself was an extraordinarily vague document. The charges, as reported in *The Times* of March 2, 1950, were as follows:

"That on a day in 1943 in the city of Birmingham for a purpose prejudicial to the safety of interests of the state he communicated to a person unknown information relating to atomic research which was calculated to be, or might have been, or was intended to be, directly or indirectly useful to an enemy.

"That on a day unknown between December 31 and August 1, 1944, he being a British subject, in the city of New York, committed a similar offence.

"That on a day unknown in February 1945, he being a British subject, at Boston, Massachusetts, committed a similar offence," and

"That on a day in 1945, in Berkshire, he committed a similar offence."

The indictment itself was falsely worded. On the basis of Fuchs' statement, which was the only evidence the court had, he gave his information to agents of the Soviet Union, which in 1943, and in 1944, and in February 1945, was not an enemy

but the closest ally of Great Britain, an ally indeed which bore the brunt of the war and saved England from invasion. But that is beside the point.

The case was conducted by the Attorney Sir Hartley Shawcross who said: "His statement, insofar as we have been able to check it, is believed to be true." The security officer, William James Skardon, who conducted Fuchs' investigation was called to the witness stand by the Counsel for Defence, Mr. Curtis-Bennett. He stated that apart from the confession Fuchs had made, there was no evidence on which he could be prosecuted. The whole of the proceedings in court, apart from Fuchs's plea of "Guilty," were taken up with the reading of the indictment; of the accused's confession; the speeches of Sir Hartley Shawcross and of the defence counsel. Ninety minutes after the trial was opened, with no witnesses called or documents presented, Fuchs was found guilty and sentenced to 14 years' imprisonment. If such a trial had taken place in Eastern Europe, there would have been outraged protests from every corner of the Western world.

What made Fuchs confess? One cannot suggest drugs or torture because he made his statement out of prison in his own home. An intelligent security officer worked on him for a long time and made him feel thoroughly ashamed of himself. At least that is the story he told the court, and it is a similar story to many of those I have heard in the People's Courts of Eastern Europe. The important point, however, is that a confession in almost any court in the world is still regarded as the "king of evidence" and can only be challenged if the accused renounces it in open court, or his defence counsel can prove it is demonstrably false.

In Eastern Europe, after all the evidence has been heard, the prosecutor and counsels for defence have made their speeches, the accused have the right of a final statement, in which they

usually put forward anything which they feel might weigh in their favour; might count as extenuating circumstances.

In the Mindszenty case, the Cardinal expressed sincere regrets for his actions and said they were a result of his education and environment. “It took half a century to make me what I am, by a strictly determined education and principles. This education, these basic principles are built into a man’s life as firmly as rails are laid on the ground. These rails carry you along the track and this accounts for many things... As concerns my unintentional and unpremeditated violation of certain laws of the state, I confessed and admitted whatever had happened. I also offered to give material compensation. And I meant it.”

Dr. Baranyai made a long speech in which he defended his position as a Monarchist, and said he felt the superior living standards in England, Holland and Scandinavia were due to the fact that they were monarchies. Prince Paul declined to make a final statement, and also declined to appeal against his sentence of fifteen years’ imprisonment. And so came to an end one of the most important trials in history and certainly one of the most discussed. For the first time in Europe, since the French Revolution, except in the Soviet Union, a government had the courage to bring the highest representatives of the church and aristocracy to trial when they clearly violated the laws of the country.

CHAPTER EIGHT
AMERICAN PLOTS IN BULGARIA

The trial of the Bulgarian pastors which followed by one month that of Cardinal Mindszenty was a very different affair to that in Budapest. The Protestant pastors were much smaller fry and represented no real forces inside the country. They were a closely knit corporation of spies, working directly under the orders of American intelligence, well-paid in dollars converted into Bulgarian currency at black market rates by American commercial interests in Bulgaria.

Mindszenty did represent the Catholic Church in Hungary, a powerful hierarchy to whom two-thirds of the population looked for guidance. He controlled a vast political organization masquerading under the cloak of religion, not responsible to any rules of the ballot box, but able to influence politically ignorant people in a dozen different ways from pastoral letters signed by the Cardinal to rumours and threats by the parish priests. Although Mindszenty was only accused and sentenced for specific, documented crimes of conspiracy and black marketeering, his wider crime was that of consistently opposing every move made by the government to lift the people out of the mire of economic and cultural misery into which they had been plunged for centuries.

The Catholic Church in Hungary as in Spain at the other end of the Hapsburg Empire had always sided with the oppressors against the people, whether they were royalists, fascists or nazi. The situation was quite different in Bulgaria where the great mass of the population belonged to the Orthodox Church, which supported the people in its revolts against the Turks. Throughout the 500 years of Turkish occupation, the Orthodox Church kept a tiny flame of Bulgarian culture flickering. After the liberation by Russian troops in 1878, the church re-

mained relatively aloof from politics. During the German occupation as during the revolt against the Turks, many priests took up rifles and fought side by side with the partisans. Since the end of the war, the church has collaborated loyally with the government in building a new life for the Bulgarian people. The Bulgarians in general are not very religious. For the majority of the population, churches are something to visit on special holidays or occasionally for a wedding or a funeral.

The Bulgarian United Evangelical churches which included the congregational Methodist, Baptist and Pentecostal churches had a combined following of 14,000 in a country of 7,000,000. By themselves they were an insignificant factor in the country and were out of touch with the masses of the population.

They were a shady set of characters who filed into the court on February 25, 1949 to face charges of espionage and high treason. The trial was open to the public. The American and British legations sent along observers and British and American journalists came from Berlin, London and Vienna to represent the news agencies, *New York Times* and *London Times*. All evidence was recorded and broadcast to the Bulgarian public. Telephone booths were installed in the courtroom so that correspondents could telephone their despatches to whatever European capital they wanted, as soon as the proceedings warranted a despatch. My own calls were always made in the evening from my hotel room. Contrary to some reports published in the West, there is no censorship in any of the people's democracies.

What were they up to, the "innocent" pastors who looked so humble and ashamed of themselves when they were escorted into the People's Court? The meat and bones of the conspiracy was to reverse the traditional role of the Church which is to persuade people to accept their hard life on earth and wait patiently for the reward in the afterworld. They pledged themselves instead to try and foster discontent to a point where riots and

disturbances would give American forces a chance to intervene to turn Bulgaria into another Greece, torn with civil strife with American men and arms ushering in the new Paradise. That was the central point of their treason. By close-knit military espionage, spotting the movement of Russian and Bulgarian troops, types of equipment, location of airfields, they prepared to make the American intervention an easy task.

To understand fully the role of the pastors one must remember that even after the failure of Mr. Churchill's plan to create a Second Front in the Balkans to suppress all revolutionary movements in Eastern Europe, the British and Americans had a plan carefully worked out for a bloodless occupation of Bulgaria. When Hitler's armies were reeling back across Eastern Europe in 1944, and it became apparent that they would soon be thrown out of Bulgaria, negotiations took place with the Western Allies at Cairo with a view to making a separate peace with Bulgaria and occupying the country immediately with Anglo-American forces before the Soviet armies arrived.

Bulgaria had declared war on the Western Allies, but public opinion was so strongly pro-Russian that despite a strong German pressure the Bulgarian government did not declare war against the Soviet Union, nor did one Bulgarian soldier go to the Russian front, despite German demands that volunteer battalions be raised. The Soviet Union, apprised of the Cairo negotiations, declared war on Bulgaria in September 1944 and crossed the frontiers before the Western Allies had time to act. A revolt immediately broke out throughout the country, soldiers mutinied, shot their officers where necessary, and together with the Soviet Army chased out the Germans. A Bulgarian Army was formed which later fought its way through Yugoslavia and Hungary to Austria. The Western Allies met up with the Bulgarians in Klagenfurt in Southern Austria and not in Bulgaria as they had hoped.

As the Pastor's trial proved, however, the Americans did not give up their idea of securing another Balkan bridgehead in Bulgaria.

Chief accused was Pastor Vasil Ziapkov of the Congregational Church, a weak-looking, dark moustached man, who wept copiously and hypocritically as he gave his evidence.

"Yes, I am guilty," he said, "I was a spy. I only want to confess before you, before the Bulgarian people for my crimes." His voice became stronger as he started to relate his actions against the young republic.

"It is quite easy for a young Evangelical pastor to become an American or English spy," he said. "As a graduate of their schools he is susceptible to their influence." And he described the hard life of youths from poor families in Bulgaria, with a sudden new vista opened by the generosity of English and American missionaries. He was sent to England to study. When he returned from England in 1926, an American Professor, Floyd Black, president of an American college, enlisted him as an agent. He was to prepare lists of all pro-American Bulgarians. Black later arranged a scholarship for him to study Christian Ethics at Columbia University, a bizarre training for a future highly specialized spy. Professor Black next turned up on the stage as a U.S. Intelligence Officer attached to the American Consulate in Istanbul, the centre for U.S. espionage in Bulgaria.

After Bulgaria's liberation on September 9, 1944, Ziapkov was visited by a Mr. Burt Andrews of the British Legation, who after a few preliminary inquiries asked him bluntly whether he would do espionage work for the British. "For a start," Ziapkov said, "Mr. Andrews said he would be grateful for data about crops, industry, state of railway lines, new constructions and food supply." A few months later, in December 1944, he was contacted by Cyril Black, son of the professor, and Secretary at the U.S. Legation in Sofia, who immediately enrolled him

again as an American agent. Asked whether the British knew he was working for the Americans as well, he said:

"The British knew that I was giving information to Black, but Black did not know I was working for the British." He drew pay from both. Andrews was not very satisfied, however, with the first reports.

"He told me I must organize my work better and mentioned three points: (a) data should be grouped according to subjects and should give an overall picture and not just that of one region or town; (b) information should be classified as referring to industrial or military objectives; (c) information should concern major objectives of national importance."

Black put him in touch with two other pastors already recruited by the Americans to help in the work. Andrews suggested other trusted names. Bit by bit the network was built up until it included all the members of the Supreme Council of the Evangelical Churches. Black wanted a precise list of Soviet ships at the ports of Varna, Burgas and Lom on the Black Sea, the strength and movements of troops towards the frontiers.

The pastors were unimportant people compared to the accused in the Mindszenty trial, but they were much more effective as spies.

They provided data on every facet of the country's life and seemingly more accurate information than that provided by the priest Bela Ispanky in Hungary.

After Ziapkov's first meeting with Andrews and Black, he called a meeting of the Supreme Council and had a resolution passed delegating two of the pastors, Mihailov and Ivanov, to call at the American Political Mission and insist in "the name of the Bulgarian people" on the despatch of U.S. armed forces to Bulgaria. (They represented a total of 14,000 adherents to their combined churches.) First Secretary Black promised them intervention could be arranged but only if disorders could be

started. “The U.S. government,” he said, according to Pastor Ivanov, who took part in the meeting, “wants an opposition in the country, but we must have real manifestations of unrest before we can intervene openly.”

Black and a Colonel Thompson outlined how they should work to bring about such dissatisfaction and assured them that all expenses would be defrayed by the American authorities. They must spread rumours of an impending war between the United States and Soviet Union to make the peasants hoard their grain, they must speak of atom bombs on Bulgaria unless the gates were opened first to American armies.

They enlarged their circles by contacting purged officers from the fascist army, dispossessed factory owners and families whose members had been punished for collaboration with the Germans. (Several of the accused fifteen pastors had worked as German agents before the war and worked for the Gestapo in Bulgaria and Germany itself during the war.) Above all they must try and poison the traditional pro-Russian and pro-Soviet attitude of the population by blaming all Bulgaria’s economic difficulties on the Soviet Union.

In 1947, the year of the American declaration of the “cold war,” the tempo of U.S. espionage in Bulgaria took a more aggressive form, as it did all over Eastern Europe. Ziapkov recounted a conversation at the U.S. Legation. “In May 1947,” he said, bursting into tears again, “I had a traitorous conversation with Beck. I gave him data that Pastor Vassov had sent me from Lom about Soviet ships in that port and the types of cargoes they were discharging. Pastor Neichov sent me similar information about the port of Varna and about the wheat harvest in the Dobrudja. Pastor Drianov had sent me data about the naval academy at Varna and the textile factory there. Popov reported on the activity in the port of Burgas, about Soviet ships and their cargoes. After I had given all this to Beck he asked me if I

knew of any groups of malcontents. I told him I did, and he said to me: 'Establish the closest contact with them, for these people can be useful to us. Sow fresh troubles in the breasts of these malcontents, that's the best possible work for the moment. The greater the number the greater the obstacles this government is going to find. We are not going to tolerate Markos in Greece much longer,' Beck told me. 'One fine day he will be liquidated and the Greek-Bulgarian frontier will no longer be controlled by Partisans but by a regular Greek Army. A great number of refugees from Bulgaria can be accepted there, they can be mobilized, armed and sent back inside the country to cause real trouble!'"

Ivanov gave the Court some details of how payments were arranged.

"During the interviews, Robert Strong (from U.S. Legation) told me that he had given orders to have remitted to me 1,000 dollars for a start and later another 1,500 so that up to the end of 1946 I would receive about 2,500 dollars. This would be changed by a Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer representative at the rate of 1,000 leva to the dollar (four times the official rate.)"

Later, the pastors put their heads together and demanded twelve thousand dollars a year for the work of the four leaders of the group, but the Americans cut this back to 6,000 dollars. The money was mostly changed by Reverend Larin Popov, described in the indictment as a "degenerate and homosexual." It was established during the court proceedings that he had cheated his fellow pastors by giving them a rate much lower than that at which he sold their dollars on the black market. When things began to get hot for them towards the end of 1948, one of the band paid about 400 dollars for a false passport and visa and fled the country, another one, Pastor Chernov, was caught trying to cross the frontier illegally. Altogether about 43,000 dollars passed through the hands of the pastor during their four

years' activities. As every cent of it was exchanged on the black market, this represented for each of them a fortune in Bulgarian money.

Several of the pastors, as they concluded their evidence, paid tribute to the way in which they had been handled by the Security Police.

"I would like to say," said Mihailov, "that the State Security Service, whose job it is to keep an eye on those engaged in espionage, is a real school of political re-education. How shall I describe it? The routine is strict, but it is just and human. They told me that a foreign radio station said I had been killed. I stand here before you as a living denial of their inventions." (Needless to say it was the *Voice of America* which announced Mihailov had died under "torture.")

Reverend Yanko Ivanov, one of the four chief accused completed his evidence, adding: "Thus I come to the end of my testimony about my espionage activities which I carried out until the day of my arrest. To my great regret I know that it will be difficult to find mitigating circumstances for me in view of what I have told you.

"When I was arrested, I expected to be handled by people who would be hard and cruel. However, the time I have passed with these people has helped me to see things clearly. What impressed me was that although in their eyes I was a criminal, their attitude was not to bully or annihilate me, but to help me…

"All these facts have made me realize that the Fatherland Front and the Communist Party does not threaten our churches and our religious liberty as I had thought at first. I have come to the conclusion that they are people with principles who defend and will defend the liberties proclaimed by them. I am convinced that they are sincerely human people.

"I must say, being in full possession of my faculties, and quite sincerely, that no moral or physical pressure was exerted

on me. Everybody, starting with the militiaman who arrested me up to the most important officer with whom I had contact, behaved extremely correctly towards me."

Several others made similar statements. As far as one human being could judge another, they made these statements sincerely. And one of the two who was acquitted, Father Angel Dinev, as related in a previous chapter, assured me at some length, that he stood by his statement in court, that after his first contact with communists he was convinced they were sincere people with whom he could work.

If there had been tortures or some insidious drugs which could make an accused give the right answer to every question likely to be put to him in court — and fellow accused, witnesses, counsels for defence and state prosecutors, all have the right and frequently did put questions to the accused — surely one of the seven in the Mindszenty trial or one of the fifteen accused in the pastor's trial would have had the courage to jump up in court and say so. One knows of the tortures and beatings that communist leaders like the late Bulgarian leader Dimitrov and the Hungarian leader Matyas Rakosi suffered before their trials. Yet each turned the table on his accusers; used the courtroom as a propaganda platform as a man who believed in his cause should. There were no confessions during Rakosi's sixteen years' imprisonment.

The difference can partly be explained by the fact that Rakosi and Dimitrov and thousands of other communists and trade union leaders over the whole of Europe were put on trial for their faith as leaders of the working class. They defended themselves with the courage and passion of men fighting for noble convictions.

But what did Mindszenty and the pastors have to fight for? Their faith was not on trial. What sort of a noble speech can an accused make in defence of trying to plunge his country into

war? What noble defence can be put up for black-marketeering by men whose business it is to look after the spiritual welfare of their fellows?

With the knowledge of the dark traditions of Balkan police methods and with their guilty conscience to prick their imagination I have no doubt pastors and priests expected tortures and beatings. Several of the pastors had worked with the Gestapo and knew the routine. But life has changed in the people's democracies. It would be surprising if police methods were not reformed along with the other sweeping, revolutionary economic and social changes. The new broom of socialism has swept away the dark practices of the past, but the pleasant surprise of the pastors, who had never contacted communists in their lives before, was doubtless sincere when they were treated as human beings.

A few days before the Pastor's trial started, a trial was held in the United States Zone of Germany of a Czech accused of espionage. The trial was in a U.S. Military Court, neither public nor correspondents were admitted while evidence was being heard. Correspondents eventually complained to the American Military Governor, General Clay, and were admitted to the Court to hear the verdict read. The Paris edition of the *New York Herald Tribune* of February 18, 1949, reported the scene in the courtroom as follows:

"The 31-year-old defendant Frantisek Klecka weaved back and forth as the sentence was pronounced. Three American MPs stood at his back and placed handcuffs on Klecka immediately after he was sentenced. Klecka turned to correspondents standing at the rear of the courtroom and shouted: 'I am not guilty. I am innocent. It's not possible that I should get 20 years for this,' he said in tears as he left the courtroom."

In that trial no one except eight court members, two prosecutors and two defence attorneys, all Americans, knew what

the charges were, or what evidence was offered but by the brief description of Klecka's appearance one has some idea what methods were used to try and get a confession. And Klecka never confessed.

A more precise insight into methods used by the Americans to extract evidence was contained in a report issued by the U.S. Army's Justice Review Board in March 1949, following repeated complaints by prisoners in court that they had been beaten. Specific methods cited were condemning men to death in a mock court and sending a mock priest to the "condemned" cell to hear their confessions; standing them against a wall and shooting at them — pieces of hair snicked away by the bullets were found embedded in the walls of the cell; beatings in the face, stomach and below the belt. After quoting evidence by the U.S. Army dentist that he had treated "about 15 or 20" German prisoners for injuries to the mouth and jaw "apparently inflicted by blows," the Justice Review Board's report concludes with a laconic statement that "physical force was not systematically applied."

Prisoners subjected to this treatment often broke down under the beatings and made confessions, but just as often they denied them in open court and described the methods used against them.

The question of keeping an accused in jail during the period of investigation is not permitted in British or American courts, unless sufficient evidence has been produced in open court to commit the accused for trial and application for release on bail has been refused. This is not, however, the custom in Europe. The Viennese press at about the time of the Mindszenty and Pastors' trials, for instance, carried a story about a former Austrian Attorney-General, Dr. Paul Pastrovich, who had been held by the Austrian government in "*Untersuchungshaft*" (investigation arrest) for fifteen months. An appeal was lodged on Feb-

ruary 22, 1949 to have him released on bail of 5,000 schillings. The State Prosecutor opposed the request, it was referred to the Supreme Court which supported the Prosecutor. Investigations were not completed in the case.

The Mindszenty and Pastors' trials closed one more agency by which the British and Americans hoped to regain their old influence in Central Europe and the Balkans and restore the old reactionary regimes, which so easily became pawns in the hands of the Western powers. It was hard for them to see these countries gradually building up solid economies, guided by solid regimes who could win the support of the peoples by promising and giving them real independence even if it meant a hard life without the glitter of Marshall Plan aid.

There were dozens of plans docketed away in Whitehall and the White House for restoring British and American influence in the people's democracies. Their plans were not always the same, nor did each always take the other into his confidence. Churchill's Balkan Second Front plan was defeated by Roosevelt who was interested only in getting the war won quickly. Churchill then switched to another tactic, also disapproved of at that time by the Americans. The invasion of Greece and the long-range deal made with Tito was carried out against the wishes of the Americans. Roosevelt saw the war as a military problem to defeat the nazis. Churchill saw it primarily as a political problem, even before the Russians turned the scale at Stalingrad — to prevent the establishment of postwar left-wing governments in Eastern Europe. The British were in continuous touch with King Boris in Bulgaria and pinned their faith after the war in a right-wing regime, built around the King and composed of the same anti-popular elements which had collaborated with the Germans, as they installed in Greece. King Boris' death, the swift advance of the Soviet Army and the seizure of power by the Bulgarian people, upset their plan.

In Bulgaria the Fatherland Front, in Hungary the People's Front, a coalition of parties excluding the nazi or fascist collaborators representing all interests of the community, were set up. British, and fairly soon American, policy was aimed at splitting off some parties from the Fronts and if that failed, splitting one of the parties in the Front and setting up a legal opposition party, which could act as a spokesman for Western interests, with leaders susceptible to the idea of Western intervention.

Such parties and such leaders were indeed found, with Petkoff in Bulgaria, Ference Nagy, Zoltan Pfeiffer and others in Hungary, but they were soon discredited. The Popular Front remained as the basis of the administrations, with the Communist Party gaining increasingly in prestige and power. (In Bulgaria it must be remembered that in elections in 1920 and 1921, the last free elections before Professor Tsankoff took over as Fascist dictator, the Communists twice gained one quarter of seats in parliament.) When the British and Americans found that no reliance could be placed on legal opposition parties, another set of reserves were marched up to the front, the pastors and priests, but these proved less reliable and even weaker than the political leaders.

The Americans especially were able to convince their agents of the imminence of war with the Soviet Union, they dangled the atom bomb in front of people's noses, warned them the only way to avoid having it dropped on Hungary or Bulgaria was to have the American armies in those countries first. But the politicians failed them and the priests failed them. They were forced to abandon their early plans for direct intervention by British and American armies and draw on their last card, an ace which they had hoped they would not have to play. That ace was Marshal Tito.

If they could not rule the Balkans directly, better at least have it in the hands of somebody in opposition to the Soviet

Union, somebody who appreciated the magic of dollar aid and was willing to grant concessions in return. And Tito's men and their followers in other communist parties were men hardened and tempered in the heat of political struggle. They would not be weak reeds who fled the country like most of the opposition political leaders; they would not blab everything in court like the priests and pastors; they were used to illegal work. The Americans eagerly took over Mr. Churchill's long range plot and added their own improvements, after the Truman Doctrine was announced and the Cold War had got under way.

In the courts in Budapest and Sofia, one would like to have seen the real leaders of the plots, the military attaches and first secretaries from the Western legations who promised that it was only a matter of hanging on a little longer, just a little more organization, just one little riot or disturbance and American troops would come rushing across the frontiers as "liberators." Ziapkov described how the Americans kept up the "morale" of the Bulgarians and told them publicly, in a language that a child could understand, that America was about ready to "liberate" the country.

An American missionary, Markham, who had been for many years an agent of U.S. intelligence in Bulgaria, a former president of the American College, was invited to preach at Ziapkov's church. He chose as his text a verse from Isaiah: "After the dark night there always follows the dawn of resurrection, so let us mobilize our moral and material forces to build that which the new day will bring."

Markham spoke in parables about the days of the Babylonian yoke, and the subsequent liberation by the prophet Isaiah, and it was clear to everybody that it was not the German yoke or the Soviet Army he was speaking about but Bulgarian communists and the U.S. Army.

CHAPTER NINE
THE NEW HUNGARY

My knowledge of modern Hungary before I came to that country was based mainly on tourist literature and travellers' tales. A romantic countryside with wide-sleeved dashing horsemen on the puszta, a decadent Budapest, where dozens of princes, counts and beautiful countesses lived out the last days of a semi-feudal society to the music of gypsy bands. A country gone to seed, a lazy easygoing people who watched their society disintegrate without stirring a finger to arrest the progress. And true enough, that is the picture today of a certain facet of Hungarian life, but an unimportant facet. What wrong conceptions one has of countries judging them by the antics of their aristocracy or upper middle-class; and writers of romantic Hungary in the past have held the mirror up to these classes and not to the working people. What a different impression one has of the Hungary of the Three-Year and Five-Year Plans!

There is a quality of brilliance and imagination in the leadership in Hungary today which has gradually dissipated the cynicism of centuries of Hapsburg rule and decades of fascism. The material reconstruction has been fabulous, but more astounding and more important is the reconstructed outlook of the Hungarian people. Budapest was probably the most cynical capital of Europe five years ago, and today it is a city of enthusiasts. For the first time in Hungarian history people know where they are going. For a small minority, the road is an unpleasant one, for the great majority the road is leading to a definite goal with a better future which is being realised in a day-to-day improvement of living standards.

Few people, except those who drew it up, believed in the Three-Year Plan, but when the bridges, roads, workers' flats and factories which were scornfully derided at first as paper dreams,

actually took shape in two years and five months, there was little difficulty in getting people to believe in and subscribe to the Five-Year Plan which started in January 1950.

In the spring of 1949, when I returned to Budapest from Sofia the good, new life was already making itself felt and seen. Two new bridges were creeping back across the Danube to join four permanent bridges already built in the capital since the liberation. Workers had pledged themselves to complete the lovely Chain Bridge, built by British engineers in 1849, by November 20, 1949, the hundredth anniversary of the opening of the original structure. The Germans had destroyed it, as they did every single bridge over the Danube between the Black Forest in Germany and the Black Sea. Blocks of workers' flats complete with nurseries, overlooking the Danube, were just receiving the finishing touches.

Country roads were a mass of bloom from the fruit trees which lined their edges. Cherry trees trailed their blossoms in the Danube. Village stores, full of new consumer goods which peasants had never seen in their lives before, or at most in Budapest shop windows, were packed with customers. Electrification of the villages gave the peasants an interest in electrical cookers, irons and other gadgets they had never dreamed of before. They were all available in the new village stores. Houses were springing up everywhere in the countryside on sites allocated from the large estates. In Budapest, the shops were crammed with unrationed food and textiles, crammed also with buyers until late at night. To enable the workers to do their shopping in comfort — it is the fashion now in Hungary for both husband and wife to work — the cooperative food stores stay open until 10 p.m. In each district there are special stores which maintain a twenty-four hours' service. Workers can telephone and order their luncheon packets or any other grocery supplies, the parcels will be ready for them when they come to collect. People's Buf-

fets and People's Night Clubs were jammed with young workers and their wives. The luxury Grand Hotel on Margaret Island was full of people who would never have dared pass through the swing door, even could they have afforded it, in the old days. It was now managed very efficiently by its former charwoman.

On May Day, the whole city and every town and village celebrated with an enthusiasm and gaiety I have never before experienced. Budapest was a mass of banners, singing, marching people, flowers, mobile buffets and groups picnicking in every park and garden. It was the greatest celebration Budapest had ever known. Nineteen Forty-Nine perhaps was the year when the great mass of the people became really convinced they were on the right path. Promises were being kept; the People's Front was delivering the goods. It was difficult in May 1949, in the sparkling, garlanded capital, dotted with new and restored buildings, with well-nourished, smartly-clad people and everywhere infectious gaiety and vitality, to know what the city was like only four years previously.

In the spring of 1945, Budapest was a city of rubble, burned tanks and rotting corpses. Traffic between Buda and Pest was at a standstill with every bridge over the Danube destroyed by the nazis.

Of 35,500 apartment houses, 29,987 had been destroyed or badly damaged. Thousands of civilians were killed in the bombings and house-to-house fighting. Thousands more were murdered by Germans and the Hungarian Fascist Arrow Cross troops. One of the first and most tragic tasks was to lay out the corpses for relatives to identify. There were no less than 40,000 bodies in the streets and among the ruins. One can see heart-rending photographs in Budapest of scores of murdered children laid out in the open streets, and parents and relatives filing by to recognize them for burial. Few crops had been sown or harvested and Budapest was starving. Bands of starving chil-

dren roamed in the streets, wailing for bread and their parents. Of the city's fine bus service, 16 buses were left, the Germans had driven off in the rest. Gas, water supply, and electricity services were disrupted. During the ceaseless bombardment and to escape the Arrow Cross murder gangs, people had not moved out of their cellars for weeks on end. Life had come to a standstill — all telegraph and telephone poles had been cut down by the Germans, railway lines had been cut through at regular intervals by special sabotage machines. Every road leading into Budapest had been mined, every bridge over thirty feet long destroyed.

One thousand two hundred locomotives and over 40,000 railway wagons were driven off to Germany. Even if communications with the capital had been available there was no food in the country. Apart from the neglected crops, the livestock had been reduced from 8.6 millions to 3.2 millions. Budapest in early 1945 was a hopeless city of rubble, stench and starvation.

While Budapest was still under siege, the provisional government at Debrecen was already making plans for the gigantic effort to repair the damage, to make Hungary take a leap forward in history and restore the capital to one of the most beautiful in Europe. And in the spring of 1949, with the Three-Year Plan well on the way to completion, the people could justifiably celebrate four years of astounding progress.

The rebuilt city, the restored homes and bright new workers' flats, the four new bridges over the Danube, the rubble heaps converted into gardens — this was all something done by the Budapestians themselves, at first working with their bare hands. It was something in which all but the embittered malcontents took part, young and old, regardless of sex.

Mayor Zoltan Vas threw all his brilliant energies into getting the city running again. In the first days he helped distribute truckloads of potatoes to the starving citizens. Vas was

sentenced to death by Horthy at the age of 16 but as he was a minor the sentence was commuted to life imprisonment. He served sixteen years before the Soviet Union secured his release in 1941, at the same time as Rakosi. The Russians gave him 250 army trucks in those early days to organize food supplies for the city. Vas is now the driving force behind the Five Year Plan, as chief of the Planning Office.

Nationalized industries delivered trams and buses to restore the city's transport service, industrial workers put in extra shifts, at first on the most meagre rations, to get the city's life pulsing again. Hand in hand with reconstruction went the social and economic reforms, without which the tempo of work and morale of the workers could not have been sustained. The nationalization of the key industries, equal pay for women, establishments of creches and nursery schools, and generous maternity leave and pay for pregnant and nursing mothers, paid holidays and requisitioning of the former luxury hotels for workers' holiday resorts; preferential treatment for workers in the days when food and clothing was rigorously rationed, heavy punishment for speculators and really brilliant leadership by communists of the calibre of Matyas Rakosi, Zoltan Vas, who, first threw his talents and energy into starting life rolling in Budapest, and Erno Gero, who tackled the task of restoring communications. These were the things which fired the enthusiasm of the workers and turned tens of thousands from embittered or apathetic critics into elite workers.

There was plenty of reason for the workers to sing and dance in the streets on May 1, 1949, undisturbed by the glowering dismissed Horthy officials and dispossessed landowners, who sat along the boulevard cafes to reminiscence with their cronies about the "good old times" and speculate on how long they must still wait for the Americans to come and restore their estates and their jobs. It is a source of constant amazement for for-

eign visitors to Budapest that hundreds of cafes are full all day long with the dispossessed middle class and aristocracy. Each cafe has its dozen or so regular habitues who drift in at the same hour each day, many of them still dressed in their country gentry clothes, drink coffee and *barack*, the famous apricot brandy, grumble against the regime, spread rumours about the day war will break out and discuss the latest black market rate of the dollar. They are the only ones, except for the Bishops, however, who sigh for a return of the old days and they are not the ones to drape cartridge belts round their fat waists, fill their pockets with hand grenades and take to the hills to fight for their beliefs — beliefs in the sanctity of the right to exploit. The government has taken a tolerant view of those that only talk in cafes, but is sharp to pounce if there is any hint of action.

The glum-looking dispossessed seemed to belong to another race and era than to that of the strapping, smiling young men, the gay beautiful girls from the youth organizations, the veteran workers from the industrial suburb of Csepel, girls from the Goldberger textile mills, mechanics from the Hofherr tractor works, who paraded half a million strong, past Prime Minister Dobi, communist leader Rakosi, and other party and government leaders on May Day at Heroes' Square. There was no future for the landowners in a people's democracy because they wanted to take no part in the new life. A handful did make an effort to readjust themselves. I know of one Baron and his wife who made a sincere and successful effort to start a new life. He took a course in and graduated as an electric welder after deciding that the old days were gone forever. His wife, less enterprising, took a job as a mannequin in a nationalized mode-salon. A mannequin in the new Hungary, however, is not one who shows off the latest creations to film stars in an atmosphere of champagne and roses; she is liable to travel around in a mobile mode-salon and show off simple new styles to factory girls dur-

ing their lunch hour. A rare example for the aristocracy is the former Princess Margit Odescalchi, wife of Count Apponyi, both belonging to old and fabulously rich families in Hungary. Princess Margit became a convinced anti-fascist during the Horthy regime. Imprisoned for a short time by the Germans, she was hidden by an old nurse from the Arrow Cross thugs who wanted to kill her. In recognition of her services, the government left her 300 acres of her estates when the land reform was carried out, but she personally distributed this land as well and became an ordinary factory worker. She joined the Communist Party and was later elected to Parliament. Margit Odescalchi was a notable and noble exception of her class. In general the Hungarian semi-feudal aristocracy was the most corrupt and decadent in Europe and could only be compared with that of Russia of the Romanovs, in the twilight of the Tsarist Empire.

The May Day parade was a curtain-raiser to the elections which were to be held in Hungary on May 15. To the western countries there did not seem to be any point in holding elections, as there were no opposition parties or candidates. But in Hungary itself the elections were taken very seriously. Certainly there was no exciting struggle for power by one party or another group of parties. But election time was an opportunity for the government to touch down to earth, to test the feelings of the people; to explain government policy to the peasants particularly, and to receive criticism. For three weeks before polling day, government leaders from Dobi and Rakosi down toured the country, addressing meetings day and night. The success or otherwise of correct administration would be shown by the number of votes as analysed district by district and village by village. Opposition to the government could only be expressed by not voting or by making the voting slip invalid. Why not have permanent public opinion survey committees instead of the "farce" of elections where there are no opposition candi-

dates? It's a question or a variation of a question often asked in the West.

Capitalism has been abolished as a class factor in Hungary. At the time of the 1949 elections in theory all industries employing over 100 persons were nationalized, in practice most employing over 40 or 50 had been taken over. All large estates had been distributed. Capitalism existed still in a thousand small undertakings, but it was no longer a political factor. Hungary had accomplished a revolution and there was no intention of allowing the dispossessed landlords, factory owners and bankers to have a political party. But this was not democracy? The people had taken over power and were determined to ensure that it would not be snatched away from them as had happened with such wearisome repetition throughout their own and European history.

There were differences of interests in Hungary of 1949 but not conflicts of interest. Peasants had different problems to workers, middle peasants different problems to poor peasants, intellectuals other problems again. But whatever their problems, their basic interests were all the same — to live in peace with their neighbours, to have a rising standard of living, to have security in ill-health and old age, to be able to educate their children, to prevent a rebirth of fascism. Each group had parties or organizations to which they could nominate candidates to represent them in parliament. There were the Communist Party, the Smallholders' Party, the National Peasant Party, the Independent Democratic Party of the liberal-minded priest Father Balogh. Any group in a factory or village could nominate its candidate in the respective parties. The party leadership decided in what order the candidates should be listed. The total number of votes cast decided the number of candidates to be elected. Each 16,000 votes elected a candidate, which was an incentive for everyone to vote and give their candidate the max-

imum chance of election.

A member of parliament has serious duties. He must keep in constant touch with his electors, transmit their requests to the administration and explain policies to the people. His mandate can be withdrawn any time a majority in his district demands it, in which case the next one on the list at election time is automatically elected. Unless they have ministerial posts, members of parliament go right back to their jobs in factories or farms after the session of Parliament is finished. There is no question of their not being in touch with their electors all the time, no excuse for not knowing their demands and criticism.

The Saturday before polling day, I wanted to make some pictures of election posters and found just the picture I needed. A long white brick wall covered with brightly coloured posters showing smoking factory chimneys, new bridges over the Danube, tractors almost hidden with golden grain, interspersed with lists of candidates and an old couple peering at one of the lists. After I had taken the picture, the old couple, recognizing me as a foreigner, invited me to have a cup of coffee with them in their flat.

They were friendly and so genuinely hospitable that it was impossible to refuse. To my surprise they took me to a brand new block of flats nearby, of which only one floor was completed. I was escorted into a tiny, but charming two-roomed flat, and my hosts insisted that I inspect every corner of it, the little blue-tiled bathroom, the kitchen with electric stove and fridge. While "mother" prepared coffee, I asked the old man about the elections. I had struck gold. He was himself a candidate, Jozsef Dindoffer, 75 years of age, machine locksmith, from the Lang Machine Factory.

"I was nominated by my trade union," he explained, "and my name was sent up to the People's Front Committee and they accepted me as a candidate." After further questioning it ap-

peared he was nominated not because of long membership in the union, but because he was a top-worker, which was also the reason why he had been given the nice new flat.

In labour competition he and his team of three completed their "norm" of work in 240 hours, the next best time by a team of four was 400 work hours. I was amazed that at 75 years old, first that he was working at all and secondly that he could be a top-worker.

"I thought I'd laid down my tools forever until 1945 came," he said, "and then I knew we had something we workers have been fighting for all our lives. We thought we had it in 1919, but we were crushed, I myself went into jail for a while. But in 1945, I said, 'Mama, get out my overalls, I'm going back to work!'" And "Mama," bustling in with coffee, gave him a fond look, behind her spectacles, and said, "Aye, that he did. He went right back to the benches and said 'we're going to build socialism this time.'"

"We had it hard those first months," continued Dindoffer, "the old ones were mostly worn out, the young ones didn't have much interest. Life itself was hard. No food, no heating, no proper roofs over our heads and no clothes. Look at us now," and he waved his hand round the flat, walked over and opened the wardrobe to show his own winter and summer suits, his good winter overcoat and the warm clothes "Mama" had for the cold weather. "I never had two 'best' suits in my life before. Now I have one for winter, one for summer. He opened his wallet and showed two 100 forint notes (worth six pounds). I've got money in the bank and I always have a little reserve of cash in my purse. Did we ever have spare change in the house in the old days, Mama?" And Mama shook her head and murmured, "More often we were in debt."

In Dindoffer's normal week, he earned eight pounds, but as the old chap worked regularly twelve hours a week overtime, his

average earnings were thirteen pounds ten a week. For his flat, including heating in winter, he paid eighteen shillings weekly.

"I never thought I'd live to see such things come in my time," he said, adding hastily, "not that I didn't know the fascists would be beaten in the end. But it's been a hard road. In our factory the whole atmosphere's changed now that the workers really feel they are on top. They see it, they've got their men right there on top, in the offices where the directors and bosses used to sit. They work like I do, not just so I can have two 'best' suits in my wardrobe but because they're building something which takes shape under their eyes. And the more they work the quicker it comes. They see the results; the canteens where they eat better than at home for next to nothing; if they're sick they get sixty-five per cent of their wages for up to a year; three or four weeks' paid holidays; school for their kiddies and nursery schools so's their mums can work too. Did we ever have anything like that before? Of course not. In the bad days, under the monarchy, under Horthy, Hitler and the Arrow Cross rabble, I used to tell the lads that that's what socialism meant but not many used to believe me. Now they look up to me as somebody that knew something.

"Now I'm not so strong any more in my muscles but I know a lot about the trade and I can teach the youngsters lots of short-cuts, they call them 'innovations' nowadays. I often thought of some of these things before, ways to cut labour, speed up the job. But why should I tell the boss that and lose somebody his job to pour more profits into the boss' pockets. But I thought about them a lot when I read about the Stakhanovist movement in Russia. Now I can put some of my ideas into operation and help everybody. If anybody goes out of a job because of an 'innovation,' you can be sure he's moved up to more important work."

After the coffee was over I took the old couple in my car to the gates of the Lang Factory in Vaci Ut. Jozsef took his wife's

arm and led her over the corner where among the election posters and slogans he proudly pointed to the photo of Dindoffer Jozsef, nominated by the trade unions as a candidate for Greater Budapest. As we drove back the old chap said: "We've got eight grandchildren and four great-grandchildren. They've got the best future ahead of them anybody ever had. That's why I'm working for mine and other people's grandchildren, and I'll keep going till I drop."

As Dindoffer was a veteran trade unionist and social-democrat, I felt he was the proper person to ask a question which is sometimes asked by western trade unionists and more often by westerners who have no sympathies at all with trade unions.

"What about the right to strike? Can you strike if you want to?" The old man looked at me in amazement, pushed his peak cap to the back of his head and scratched his spare grey hairs.

"But what would we strike about? We own the factory. We own the government. Our trade union chief sits right up there with Rakosi. Every problem that our workers have is discussed in meetings in the factory, if necessary it's taken to the directors of the factory, some of them our own workers. If they couldn't settle it, it would go right up to Trade Union headquarters and it would be settled, I suppose, by our chief with Rakosi personally. But such things don't happen. If there's a real complaint, party people or our shop stewards take the matter up almost before the workers know there's a grievance and it's settled."

"Well, suppose you think you don't earn enough, that you should earn a basic ten instead of eight pounds weekly or that you should only work 40 instead of 45 hours a week, and you started an agitation among the workers, what would happen?

"We would have a meeting and there'd be enough sensible people there to tell me to shut up. They'd say how can we build socialism if everybody wanted to work less. A shop steward

would explain how things were five years ago, how things will be in another five years. And I would be too ashamed of myself to say any more."

"But maybe the other workers would agree with you, they would tell the shop steward to shut up. And workers in other factories perhaps would sympathize with you and all start demanding more money, or less hours of work. What would happen then?" I persisted.

"It's nonsense what you're saying, but if the majority of the workers were dissatisfied, then they would be right and the trade union leaders would argue it out with the other people in the government and changes would be made."

"They say in the West that you can't strike because it's forbidden and strike-leaders would be arrested."

The old man looked so angry, his kindly face became so red that I felt ashamed to have provoked him with this question, but I wanted the answer and felt sure he would give the right one. And he did.

"That's a great slander on the workers of our country," he said, "and of workers in all countries. No terror ever stops workers. We know all about illegal strikes from the Horthy days. Strike-leaders have gone to prison and been tortured and have come back to lead new strikes. Workers have gone into the streets with their fists and stones against swords and machine-guns. If the workers didn't support this government it couldn't last twenty-four hours without bloodshed. Tell your friends in the West that it isn't police or rifles that stop us from striking. It's because this is our government and these factories are ours. And I hope soon it'll be that way in the West. But don't let anyone say that Hungarian workers don't strike because they're afraid. Let them read a little Hungarian working-class history first!"

I would like to round off the story saying that Jozsef Dindoffer was elected to parliament the next day, but he was not.

His name was apparently too far down the list. More than six months later, however, his name was in the papers for having broken all records in the special “Stalin shift” to celebrate the Soviet leader’s birthday. He is now a “hero of labour” and still working.

A week before polling day a monster rally was arranged in the heart of the most reactionary region of Hungary, at Celldomolk, not far from the Austro-Hungarian border. Celldomolk was the last seat of the Szalasi fascist government as it was fleeing to Germany. It was a stronghold of the ultra rightwing parties of Zoltan Pfeiffer and Barankovics, strongly Catholic, strongly conservative. Rakosi decided that if the population couldn’t come to the monster rallies in Budapest, he would bring one to them. Fifty special trains, one every three minutes, dumped 150,000 people from five different counties into Celldomolk in the space of two and a half hours. Former landless peasants and farm servants, small landowners under the land reform laws, enthusiastic supporters of the regime, reinforced the dour, middle class farmers of the Celldomolk area. Rakosi was to speak, and with him Premier Dobi. For an hour the new peasants climbed on to the tribunes and filed past with presents for Rakosi and the other speakers. Presents ranged from lambs and pigs to little kegs of *barack* (fiery apricot brandy) and bunches of flowers. Each one spoke a few words into the microphone as he or she filed past. Rakosi, jovial, smiling, full of energy as always, had a word for each. One peasant woman held up the lamb in her arms and said: “Anyone not voting for the People’s Front has less brains than this lamb.”

Peasants came on horseback, in turnouts pulled by the spirited horses for which the country prides itself, in special buses, in every available type of transport. The town of 6,000 had never seen anything remotely resembling the spectacle. The menfolk in their black suits and shiny black boots, the women,

stolid, a little suspicious, kerchiefs over their heads, the youth gay and lively as it is everywhere in Hungary. Rakosi and Dobi seemed to take these rather dour peasants by surprise, by speaking to them in a homely language they understood and about things which concerned their daily lives and their children's future lives. Suspicions seemed to melt into the background and Rakosi received a tumultuous ovation when he had finished.

After the meeting was over, the taverns were full of excited peasants discussing Rakosi, whom most of them had seen for the first time. All they knew of him was what they had heard from their priests — that Rakosi was a synonym for anti-Christ. They lounged about in the meadows at the town's outskirts, opened their luncheon packages of hard-boiled eggs, chicken and cheese and talked of one of the greatest events in their lives. "But he talks good sense," one glum old peasant told his neighbour, "he talked about seeds and fertilizer and machinery as if he knew all about it. About crops and prices. I was told he'd talk only about kolkhozes and the church." "Kolkhozes" was a famous bogey-word at the time in some of the more backward villages where the priests spread the word that the "kolkhoz" was a sinful, Soviet invention, which meant that your land was taken away and the eldest son sent to Siberia. Many of the peasants had no idea even that the word meant communal farm. They only knew from the priests that the "kolkhoz" was an evil thing and must be avoided. A panic started in one village once when a breathless peasant arrived and said he had seen two truckloads of "kolkhozes" at the next village, headed "this way." (The "kolkhozes" were two truckloads of brigadiers coming to help with the harvesting.)

Election day itself was turned into a great national feast. The streets of Budapest from early morning were filled with singing, marching groups of youths and girls; entertainers kept up non-stop performances outside the polling-booths, in many districts

all the tenants from an apartment house, strolled with linked arms to the polling stations together, singing as they went. I toured the countryside for hundreds of kilometres and everywhere there was the same festive atmosphere; gaily decorated polling stations, groups of singing and dancing young people decked out in national costumes, village bands out, the whole thing a gala parade. Of course, there was no election fever in the sense of excited discussions about prospective changes of parties of candidates, but there was a real and infectious enthusiasm on the part of tens of thousands of voters that I saw, using their chance to give the government an appreciative pat on the back for the success of the almost completed Three-Year Plan, and an encouraging pat for the success of the new Plan about to begin.

The malcontents, the dispossessed and disfranchised stuffed their fingers in their ears when they heard the music and the singing, averted their eyes from the swinging lines of workers going to vote, from the dancing troupes. "Terror, terror," they muttered, and on the following day the western legations were echoing their words. People were forced to the polls, frightened into voting. Could one reproduce this picture, of gaiety from one end of the country to the other by terror, by force? One could as well say that the blossoms which covered the apple and peach trees which lined the roads and perfumed the villages with their fragrance were products of terror.

People with the Dindoffer spirit were those that poured on to the village roads and the city streets on election day, the ones who danced till late through the night in Budapest's main squares with modern jazz bands and gypsy orchestras set up cheek by jowl on the pavements; people that rejoiced that the old tensions and factions were things of the past; that what counted was a Hungary leaping ahead, spanning centuries in a few years to a new future, a future undreamed of a few years ago, except by a few Dindoffers, many of them then in jail, many of them

in exile, many of them with their ideas locked in their breasts because to reveal them was to be destroyed.

There are others of course, and one of the tragedies is that people in the West still get their impressions of the people's democracies from the "others." In the old days it was proper perhaps for the legations to accept as correct the views of the upper middle class and aristocracy as to what was happening or what would happen. After all they were the people, in those days, that made things happen. A good proportion of their tips were bound to be correct. But for the legations still to accept, as they unerringly do, the views of these people as any guide today is stupid and, in the long run, criminal. The aristocracy and the middle-class still exist plentifully as individuals, but as a force they are wiped out. They are isolated, have no knowledge of what is going on in the country and cannot influence the course of events enough to shake a leaf on a tree in the humblest peasant's garden. But they are in evidence and in Budapest it is impossible not to be aware of them.

They fill the cafes in fashionable Vaci Utca, recline in chintz-covered arm chairs in tiny bars and cafes in the Var, the aristocratic quarter of Buda, and have coffee with whipped cream or a glass of *barack* brought them by some countess turned waitress or barmaid. They exchange rumours, pass on the latest news they have gleaned from the *Voice of America* and believe themselves to be the best-informed people of Budapest.

And often enough the rumours they have invented will be broadcast as news the next day over American radio.

They bitterly complain about their poverty, do no work and in general live by selling off bits of jewellery or dealing in black-market currency. They provide a disgusting example of what happens to a privileged class when it is robbed of its privileges. Bankrupt, spiritually and morally, ninety per cent of them have not the character to try to adapt themselves to the new life.

Their hope for the future is in the third world war, which they fondly imagine will restore them their estates and privileges.

On the evening of the same day that I had met Mr. and Mrs. Dindoffer, I was invited to dinner with a Hungarian family, to whom I shall give the name of Schwartz. Baron Schwartz had been a landowner before the first World War, but his estates lay in that part of Hungary which was given to Romania. The baron, as a token of changed times, dropped his title and was given a position in the Department of Agriculture. He served loyally under Horthy, under the nazis, under Szalasi fascists.

When it seemed the Germans would be defeated, Schwartz shipped his son off to Bavaria and as the Russian troops entered Hungary, took his wife and daughter and fled to Prague, hoping to get further west and be "liberated" by the Americans.

But Prague was liberated by the Czechs themselves, the Russians got there before the Americans. Schwartz and family returned unwillingly to Budapest, having scattered most of their family possessions along the road in their hurried flight away from the Russians.

Instead of their previous large flat, they had to make do with two small rooms. Mr. Schwartz was invited to appear before a Public Service Commission, like all other public servants to decide whether he could continue in his job at the Ministry of Agriculture or whether he could be dismissed. He refused to present himself, as he "knew" the Americans would be in Hungary within a matter of months. If he had presented himself and had been dismissed, he may have been given his normal retirement pension, or at worst, if he were dismissed without pension, he would be regarded as "dead" and his wife would draw a widow's pension — in Schwartz's case of about 13 pounds a month.

The energetic and intelligent daughter got herself a job with the new government despite papa's protests that she was compromising herself and the family. Several jobs were offered

to Schwartz. He refused them all. Ever since his return from Prague he sits for most of the day in his pajamas — and waits for the Americans. He does literally nothing, does not read a book nor a newspaper.

"If I take a job, under this government, I would be compromised," he explained to me, "I would never get my old job again or my pay."

"But who will ever give you your old job back?" I asked.

"When the Americans come, they will need all of us experienced officials of the old days. And, of course, the new government they set up will pay us back all the salary that has accumulated since 1945."

Schwartz, who is 15 years younger than Jozsef Dindoffer, sits in his armchair and waits for his daughter to bring home her month's wages. He pockets the lot and daily doles out enough for her bus fares and one packet of cigarettes. The first salary after they became re-established went for a deposit on a radio set so Schwartz could listen to the *Voice of America* and the BBC in Hungarian. I said he did nothing. It is not quite correct, for both he and his wife are learning English, in order to be ready for the day of "liberation." He lives five minutes by bus from the centre of Pest, but has no conception of what miracles of reconstruction have been accomplished within a stone's throw of his own flat. There are thousands of Schwartz's types in the country, and their opinions on the temper of the people, their stupid little stories are valued like gold in the Western legations. Solemn reports are drawn up about oppressions, new stirrings among the peasantry, dissatisfaction among the workers, suppressed strike in some textile factory, outrage against a church, on the basis of the armchair musings of Mr. Schwartz and his kind. They destroy the future of their own children if they can. Schwartz's son has several times expressed the wish to return to Hungary instead of working as a house servant in Western Ger-

many. Perhaps he would be interned for a few months when he came back, certainly he would be thoroughly screened, but then he could start a new life, enroll in a training course and make himself a useful member of society. But Schwartz insists that he remain abroad and only return with the American Army!

Official Hungary takes a merciful, tolerant view however of the Schwartzes, whose views and hatred of the government are well known, but whose capacity for real harm against the state are almost nil. Their main harm is against themselves and their own.

CHAPTER TEN
THE END OF FEUDALISM IN HUNGARY

Uncle Jozsef, or Jozsi Bacsi (pronounced Yoshy Bachy) as we have come to call him, seems as good a starting point as any for a chapter on land reform in Hungary. Dressed in a green hunting coat with a cock pheasant's feather in his hat, he dropped in one day at the hotel room of a visiting American correspondent friend of mine and proved with letters from America that he was the uncle of my friend. Uncle Jozsef, balding, greyish, had that nut-brown face, that easy smile and gay look even in his mid-fifties that reminded one of the types that used to haunt the gambling casinos of the Riviera in the between-the-war days. Handsome and jolly, as if life were a reflection of the perpetual Riviera sunshine, but vacuous, unintelligent and uncultured. And, in fact Uncle Jozsef has spent many days — and nights — on the Riviera, gambling away the money his farm servants earned for him by their slavery at home.

Uncle Jozsef, full of confidence and winning smiles, had come on an important mission. My friend was a correspondent. He must therefore be in contact with Ivan Boldizsar, Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, in charge of press and propaganda, doubtless a powerful man.

"You must see Boldizsar immediately," said Jozsi Bacsi once credentials of uncleship were irrefutably established. "This is an important family matter. My son-in-law, husband of your cousin Therese, is arrested. You must ask Boldizsar to get him released. Of course, we will pay what is necessary. But only you can make contact."

Poor Jozsi Bacsi was still living in the old days when if things went wrong, for the privileged class it was just a matter of contacting the responsible official, paying enough and the matter was settled. But Jozsi Bacsi had been completely at a loss in this

family crisis because it occurred under a government in which he knew not a soul, nor did he have a friend who even knew a friend of somebody connected with the government. And then the fates sent a "deliverer" in the form of a relative who must perforce have contacts with M. Boldizsar, so Jozsi Bacsi took out his best landowner's costume and set forth for Budapest.

My friend, who is a progressive journalist, had to give Jozsi Bacsi a quick outline of the new ethics, before he understood, very sadly, that times had indeed changed.

We were glad, however, of the chance of meeting Jozsi Bacsi, and lost no time in following up the acquaintance. It turned out that son-in-law Ferenc was soon released. He had not been charged with a political crime as we expected, but had been denounced by his own mother for stealing some of the oak beams from the family castle for firewood. The police were called and had no option but to take Ferenc in charge for a few weeks.

Jozsi Bacsi, before the first World War, had been a modest lawyer, but his dashing manners and gay smile won him a Countess wife with a dowry of five thousand acres. The property was near the Romanian border and had a frontage on the Tisza river, and a fine castle with two towers. Jozsi Bacsi was a good lawyer and soon organized the estates into good shape. He cut down the number of farm servants, who were, as was usual, paid in natura, in grain, lard and occasionally a little meat, were given a hovel to live in and got enough hard cash to buy perhaps a shawl or a pair of shoes in a year. He raised the rent of the fishing rights, which every landholder whose property fronted a river, owned at such a price that the fishermen could not pay. He obligingly fixed a compromise so that the fishermen returned him half of the catch every day.

Jozsi Bacsi brought up the fishing rights from his neighbours, released them to the fishermen on the same basis and bought up the fish shop in the biggest town in the district,

through which he marketed his share of the catch. As he became the biggest fish distributor, he fixed the prices at which the fishermen sold him that portion of the catch which they retained.

With all this well organized, Jozsi Bacsi could devote his time to the Countess, relax, travel and enjoy life. While trusty managers looked after the estates and fisheries, Jozsi Bacsi and the Countess toured Europe and sometimes indeed Jozsi Bacsi toured alone. He became a man of taste and culture, and two rooms in the castle bore marks of his wide travels. His smoking room gradually became an exhibition piece for pipe connoisseurs. The walls were lined with hundreds of pipes from every age and nation, from tiny clay pipes to enormous carved meerschaums and complicated Turkish hookahs. But another room was his real pride in which he displayed his European-wide collection of chamber ware. His favourite was a fine Grecian urn on which he averred the Empress Maria Theresa had frequently and comfortably squatted. The farm servants, huddled together in their miserable cottages, could not afford to send their children to school, or at most, for three or four years. They could never afford to have a doctor if one fell sick. But they had the spiritual comfort of the little church which Jozsi Bacsi subsidised. Jozsi Bacsi told us that he regarded his farm servants almost as his children. After all, he fed them and housed them. Pretty peasant girls he even treated gallantly and sent them to a doctor if they were to have a child by him.

When World War II came, however, and Russian troops began to near the Romanian-Hungarian border, Jozsi Bacsi thought it prudent to retire from the castle and live modestly in town. The area where his estates were located has been traditionally called the "Stormy Corner" of Hungary. The Soviet armies burst across the frontier. Landowners and estate managers had fled. The Russians told the farm servants: "Grab as much land

as you can work yourself and plough and sow. Hungary is going to need food, lots of it." The servants gladly grabbed, ploughed and sowed. Afterwards came the Land Reform Act which confirmed them in ownership of the land they had seized.

Jozsi Bacsi, when the fighting was over and passions had cooled, returned to the castle to reason with his servants:

"Would you believe it?" he asked us, his slightly bulging eyes almost jumping out of their sockets, "the castle wasn't there. The servants had carted it off, brick by brick to the very last stone and built themselves cottages out of it. They'd even prised stones out of the very foundations. God knows what happened to my pipes and chamber pots."

The farm servants settled down on the land and tilled it as their own land, as indeed it now was. Fishing rights were abolished, the fish distribution business taken over by the state. The fishermen joined one of Hungary's two hundred fishing cooperatives, the government gave them a loan to replenish boats and nets, they now fish the rivers wherever there are fish and care nothing about whose water frontage they are fishing in. Jozsi Bacsi accepted his losses philosophically, however, like a good gambler, and went to join daughter Theresa and son-in-law Ferenc, on their estate near Hungary's most famous battleground, Mohacs, along the Yugoslav border. Uncle Jozsef had gambled with too many dispossessed Russian aristocrats in Monte Carlo ever to believe he would get his estates back again, and in that, at least, he was different from most of the former landowners.

My correspondent friend and I visited Uncle Jozsef and the rest of the family one Sunday afternoon after a long drive south from Budapest. They lived in two enormous rooms on the ground floor of an eighteen-roomed castle, belonging to Ferenc's family. The rest of the castle had been taken over by the village farmers' cooperative and, as we arrived, the peas-

ants were streaming in over the threshold to hold some sort of conference. The cooperative had held a dance there the previous night to celebrate the harvesting of the grapes. Jozsi Bacsi, dressed in neat brown tweeds, brown and white shoes with a gold knobbed cane, looked as if he might be about to step out to have a fling at the casino. Cheerful as ever, a wide smile on his brown face, he bade us welcome to the castle.

The room to which we were invited was filthy and in dreadful disorder. Apples and onions were sprawled together in one corner, old clothes, riding equipment, a sword scabbard and some deer heads were scattered in another corner. Theresa came in, grimed with dirt, handsome but filthy. "We're 'prolies' now," she said, as she greeted the hitherto unknown cousin, begging us to excuse the dirt and disorder on that account. "Prolie," short for proletarian, is a favourite word these days for Hungarians who have come down in the world. It was a magic word by which they could be excused for any lack of courtesy, dirt or personal neglect. Dirt and disorder was their conception of the proletarian way of life and they adopted it as the first symbol of their changed circumstances. Actually peasants' homes in Hungary, as in most parts of the world, are shining with cleanliness and so are the faces of the peasant housewives. Theresa, plump and dark, mother of two little children, explained that when the estate was divided up, they had been left with 100 acres. At first they rented out the 100 acres in small lots, but now they decided to transform themselves into small farmers and live as other peasants lived. They had been allowed to retain temporarily the two rooms in the castle, but were soon going to move into a little cottage in the village.

On the fireplace was a coloured photograph of cousin Ferenc on his wedding day. With fierce moustaches, in the traditional uniform "Dismagyar" of the landed gentry, blue coat with gold buttons and lacings, he looked every inch an aristo-

crat. But what a weak impression he made when he joined the family circle, to kiss the hands of ladies in our party, clicking heels as he shook hands with the men, talking in a squeaking high-pitched voice, as he, too, tried to explain the soiled linen, the dust and grime, the awful atmosphere of decay and neglect by the fact that "we're 'prolies' now."

As we took our leave the cooperative members started filing out. It seemed to me they looked at Ferenc and Jozsi Bacsi without malice, but with a highly amused contempt as much as to say, "And to think it's for these weak, stupid people that we and our fathers and grandfathers have been slaves for centuries." They lounged around in the sun and under the fine old trees which grew outside the entrance to the castle, and seemed to have quickly adapted themselves to the idea of looking at the castle and park as part of their property.

About 8,000,000 acres of land was distributed in the land reform laws of 1945 to 650,000 landless families of farm servants and agricultural labourers, and peasants who formerly owned only an acre or two of land. Together with their family members nearly 3,000,000 people were involved in the great handing out of the estates. They turned Hungary into a country of small landholders, the great majority of whom owned farms of less than 10 acres.

Many people, including some of the new owners themselves, criticized the land reform on the grounds that it was uneconomic to turn a country which had been used to large-scale agriculture back into a land of tiny holdings. Also that the holdings were too small for a family to make a proper living. Both these criticisms are justified, but there was no other alternative, because the owners and managers had fled, most of the agricultural machinery, tractors and combines had been destroyed or shipped back to Germany, eighty per cent of the draught cattle had been killed; the country was faced with millions of

unemployed farm labourers on the one hand, untilled land and famine on the other. The government followed the lead of the Soviet Army leaders and told the peasants to grab the land and till as much of it as they could, with their bare hands if necessary, until the government could provide better implements. Of course, theoretically, it would have been better to move in with a great army of tractors and up-to-date machinery, and declare the estates national property and work them as great communal farms. Everyone knows that with scientific methods, large-scale farms can be worked more economically. But it would be years before Hungary could replace even that machinery which existed before and meanwhile the workers had to be fed, the peasants employed.

The farm servants because they lived on the estates grabbed first; the agricultural labourers who lived in the villages and did only seasonal work for the landowners received their share afterwards, which explains why the farm servants received an average of 12 acres, the labourers only seven acres. The servants, living on the properties, got in first. There is a great excess of peasant labour in Hungary, a problem which can only really be solved by a large absorption of labour into the cities as the country is gradually industrialized. Official figures show that three millions, one-third of the country, were either without land or had tiny plots from which they could not make a living before the war. The immediate demands of these people were largely met by the land reform: It was better for three million people to be settled on eight acres of land per family than for only a million and a half to be given sixteen acre farms for each family and the rest to go empty-handed.

Hungary will certainly not remain a country of tiny landholders. The development of the machine-tractor station and the cooperative farm have started the second revolution in five years in the Hungarian villages. Hungarian peasants, because

millions of them have had the status of serfs for generations, are backwards and fearful of change. One has to explain and demonstrate a new idea a score of times to them before a spark of interest is kindled. As Hungarian industry has gotten into its stride again, and more and more tractors are coming off the assembly lines, the question of the cooperative farms is coming more and more to the fore. But the peasants are suspicious and the government is wise in introducing the new cooperative farms very gradually.

The principle is to demonstrate to the peasants that the cooperative farms give the best results, the best crops and give more free time to the farmer. There is no pressure on people to join. Unwilling farmers will not plant crops and the government does not want any interruption in its food supplies. Reactionary priests in all parts of the country warn farmers to have nothing to do with this new evil. "First they give you land and now they want to take it away from you," they say; and the farmers, millions of them, with their own little farms for the first time in their lives, swear they will defend their holdings till the end. But there are plenty who now have confidence in the government that gave them land, that helped them with animals, seed and fertilizers, a government that kept its promise to them and brought electric light and a water supply to the village, that rebuilt the school and church and made it possible for Janos to go to the University or Dorothea to the hospital when she was sick. There is so much on the balance sheet in favour of the government that they listen to the party organizers or village committeemen who lecture on the new life a cooperative can make possible. After weeks or months of discussion perhaps a group of peasants, usually the poorest in the village, may decide to pool their land and form a cooperative. It is a very serious decision to take and not one that is made lightly.

All those who want to join, perhaps fifteen or twenty fam-

ilies, will meet together and elect a committee, a governing board of the cooperative. If their farms are not adjoining, the committee will have to do some negotiating with their neighbours, exchanging perhaps some pieces of land so that the cooperative farm will lie in one block of land. The members will have to decide what sort of farm they want to have and there are two main types.

(1) One in which the land is completely pooled, the boundary stones are torn up, the peasants lose all claim to any land if they withdraw, payment will be made on the same basis to all according to the number of working days he or she has worked.

(2) The land is pooled only for working purposes. Boundary stones remain, if the peasant wants to withdraw he can take his land out with him, payment is based partly on rent paid for his land and partly on the working-day system.

There are several varieties of the second type of farm which is naturally the most popular.

Having decided on the second type, they must fix the proportion on which the farm income is to be divided. Usually it is on a 60-30-10 basis. After all running costs have been paid, ten per cent of the farm income is set aside to take care of the old, sick, the unemployable, sixty per cent is paid out according to the number of days each man, woman and child over 16 has worked, and thirty per cent is paid out on a rent basis. He who brings in 30 acres gets three times as much out of this dividend as someone who contributes only ten acres.

After the committee's request to form the cooperative has been approved by the Ministry of Agriculture, the farm may apply for a loan at a very low interest rate. They may try to buy one or two tractors unless there is a government tractor station somewhere in the neighbourhood. What implements and draught animals they will have will be pooled, work will be rationalized. Old Sandor who has troubles with his legs and

couldn't manage the ploughing very well may be an excellent milker. He will be the farm's milkman and will do nothing else but milk the farm's cooperative herd twice a day. Young Bela, who always had a flair for mechanics, will be put in charge of keeping the machinery in order. The first thrill of communal effort comes when the peasants all get together to build the new sheds which are going to house their herds and their machinery. Old-established cooperatives have already built their own cinemas, and in some cases small theatres to which troupes from Budapest come and play. That is the real revolution that is going on in Hungarian villages, much more significant than the turning out of the feudal landowners. Cinemas and theatres, really owned by the farmers. Only they can decide who uses them and for what purpose. In the old-established cooperatives, there is a new pride and love for the communally-owned property built with the peasants' own hands, from money which they themselves have voted out of a common fund, which is of much higher order than the old attachment the individual farmers had for their bit of land.

The machine station is an important adjunct to the cooperative farm and a valuable bridge between the city worker and the peasants. Hungary's small farmers are not wealthy enough to own tractors even if they could get priority to buy them. But tractor-ploughing is not only labour-saving, it is good for the crops. The deep ploughing now introduced into Hungary turns up soil hardly more than scratched in the old days with oxen-drawn wooden ploughs. The government set up machine stations all over the country, each with a few tractors, harvesting machines and other essentials. They were manned by young men and women from the city, politically educated as well as being first-class mechanics. All of them volunteered for the work. They are the city workers' ambassadors to the peasantry. At first they were regarded with deep distrust when they

set up their sheds and moved in with their queer collection of charges. In some cases they were attacked, their sheds burned. They are there primarily to serve the cooperatives, but any farmer who wants his ploughing done can call up the machine cooperatives and the ploughing will be done at a very modest charge. In some cases the machine stations have been absorbed by the cooperatives and, of course, the latter has priority over private farmers' work. The private farmer must pay slightly more than the cooperatives.

The machine stations have become more than just places where tractors and harvesting machines are available. They are little centres of enlightenment in the village. They are manned by advanced city workers who can tell the peasants what is really going on and what one is going to build in Hungary. In the evenings the peasants come around and on the pretext of wanting to borrow a spanner or seek some technical advice, they begin to discuss this new life which is sweeping over the country. The technicians are gradually invited into peasant homes. They are people who have read books and can explain things. The priests are not pleased about the technicians. They regard them as an African medicine man regards a modern doctor who steals his authority by curing the tribe's sick with science instead of magic. In the old days a villager turned to the priest as the supreme authority on all matters, now they turn to the mechanics.

Instead of being completely isolated as they were at first, the technicians from the machine stations are now the centre of village life. They are good propagandists for socialism by their very skills. Not only do they plough the farmer's land and harvest his crops, but they mend his implements, his wife's sewing machine and the youngster's toys. They win the confidence of simple people to whom the city workers were previously as foreign as South Sea islanders. "Work hard, develop your cooperatives and

you and your children can enjoy the same sort of life as we have in Budapest," they tell the peasants. They open up entirely new horizons, give a picture of a life where one need only work eight hours a day, six days a week, have paid holidays in the mountains of Matra or at Lake Balaton, even be sent to Czechoslovakia or the Black Sea in Bulgaria; and all to be accomplished not for some future generation, but now, in a year or two. Why should farmers always work from dawn to dusk and live in misery? The cooperative farm and the tractor will alter all that.

The government, of course, favours the cooperative farms, by selling them the best seeds and fertilizers, giving them the benefit of any new developments in treating diseases of crops or cattle. And the cooperative farmers do their best to prove to the often sneering private farmers that their road is the right one. By communal effort they lay on an irrigation system, they take the advice of the government and try the deep ploughing and rotation of crops. Specialists survey their soil for them and tell them what is best to plant where. Usually by the second season, there is a demonstrable improvement in their crops and in the financial situation of the members. More farmers want to join and in a neighbouring village a new group starts up and that's the way the government wants to have it. The cooperatives should grow naturally by the example of successes firmly demonstrated. In 1949, the government had to put a temporary halt to the formation of new cooperatives. They were beginning to grow too fast, faster even than Hungarian industry was able to keep pace with tractors and machinery. But the movement is now on a firm basis with over 1,500 cooperatives farming half a million acres, and 220 machine stations operating 3,800 tractors, by the end of 1949, the last year of the Three-Year Plan.

Nothing had been done for the Hungarian peasants or villagers for hundreds of years until 1945. Even villages on the outskirts of Budapest had no electric light until the Three-Year

Plan brought it to them. Nearly 400 have been linked up with the electricity network during the Three-Year Plan, and by the end of the Five-Year Plan there will not be a village without electric light.

The 80,000 acre Hortobagy written off by Horthy and the Hapsburgs as a romantic wasteland where the gentry could shoot wild geese in the swamps, and visitors could see the wide-sleeved dashing *csikos* (horsemen), galloping in swirls of dust across the puszta, is now being transformed into one of the most fertile regions of Hungary. With a well-planned irrigation system, the state started a great rice-growing project for the first time in Hungary. By the end of 1949, not only was the Hortobagy producing all domestic rice requirements but a substantial surplus for export. Cultivation of cotton has now also started in the Hortobagy area from strains imported from the Soviet Union.

When the land reform was carried out the state reserved about 70,000 acres of land for state experimental and research farms, mainly for breeding stock and seeds.

One of the most important of these is at Babolna, on the Budapest-Vienna road, where the famous Lipizzan-Arab horses are being "proletarianized." Stock descended partly from those bought by Count Ferenc Eszterhazy from the Hapsburg Court, and partly from direct imports from Arabia, are used for breeding purposes to develop a new light draught animal which will be equally at home pulling a cart-load of potatoes or drawing some dashing turnout at a farmer's wedding. The stud itself is on an old Eszterhazy property and is claimed by the Hungarians to be one of the finest Arab studs in the world today.

After the dispersal at the end of the war, the Hungarians could only scrape together one stallion, twelve Arab and seven Lipizzan mares by 1946. A few more were returned from Germany, others turned up inside the country, and today there

are just under 200 first-class stallions and mares at stud again. Beautiful milk-whites, greys and bays originally destined to pull emperors' coaches, and provide mounts for the emperors' escorts, are now siring a new race of farmers' horses. With artificial insemination, avoiding the trouble of transporting their mares to stud, farmers from all over Hungary can now breed Arab or Lipizzan strains from their mares. Indeed they may not cross their mare with any stallion without government permission. As every other detail of life is planned, so is also the question of raising the quality of the country's livestock.

There are no people in Europe who care more for their horses than the Hungarians. They rival even the Irish in this respect, and this minute attention to horse-breeding on the part of the government has won many peasants over to its side who were not the slightest bit impressed by electricity in the village or university for the children. Hungarian horse-drawn traffic already has a recklessness about it that makes the Western motorist feel a little nervous. What it will be like when every farmer's horse has a dash of Arab or Lipizzan in it, I would not care to prophesy. I attended a demonstration in Babolna where an old-time "cochero" drove a four-in-hand of beautiful dapple-greys in a fine hunting brake. The greys were immediately switched to the harness of a long dray with two and a half tons of flour in it. They hauled it as if it were the Emperor Franz Joseph himself, necks arched, high-stepping and trotting as briskly as if they were on the Vienna Prater.

Uncle Jozsef bewails such things. His fine nose turns up with disgust when he hears of Lipizzan stallions being made available to the peasants. His gay good humour disappears completely when one discusses the growth of the cooperatives, the incursion of machine stations into villages. Jozsi Bacsi is particularly hurt that a peasant takes off his cap when he meets a tractor driver from the machine station in the village clad

though he is in greasy overalls and disregards Jozsi Bacsi in his green hunting suit.

An era has come to an end for Jozsi Bacsi and his friends. In the old days it was Jozsi Bacsi and the peasants against the city workers. Now it is the workers and peasants against Jozsi Bacsi and his friends. And not only in Hungary but in Bulgaria too, which I visited for the third time in the summer of 1949.

CHAPTER ELEVEN
THE COOPERATIVES IN BULGARIA

Bulgaria in the summer of 1949 was a country still suffering badly from wartime losses and the unbelievable bad luck of three successive droughts. She was also suffering, as one was to learn later, from very effective sabotage in her industries. In Sofia food was short, there was no appreciable improvement from my first visit just one year previously. But spirits were high, the crowds that paced the Tsar Liberator boulevard outside my hotel room in the evenings were enormously good-humoured. And people sing in Sofia all day long, from the earliest hours of the morning until late at night. They sing much more than in Hungary — and it must be confessed they sing more expertly in tune and harmony. Mostly they sing partisan songs, but often enough Bulgarian and Russian folk songs too. Children going to school, brigadiers off to work an early shift, soldiers marching to their barracks, students going to an art exhibition, a trade union group going to the theatre — always with linked arms and singing like trained choruses.

In summer the air was tinged with the fragrance of flowers from the profusion of rose gardens in the city. The breezes that cooled the city in the evening were charged with the perfume of ripening fruit, from the orchards nestling at the foot of Mt: Vitosha. Sofia is closer to nature, less sophisticated a city than Budapest. The countryside comes right into the main streets; shops are filled with peasants in a dozen different national costumes. There is more horse-drawn traffic, the people are not so well-dressed. These things all make it a very different city, but it took me a few days to put my finger on the vital thing that made Sofia in 1949 another world from Budapest of 1949. I missed the thousands of dispossessed aristocrats and landowners, sitting around in the cafes. They virtually don't exist in Sofia. The

Turks had been the feudal landowners and when they were chased out by the Russians in 1878, Bulgaria became a nation of small farmers. There were peasants with long shoes curled up at the end sitting in the cafes, women with their plaited hair hanging in a little cloth cover down their back. Small wonder there was a freshness and naturalness about this city, a complete absence of decadence.

In contrast to Hungary, which is composed almost exclusively of endless, rolling plains, Bulgaria is a very mountainous and a very beautiful country. No country in Europe is so rich in national costumes and traditions. Village after village, especially those tucked away in the mountains, have completely different characteristics, though they may be separated only a few miles from each other. Musical instruments, dances and even folk songs vary from district to district, probably because the rugged mountains made interchange of customs difficult. The villagers are a friendly, generous, open people with a natural gaiety, which one does not find so often with the Hungarian peasants, whose spirits have probably been dampened over the centuries by the ever-present priests. Priests or pastors, as mentioned earlier, play little part in Bulgarian village life.

One thing that made it possible for the government to command support from the people during the lean years after the war was the remarkable solidarity between peasant and city worker. The histories of previous revolutions all over Eastern and Central Europe is that they failed because of the absence of this solidarity. When the peasant parties rallied around Stamboulisky at the time of the Tsankoff coup d'etat in 1923, the communists stood aside; in the Hungarian revolution in 1919 Bela Kun failed to win the confidence of the peasants. The latter refused to deliver food, and Kun was forced into excesses to try and drag it from them; the Soviet revolution had a close escape from similar causes, but Lenin fought from the beginning

for a worker-peasant alliance.

I was born and reared in a farming area in Australia and have experienced in that comparatively enlightened country the suspicion, bordering on hatred, felt by the ordinary farmer for the city worker, and the contempt of the worker for the farmers. Capitalism has always been able to drive a wedge between town and country worker. Farmers distrust city workers because they get regular wages, work regular hours, make strikes, while the farmer feels he has to work from dawn to dusk and sell his products for whatever somebody wants to give him. The industrial workers, more advanced politically, know their troubles are due to capitalism. The farmer, himself a small capitalist, does not see that he too suffers from capitalism. He is a ready target for the press which tells him the high prices he pays for consumer goods are due to the workers demanding higher wages.

Town workers usually react by regarding the peasant as a lazy, good-for-nothing, who plants his crop and does nothing while it grows, except to complain about high prices, bad weather and striking workers. From my own experience for a long period as a small farmer, and later as an industrial worker in Australia, I know this feeling and have seen it reflected in every country I have visited. Even in the Far East, where the peasants are in an enormous majority and live little better than animals, it is rare to find workers and peasants really viewing their problems from the same angle and with an understanding that they are basically the same, exploited by the same forces. In Bulgaria they have accomplished a miracle by closing the gap in a few years after the war. It has been done by the volunteer labour brigades, which are better organized there than in any other people's democracy I have visited.

There are scores of different types of brigades, formed by volunteers from every walk of life. There are technical, medical, skilled and unskilled brigades, volunteer groups from factories,

machine shops, hospitals and government offices. Each member is pledged to do at least 60 hours volunteer work during the course of the year. In fact, they do much more than that. I have seen them at work and have marvelled at what they accomplish. Suppose it is a technical brigade of mechanics and smiths. During the week, their leader will have checked in at brigade headquarters and announced that he will have a brigade ready for the weekend. He will be given a target, perhaps a village 60 or 70 miles from Sofia.

Brigade headquarters provide a truck, the village will be warned, and on Saturday afternoon, peasants will have brought every imaginable type of machinery into the market square, from ancient reapers to pots and pans that need mending. The technicians will have brought a portable forge with them, oxy-acetylene torches and plenty of tools. They set to work, with willing helpers from among the peasants and probably the local smithy. Reapers, mowers and ploughs will be set in order, the pots and pans mended. The leader of the brigade will give an informal talk to the peasants on how they can better care for their machinery and he will demonstrate some of the simple things that go wrong and how the peasants themselves can repair them. By the time darkness falls, there is probably still plenty to be done. The peasants will have brought food and wine to the village hall, the brigadiers are sure to have brought a musical instrument or two with them. Friendship between town and country worker, based on practical help, is toasted in wine, and the potent *slivova* or plum brandy. Music soon starts up and town workers and country peasants are presently sending the dust rising to the ceiling as their feet pound the floor in a *hora* or whatever the local variation of this traditional Bulgarian dance may be. Next day the work continues, either at the same village or the next one set as a target, and on Sunday evening a truck-load of weary but merry technicians, singing at

the top of their voices, trundles back into Sofia again. There are veterinary brigades which treat animal diseases and at the same time tell the farmers how to recognize early symptoms, dental brigades that check the whole teeth of the village in one day, unskilled brigades which help with harvest work or weeding. Workers take their wives along and while the menfolk examine pigs or mend ploughs, the wives help the peasant wives with sewing and mending.

It is impossible to overestimate the effect of all this on Bulgarian village life. New lasting friendships are formed. Next time a peasant whose plough has been mended comes to Sofia, he is sure to look up Georgi or Nikola or whoever did the job and bring him a pound of lard or a dozen eggs and talk about the changes that are coming over the land.

I travelled over much of Bulgaria in my car in the summer of 1949, and in village inns, where peasants gather to drink their *slivova* out of tiny bottles not larger than one's finger, I often asked about the brigades. The peasants without exception spoke about them with the warmest affection.

"They don't only mend our tools and help us with the harvest, they teach us too." "I always used to think city workers were lazy good-for-nothings, but now I see they're workers too. We work the land, they work in the factories, but we're both workers."

At a little machine shop, belonging to the Bulgarian Machine Cooperative, I spoke with the chief mechanic, Georgi Kuleff, who was also the leader of a technical brigade. The plant employed 35 workers and had been privately owned until 18 months previously, when the workers formed a cooperative. Main work was to repair tractors and cars, but they had also started to manufacture small machines, such as water pumps and portable forges.

Georgi was not much better off financially under the

cooperative than before. He used to earn 15 to 16 pounds a month, now he earned about a pound more, but his taxes had been reduced and he had a good canteen meal every day for ninepence. The shop is too small to run its own canteen, so it shares one with two other machine shops.

In February 1949, the 23 members held a meeting and decided that they should form a technical brigade to do volunteer work. Before that many of them had worked as individuals, cleaning up rubble and repairing cars in their spare time. They decided they could best be used as a technical brigade repairing tractors, harvesters and general agricultural equipment.

"We were allotted at first to a Sofia tractor shop and then enrolled as a mobile brigade for the villages," said Georgi, a swarthy, stocky energetic man, 38 years of age with a cheerful open face that is so characteristic for the Bulgarians. "On Saturday afternoon, after we knock off work, we set out the tools we need for the next day. Sometimes we start right out to work on the Saturday afternoon, but usually we make a whole day of it on the Sunday.

"On Sunday mornings at 7 o'clock we assemble here at the shop and a truck from the Central Co-op organization picks us up and off we go to whatever place has been decided beforehand."

"What does your wife say to your taking your Sundays off like that?" I asked.

He grinned. "She didn't like it much at first. But I made a pact that for every Sunday I went out with the brigade, I'd take her to a show during the week. She soon saw that what I was doing was right. She knew that I wasn't running around after other women but doing good work. Sometimes she comes with me now, but more often in the summer she goes to her father's place to help with harvesting.

"It does your heart good to see how the peasants welcome

us with open arms now. They've changed completely. They bring out everything they have to be repaired and feed us. We fix up their things, give them a lecture after it's over. We always take an accordion along and have a little dance and sing-song before we come home. And when I come home I have to sing any new songs I've learned to my five-year-old daughter, who's a great enthusiast for the brigades."

Another young man, Ferdinand Simeonov, spoke up. He was a welder, married, with an eleven-years-old daughter. "I always take my family with me if there's room in the truck," he said. "My missus helps the peasant women with sewing, my daughter looks after the village babies and teaches them songs while I help my comrades here."

I asked for a typical day's work and as the new order has taught people to be meticulously careful about preserving records of the work, they were able to quote exact figures.

The previous Sunday they visited the village of Jivit, about 30 miles from Sofia. They took a team of 18 men, four mechanics, three welders, three tinsmiths, two smiths, one technical foreman, one "cultural" leader and four unskilled workers. In one day's work they welded 85 different parts of machinery, repaired and replaced spare parts on seven agricultural machines, 25 miscellaneous repairs to ploughs and harrows, and 28 repairs to cream cans, milk buckets. Small stuff? In terms of actual work done, not very dramatic, but for the villagers it was an enormous amount of labour saved because most of those things would have to be brought into Sofia for repair and many days would be lost trying to find the right shop and somebody who would do the work immediately.

"Don't the local smiths object to your coming and taking work away from them?" I asked.

"Not at all," replied Georgi Kuleff. "On the contrary. We help them too. They have all suffered during the war, machines

have been broken, parts are missing. We always try to set the local smithy in order before we leave a village, and if he needs some parts we don't have with us, we make them and send them to him."

"But don't you feel too weary to do your work properly during the week if you work every day and then weekends as well?"

"A change is as good as a rest," Kuleff said. "Of course, if I had to try and persuade the lads to work every Sunday in the shop here they would probably soon get very sour. But we are out in the fresh air, we see new places and meet new people. It isn't like work at all and it is a good education for all of us. Most of us knew little about how peasants live, what their problems are. We only knew them as people always complaining about something or other. Now we see really what a hard life they lead and it makes us feel good to help them."

"And what were our Sundays like before? Sleep in till midday, then visit or be visited by some relative you probably didn't want to see. At best, take a walk in the park. Now it's exciting for us all. When we get a little more transport we'll all take our families with us. The other thing is that ours is a government of workers and peasants and it's the job of all of us to make sure that on the ground, too, workers and peasants see themselves as one people, get to know each other and help each other through difficulties."

To check on the other end of the picture I made a trip out to the village of Jivit and stopped at a little saloon in the village where peasants drop in to have a tot of the harsh spirit made from the skins of grapes before lunch. The bar was lined with scores of tiny bottles, used as drinking measures, and half a dozen wrinkled and stubbly-faced peasants in their brown tight-fitting coarse pants and shirt-sleeves were drinking their tots and discussing the harvest. On the wall was a gaily coloured anti-Marshall Plan cartoon. On one side one could see Greeks

erecting gallows from timber marked "Made in USA," on the other side a horrible looking Turk with a Marshall Aid watering can was sprinkling his garden from which were sprouting bombs, shells and bayonets. (Bulgaria is always painfully conscious of any military preparations being made by her two southern neighbours.)

An old, old man, who turned out to be an 82-year-old former village schoolmaster, and two husky young peasants, who arrived at the same time as I did, completed the group.

The first one I spoke to was Georgi Mitoff, a middle-aged peasant, brown and wiry, who owned eight acres of land. Was he in a cooperative? No, he wasn't. He thought it was maybe a good idea, "but not for our village. We don't have enough implements to go round." What did he know about brigadiers?

"They have worked for me, worked well. They welded the broken parts of my plough, sharpened my picks and shovels, and mended my watering can. The first time they came was in August, 1945, about 50 or 60. That was to help with the harvest. Since then we've had all sorts, technical, veterinary and harvesting brigades. They taught us how to take our machines to pieces and put them together again, how to look after our things, care for our cows and sheep and recognize diseases, how to clean our seeds so's not so many weeds will come up. One special brigade came and told us how we can prepare the soil better and how to change our crops so the land doesn't get tired. They are good people. I had no idea what city workers were like until these people came.

"Now I have made friends with a welder. I visit him whenever I go to Sofia. Last time was about three weeks ago and I brought him a few odds and ends to mend, and took him some butter and eggs. I like to go and just have talks with him anyway. We talk about his work and my crops, about our kids, about how life could be made better for both of us."

“How do you think it could be made better for you, for instance?”

“Well, we need better roads, a village bakery, a bigger school and a cinema. Then it would make my wife happy if we could have a bus-line from the city. As it is, if she wants to go to Sofia, she has to wait until I can drive her in the buggy. Our horses shy so much at traffic it’s dangerous for her to drive alone.”

Another young man, with golden hairs glistening on his broad, ruddy chest, spoke up. “Life gets better day by day, but slowly. In the old days we had lots of produce and couldn’t sell it. Now the selling part is taken care of. The government buys everything we can grow. We’ve had three drought years in a row which have set us back but this year it’s better. One good thing about this government is that it aims to make everyone work and everybody is working now. That’s a good thing. These brigadiers are fine people. We used to have to waste time going to the city to look for specialists for our troubles. Now they come right here to us.”

The old schoolteacher, Georgi Michev, who had taught all the farmers in the saloon, was a little more cautious than the others about the changed life: “I don’t know which is better,” he said, rubbing his gnarled hand over the white stubble of his beard and looking round at his former pupils. “In the old days I thought things were good, but today life is good also. My school had four grades and I was the only teacher for 50 pupils. Now there are 110 pupils, seven grades and five teachers.”

“What do you think about the brigadiers?”

“They’re good. I never dreamed such a thing would happen in my lifetime. They come and help repair tools and implements and never charge a thing. They fix our shoes, dentists mend our teeth, doctors give us advice and medicines. Of course, it’s a good thing.”

In the West it may seem an incredible thing that there is

no one in each country village capable of mending buckets, repairing shoes, looking after human and animal ailments, but Bulgaria has been a poor country for centuries. Five hundred years under the Turks was followed by a German monarchy which was as little interested in improving life in the villages as were the Turks. The brigadier movement was a makeshift arrangement to cover the years until modern facilities were available in all country centres. In the summer of 1949 there were over 80,000 brigadiers in Sofia alone, working in a directed and well-organized way. Apart from the enormous material help they brought the peasants, the most important result, however, was the far-reaching new solidarity they had built up between town and country worker.

The peasants of Jivit insisted that I lunch with them in the saloon as their guest. Under a huge portrait of Georgi Dimitrov, they plied me with bowls of sheeps' milk, black rye bread, soft white cheese and an enormous omelette made from six eggs. They were ignorant peasants; wrinkled old Georgi Michev, who sipped a bowl of milk with us, had taught them barely more than to read and write, but they wanted to know why America and England always talked about war, why they always supported the reactionaries. They especially wanted to know why a socialist Britain didn't understand the problem of a socialist Bulgaria and help with its reconstruction. They were quite convinced that the Soviet Union wanted peace, that America wanted war and that Britain had no free choice because she had sold herself to America for dollars. Their needs as peasants were simple and modest. They wanted peace to till their land; a few improvements in the village, a quiet development so that their children could go to a school of seven grades, instead of only four, or perhaps even to the city to a high school. For over 500 years they had been waiting for such things and now for the first time they were getting them. They could not even imagine the new, more

leisured and cultural life which was being planned for peasants by the leaders in Sofia. Their imagination could not go beyond a bakery and cinema in the village, perhaps a bus line and better roads. The idea of the cooperatives had not even reached them yet, but even the modest ideas they had for improving life, they knew were endangered in case of war or the restoration of the old reactionary regimes.

For a handful of people, unfortunately a highly articulate handful, the idea of war meant the restoration of their fortune and position by means of Anglo-American bayonets, for the millions it meant another betrayal of hopes. These ideas or something similar must have been running through the mind of one stubbly, brown moustached peasant, Lazar Nikolas, who got awkwardly to his feet before I left and said:

"You see how it is here. We are poor. We don't ever expect to be rich because we're just little people that plough our bit of land and raise a crop which is good or bad according to the weather. Nobody has ever tried to help us before. In the past any change has always been for the worse. Stamboulisky tried to help us, but he didn't last long and after him things were worse again. But these people are doing something. Even when things are bad, we feel it here," and he put his great hairy hand over his heart, "that they sympathize with us and do the best they can do. As for the brigadiers, God bless them. They brought us new hope when they helped us bring in the first harvest right in the middle of the fighting. They've helped us ever since and never looked for a penny from us."

For a view of the shape of things to come in Bulgarian village life, one must go to the Georgi Dimitrov cooperative farm near Plodiv, on the Bulgarian central plains. As in Hungary, the Bulgarian government has gone ahead very carefully on the question of setting up cooperatives. The same principle of inducement by example has been used. In some cases where

party zealots started to apply pressure to the peasants, they were sharply scolded and in extreme cases were purged from the Communist Party.

In the village of Razhevo-Konare, except for thirty families, all the villagers altogether, almost 700 family units, are in the Georgi Dimitrov cooperative. It started in 1945 with only about 50 families, some of whom withdrew after the first year. When the results of the first two years were seen, then the whole village started to come in including those who had left. By the summer of 1949 every family except the thirty mentioned above were members. The leader of the cooperative explained: "Of course, now that the pioneers have done all the work, completed the buildings, laid down irrigation and started a creche they want to come in too. But these thirty families derided us from the beginning, tried to stop others from joining and did their best to get their friends to take their land out again once they had joined. Now they plead to be allowed in. We'll let them in in the end, but meanwhile we're punishing them a little."

The "Georgi Dimitrov" is almost a completely autonomous economic unit. The whole village, including brick-makers, carpenters, smiths, mechanics, saddlers and tailors are members. (It was five times the size of Jivit and comparatively well served with facilities.) Altogether the unit owns about 6,000 acres, much of which was considered unusable land, until the cooperative members got to work and built an irrigation system.

Most of the artisans were not at their normal work the day I arrived because it was mid-summer and all hands were needed to help get the harvest in. The smithies, of course, were still on the job, taking care of breakdowns, repairing cart wheels, shoeing horses. A couple of rather delicate men, too frail to help with the harvest, were french-polishing some furniture, a fine new walnut bed being prepared for one couple who were to marry as soon as the harvest was in. The cooperative had its own

furniture shop and needless to say built all its own houses and other buildings — all in brick from bricks made on the farm.

At the very end of the long low building which housed the artisans was the creche, with two white-gowned figures managing a dozen or so fat babies, from a few weeks up to two or three years of age. Most of them were sunning themselves in a little railed off yard. They had no need of rattles or comforters to keep themselves amused. A whole wondrous kaleidoscope world moved past right in front of their eyes. A pair of horses being led past the smith, a load of hay lumbering to the barns, a flock of brown and black sheep being taken to water. Magnificent entertainment for babies. In the old days, in harvest time, they would have been left at home in the care of brother or sisters perhaps a year or two older, or would have been taken to the fields and left at the mercy of sun and flies from the time the sun peeped over the horizon until long after it had disappeared. Now, when they felt sleepy, there were neat little cots inside a cool, gaily decorated room for them to rest in.

My guide, the Domikin or supervisor, Vidul Chernov, a massive, tireless man of the cooperative, escorted me further. We passed a batch of fine, brown, strapping young women, sickles in hand, walking back towards the sheds. "They're the mothers of the babies you have just seen," Vidul explained. "As far as possible, nursing mothers are given work close to the creche so they can step back every three hours and feed the little ones. Of course, they get paid on the same basis as everyone else. We usually see them get some lighter sort of work than the others. This lot is cutting green grass now for cow feed instead of reaping wheat like the others."

We walked for several miles over the huge farm that day. On the borders, where the cooperative lands and private farms met, one could understand why the remaining thirty families were clamouring to come into the cooperative. There was no

comparison in the two crops of maize, growing a few feet away from each other. One had had preference in fertilizer, but also the benefit of the communal work of the 700 families who each winter had toiled away at extending an irrigation system, installed for the first time in the district by the cooperative. Broad, green stalks of maize on the cooperative farm waved their healthy leaves at miserable, spindly things fighting valiantly for life in parched earth, dry and hard as concrete.

The total labour power on the farm was split up into groups of about 200, and these in turn into work brigades of about 15 each. The brigades always worked together whether at weeding, sowing or reaping.

The "Domikin" explained that working in groups came quite naturally to the peasants, as it was traditional at harvest time for peasants to reap their crops in common. "Neighbours always pooled their man- and woman-power and harvested one after the other all the fields belonging to their particular group. The whole group was fed by whichever peasant's crop was being harvested at the time. The custom was for the oldest in the party to set the pace; the peasants whose crops were being cut would call the stops for a breather or for meals, and the oldest of the others would say when it was time to start again.

"Of course, now the brigades challenge each other in work contests, and it's a matter of pride that they don't lag behind each other. Competition is on a very good-natured basis."

The farm was still very poor in machinery compared to its modern American or Australian counterpart. Rows of girls were swinging sickles into a wall of crisp golden wheat, older women were binding it into sheaves and stacking them into little stooks to dry. Eventually these would be carted away to be fed into threshers where the ears would be separated from the straw and eventually fed by hand into bags. Even this was an improvement over many of the farms, where the grain is laid

in a hollow and oxen or donkeys chased round and round, to trample on the straw and shake out the precious grains. A far cry from the modern header which in one operation strips the grain from the straw as it stands in the fields, cleans it and bags it — all done by machine which one man can drive. In time the Georgi Dimitrov farm will certainly have such machines, meanwhile members do their best with what they have. Six tractors on the farm took care of the heaviest work.

We came to a large field in which a group of people were busy, seemingly building pyramids. "They're our gypsy brickmakers," explained Vidul, and he took me over to introduce me to a flashing black-eyed very good-looking gypsy girl, Yelinda, who, at 22 years, was chief of all the brickmakers.

"Do I like being in a cooperative?" She repeated my question. "This is a new life, something we never dreamed of before. We are accepted as equal for the first time in our lives or in our parents' memories. We get paid the same rate as everybody else, we are members and can take part in meetings, our votes count like anybody else's votes. Before we begged in the streets, cleaned people's shoes. Everybody despised us and we despised ourselves. Nobody was glad to see us, they said we didn't want to work, we were lazy, that we stole. Now they see what we can do if they give us a chance."

In the background, gypsy men and women were furiously digging clay, moistening it with water drawn from a nearby stream and puddling the oozing paste into brick moulds. All around stood heaps of bricks, taken out of their moulds and left to dry in the sun. Yelinda, when we came upon her, was supervising the building of a huge kiln. Bricks were being laid row upon row just as if for the building of a house, but instead of mortar, flaky coal laid between the rows. When the pyramid was built, the kiln would be fired, and after a few days, the bricks, red and hard, would be ready for building into some new

shed for the cooperative or a new house for one of the members.

We passed good-looking herds of black buffalo cattle and flocks of sheep, all the property of the farm, and afterwards we drove around the village to inspect the fine new cooperative hall which was being built to serve as meeting hall, theatre and cinema.

"But no building goes on in summer-time unless it's absolutely essential," Vidul said. "We're far too busy with crops. In winter, where there's nothing else to do, we build and extend our irrigation system. We have it all planned out just how much we'll do each year."

The co-op pays its members out on the 60-30-10 system mentioned earlier. Sixty per cent in work-hours, 30 per cent in rent, according to how much land each peasant contributed, 10 per cent into a fund to take care of the sick, aged and other unemployables.

Every member of the cooperative, whether he or she is weeding cabbages, milking cows, making bricks or raising pigs, has a "norm," based on the area of cabbages weeded, numbers of cows milked, bricks made or pigs raised over a certain period. The "norm" is calculated in terms of working days and the more it is exceeded the greater the number of working days credited to one's account, and the greater the dividend paid out at the end of the season. Many of the farmers in the "Georgi Dimitrov" cooperative were paid up to five hundred working days for the previous year.

It is a very carefully calculated and complicated system, difficult certainly for a non-farmer to follow. I discovered, for instance, that a pig reared to the age of three months counts as fourteen days to a swine-herd, which it seemed to me would make a swine-herd a prosperous man if he could manage to rear four or five litters in a year.

But what if the sows only produced tiny litters. Vidul

shrugged his shoulders. “There’s always a certain gamble in farming. His job is to look carefully after those that come into the world. Nature will balance up the size of the litters.”

At the end of the season, after working days are calculated and checked, the farmers are paid off in grain, fats, sugar, wine, etc., plus a goodly sum in cash, which averaged in the 1948-49 season about ten shillings per day for each person over sixteen years of age, in the cooperative, far above anything any but the richest members had ever earned as private farmers.

By the end of 1953, it is planned to have about two-thirds of all farming in Bulgaria organized on the lines of the “Georgi Dimitrov” cooperative.

CHAPTER TWELVE
THE LIFE OF GEORGI DIMITROV — PART I

On Saturday, July 2, 1949, life came to a standstill in Sofia and throughout the whole of Bulgaria. The loudspeakers in every town and village announced that Premier Georgi Dimitrov was dead. In Sofia, outside the Hotel Bulgaria where I was staying, little groups of people wept openly in the streets. The stout, peasant woman who cleaned my hotel room wept and said, "It seems like he just came home to us and now he's gone forever." The laughing, chattering crowds which take complete possession of the main boulevard in Sofia on a Saturday evening were transformed into subdued little groups of people discussing in hushed voices what would be next in Bulgaria. For a long time Dimitrov had been ill, but his death came like a stunning shock to millions who could not think of New Bulgaria without Georgi Dimitrov at the head.

The following Wednesday I followed along behind the mournful cortege which bore Dimitrov's body from the railway station where it arrived from Moscow, to the National Assembly where it was to lie in state. Over half a million people, more than the population of Sofia, lined the streets, most of them simple workers and peasants grieving for their leader. For two miles, the yellow-tiled streets were packed with the saddest-looking faces I have ever seen, tens of thousands of them openly sobbing. Drawn by black-cloaked horses, the guncarriage on which the casket was borne was followed by Dimitrov's widow, Rosa, the two adopted children, Marshal Voroshilov, and Ana Pauker, and members of the Bulgarian Politburo and government. It passed through streets along which Dimitrov led the coal miners of Pernik in their great strike 43 years previously, to demand a living wage from the government. The procession led through

the working suburbs where grizzled old men, veterans of some of the earliest stirrings of the Bulgarian labour movement, knelt bare-headed to pay last homage to their leader. Past glittering Turkish mosques, past the old Orthodox Cathedral, and along through the modern part of Sofia, to the National Assembly.

For ten days Sofia mourned. Night and day nothing was heard but the solemn strains of Chopin's Funeral March, Beethoven's Third symphony, the moving Bolshevik Funeral Anthem. The body had been embalmed by Soviet specialists aboard the special train which brought it from Moscow. Fishermen from the Black Sea, tobacco workers from Plovdiv, miners from Pernik, peasants from all over the country came to the capital to file past the body. For five or six hours they stood in line in the blazing heat, wrinkled old peasants, veterans, who had taken part in strikes organized by the lifelong revolutionary in the early 1900s; who had fought with Dimitrov in the 1923 revolt. There were emotional scenes in the Assembly Hall where Dimitrov lay as natural as he had been in life, his pale face reposed, his lofty forehead serene.

I had seen him first just twelve months previously when I attended a reception given by Dimitrov to Matyas Rakosi and other Hungarian leaders who had come to Sofia to sign a friendship pact with Bulgaria. Dimitrov then was no longer the robust figure who had hurled defiance at Hermann Goering in the Leipzig trial. He was fragile and his face and whole body seemed to have shrunken. Nevertheless, he was very lively that night and insisted on dancing the *hora*, with great vigour with some brigadiers and shock-workers. The latter in their blue overalls made a strange contrast to the elegant western diplomats all in full dress.

Probably the former royal palace had never housed quite such a gathering before. The stairway to the reception hall was lined with the magnificent scarlet and white uniformed troops

of the Guards regiment. At the head of the stairs Dimitrov and other government leaders stood to shake hands with the guests as they arrived. Dimitrov was clad in a simple white duck suit, white shirt buttoned at the collar but without a tie. Both Dimitrov and Rakosi were in great form that evening and both were at some pains to make the brigadiers and workers feel at home among the dazzling uniforms and splendour of the generals and the diplomats and their wives. One Western diplomat, who has since been expelled from the country for having been involved in an espionage trial, turned to his companion as Dimitrov, jogged by his feet twinkling in the intricate steps of the *hora*, a brigadier girl on each arm and said, "By the look of the 'old man,' we'll soon have one less communist leader in Eastern Europe to worry about! I wish they all looked as sick."

The day after Dimitrov's death was announced, the Bulgarian Cabinet at a special meeting announced it had decided to erect a mausoleum to house the embalmed body which would be permanently exposed to public view as is that of Lenin in Moscow. Plans had been approved and the leader of the brigadiers had pledged that the Mausoleum would be completed by the following Sunday, the day of the state funeral. The clearing of the site and the building of the Dimitrov Mausoleum was a most astonishing feat. A few hours after the communique was issued, little more than 24 hours after Dimitrov's death was announced, work had started on a site in a public park, opposite the Presidium of the Republic. Work started late Sunday night, and by next morning astonished citizens on their way to work could not believe their eyes. An eight feet high wooden fence walled off an area a hundred yards square and through the chinks they could see what seemed to be thousands of brigadiers working as in a frenzy, cutting down trees, lopping branches off others, unloading bricks, digging holes, mixing concrete, working at a pace which seemed impossible to main-

tain. Many of them vowed they would not move from the job until it was finished. They worked night and day, pausing only long enough to snatch something to eat. By Monday evening, the site had been cleared and the foundations for a thirty-five feet high brick building about forty feet square had been dug. The first night there was a furious rainstorm, a couple of inches of rain fell within a few hours, but the brigadiers — issued at a moment's notice with waterproofs — did not cease to work. The fire brigade came along and pumped water out of the foundations. Throughout that week, the rain came down in torrents, and in the Western legations, officials rubbed their hands together and said, "There'll be a scandal. They'll never finish it." But they did finish it. While the diplomats were taking up positions at the National Assembly to follow the cortege, brigadiers were tearing down the last of the wooden fence to reveal the simple and beautiful, completed Mausoleum, faced in white limestone, ready to receive the body of Bulgaria's greatest son.

Communist leaders came from all over the world to take their leave of Georgi Dimitrov, whose work was as much for the international working class as for Bulgaria. Communist representatives from twenty-three countries, headed by Marshal Voroshilov from the Soviet Union, took their turns mounting guard alongside the body, as it lay in state in the National Assembly. Not since the death of Lenin had a communist been so honoured and indeed since Lenin's death, no communist of such a stature or such prestige in the international communist movement had died. Never before were so many top-ranking communists gathered together, in one place, as in Sofia on Sunday, July 10, the day of the funeral, Voroshilov from the Soviet Union, Ana Pauker from Romania, Maurice Thorez from France, Wilhelm Pieck from Germany, Luigi Longo from Italy, Pastirides from Greece, Harry Pollitt from England, leaders from every part in Europe, even the secretaries of the parties of

Argentina and Venezuela, and Dixon, president of the Australian Communist Party, followed behind the gun-carriage from the Assembly along Tsar Liberator Boulevard, to the Mausoleum. Behind the foreign communist delegations and the diplomats followed the population of Sofia, swelled by thousands of people from the provinces. Each of the 23 communist leaders made a five minute funeral oration, all of them stressing Dimitrov's lifelong fight for the international working class movement. At the end of a five-hour ceremony, while twenty-one guns crashed out a final salute, the red-swathed casket was carried by Voroshilov and members of the Bulgarian Politburo into the crypt of the mausoleum.

Throughout the funeral ceremonies, one important Bulgarian personality was missing, Vasil Kolarov, the closest and oldest friend of Dimitrov, the acting premier and foreign minister of the Republic, did not go to Moscow for the final hours with Dimitrov as did some other members of the Politburo; he was not at the station on the Wednesday when the train bearing the body arrived; he did not stand guard at the National Assembly; he did not appear at the Mausoleum for the funeral rites. All the ceremonies were managed by Valko Chervenkov. Kolarov had suffered a severe heart attack when he received the news of Dimitrov's death and he was too sick to make any public appearances for several weeks.

Within six months, Sofia was draped in black again and solemn funeral music was broadcast day and night throughout the loudspeakers in the streets. From 6 o'clock in the morning until midnight for three days, crowds of peasants and workers stood in the snow to file past the body of Vasil Kolarov, lying in state in the National Assembly. Kolarov never fully recovered from the heart shocks which followed the death of his comrade. He valiantly carried on his duties as Premier of the Republic to which post he was unanimously elected following the death

of Dimitrov. I was present at his last public appearance, when he delivered a ninety minute address on the eve of the national elections on December 17, 1949. He had changed enormously in the six months from when I had previously seen him, at the opening of the first parliament after Dimitrov's death. His normally round, robust face was thin and haggard, but his voice had lost none of its vitality, nor his gestures their vehemence. He spoke at length about the crisis through which the state and Communist Party had successfully passed in connection with the Traicho Kostov plot, and he warned the people and party of the need for vigilance if they were to preserve the great advances they had made. Within three weeks Kolarov was dead, at the age of 72. Bulgaria and international communism lost, within six months, two of their greatest figures.

Marshal Voroshilov, deputy premier and one of those who stand closest to Stalin, was sent to represent the Soviet Union at the funeral. Kolarov was buried with the same honours as Dimitrov, a few paces away from the Mausoleum, so that in death as in life, the two friends would remain close to one another.

The lives of these two men, Dimitrov and Kolarov, are so intricately interwoven that it is proper to sketch their biographies together, as they lived, fought and died together. Their biographies form part of the history of modern communism and the history of Bulgaria of the twentieth century. Their careers provide a rare example in history of a forty-five years old political partnership which took the two friends on incredible adventures to many corners of Europe together, and led them back to lay the foundations of a new social system in their own country and eventually to die within a few months of each other. Both were foundation members of the Bulgarian Communist Party, both were secretaries of the Communist International (Comintern) in Moscow. Both lived in exile for 22 years, both

were serving as prime ministers of their country at the time of their death.

Vasil Kolarov was the elder of the two. He was born in Shumen, not far from the Black Sea, now renamed Kolarovo, in July 1877, while Bulgaria was still under the Turkish yoke. Dimitrov was born five years later in a village in the district of Radomir in Macedonia, near the present Yugoslav border. Both children grew up in the years when memories of the 500-year-long Turkish occupation were still fresh in their parents' minds. Their bedside stories were tales of the legendary Bulgarian figures, fighters and poets, Christo Botev, Vasil Levsky, Ivan Vassov and others who led the Bulgarian rebellion in spirit and with the sword against the Turks. Their heroes were the wild revolutionaries who hid in the mountains, fired the national passions of the Bulgarian people by their deeds in the resistance that eventually led to the nationwide revolt, which crushed as it was in a sea of blood, provoked Russia into action and the eventual Liberation of Bulgaria from the Turks by the armies of Tsar "Liberator" Alexander.

Young Kolarov and Dimitrov were both active in politics at an early age, Kolarov at school and Dimitrov as soon as he left to work as a printer's apprentice. They both fell under the influence of Dimiter Blagoev, the founder of Bulgaria's Socialist Party, a Marxist theoretician and writer of note who occupied the first place in Bulgarian left-wing politics for a quarter of a century. At the age of 17, Kolarov, already a member of the Social Democrats, organized a students' revolt against the headmaster of the high school he was attending at Varna. Troops were called out and broke up the students' demonstrations, but the headmaster fled the city and did not return. Kolarov took an active part in left-wing student organizations at Varna University until he was 20 when he was sent abroad by his family to study law in France and Switzerland. Kolarov came from a

family with a middle-class background, Dimitrov's father was a worker.

Dimitrov became secretary of the Printers' Apprentice Trade Union at the age of 18 and joined the Social Democrat Party two years later. That same year in 1902, Dimitrov and Kolarov met for the first time, significantly enough at the conference which laid the foundation for the modern Bulgarian Communist Party. In July 1902, both young socialists attended the Social Democratic party conference at Tirnovo, in central Bulgaria, ancient capital of the country. It was at this conference that the party split into Bolshevik and Menshevik groups, or "Narrow" and "Broad" socialist parties as they were called. Kolarov and Dimitrov both supported the leftist faction, the "Narrow" Socialists, which later became the Communist Party. Kolarov, who in the meantime had returned from Geneva where he had taken his law degree, became "Narrow" party secretary for Shumen and Dimitrov was party secretary at Plovdiv, second largest city in Bulgaria. Within a few years both Dimitrov and Kolarov were elected to the Central Committee of the Party, positions which they held without interruption for 40 years.

It is impossible in the short space of one chapter to do more than skip through a few of the more important pages of the lives of these two remarkable men. Dimitrov developed into the tough, courageous workers' leader, who organized and led strikes and was always in the thick of industrial trouble. Kolarov had developed into an intellectual, no less tough or courageous who used his talents as a lawyer to defend the arrested strikers or mutineering soldiers, and who used pen and platform to propagate the cause of the left socialists. In 1907, he attended the international socialist congress at Stuttgart, together with Lenin, Rosa Luxemburg and other international socialist celebrities. Kolarov supported Lenin's proposal, approved by the conference but later betrayed by the German socialists, to op-

pose any moves for a new war, to call for a revolt of the workers of all countries which were involved in a future war, to oppose in parliament military credits for a new war.

Dimitrov at this time had led the successful thirty-five day strike of the miners of Pernik (now Dimitrovo), and was busy with predominantly trade union work, organizing miners, tobacco and textile workers. In January 1910, we find Dimitrov and Kolarov in Belgrade at the first meeting of the Balkan Socialist Confederation. This was formed at Bulgarian initiative to halt the German-backed drive of the Austro-Hungarian Empire towards the Balkans, which later culminated in the Balkan wars of 1912-13 and the first World War. In 1911 the two friends represented the Bulgarian Trade Union movement at an international trade union conference at Budapest.

In the elections of 1913, after Bulgaria had been defeated in the Balkan wars into which Tsar Ferdinand had dragged the country, the Narrow Socialists received their first electoral successes. Seventeen deputies were elected and amongst them Vasil Kolarov and Georgi Dimitrov, the latter at 31, the youngest member of the Bulgarian parliament.

They both made use of their rights as deputies vigorously to denounce the plans being made for entering the coming war on Germany's side and they demanded a policy of neutrality. They opposed every move to drag the country into war and when the war broke out, Kolarov and Dimitrov denounced it as an imperialist war in which the working class should take no part. They denounced equally the German Social-Democrats who betrayed the earlier pledges and supported the war and who even sent delegates to Bulgaria to try and win the Bulgarian Social Democrats over to their viewpoint to support Germany in this war. In 1915, when Bulgaria entered the war on the side of Germany, the Narrow Socialists published a manifesto opposing the decree of mobilization. Dimitrov was arrested and

imprisoned for a year and a half. Kolarov, who was a reserve officer — he had been mobilized in the Balkan war — refused to answer the mobilization decree, and was also arrested together with most of the members of the Narrow Socialist group, all of whom refused to take part in the war.

They were released, however, and took their places in parliament to oppose on every possible occasion right throughout the war years, any votes for military credits. As a lawyer, Kolarov defended Serbian and Bulgarian deserters and at international conferences in Switzerland and Stockholm, Kolarov remained steadfast to the original resolutions of the Socialist International.

In April 1917, Kolarov even organized a meeting with German socialists in Berlin, under the Kaiser's nose so to speak, and roundly denounced the Germans for their betrayal of the socialist front. In Stockholm in the same year, Kolarov contacted the Russian Bolshevik leaders who were preparing to put into effect Lenin's resolution at the Stuttgart Conference of 1907, to raise the banner of revolt in the warring countries.

In 1917, one of Georgi Dimitrov's brothers, Nikola, died in exile in Siberia. He had been arrested by the Tsar's police in 1908 for printing illegal revolutionary pamphlets in Odessa and was exiled for life to Siberia. He went to Russia in 1905, the year of the first Russian revolution — the "dress rehearsal" as the communists call it.

The 1917 revolution in Russia gave a fresh spurt to the activities of the Narrow Socialists. Towards the end of 1918, revolts and mutinies broke out in the Bulgarian Army, strikes in the factories, Dimitrov doing much of the agitational work, Kolarov defending any mutineers who were caught and brought before the tribunals.

Dimitrov was arrested again together with a large number of Pernik miners in a demonstration to celebrate Dimitrov's

release from jail. The miners created a diversion which set Dimitrov free from the police, but the miners' leaders were arrested and brought to trial with Kolarov as their defence lawyer. In one of his greatest victories at the bar, he managed to have the lot acquitted due to "lack of evidence."

In 1919, the "Narrow" Socialists decided to transform their party into the Bulgarian Communist Party — the second after the Bolshevik Party to do so. Kolarov was elected secretary and he, Dimitrov and other prominent "Narrowists," Kabakchiev and Maximov, were named as delegates to the Second Congress of the Comintern. Dimitrov and Kolarov set out in one fishing smack, Kabakchiev and Maximov in another, to cross the Black Sea to Odessa, and on to Moscow. The boat in which Dimitrov and Kolarov were sailing, however, was blown on to the Romanian coast in a storm, and both were arrested by the Romanians and charged with espionage. Eventually they were released and deported back to Bulgaria, too late for the Comintern meeting.

In the elections of 1919, the newly-formed Bulgarian Communist Party won one quarter of the votes and were allotted 47 seats in the Sobranje, in which the peasant leader Stamboulisky had a clear majority. It was a notable victory for the communists and worth remembering in the West where communism in Bulgaria is so often represented as something which the Soviet Army brought with them when they liberated the country in 1944. In the next elections, at the end of 1921, the communists increased their seats to 51. (Even in 1931, the communists gained 31 seats, in 1933 they won the Sofia municipal elections.)

The period from 1919 to 1923 is one about which the Bulgarian Communist Party is not too happy. Georgi Dimitrov was very critical about this period in the mammoth political report which he presented in a six-hour speech to the Fifth Congress of the BCP in December, 1948. This report, presented six months before he died, must be regarded as Dimitrov's political

testament and is an authoritative and unvarnished history of the Bulgarian Communist Party.

Stamboulisky in 1920 rejected the idea of cooperation with the Communist Party. He did not invite the Communist Party to join his Cabinet although he had discussions with Kolarov before he picked his government. But it seems also that the communists did not want to have anything to do with Stamboulisky either. Stamboulisky was the man of the Agrarian Union and, as Dimitrov points out, the Communist Party had made grave errors in overlooking the role of the peasants, in neglecting them in fact. They had concentrated on the industrial workers as the more advanced politically and had created no mass liaison with the peasants. The communists had other reasons to be piqued with Stamboulisky. They warned him time and again of an impending fascist coup against him. At first he listened and took measures which the communist leader — in those days still Dimiter Blagoev — proposed. The Tsarist White Russian army of General Wrangel, 20,000 strong, had been given refuge on Bulgarian soil, and the reactionaries hoped to make use of Wrangel and his men. The communists demanded, and Stamboulisky eventually agreed with them to disperse, disarm and expel Wrangel's troops. This was done and danger averted for a short time. Soon the communists claimed they had definite proof of preparations for an armed coup, and they demanded that arms be issued to the workers of Sofia. This was turned down by the peasant leader on the grounds that there was no proof of an imminent coup.

(In 1921, Dimitrov and Kolarov went to Moscow for the Third Congress of the Comintern, Kolarov was elected to the five-man presidium of the Congress and the following year was made general secretary of the Comintern. Apart from attending various conferences in Europe, he remained in Moscow at his Comintern offices, until the events of June 1923 in Bulgaria.)

On June 9, 1923, the fascists struck against Stamboulisky and his Agrarian Union government. Led by Professor Tsankoff, and helped by reactionary army officers, they quickly dispersed government resistance. Stamboulisky was hunted down like an animal, and on June 13, was literally cut to pieces. The communists stood aside, as Stamboulisky had refused their help and disregarded their advice. Kolarov was in Moscow at the Comintern, Dimitrov and a few other militants were in a minority in the party leadership at home. Blagoev, the leader, demanded that the party adopt a neutral attitude.

In his "Political Report," Dimitrov comments: "The ill-fated policy of neutrality (in June 1923) was excused by lifeless doctrinaire considerations completely alien to reality and to revolutionary Marxism. The party leadership maintained... since the peasants were not yet ready to fight for a workers-peasants' government, they would not follow the appeal of the Communist Party for an uprising against fascism."

Kolarov, in a radio broadcast from Moscow, immediately denounced the Communist Party attitude, asked for and received permission to leave the Comintern and return to Bulgaria. On June 23, he arrived secretly at Varna, having crossed the Black Sea in a motor boat from the Soviet Union. Unfortunately for his comrades, he was arrested by Tsankoff's police aboard a Sofia-bound train. While Tsankoff sought out and crushed the remaining armed opposition to his coup and consolidated his forces, Kolarov sat in jail for 40 days. At the beginning of August he was released for lack of evidence of any crime committed.

He immediately went to Sofia and the day after he arrived, he took part in a meeting of the Central Committee of the Communist Party. With the support of Dimitrov he demanded that (a) the decision to remain neutral be rescinded; (b) that the party establish closest contact with the remnants of the Agrar-

ian Union, and if necessary start a revolution against the Tsankoff government; and (c) that the party work for the setting up of a workers-peasants' government. A resolution to this effect was accepted by the Central Committee and a special Committee was set up to make the technical and military preparations for an armed insurrection. Kolarov's views at this meeting had the weight of the Comintern's approval behind them, but were still opposed by some members of the Central Committee, including, it is believed, Blagoev. Kolarov asked the Comintern to extend his period of leave so that he could remain with Dimitrov to help with the revolt.

A revolutionary committee of three was set up, including Dimitrov, Kolarov and Gavril Guenov. September 23 was set for the outbreak. Secret committees were set up throughout the country, arms which had long been hidden away were distributed. Early in September, the leaders were warned that Dimitrov and Kolarov and the whole Central Committee were to be arrested, so they all went "underground." On September 20 members of the revolutionary committee for Sofia district were arrested by the police. Someone had betrayed the plans, the police scoured the country for Dimitrov and Kolarov, who by this time had been publicly named as the leaders of the impending revolt. On September 22, the insurrection broke out as planned, but Tsankoff's troops and police were well prepared. The insurgents seized many towns and districts, but were soon crushed. After six days of severe fighting, Dimitrov and Kolarov led the remnants of their battered forces across the frontier into Yugoslavia. Both were sentenced to death in absentia, both remained outside Bulgaria for 22 years, when they returned within two of months of each other at the end of 1945. During the fighting and in the executions which followed, 30,000 workers, peasants and intellectuals lost their lives.

The September revolt remained a much discussed episode

in the stormy history of the Bulgarian Communist Party. It cost the death or exile of many of the party's best members, including the death of another of Georgi Dimitrov's brothers, Todor, who was captured by the police and was put to death after the most horrible tortures. Dimitrov's youngest sister Elena was hounded by the police for two years until she eventually escaped to the Soviet Union where she met and married another Bulgarian Communist who fled to the Soviet Union after the massacres of 1925. His name was Valko Chervenkov, now Prime Minister of Bulgaria and secretary general of the Communist Party.

Opinion on the correctness or otherwise of the revolt provided material for splits within the party for years to come, although the Comintern, Blagoev and members of the Central Committee who remained in Bulgaria approved the uprising as the only possible course after the mistakes made in declaring for "neutrality" during the June coup. Blagoev died in May 1924; leadership of the Party was transferred abroad.

Kolarov returned to his post at the Comintern and Dimitrov went to Vienna to set up a bureau of the BCP abroad, composed of party exiles. With Comintern approval, Kolarov and Dimitrov called off further direct revolutionary activity in Bulgaria and asked those party leaders who were able to remain within the country to start from the bottom again and concentrate on organizing workers and peasants in the legal struggle for improving their day to day life. This sage advice was disregarded, the leadership inside the country fell for the clever plot of an agent provocateur, an employee of the French Deuxieme Bureau (Secret Service) and in 1925, exploded a bomb in the Sofia Cathedral, at a moment when Tsar Boris should have been inside. The French officer obligingly telephoned Boris to remain at home that afternoon. Terrific reprisals were started immediately against the workers, another 20,000 of whom were slaugh-

tered. These communists that escaped the September uprising were caught in the 1925 massacre which the Sofia Cathedral attentat provoked. Leadership of the party after that was concentrated almost exclusively abroad until a party nucleus could be painfully and slowly re-established again inside the country. A Central Committee continued to meet abroad almost every year in Vienna, Moscow or Berlin, with Dimitrov and Kolarov always occupying the dominant roles in fighting against the defeatism which spread through the party after the double tragedies of 1923 and 1925.

The lessons of 1923 had not been lost on Dimitrov. On his initiative in 1942, the Fatherland Front was founded inside Bulgaria, a union of workers and peasants organizations, embracing every member of the community, prepared to take up arms against the nazis and the Bulgarian fascists, it was later to become the basis for all political activity in Bulgaria.

Kolarov returned to Sofia on September 9, 1945, Dimitrov two months later. After all, the trials and perils they had been through, not the least of which were living through the war years in the Soviet Union, they returned to their native land where Dimitrov had been sentenced three times to death and Kolarov once to death and to two prison sentences, each of fifteen years. Their fortunes had changed. The Bulgarian Communist Party had regained its great prestige among workers and peasants by its tireless struggle against the Germans and by its leadership in the revolt in 1944. There were still many able communists left in the country, some of them released from jails in which they had been held since 1923 and 1925. Dimitrov at first became President of the Republic, but later Premier with Vasil Kolarov as Foreign Minister. In 1946, the two friends and revolutionaries, who beat a fighting retreat from their country 23 years previously, were firmly back in the saddle after completing a revolutionary cycle of which history yields few similar examples.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN
THE LIFE OF GEORGI DIMITROV — PART II

Dimitrov and Kolarov were not faced with an easy task when they returned to Bulgaria at the end of 1945. The Communist Party had been through difficult times, its leaders scattered throughout Europe in exile; the Party at home constantly operating in illegality with no stable headquarters, and no opportunity for full discussions of decisions.

The party was badly riddled with factions, "rightists" who opposed the September uprising, the "leftists" who opposed the decision to call off armed insurrection in 1923. At the time of the Leipzig trial the situation was such that members of the "leftist" Central Committee inside Bulgaria were the only communist leaders throughout the world who did not support the campaign for Dimitrov.

In the broader field too, in 1945, the Fatherland Front was having difficulties. British and American efforts were directed to splitting up the organization and gaining control of any opposition party which they could persuade to leave the Front. Both Dimitrov and Kolarov were sick men and they knew they had a limited time to weld together a party and a government capable of consolidating the great gains that had been made, and leading the country on to socialism. They were determined that this time there should be no Tsankoff coup d'etat and that there should be no weak links in the party leadership which would enable a new Tsankoff to gain a footing. The moment had come for which they had fought for fifty years; the moment for which peasants and workers had stained the Bulgarian soil with their blood in 1923, in 1925 and during the years from 1941 till September 9, 1944. This time there must be no mistakes, no weaknesses, the victory must be permanent and built

on sure foundations.

It is against the background of half a century of thwarted hopes and betrayals that one must consider the trial of the Agrarian leader, Nikola Petkoff, who flirted with the idea of an officers' coup backed by the British and Americans; and the trial of the former communist leader Traicho Kostov, who saw himself as the leader of a "new type" of communist Bulgaria, a semi-autonomous communist Bulgaria attached as the seventh Republic to the "new type" communist federation of Yugoslavia. These were old ideas in new dress and had cost Bulgaria dear in the past.

The Foreign Office and State Department denounced the sentencing of Nikola Petkoff as judicial murder; denied as fantastic the evidence that he had plotted a coup with American support, that he had planned to turn the country into a battlefield and to open the gates to American armies. In this connection an interesting item appeared in the *New York Herald Tribune* of March 5, 1950, more than three years after the Petkoff trial.

The story is datelined *Jesi* in Italy and reads as follows. "A group of Bulgarian political refugees here called yesterday for war with Russia as the only means of releasing the communist grip on the Balkan countries of Eastern Europe. The refugees, mostly members of the Bulgarian Peasant Party of the late Nikola Petkoff, toasted President Truman and insisted that Western intervention is their only hope of liberation from the yoke of Moscow Communism... the 163 Bulgarian exiles declared that their sole aim is to return to their homeland as frontline fighters to liberate their country from communist rule.

"The Bulgars heard speeches by former Peasant party leaders before receiving their first CARE food parcels, distributed by the International Rescue Committee on behalf of the Iron Curtain Refugee Committee..."

Dimitrov and the Bulgarian government knew quite well what Petkoff was planning. Once the partisan armies in Greece were liquidated, frontier incidents could be timed to support local disorders arranged by Petkoff and his followers. Bulgarian fascist bands could easily be infiltrated over the border to bolster up the disorder and the Americans would consider they had the right to intervene as they had in Greece. Fortunately for peace in the Balkans, and unfortunately for the British and Americans, the Greek partisans kept fighting long enough for the Bulgarians to clean up their local traitors. By the time the partisans had stopped fighting, there were no groups left in Bulgaria to foment disorders.

In a revolution you win or lose and take the consequences. In 1923, the communists lost and took the extremely bloody consequences. In 1944, with Soviet help they won. They consolidated their victory with remarkably little distress and bloodshed. The Western world raised more outcry over the hanging of Nikola Petkoff who conspired against the government that it never did about the massacre of 20,000 leftists in 1925, but in fact the transformation of monarchist and fascist Bulgaria to a state in which the communists wield chief power was accomplished with extraordinarily little hardship to their political opponents. Before they died, the rugged Dimitrov, with the craggy face of a born fighter, and Kolarov, the intellectual and humanist wise old man, who loved the arts and sciences, saw both party and government survive difficult crises. They could die content that the Bulgarian people had set their feet firmly along a path which daily led them to a better future, a future which was changing perceptibly and yielding results which for half a century they had heard of vaguely in pamphlets if they could read, or from some passing propagandists. The finest testimony to the success of the Dimitrov-Kolarov life-long fight for the well-being of the Bulgarian people was written on the faces of

hundreds of thousands of humble people who came from every corner of the country to gaze for the last — and for many of them for the first-time on the faces of these two devoted leaders, as they lay in state in the National Assembly. In Sofia, as I was at the time of the death of both of these remarkable men, I have seen no more moving tribute to any leader than that expressed by the masses of the Bulgarian people to Dimitrov and Kolarov.

Dimitrov was in Berlin in 1933 when the flames of the burning Reichstag served Hitler as the bomb plot in Sofia had served Tsar Boris. Not content with banning the German Communist Party and arresting all its leaders, including the communist deputies in the Reichstag, Hitler wanted to prove to the world he was forced to these measures by the provocations of international communism. The scapegoat was none other than the Bulgarian communist leader Georgi Dimitrov. The trial held at Leipzig six months after the firing of the Reichstag was intended to be Hitler's supreme stage piece against communism. But he had reckoned without the magnificent audacity, courage and wit of Dimitrov — and of the efforts of Vasil Kolarov abroad in rallying international support for the Bulgarian communist leader.

The Reichstag was fired on February 27, 1933, Dimitrov and two other Bulgarian Communists. Popov and Tanev, were arrested on March 9, and brought to trial with Ernst Torgler, former president of the German communist parliamentary group, and van der Lubbe, a half-witted Dutchman.

Kolarov was charged by the Comintern with directing the international defence of Dimitrov. He left Moscow and travelled from country to country, visiting Paris and London in September 1933, and stirred up public opinion to rally to the defence of Dimitrov. Kolarov took part in the "mock trial" held in London which branded Goering as the originator of the fires. The arrest of Dimitrov was made the first great inter-

national rallying point against German fascism, and the lesson of the success of Kolarov's campaign in mobilizing all sections of leftist and liberal opinion was not lost upon the Comintern.

Dimitrov's behaviour in Court won him the admiration of the whole world and raised the prestige of communists enormously. His audacious replies to an embarrassed Goering, despite the latter's authority as Minister-President, were commented on in the world press. Dimitrov had been kept in chains and half-starved for six months before he was brought into court. He was warned that his only chance for mercy would be to admit his guilt. The trial provided the sensational publicity Goebbels had promised, but the very opposite type of publicity he had expected. Trained police witnesses forgot their lines when Dimitrov began to cross-question them. Dimitrov not only denied his own guilt but nailed the nazi leaders themselves as the real culprits and more precisely named Herman Goering as chief incendiary. When his questions got too acute, the court president closed the session or had Dimitrov removed from the Court, or refused to allow him to continue his questioning.

On one occasion, Goering, purple with rage at Dimitrov turning the tables on him and asking him searching and embarrassing questions, hurled a tirade of oaths at his prisoner. The Court president, slightly embarrassed himself at Goering's bullying outburst, turned to Dimitrov and said, "You see how your communist propaganda has made the witness lose his self-control and how you have provoked him to such rough behaviour."

Dimitrov answered with an ironic smile, "On the contrary, I am very pleased with the replies of the Minister, President."

This was too much for the spluttering Goering. He, in court as an ordinary witness, ordered the presiding judge to remove Dimitrov from the court. This was something which had never happened in any court, not even in a nazi court before.

"You fear my questions?" shouted Dimitrov.

"I'm not afraid of you," replied Goering, "but take care not to fall into my hands outside this court."

One after another, Hitler's top henchmen came into court and, one by one, were demolished by Dimitrov. Goebbels fared no better than Goering. Dimitrov changed the course of the trial and made the court room a platform for the greatest attack on fascism and nazism that had ever been launched up to that time. He carried the attack into the enemies' camp with such brilliance and audacity — and thanks to Hitler's and Goebbels' miscalculations — with such worldwide publicity that the nazis were forced to acquit him and the other Bulgarians. Dimitrov conducted his own defence and interrupted the speech of Torgler's lawyer, Dr. Zack, to say, "I would rather be sent innocently to the gallows by this German Court than be acquitted by such a defence as Dr. Zack has made on behalf of my comrade Torgler." Most of Zack's speech was taken up with a savage attack on communism and of his client's "misguided ideas."

In his final speech, Dimitrov was interrupted thirty times by the Court president, and finally he was dragged from the court before he finished, but it was a masterful effort. There was little of it that dealt with the defence of Georgi Dimitrov. Most of it was an open attack on German and world fascism and an appeal to the workers of the world in general and the German workers in particular to close their ranks and fight fascism immediately.

He quoted from Goethe:

"You must climb
To fall or conquer
Or to serve without rest,
To triumph or suffer
You — anvil or hammer."

The international working class should decide quickly, Dimitrov told them from the Leipzig Court House, whether they wanted to be anvils to be beaten or hammers which would batter fascism out of existence.

Dimitrov, Torgler and the other Bulgarians were acquitted, Hitler had to be content with the half-witted Dutchman as a scapegoat. Van der Lubbe was duly executed for the firing of the Reichstag, and Dimitrov, after intervention by the Soviet Union, was released and sent to Moscow. Nominated by Stalin, Dimitrov took over Kolarov's old job and became secretary of the Communist International, a post he kept until the Comintern was dissolved in 1943.

The great support Kolarov found in his "'Save Dimitrov" appeal, support from communists, socialists, liberals, intellectuals and even religious bodies, prompted Dimitrov to launch the Popular Front movement in 1934 as a means of combatting fascism. The Comintern endorsed this policy and the united front of all progressive parties grew into a recognized political movement. Popular Fronts of the communists and socialist parties in France and Spain swept to power in elections held in 1936. The United Front was the basis for resistance groups in Eastern Europe during the nazi and fascist occupation and has become the basis of government in the countries of the people's democracies.

While Dimitrov directed the affairs of the Comintern, Kolarov retired to do scientific work in Moscow as head of the International Agricultural Institute. He was given an honorary degree in Economic Science and later became a specialist for agrarian questions not only for the Balkans and Europe as a whole but also for China, India and Latin America. Both he and Dimitrov of course remained members of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party to direct its policy as far as possible from abroad. When World War II

broke out, the two veteran leaders collaborated together on the "Christo Botev" radio station which operated from Soviet territory in the Bulgarian language. More important was their work in directing the difficult underground resistance movement against the Germans and Bulgarian fascists, a movement which they fed with recruits and supplies from bases inside the Soviet Union. Parachutists and supplies brought in by Soviet submarines played no small part in the very effective Bulgarian partisan movement.

After the death of these two giants, one might well ask, "Who next?" The man who was being groomed for the task of succeeding Dimitrov as leader of the Party, Traicho Kostov, proved to be a traitor. An account of his activities forms a separate chapter in this book. Valko Chervenkov became the successor both in the Party and in the government. He is an imposing personality, physically and in character. Over six feet, with broad shoulders, Chervenkov is very big for a Bulgarian, a stormy-looking man, with a shock of unruly hair, a forceful manner and a stormy past. Compared to Dimitrov and Kolarov, Chervenkov belongs to a younger generation of Bulgarian communists. He was 49 when Kolarov died, but already a veteran communist with an impressive background.

Chervenkov's political career started at the age of 14 when he helped lead a great student strike in Sofia. He joined the Communist Party as soon as it was formed at the age of 19, and three years later was seriously wounded in a clash with Tsankoff fascists in the outskirts of Sofia.

At the time of the Tsankoff coup d'etat in June 1923, Chervenkov was secretary of the Young Communist League in Sofia, and as leader of the Komsomols he took part in the September insurrection. After the revolt was suppressed he remained illegally in Bulgaria and was sentenced to death in absentia. Due to his bulk and striking physical characteristics, it was not an

easy thing for Chervenkov to go underground. Time and again he escaped capture by a hair's-breadth. In the two years between the 1923 revolt and the 1925 attentat in the Sofia Cathedral, he was constantly on the run. He played an important role in rebuilding the Communist Party machine, but following the wholesale massacre of communists in 1925, he was ordered by the Central Committee to leave the country. He left illegally for Moscow and studied at Moscow University. A striking tribute to his abilities was his appointment as a director of the Marx-Lenin Institute in Moscow, where many of Europe's leading communists passed through his hands.

He was naturally in closest contact with Dimitrov and Kolarov during his exile and he was in charge of educating all Bulgarian political exiles in the Soviet Union. When war broke out, he was put in charge of the Bulgarian language "Christo Botev" radio station. He returned to Sofia with the Medal of Lenin, one of the highest Soviet decorations, and was immediately made a member of the Politburo of the Communist Party. In the first Dimitrov Cabinet, he was president of the Committee for Science, Arts and Culture, as well as Secretary-General of the Fatherland Front, and a secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party. After Dimitrov's death, Chervenkov became first vice-premier and secretary-general of the Communist Party and after Kolarov died, he became Prime Minister.

At Kolarov's funeral, which is the last time I saw Valko Chervenkov, he looked much younger than his 49 years, a man of great physical and intellectual vigour whose broad shoulders seem well able to bear the mantle handed down by his two great predecessors, his colleagues in exile.

What has been accomplished in those first five years after Bulgaria's liberation requires a complete volume to relate. I have touched on a few points only so far. The new friendship forged

between city and country worker, the practical cementing of the alliance between worker and peasant, the prototype of the new cooperative village of the future with autonomous communities, equipped with all the advantages of city dwellers with the possibilities for vastly improved economic conditions as well as for a full cultural life. This new deal for the villages goes ahead slowly however. The peasants must not be rushed. On paper it will be the end of 1952 before even 60 per cent of agriculture is in the hands of the cooperatives, but if the peasants are not enthusiastic it may take longer.

One could quote figures of what has been achieved in the two-year plan and what will be achieved under the five-year plan, but figures are poor props with which to present a picture of the new life which is being created. One interesting point, however, with the five-year plan is that it is intended to reverse the old picture of Bulgaria as an overwhelming agricultural country by establishing a 76:24 ratio between industry and agriculture by the end of 1953. One will no longer be able to think of Bulgaria as a land exclusively given to the production of yoghurt, rose oil and tobacco. In every field that one looks there has been or there is in the process of being a complete revolution, and nowhere is this more striking than in the changed status of women since September 1944.

Bulgaria was behind most Eastern European countries, which is saying a good deal, as far as the position of women was concerned. Five hundred years of Turkish occupation with all that entailed, followed by an authoritarian monarchy, and topped off by 25 years of fascism, was a bad legacy to take over in 1944. In many parts of the country women were chattels with no rights, they occupied special quarters in the rear of the houses and did not show themselves when male visitors called. They were just about one step advanced from living in purdah as far as rights were concerned. Their first political rights were grant-

ed during the 1930s, when married women who were mothers were given the right to vote, but not to be elected as deputies.

One of the first decrees introduced in 1944 was to give women full social economic and political equality with men. Later a whole host of subsidiary laws were introduced which ensured that these were real rights of equality and not just dry laws in the statute books. All women over the age of 19 can vote and those over 23 can be elected as members of parliament. The present government has one woman minister, and three assistant ministers, Dr. Tsola Dragoicheva, woman minister for Posts and Telegraphs, incidentally spent eight years in Tsar Boris' prisons for political offences, and was three times sentenced to death. The Vice-Minister for Social Welfare, Rada Todorova, spent 13 years in prison. The Ambassador to Moscow, the prize diplomatic post, is another woman, Stella Blagoev, daughter of the founder of Bulgarian socialism, Dimiter Blagoev. There are 34 women in the present parliament of 250 deputies. Women get equal pay for equal work and they get three months' maternity leave on full pay in the event of child-birth. Leave may be taken when the mothers wish, before or after birth. All professions without exception are open to women. In the old days they could study and take degrees in various professions but were not allowed to practice.

Creches and nursery schools attached to the factories have made it possible for women really to take advantage of the right to equal pay for equal work. Instead of spending half of their wages to pay some old drone to look after the children while they work, they can leave their babies in the factory creche with the sure knowledge that they will get expert attention, plus regular medical inspection.

All the old restrictions on girls studying for careers have been swept away. Before 1944, there was a limit to the number of girls who could study in any university faculty. Not more

than thirty per cent of students studying literature could be girls for instance. Now the only criterion of studying is the entrance examination. Forty per cent of those studying architecture at the Technical High School in 1950 were women.

In the old days the greatest calamity that could befall a woman was to have an illegitimate child. She was not allowed to name the father, there was no way of getting maintenance from him; the unmarried mother was a social outcast with no chance of marriage, little chance of a job. The child grew up with no legal rights. Today there is no such thing as an illegitimate child. All pregnant women, regardless of their marital status, have the right to free pre-natal care, the right to three months paid holiday, at childbirth, followed by up to six months unpaid holiday without losing their jobs. For the first six months after childbirth they may work only six hours daily. The unwed mother has the right by law to name the father, and he must pay maintenance. The child has full legal rights and equal inheritance rights with other children from the same father. A mother is a mother, whether she has a husband in the eyes of law or not, and a child is a child — not to be discriminated against because of some technical formality.

The most revolutionary change in the life of Bulgarian women, however, has come about in the villages. Dimitrov had occasion once to chide Bulgarian men, even communists, for their attitude towards women. "Most Bulgarian men, even party members," he said, "still occasionally wear the fez on their heads." This was particularly true in the villages where women were usually regarded as pieces of property alongside the ox and goats. Woe betide the village maid that did not have a few strips of land to bring into marriage and a few animals as well. She would not find a husband. If she did not please her lord, he could send her home after a few years, minus her land and her cattle. If she did please him, she would soon become a beast

of burden, even occasionally yoked up alongside the ox to pull a plough. She worked at least as hard in the fields as the man during spring, summer and autumn, and in winter it was she who tended the animals, while lord and master often enough spent the harvest earnings with his cronies in the village saloon. She never had money of her own, her back was never straightened, her bands never idle. She took part in no cultural or social life, apart perhaps from an evening chat with her neighbours, as they sat in front of their miserable stone cottages, spinning the coarse tufts of sheep wool into balls of yarn, waiting for their lords and masters to come home, as like as not drunk and quarrelsome if supper were not ready.

There were valiant village women who fought for a better life for women, and a sprinkling of progressive peasant husbands who set examples, but by and large the life of women in Bulgarian villages before September 1944 was one of unrelieved gloom and misery. Today even the peasant wife has complete economic equality with her husband. And this is not an idle phrase. If she is 60 years of age, she gets a pension on which she can live comfortably without working more in the fields. She is now legally entitled to the income from the land she has brought into the marriage. If the marriage is dissolved, she takes away half of the entire family fortune regardless of what she has brought in as dowry. And in case of any disputes, she will go to the local branch of the 600,000 strong National Women's League and raise such a fuss that a delegation will visit lord and master and find out just what has been going on.

The cooperative farm opens the road to the final emancipation of Bulgarian peasant women. In the cooperative with its canteens, creches and communal laundries, they are relieved from much of the drudgery of cooking, washing and looking after the children which used to form the back-breaking burden in the old days after work in the field was finished. In

the cooperative too, the money she has earned according to the number of days she has worked is pressed into her hand by an impersonal treasurer. She does not have to wring it from a grudging husband. In most cases this new independence of the village woman, this new self-respect they have found, has made for happier and sounder married life. In some cases, naturally, it has caused great upsets.

The advantages of life on the cooperative farms are more immediately apparent to the women than to the men and often it is the wives who insist on joining. If a husband insists on staying out, the wife can take the case to the Women's League or to the Village Council. A delegation will be sent to talk things over, and if the husband still refuses, the wife is allowed to detach her piece of land from the farm and bring it to the cooperative. She will, of course, continue to live with her husband, but will work at the cooperative. After one season of working the farm on his own, the husband usually sees reason to join the cooperative too. If the husband is too quick with his fists or boots today, the wife has a quick redress through a complaint to the village council or local committee of the Women's Federation. Village cinema and frequent visits by mobile theatrical teams, the radio and electric light, the chance to take part in discussions open an entirely new life to the peasant wife. Thousands of them attend evening courses to learn to read and to write, often together with their husbands. Those that distinguish themselves in work or social activity have a chance of being sent to represent their district in parliament.

Article 72 of the new Bulgarian Constitution states: "Women have equal rights with men in all spheres of the state, private, cooperative, public, cultural and political life." When they first read those words in the newspaper there were few peasant women who believed that they applied equally to them. But now that paragraph has been put very strictly into oper-

ation, and the law punishes any who try and evade it.

A couple who wish to divorce today in Bulgaria may do so with the minimum of formality and without payment. If both sides agree, it is simply a matter of registering the fact at the local village or regional council office. They are asked whether they have thought over the matter carefully and if they still insist, they are given a legal separation and divorce follows within three months. Divorce proceedings can be started three months after marriage. Some grounds for divorce such as sterility of one of the partners, or the fact that one has been sentenced to prison, have now been abolished, but political incompatibility today is an important factor in divorce. When divorce is granted, children are usually left in the custody of the mother, and as mentioned earlier, contrary to previous custom, the family fortune is equally divided, with the man responsible for the maintenance of the children. It is legally impossible for a husband these days to send his wife back to her parents because he thinks he has bought a bad bargain. He must legally sue for divorce with its — for him — unpleasant economic consequences.

Marriage procedure has also been simplified these days. Both partners present their identification cards to a civil official, each signs a declaration to the effect that there is no legal impediment to the marriage, that neither is a cretin, nor chronic alcoholic, nor suffering from any incurable disease. No previous formalities are necessary, only two witnesses to sign the register. There was a great rush on the divorce courts when the new laws were announced, mainly by people who would have been divorced years or decades previously, if there had been simple laws. There were also a number of cases of people getting married at five minutes' notice and divorcing again as soon as the legal minimum of three months had passed. The "silly season" in matrimonial relations has now passed and family life in Bulgaria is on a more stable basis than in most countries in

Western Europe, and is certainly more stable than in America.

On every hand there is evidence that Dimitrov and Kolarov laid the basis for a social system which is rapidly raising Bulgaria from one of the most primitive of the backward Balkan countries to one of the most progressive countries in the world in the sphere of social relations. The example of the real emancipation of Bulgarian women is only one facet of the revolutionary changes that have taken place in every sphere of life. Another interesting example is the way they have tackled the question of prisons, a pressing problem in all western countries.

There are two shops in the centre of Sofia, which would be indistinguishable from other shops, except for a small plaque on the outside walls that says they belong to the Sofia Central Prison Cooperative. One can buy cane chairs, baskets of every imaginable shape and colour, and children's toys, from convicts. They manage the shop, sell the goods over the counter, take the customers' money and hand back the change. There are no guards in the shop or outside it. In the morning a prison van delivers the prisoners to the shop, in the evening it collects them. Those serving behind the counter, and the prisoner craftsmen who make the baskets and toys, are paid trade-union rates for their work. Half of what they earn goes to pay for their "board and lodging" in prison, the other half they send to their families. Every prisoner has the right to work and receive trade union rates for his work. The system in the West whereby wife and children suffer because of the breadwinner's crimes is considered monstrously unjust in Bulgaria.

For every three days that a prisoner works, five days are credited against his sentence. In other words, a prisoner sentenced to five years is released after three years if he has worked, with a substantial sum of money to his credit if he is a single man and has not been sending his earnings home. More astounding still, prisoners who prove themselves to be trustworthy are often

given weekends off, when they may visit their families, and they get 15 days vacation a year. Many who were sentenced to long terms of imprisonment, including the Mayor of Sofia under the Germans, have been released from prison altogether on condition they do not move out of the village to which they have been "exiled," or in some cases on condition they do not visit Sofia or certain other proscribed cities.

Naturally, assassins, murderers, people convicted for crimes of violence, are kept under close observation for a long period before such privileges are granted. Normally a prisoner spends several weeks or months in a solitary cell, while the guards get to know him and form an opinion of his character. Those serving sentences of less than twelve months suffer greater restrictions than those with longer sentences.

Most of those who occupy the highest positions in the Bulgarian government today have spent years inside the prewar prisons, known throughout the world for their inhuman conditions. They discussed for many years what prisons should be like, and they have taken the earliest possible opportunity to put their theories into practice. Prisoners have to be made into socially useful persons and prison in Bulgaria today gives many people their first chance in life. They are taught carpentry, electrical engineering and a dozen other trades; they have prison libraries, orchestras and theatrical groups.

When the accused in the Pastor's trial and later in the Kostov trial asked to be spared to perform useful work for the state, they knew they were not uttering idle words.

Prison is no longer the dehumanizing institution it used to be in Bulgaria, and still is in the West. It is a place which deprives the enemies of society of the possibility of an early repetition of their crimes; gives them an opportunity of making honest retribution; fits them for a place in society again and does all this with the minimum of suffering for their guiltless

dependants.

Another problem the government had to solve was that of the minorities. There were large minorities of Turks, Greeks, Armenians, Jews and gypsies in the country. The Jews were mainly descendants of those expelled from Spain at the end of the fifteenth century, the gypsies remnants of those that settled in Bulgaria in the great westward migration of gypsies from their supposed original home in Central India. In the case of the Turks, Greeks and Armenians, the problem was relatively simple. They were mostly small farmers with roots in the country. The new constitution declared every citizen had equal rights and backed this up by allowing all minorities full language and cultural rights, to run schools in their own language and publish their own newspapers. In the case of the Turks, the government subsidised seminaries where Muslim priests could be trained.

The case of the 50,000 Jews was not so simple. After all that European Jewry had suffered under the nazis, many of them did not believe in the good faith of any government. Most of them already had relatives in Palestine from prewar migration days. Bulgarian people and local government officials protected the Jews very effectively during the German occupation, and despite repeated attempts to round up all Jews and send them to the gas chamber in Poland, Bulgaria's Jewry remained intact at the end of the war, except for some who fell fighting with the partisans. Most of them decided, however, that they wanted to go to Palestine, and the government put no obstacles in their way. Free transport was provided by train and ship for all those that wanted to leave. In all, almost thirty-five thousand went, leaving about 15,000 still in Bulgaria. Individual Jews who still want to leave may do so, but in future they must pay their own fares. The Jews have their own newspapers, synagogues and rabbis. Most of those now left are progressive citizens who have

demonstrated by their deeds that they want to identify themselves with Bulgarian life and socialism.

No doubt there are many romanticists and sentimentalists who will regret the disappearance of Bulgaria's gypsy nomads. The straggling caravans, the mangy, snapping hounds, the florid gypsy girls with voluminous coloured robes ready to tell the fortune of any hand crossed with silver, the little nomad camps with brown bodies splashing in a stream, the blue smoke and cooking pots and skinny tethered horses, they all are becoming a thing of the past in Bulgaria. The nomads are being given roots, and make no mistake about it, they like it. Hitler's plans to exterminate them as socially unadjustable and racial degenerates probably frightened them rather badly and caused the tribal sages to reconsider their habits. Or perhaps it was true what one brown, wrinkled old gypsy woman with a clay pipe between her lips told me on one of the cooperative farms: "It isn't true that we like being nomads. Only a fool can say it's true. We would always have stayed on the land if we could have got hold of some, or settled down as artisans. But we came too late on the scene. We would never get land of our own. We were always a peaceful people, a disunited people. We never made any landgrabbing wars. We stayed where we could, as long as we could until we were pushed on our way. But see how our people work now they have a chance!" And it is true that the gypsies who have been accepted into the cooperatives seem to work doubly hard to prove that it was the only opportunity that was lacking in the past. The nomads have mostly been given land now or are accepted as artisans, brickmakers and blacksmiths into the cooperatives.

In Sofia the gypsies were mostly blacksmiths and bootblacks. Now they are formed into cooperatives. Gypsies run seven shoe-shining parlours in Sofia today and are very proud of them. The manager of the "Pashev" shoe-shining cooperative

personally cleaned my shoes and kept up a running commentary.

"In the old days we used to run barefoot in the streets, kneel down here, kneel down there and beg somebody to let us shine his shoes. Sometimes we got a kick in the face for our pains. Customers paid us what they wanted and we could never complain. Now look at us!" He was a short, swarthy man, with a scrubby face and tons of energy as he whisked one cloth after another across the dazzling surface of my shoes.

"Look at us. A few years ago all of us were in rags and patches, nobody with shoes."

Grinning all around the shop were half a dozen equally swarthy gypsies with gleaming teeth and jet black eyes, clad in neat blue overalls, neat white canvas shoes, neatly brushed mops of blueblack hair.

"We're out of the rain, snow and flies now. We have a radio to entertain our customers," and he rushed across to turn it on. "We own everything here. First we formed a cooperative, then the government loaned us 25,000 leva (about thirty pounds) to stock up with brushes, polish and rags, and pay a month's rent on the shop and chairs. In six months we paid off everything, bought ourselves overalls and the shop a radio. And we've all got more money than we ever had in our lives before." A big placard in the shop advertised standard rates for polishing different types of shoes, from white sandshoes to long riding boots.

"We got much more trade than we used to when we worked on our own and against each other. People trust us and send their shoes in to us to be cleaned. We get as much or more custom that way than from those that sit in the parlour."

It is perhaps not as romantic for the tourists to see gypsies dressed in blue overalls and shoes and set up in a shop instead of rushing around barefoot and clad in "picturesque" rags, but the gypsies seem to think they are better off that way. "And," as my

mentor expressed it, "our kids that used to be running around in the streets are in school now learning to be real big shots."

The gypsies, of course, have the same voting rights as all other citizens, they have their own paper printed in some weird Romany dialect, have their own deputies in parliament and, above all, they have the only gypsy theatre in Europe outside Moscow.

One of the gypsy members of parliament had to take up an amusing question because of an incident on one of the programs at the gypsy theatre. It was decided that a certain lascivious and suggestive dance traditionally performed at gypsy weddings was unsuitable for the stage and must be banned. The gypsies protested strenuously, and the MP was delegated to take the matter up. He put up a good case based on the fact that the dance was traditional and had its roots as far back in gypsy culture as anyone could remember. He won the point and the dance is still performed with all the wild abandon the talented gypsy dancers can muster.

From the gypsy theatre to the arts in general in Bulgaria is a far cry, but it does bring us to the question so puzzling to the West as to how the theatre, arts and artists function in a socialist state. People who can understand the logic of the state taking over factories, or farms being worked as huge cooperatives, find it difficult to imagine how art, music, the theatre, painting, can be socialized. I found the answer partly in the rooms of the Committee for Science, Art and Culture in a discussion with a group of young painters and writers, and partly from discussions with one of Bulgaria's finest sculptors, Andrei Nikolov, an old man, with a great shaggy head and beard that makes him look like a twentieth century Karl Marx. The young painters and writers gave me the theory of the matter, Nikolov confirmed the practice of it.

First of all it was made clear that artists and writers are hon-

oured and privileged people in a socialist state. Their special talents are recognized, they receive all sorts of privileges, and in return they are expected to play a special role in raising the general cultural level of the people. That is the basic tenet, so to speak, of their role in society.

Almost, but not all, of the painters, writers and musicians are members of a union of some sort which is affiliated with the Committee (with the status of a Ministry) for Science, Art and Culture. Painters and Sculptors work basically on a state contract system. In 1949, for example, the Committee set a theme for painters, "The History of the Bulgarian People." Any recognized painters could apply for a contract to paint one or more pictures which fitted the theme. A time limit of six months was set during which the artist would be paid by the state 20,000 leva per month (eighty dollars) which is equal to the pay of a government executive, about twice the pay of a telephone operator and half the pay of an underground shock worker in the mines. It is an adequate living wage.

The theme is capable of infinite variation. I saw the results of the 1949 contracts. Some artists had painted group scenes from the epics of the war of liberation from the Turks, others had painted scenes from the partisan war against the Germans, or portraits of individuals who had played some notable part in Bulgarian history. Unless one knew beforehand one would not have guessed that all the entries fitted into a general theme. They seemed just a normal exhibition of paintings from thirty or forty artists each of whom was presenting individually chosen themes.

Some of the paintings were not accepted for exhibition, in which case the unfortunate artist would owe the Committee for six months advance money which in theory he must pay back, but in practice stands as a debit against him for some future work. Works are not often rejected, but in this case one of

Bulgaria's best known painters had his canvas refused because it was regarded as too formalistic, not close enough to earth.

Almost all the canvases that I saw exhibited had already been sold but none to private buyers. State organizations, art galleries, trade union headquarters, even factories for their assembly halls are chief buyers in Bulgaria today. Paintings are not bought to be hoarded away in private collections, but are bought by mass organizations where they will have the widest possible appreciation. Art for art's sake has no future in a society where purchasers are buying not for some individual's eccentric fancies but for the public at large. The lowest prices paid for any of the pictures I saw were well above the minimum 120,000 leva necessary to repay the six months' advance payment they had received. Most artists had submitted more than one canvas, several of them half a dozen. Altogether 50 painters had applied for contracts for this particular theme.

The "History of Bulgaria" was not by any means the only theme set for 1949. The death of Georgi Dimitrov prompted a demand for portraits and busts of Dimitrov, and further contracts were let. In addition to the purchase price of their exhibits — without any agents' fees deducted — artists also receive cash prizes awarded by the Artists' Committee.

Competitions are also organized among artists themselves for themes. Many a painter wearily searching for a theme for his brushes has been grateful for the communal inspiration provided by his colleagues. There is an unlimited demand for paintings of the contemporary scene, and works depicting Bulgarian picturesque and stormy history and artists of any merit at all have no worries about their livelihood. Those with ultra-modern futurist or surrealistic or existentialist ideas can paint away all they want, and if they can find private buyers they can make a living, but in general there is not much of a future for them in Bulgaria. The extreme limit of modernism in Bulgarian paint-

ing is probably set by the wonderful old man Vladimir Dimitrov, with a long wispy white beard, whose vivid colours and slightly geometrical style, almost bordering on cubism, startles some of the orthodox realists at every exhibition.

The government, apart from help with the state contract system, gives every possible assistance to painters.

Most of the studios were destroyed during the war, dozens of painters had never possessed studies of their own. The government found 100 war-damaged shops which had been put to no useful work, and they requisitioned them, had them fitted out as ateliers and rented them to the artists at nominal cost. Blue prints have been prepared for an artist's colony to be built by the end of the five year plan at a site outside Sofia, high enough to be clear of fogs which beset the city in late autumn and winter. In the meantime, in addition to the hundred ateliers already set up, space is being made available on the top of schools and other public buildings where plenty of light is available. Most painters now earn about fifty to fifty-five thousand leva a month, about two hundred dollars according to the official rate, but in terms of Bulgarian money very much more. Special allotments of foreign currency have been made available so that they may have the best of imported materials, brushes, colours and canvases with which to work. And, important for many painters and sculptors of the old school, the fact that they made portraits or busts of Tsar Boris, or Tsar Ferdinand, is not held against them. They are estimated on the basis of their work today and whether or not it serves to raise the cultural level of the people.

For writers a different system is used. They are expected to show much more individual initiative in selecting themes. Supposing a writer has an idea for a play. He can submit an outline of the plot to the Theatre Committee, and if the outline is accepted, he is given an advance of money and starts work. If he is wise he will keep in touch with the Theatre Committee which

will arrange conferences for him with producers before the play is finished. The producers, committee members and stage technicians will all point out the faults in the play from every viewpoint from ideological faults to purely technical difficulties with scenery or lighting. The standard required is very strict. The Bulgarian Theatre is based on that of the Soviet Union, on the Stanislavsky school. Russian producers from the Bolshoi and other famous Soviet theatres often come down to Sofia to lend a hand with productions. It is not sufficient for an author to hit on a good ideological theme, the language, images and form, as well as content must be of the highest standard. From all these points the play will be thoroughly criticized before the writer puts it into final form. He has ample time to work; advances are generous and the rewards of writing a successful play are enormous, calculated in Bulgarian currency. If the play is turned down in the end, the author will have to refund his advances, but this very rarely happens, unless a writer has departed completely from his original outline.

Before the play is finally billed, a special showing will be made with a cross-section of the population invited as a test audience. After the showing there will be a public discussion. The producers make a report on how the play was produced, what technical and other difficulties had to be overcome, members of the public get up and say what they thought of the play, its content, the way it was produced, their opinions of the scenery and the acting. Criticism of the sharpest form and well-based appreciation comes not from the Olympian heights of professional theatre critics, who in the West look at any new production with a sneer, but from the general public, the final target of all writers. Plays submitted to this test audience criticism have often been radically revised and improved by the public criticism.

The most successful play recently written by a Bulgarian

author, “Royal Clemency” by Kamen Zidarov, was drastically revised after criticism by an audience in Plovdiv. It is now a first-class hit, and writer Zidarov does not have to worry from a financial point of view if he does not have another play accepted for a year or two. Authors receive a straight ten per cent of box office takings, which has meant several millions of leva for Zidarov during the first twelve months’ showing of his play.

Censorship hampered the development of the Bulgarian theatre in the past. It has now been abolished in theory but still exists in practice in the sense that the all-powerful Theatre Committee would certainly not produce a play of existentialist Jean-Paul Sartre. His work is regarded as negative and pessimistic, not in keeping with the “revolutionary, humanist and realist” conceptions of the modern Bulgarian theatre, as a spokesman for the Theatre Committee expressed it. Shakespeare, Moliere, Gogol, Tolstoi, Chekov and all Soviet dramatists were banned in the past and, of course, are all favourites of the present. “It is natural that Soviet influence is paramount in our theatre,” the Committee man explained, “not only because the language lends itself to ready translation, but because Soviet writers deal with problems and themes that express Bulgarian problems and interests today.”

Before September 1944, there were five national theatres and one opera in Bulgaria, today there are seventeen theatres and four opera houses. The government spends just twenty times as much on music, opera houses and theatre as any pre-liberation government. Old actors and artists, even those who left the theatre long before 1944, have been sought out and given decent pensions. Some of them have been brought in as advisers or teachers in the new High School for Dramatic Art. State encouragement for the Arts is not an empty expression, but has reached down and given very solid practical help to the individuals who earn their daily bread by serving the muses.

Some of the finest buildings in the country, including a group of lovely villas formerly belonging to Queen Marie of Romania, at Balchik, on the Black Sea, have been turned over as rest homes to artists, writers, painters and musicians. Anybody working on a play or book or a musical score who wants a few weeks or months in a quiet spot can apply to the Committee and he will be comfortably installed wherever his fancy pleases at a purely nominal cost.

All these reforms and undreamed of privileges are what is meant by the "New Life" in Bulgaria. They are the solid substance of visions dreamed of by Bulgarian reformers, writers and revolutionaries in the days when the Turks still ruled the land. They are the practical form of the Constitution won for Bulgaria by Dimitrov, Kolarov and the men and women that believed in and followed them. They are gains which the Bulgarian people will defend with their last drop of blood. The Western world must realize this. Whether it's the peasant in the cooperative farm, the gypsy in blue overalls and shoes, the peasant wife who for the first time is treated as an equal, the factory worker who feels himself part owner, the painter who has been given a studio and an assured future, the worker's son who for the first time in history can attend an university, they all owe their present life to the Bulgarian Communist Party, to its gifted and inspired selfless leaders, Georgi Dimitrov and Vasil Kolarov.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN THE INCREDIBLE STORY OF LASZLO RAJK

A few weeks after the Cominform resolution denounced Tito, a young Hungarian of Yugoslav origin, Milos Moich, was found by a woman friend lying in a pool of blood in his Budapest apartment. It was the night of July 10, 1948. A few minutes after the young woman arrived, Moich died, but not before he had named Živko Boarov, press attaché at the Yugoslav Legation, as his assassin. The young woman had passed Boarov leaving the apartment as she approached it. Boarov returned to the Yugoslav Legation, the Hungarian police arrived a few minutes later, but could not enter Legation premises. A strong police guard was placed round the building and over the next few weeks diplomatic notes passed with great rapidity between Budapest and Belgrade. Eventually the Hungarian police got their hands on Boarov and they commenced unravelling one of the most fantastic and cold-blooded political conspiracies in the history of Central Europe.

The trail led to the Hungarian Foreign Minister, Laszlo Rajk, to the Commander in Chief of the Hungarian Army, General George Palffy, to the chief of cadres in the Hungarian Communist Party, Tibor Szonyi, to the former Charge d'Affaires at the Yugoslav Legation, Lazar Brankov, who had declared himself for the Cominform. Beyond these important officials, the trail led back to Tito and his Minister of the Interior, Ranković, and further back still to the British and American intelligence services.

It seems that it took some time before Boarov talked, and after he did talk many months of patient checking on his incredible revelations, turning up long forgotten dossiers, interviewing hundreds of people, delving back into the history of

Hungarians in the International Brigade in Spain, into the personal stories of political prisoners held by the Horthy police in the early 1930s, the testimony of Horthy police officers already held in Hungarian jails. Enquiries were hampered because the very positions of the men involved made it possible for them to close many avenues of investigation to the police, to create diversions and draw many red herrings across the trail.

Moich and Boarov at first sight were unimportant characters, but if Boarov had not muffed his assignment, firstly by not killing Moich outright, and secondly by allowing himself to be seen, detection of the Rajk conspiracy might have been postponed long enough for the carefully organized plan to be put into operation.

When the Cominform resolution was published, Yugoslav communists at home and abroad were stunned. They had great faith in their wartime leader, Marshal Tito, but they could not believe the Soviet Union and the other people's democracies could be wrong. Those at home quickly found they could do nothing about it. Those who opened their mouths even to discuss the resolution, were whisked off to jail, or as in the case of General Arso Jovanović, Tito's former chief of staff, and hundreds of others, they were liquidated. What was required of a Yugoslav communist was an immediate rubber stamp approval to resolutions supporting Tito. Yugoslavs abroad, however, were not quite so tightly under Ranković's control. After much heart-searching, many of them declared for the Cominform. Such a one was Milos Moich. Although he was a Hungarian by nationality, he was a Yugoslav by birth, and since the end of the war had been an agent in Hungary for Ranković's secret police, or UDBA as it is now known. Moich was an important official in the Federation of South Slavs in Hungary. The President of the Association, Antal Rob, was also an UDBA agent who felt that things were getting too hot for him after

the Cominform resolution. Although a member of the Hungarian Parliament, he fled to Yugoslavia with a Yugoslav passport and a Yugoslav Legation car. The South Slav Federation, one of Tito's chief weapons for "peaceful penetration," took an anti-Tito stand, and in view of Moich's changed attitude it was decided to nominate Moich for President. Moich told Andras Szalai, of the Propaganda Section of the Communist Party, that he wanted to disclose the whole story of UDBA activities and Tito's plans for Hungary, and hinted that the story would be sensational. Szalai, who as he related to the Court, had been the most despicable type of police agent for 15 years, put Moich off for the moment and warned the Yugoslav Ambassador, Mrazović. What followed is best described in Boarov's own words as he told the Court during the Rajk trial, supplemented by Brankov who joined Boarov at the witnesses' stand to try and minimize his own role in the affair. Boarov, tall, sleek, very well dressed, grinningly greeted acquaintances among the Hungarian and foreign correspondents in the Court as he swaggered in. Brankov, short, with close-cropped black hair and a dead-white face, was tense and always on the lookout for a point which he might possibly exploit to his advantage.

Boarov explained the background of Moich and that it became known he would denounce Tito and UDBA activities. "In connection with this," he continued, "Brankov said he had reported the Moich case to Belgrade and Ranković had replied that Tito's instructions were he must be put across the border to Yugoslavia, and if this were impossible, he must be liquidated. Brankov ordered me to do it and said that as I was a Serb and closest to Moich, I had the best chance of success.

"At first I refused. Then Brankov and Blasić (first secretary at the Yugoslav Legation) took me to Minister Mrazović and explained that I did not want to carry out the assignment. Mrazović repeated the assignment and when he ordered me to

carry it out, I dared not refuse. Mrazović handed me his own revolver.

"Then I went to Moich's flat on the evening of July 10, and making sure that he was alone, I went to him and we had a long talk. I tried to convince him to give up his original intentions. I tried to get him to come to the Legation to talk with Brankov. I knew if he came there, we could put him across the frontier. At first I could not bring myself to use the revolver to kill him. But Moich refused everything. He refused to give up his original intention, refused to go with me to the Legation. Then I started to threaten him and told him he was playing with his life, at which point a quarrel developed and we started to scuffle. In the heat of the scuffle I lost my head and shot him with Mrazović's revolver. I went to the Legation and reported the case to Brankov as Minister Mrazović had already left for Yugoslavia."

A short debate then ensued in the Court between Boarov and Brankov with Brankov saying he had opposed the shooting, Boarov denying it.

"The Judge (to Boarov): Say it to his face that he did not oppose it either.

"Boarov (turning to Brankov): You did not.

"Brankov (shouting fiercely): I did oppose it."

Brankov was then ordered to take his seat, Boarov, as a witness, was led out and the case continued.

It was nearly a year after the shooting of Moich that the whole mosaic was pieced together by the Hungarian security police and the arrests of the chief figures were carried out, Rajk was arrested in his home on May 30, General Palffy on July 18, 1949. Each one arrested contributed a little more to the story. Before men of the importance of Rajk, Palffy and Szonyi were arrested, one may be sure the police had a completely watertight case against them, a case which no amount of denying could disprove. It seems more likely that like the gamblers they were,

these men threw in their hands and told everything, once they knew that they had lost.

Summed up in one paragraph, the plot was for a group of political adventurers and former Horthy officers to seize power in Hungary with the help of Yugoslav troops, install a regime with Rajk at its head, which would be but an appendance of a Greater Yugoslavia. The signal for that coup would be the arrest and assassination of Hungary's three leading communists, Rakosi, Gero and Farkas.

There was nothing new in this type of plot. Rajk and Palffy wanted to assume the role of a new Horthy, Mannerheim, Pilsudski or Tsankoff who robbed the peoples of Hungary, Finland, Poland and Bulgaria of the fruits of their revolutionary victories after World War I.

Rajk himself was an extraordinary character, cold as steel, a good actor, a political adventurer of the South American type, a man not fundamentally interested in politics or ideologies but very interested in power, a man without ideals and without loyalties to either causes or individuals. I saw him three weeks before he was arrested, addressing an election meeting at Miklosszentmarton, a village near the Austrian border. He smiled as the villagers filed past depositing presents on the platform for him to take back to Budapest, and as the crowd clapped and cheered at his speech and shouted, "Rakosi-Rajk, Rakosi-Rajk," but his smile was completely lacking in warmth and expressed cynical amusement rather than any genuine reaction to the mass friendliness. He must have been a worried man on that occasion. The net was already tightening around him. Searching questions had been put to him at meetings of the Politburo, he had difficulties in maintaining his front at high level ideological and political debates with rapier-minded political savants of the calibre of Rakosi, Gero, Revai and others. Once the spotlight of suspicion flickered even momentarily on

Rajk, curious gaps in the background began to demand explanation.

Only a week before that election meeting, according to evidence given by both Rajk and Palffy in Court, the two had an anxious discussion behind the podium on which they stood on May Day with Rakosi and the others to watch the march-past of half a million Budapest workers. Both felt they were under suspicion, but Tito and Ranković were insisting on immediate action. The process of hauling in the nets had already started however, and Rajk knew already that he would be among the big fish landed. Under constant suspicion during his past weeks of freedom, he became nervous, made mistakes and confirmed in a dozen different ways that he was a guilty man. When the trail finally led to his flat and he was taken into custody, Rajk's life cracked open like a rotten pumpkin.

For a brief period, a few months at most, when Rajk was 21, he was an idealist. He returned from France as a student in 1930, impressed with friends he had made in Paris who were Marxists. He got in touch with a Marxist circle at the Budapest University, and without joining the Communist Party, he helped distribute illegal leaflets and was afterwards rounded up by the police with a group of communist students. His brother-in-law, a police captain, Lajos Bokor, intervened, and Rajk was released after he had signed a declaration in the presence of Police Chief Hetenyi, agreeing to return to the University and act as a police spy among the students. That was in 1931, and from that day until May 1949, when he was arrested, Rajk worked all over Europe as a police spy. The declaration he signed in 1931 turned up dramatically in Ranković's hands 16 years later when Ranković signed him up formally as a Yugoslav agent.

Rajk described this scene to the Court. At the time he was Minister of the Interior and was holidaying in the summer of 1947 at Abbazia, on the Adriatic coast: "A leading member of

the Croatian UDBA, a blonde woman of about 30 years of age, called on me at the villa," he said. "She spoke Hungarian. She said Ranković would shortly come to Abbazia, that he wanted to talk with me and that no one but the three of us should know of this conversation and meeting. Ranković, in fact, arrived in Abbazia a few days later. In our conversation this Croatian woman acted as interpreter. Ranković told me that he knew I had been connected with the Hungarian police and that he had now come to Abbazia on direct orders from Tito, to warn me that in case I should not in the future maintain a political attitude supporting Tito's policy in every respect in Hungary, they would expose me. I replied that it was entirely fruitless and unnecessary to threaten me in this way, since it was not true that I had been connected with Hungarian police, and if I cooperated with them politically, I did not do so because they wanted to organize me but because my political concepts were akin to theirs. Upon this Ranković somewhat mockingly pulled from his pocket a photostat copy of the declaration I gave to Hetenyi when I was arrested in 1931. I asked Ranković how he came to possess such a document. Perhaps the Yugoslav fascist police previously had contact with the Yugoslav police and exchanged data with them? Ranković replied that it did not turn up from Yugoslav files but was given to them by the Americans.

"The files of the Horthy police were evacuated to Western Germany in the last phase of the war when the government and various official bodies escaped to the West, and in the American zone of Germany these files fell into the hands of the Americans... Ranković said they needed this document because they did not want to buy a pig in the poke, the more so as I would get to know all about their entire policies and connections. Therefore he could tell me that they were in contact with the Americans, that in the near future my instructions would not come from the Americans directly, but from the Yugoslavs.

'Well,' said Ranković, 'the Yugoslavs means Tito and myself.' He told me that in the future I would get instructions directly from him... Here I must repeat that when Ranković produced the photostat copy I said that organizing me formally on the basis of the photostat was unnecessary as I agreed with them politically anyhow. Ranković then said that I as a Minister of the Interior would understand that he, in his capacity of Minister of the Interior, would regard it as necessary to have every possible guarantee in his hands that I would perform my tasks correctly. They knew my abilities, my position in the government and the party, and would assign great political tasks to me."

The declaration Rajk signed was the beginning of his long and sinister career as a police spy. He returned to the University in 1931 and rewarded the police by denouncing a few months later the whole group which prepared the illegal pamphlets Rajk had once helped to distribute. Seventeen of them, including Rajk and another police agent, Stolte, were arrested. Rajk and Stolte, who had to be arrested so as not to attract suspicion, both were given three months' sentences. The following year he denounced another small group, was arrested with them but was acquitted. Rajk told the court that he gave regular reports on student activities until he was expelled from the University in connection with his third arrest. The police could not prevent this expulsion, of course, without revealing Rajk was their agent.

He wormed his way in the central propaganda organization of the Young Communist League with the task of locating the party printing press, but this he failed to do, as he was transferred to another more important job in the National Union of Building Workers, where he was to act as a provocateur. Mass meetings were forbidden at the time, but Rajk persuaded the workers to hold a big street demonstration at the time of an im-

portant strike by building workers. As a result of the demonstration the police arrested 200 workers, including all the union leaders, and the strike collapsed.

The police thought that Rajk should disappear from the country for a while; the communists would sooner or later become suspicious of him, and in any case there were important tasks abroad.

There was a regular flow of illegal communist literature pouring in over the frontier from Czechoslovakia. Rajk was ordered to discover the origin and the route used to smuggle in the pamphlets. In 1936, escorted by his brother-in-law, Captain Bokor, and a detective of the political police, he was passed through the Hungarian frontier into Czechoslovakia. In Prague he was naturally able to pass himself off as a persecuted communist who had escaped from the Horthy police. He was accepted as a genuine communist-in-exile. It took him some time to get himself organized in Prague and to feel his way into a position where he could carry out his task. Before he could locate the route by which the illegal literature was smuggled, he was ordered by the new Hungarian political police chief, Sombor-Schweinitzer, to go to Spain to find out the names of those fighting in the Hungarian Rakosi Battalion and where possible to disrupt and demoralize its members.

He was passed on to Paris in 1937 with false documents by the unsuspecting Czech Communist Party, but avoided the special committee of the French Communist Party which checked all volunteers in Spain. He felt that with their thorough searching methods they may have discovered something of his background. He managed to cross into Spain, unchecked, and soon won the confidence of the Hungarians. Had he not been arrested three times and imprisoned twice? Had he not fled as an exile to Prague? He was eventually made political commissar of the Rakosi Battalion, and had no difficulty in sending back

the names of all members to the Horthy police. His second task he fulfilled by insisting on disciplinary action against one of the most popular officers in the battalion, Laszlo Haas, just before the vital battle of the Ebro River. The case backfired against Rajk, he himself was denounced as a Trotskyist and expelled from the Communist Party. But the morale of the battalion was seriously weakened by this top-flight political row in the crucial weeks of the Spanish Civil War. The Rakosi Battalion held a vital sector of the front. In February 1939, Rajk deserted the Battalion and fled to France, where he was interned, and later joined by other members of the unit. Most of those who could later have testified against him and his expulsion from the party were either killed in battle or died later in the German concentration camps to which Petain and Laval delivered them.

In the internment camp Rajk told the court he was in close touch with Trotskyists among Hungarians and Yugoslavs, and he mentioned particularly Vukmanović, then known as Tempo, now Tito's Chief of Staff and Premier of Macedonia. In the spring of 1941, Rajk who in the meantime had reported regularly on his fellow internees to the French Deuxieme Bureau, was visited by a major of German intelligence who said he had been instructed to return Rajk to Hungary, at the request of the new chief of the Hungarian political police, Peter Hain. He suggested that Rajk should volunteer for work in Germany, and he could then arrange for him to be passed on to Hungary. Rajk agreed, and together with another Hungarian, Imre Gayer, who had also been in Spain, and was also a police agent, Rajk was returned in August 1941 to Hungary. He immediately reported to police chief Hain, who told him that in order to divert communist suspicion from him he would be interned for the time being, but in the meantime Rajk should help Gayer to join the Communist Party, so that Gayer could carry on the espionage work. Rajk contacted the illegal Communist Party

and gave his version of his own heroic activities in Spain and also gave a glowing account of Gayer's record in Spain — where the latter was never in the firing line. He suggested that Gayer should be put in charge of checking Hungarians that returned from Spain. This was a clever move of Rajk's to discredit any that might testify against himself.

Rajk was shortly after interned, and a few months later a large group of Communist leaders was arrested, denounced by Gayer. Included in the group was the Secretary-General of the Communist Party, Zoltan Schonherz, who was tried and hanged, and one of the Party's ablest leaders, Ferenc Rozsa, who died under torture. Rajk was tried with the group, as his name was brought in as having introduced Gayer to the Communist Party. The police left no stones unturned to cover up the tracks of their agents. Rajk was given a mild six months' sentence and went back to the comparatively safe comforts of his internment. He was freed in October 1944, and had the closest shave of his whole career as a police agent when he was arrested five months later by military counterintelligence, who had no idea he was an agent of the political police.

Things were very mixed up at that time, with the main battles for Hungary about to begin, the out-and-out fascist regime of Szalasi and his Arrow Cross men in power. Rajk could look forward to a quick court-martial and speedy death by hanging.

Between his release in October and his arrest with four other communists in December 1944, he had naturally contacted the Communist Party again on instructions from Peter Hain, with no shadows of suspicion attached to his name. If there were any doubt about Gayer having denounced the group which was arrested in 1942, Rajk, at least was above suspicion, languishing in an internment camp at the time. Before he could help the police very much he was picked up by the military. When the case was tried, Rajk's elder brother, Endre Rajk, Under Secretary of

state in the Szalasi fascist government, appeared in Court to give evidence. He demanded that the case be heard in camera. Dr. Ferenc Janosi, a tall, fair-haired, sharp-faced former military prosecutor, appeared as a witness during the Rajk trial of 1949 to tell what happened in the trial of March 1945. He had acted as Prosecutor, against Rajk and the other accused communists.

"First of all," said Janosi, "Rajk denied his guilt and denied in particular that he had ever been really active in a left-wing or resistance movement. He demanded that his brother, Endre Rajk, who was Under Secretary of State invested with ministerial powers, be examined. He asked this in connection with the fact that for a long time since 1931 and during the Szalasi regime too, he had rendered useful and valuable services to the political police, asserting also that he was a loyal follower of this regime. He also asked that the successive heads of the political police from 1931 onwards, that is first of all Hetenyi, then Hetenyi's successor, Sombor-Schweinitzer, and the head of Szalasi's political police, Peter Hain, be examined as witnesses."

"Judge: What instructions did you as prosecutor receive from the president of the military court?

"Janosi: Just before my prosecutor's speech I was told that I should deal with Rajk's case briefly and especially that I should not mention in my speech Rajk's connections with the political police.

"Judge: What verdicts were then arrived at?

"Janosi: In this case they acquitted Rajk of sedition and meted out very heavy sentences to the rest of the accused, in some cases death, for others heavy prison sentences and imprisonment for life."

Rajk's case was transferred to a civil court, but in the meantime the German resistance in Hungary collapsed, the Szalasi government fled, and Rajk, together with Stolte, whom we last met as a police agent with Rajk in Budapest University, were

taken to Germany.

Rajk decided to return to Hungary as soon as the Germans were finally defeated, but begged Stolte to contact the former chief of political police, Sombor-Schweinitzer, who was working for American Intelligence in Bavaria, and tell him that Rajk was returning to Budapest — available for new assignments. Stolte did this and was introduced to the local chief of American counter intelligence, who asked him searching questions about Rajk, and whether he was capable of performing a double role in the Hungarian Communist Party over a long period.

In Budapest Rajk was hailed as one of the best members of the Communist Party with a magnificent record of service at home and abroad, arrested dozens of times but always miraculously escaping death. He became secretary of the Budapest Party organization. Before long he was approached by an American, Lieutenant Colonel Kovach, from the U.S. Military Mission, who told him he knew all about his past and ordered him to place himself at the disposal of American intelligence. "If I did not carry this out," Rajk told the Court, "he said he would denounce me to the Communist Party leadership. Of course, I agreed to work for him."

For a time Rajk made normal intelligence reports, his estimation of the strength of the political parties, communist and People's Front policies, and other routine matters. Later he was given the task of organizing a faction within the Communist Party to split the majority of members away from the Rakosi leadership. By the end of 1946, Rajk was Minister of the Interior in a key position to carry out another of his assignments, which was to place American and British agents, recruited in Switzerland by Mr. Noel Field and Mr. Allan Dulles, of the American Secret Service (OSS) in leading positions inside the party. The party was just being painfully knit together after years of illegality with members pouring back from exile in all

parts of the world, and nobody in a position to vouch for anyone else in hundreds of cases.

Thus Rajk was able to place Szonyi in the vital post of chief of cadres department, responsible for allotting key jobs to other communists; others he placed in important positions of the Ministry of the Interior, Prime Minister's Office, Foreign Office, in the radio and press departments. At first, independently of his American contacts, Rajk was also in touch with the Yugoslavs from as early as 1945, through Lazar Brankov, then chief of the Yugoslav Mission to Hungary. Rajk was not quite certain what the Yugoslavs were after at that time, but from many guarded talks with Brankov he got the impression in 1946 that the Yugoslavs wanted to pursue a line independent of the Soviet Union and the other people's democracies. In response to veiled questions from Brankov in the spring of 1946, Rajk told the Court, "Brankov was able to convince himself from my replies to his questions that I not only sympathized with Tito but that I approved of his nationalist and essentially anti-Soviet policy. This caused Brankov to be open enough to tell me straight out that he was the head of Yugoslav intelligence in Hungary and to ask me as Minister of the Interior to hand over to him various data, to give reports on the Hungarian political situation, on various matters of state secrets and so on."

Later followed the incident mentioned above of the formal recruitment of Rajk by Ranković at Abbazia and the agreement that all intelligence material for the Americans should be funnelled through the Yugoslavs. From the time of the Abbazia meeting Rajk received regular instructions direct from Ranković about packing the army and police with "suitable people"; suspending the political activity of all party branches in the police to get the entire organization completely in his hands; to cooperate with Szonyi, long a Yugoslav agent, in packing every office in the administration with right-wing people who would

support an eventual coup. On his own account Rajk stopped investigations started by the police against several conspirators, including Minister of Defence Bartha, and the son of Prime Minister Ferenc Nagy. Rajk called off the police, gave Bartha a chance to resign and flee the country, and permitted the Prime Minister to warn his son, who was in Washington and refused to return. He released numerous pro-fascists and Horthy police agents — including Imre Gayer — from jail on his own initiative. (Documents relating to these cases were presented in court bearing Rajk's signature.)

At the end of 1947, Tito and Ranković visited Hungary to sign a friendship pact and this was made the occasion for a concrete exposition of the plot. Rajk arranged a hunting trip and contrived a private meeting with Ranković aboard the train on the way to the hunting ground. Brankov acted as interpreter.

"Ranković stressed," said Rajk, "that in what he told me he was giving me the Tito plan and that he was following Tito's instructions in telling me about this."

"Judge: What is that plan?

"Rajk: Well, the plan was that since the right-wing forces in all the people's democratic countries had been defeated one by one, Yugoslavia had to undertake the role of organizer and leader of the overthrow of the people's democratic regimes. Yugoslavia, however, said Ranković, could not do this openly, coming out with the announcement of such a policy... because of the feeling in Yugoslavia and the rest of the people's democracies for friendship with the Soviet Union. Therefore Tito had to carry out this policy under camouflage, by deception... First of all Yugoslavia had a great attraction for the rest of the people's democracies because of the war, or rather because of the heroic partisan battles of the people of Yugoslavia. So Tito thought that this attraction, this popularity, outwardly emphasizing and stressing friendship with the Soviet Union and the

people's democracies must be taken advantage of and... various federations should be concluded between Yugoslavia and the other countries... steps must be taken to remove the people's democracies from Soviet influence and bring them under Tito's influence."

Ranković, according to Rajk, elaborated a little more on this new great federation which should be built under Tito's guidance, and then went on to give specific instructions on preparations for a seizure of power in Hungary by force of arms. Tito was too experienced, said Ranković, to have the same plan for each country.

"Rajk: The task relating to Hungary was to overthrow the people's democratic regime, of course, to arrest the members of the government and within this...

"Judge: Who were the most outstanding enemies?

"Rajk: ...And within this the most dangerous ones, as Ranković said, must be liquidated, if there was no other way.

"Judge: Who were they by name?

"Rajk: By name he thought first of all Rakosi, Gero and Farkas.

"Judge: Did he only think of them or did he definitely name them?

"Rajk: He definitely mentioned them and he told me that I would be responsible for carrying out this whole program in Hungary, and in connection with this, he told me right away Tito's evaluation of the situation and the forces on which one could rely.

"Judge: Did he promise actual Yugoslav aid?

"Rajk: Yes, he emphasized that with a correct grouping of forces I could count on such support, but he considered it decisively important that in political activity, in the organization of the forces, I should rely on my own internal support."

Rajk said he discussed his conversation with Ranković with

the U.S. Minister to Hungary, Mr. Chapin, in the spring of 1948, and asked whether it was correct that Ranković had said the Americans approved the Tito plan.

"Chapin hesitated a little whether to make a statement before me or not — later he did and said that he knew of this plan and that the United States would not put any objection in the way of carrying out Yugoslavia's policy."

In 1948, Rajk began to run into his first difficulties. Up to then he had no checks. He had found in General George Palffy, Inspector-General of the Army, a kindred soul, an old Horthyist officer who had joined the Communist Party and sworn to destroy it. As Rajk packed the police and security forces with his own men, so did Palffy pack the key army posts. As Rajk suppressed political activity within the police, so did Palffy suspend political activity in the army. With no party criticism or party watch-dogs, army and police were directly responsible only to Palffy and Rajk. But in 1948 things took a bad turn.

In the spring of 1948 the Social Democrat and Communist Parties were fused into one, there was a wide purge in all state administrative posts, and many of the nominees of Rajk and Palffy were removed. A desperate blow, however, was the Cominform resolution, which exposed Tito. Rajk obtained a copy of the resolution before it was published and gave it to Brankov for transmission to Belgrade.

In August, Brankov called on Rajk and told him Ranković wanted to see him urgently. It was impossible for Rajk to go to Belgrade so he replied that if Ranković wanted to see him he had better find some way of coming to Hungary, that any such meeting must remain a close secret. A meeting was arranged in the hunting lodge of a landowner by the name of Antal Klein. The Yugoslav Minister Mrazović acted as interpreter, and his mistress made the arrangements. The story is best told by the old landowner and the Minister's girlfriend, as they related it

to the court.

Antal Klein, an elderly, balding, white-haired man with a very pink face, looked very irritated as he was brought into Court. The Judge asked him when he had first met Minister Mrazović.

"At a Polish party in Budapest at the Park Club at the end of January 1948, which I attended with Georgina, the daughter of our chief town clerk, Gero Trisznyas. As soon as we entered the place Mrazović came up to us. He knew Georgina from a hunt arranged at my place. After greeting me briefly he began to court Georgina most warmly. He courted her all the night. We left for home the day after the party." He described the ardent wooing of Georgina by the Minister and frequent visits by Mrazović to Georgina's home at Paks, about 70 miles south of Budapest, near Klein's estates.

"At the end of September 1948, we visited Paks, Georgina mentioned that Minister Mrazović would like to hunt at my place with one or two companions. I said there was no objection on my part: It would be a pleasure. Later Mrazović asked if I would do him the favour of coming with my carriage to the 116 kilometre stone, where the lane from my estate meets the road. I should wait for him there and take him further, as no car could pass along the sandy road. He said he wanted to hunt incognito, so I should myself drive the carriage. I promised to do that. A few days later, at the beginning of October, I went to the main road and waited there. When I arrived, Georgina was already there, and she said Mrazović had also invited her. About half an hour later Minister Mrazović arrived. He and a man wearing a green, felt coat and black spectacles, whom I did not know, got out of the car. After a short greeting, both of them seated themselves in my carriage. I drove along the lane as far as the edge of Biritopuszta (the hunting ground). I stopped a good distance from the buildings, where they got off together with Georgina,

took with them the food she had brought, as well as two guns. The three of them went into the hunting reserve and asked me to wait for them. They said they would come back in two or two and a half hours' time, when I should take them back to the main road. Then they left. What happened I don't know. They returned two and a half hours later, and I took them back by carriage to the main road. The two men went off by car and I took Georgina back to Paks in my carriage."

"Judge: What impressions did the 'hunt' make on you? Was it not clear that this was only a so-called 'hunt' which served Mrazović to meet certain persons in secret?

"Klein: When they returned after two and a half hours without anything in the bag I became suspicious of the whole thing. I wasn't even introduced to the man in the green coat with the black spectacles. The fact that they came from Budapest to go hunting and the whole hunt didn't last longer than two and a half hours also roused my suspicions as well as the fact that they returned without a bag from an area rich in wild animals. I then took Georgina back and saw that she also was in a bad mood. I asked her what had happened and who were these people, who was he, how did he get here? She said that she didn't know what had taken place but it certainly was not a hunt.

"Judge: What part did Laszlo Rajk play in this so-called hunt?

"Klein: I don't know Laszlo Rajk. I don't know the man; never seen him. Now that I've been put face to face with him by the authorities, I recognize in him that man who was present then with Mrazović in the green felt coat and spectacles.

"Judge: Now do you recognize him?!

The irate old man turned round, gazed angrily at the whole court, then looked at each of the accused in turn. There was a broad smile on Rajk's face.

"That's him," Klein cried, pointing a shaking finger at Rajk. He stomped out of the courtroom, still seemingly indignant at not having been introduced on the hunting field and having been tricked into lending his carriage and hunting reserve to a group of conspirators.

Georgina, dark, slight and sad-looking, was called to the witness stand. Pretty in a gentle, faded way, she had been a school teacher when Mrazović courted her and projected her for a moment into the drama of a Central European conspiracy. She confirmed what Klein had described up to the moment they left the old man's carriage.

"When we reached the keeper's hut, I noticed a man in hunting clothes was waiting there, carrying a gun. He was of middle height and about 40 years old. Mrazović asked me to stay in the keeper's hut and prepare lunch. It struck me that the other man had not been introduced to me, nor had the one who got out of the car. Then they talked, walking up and down in front of the keeper's hut, also further away from the hut. I heard that one man was speaking in Slav language. Now and again they came close enough for me to hear. I am certain that it was not Russian but perhaps Serbian. The man in the green felt coat spoke Hungarian and Mrazović translated between the two. I could understand a few words of the conversation when they came near me, for instance that Mrazović was speaking about Yugoslavia and said that action must be taken... Then they spoke about someone called Palffy who would be made Minister of Defence. I also heard the names of Ministers Rakosi and Farkas mentioned a number of times. When they had finished their talk they came into the keeper's hut and ate a snack.

"When Mrazović saw I was in a bad mood he turned and started to talk to me. Then we started on our way back to the carriage. The unknown man, however, went to two companions who were waiting and they went in the opposite direction to-

wards Csampapuszta. After the car had left I told Mrazović I felt I had been invited superfluously because it seemed that he did not want to meet me but had other intentions, Mrazović made excuses and afterwards he drew me aside and said that I should not tell anyone about this meeting…"

"Judge: Please come here. Do you recognize the person in this photograph as the one who waited at the keeper's hut? Look at it.

"Georgina: Yes, I recognize it.

"Judge: You are certain.

"Georgina: Yes.

"Judge: I have established that this picture from which the witness recognized the person in question is a photograph of Ranković which is now included in the documentation."

Rajk filled in the gaps as to the conversation he had with Ranković on this occasion. General Palffy, who at that time commanded the frontier guards, opened the frontier to Ranković's car so that it passed through without inspection. Ranković told Rajk that the Cominform resolution had changed nothing except that Rajk must act with greater speed and energy than before. Plans must be speeded up, the coup must be brought off as soon as possible. Tito was now prepared to give more direct help than before. Special Hungarian-speaking units were being concentrated on the frontier who would cross into Hungary wearing Hungarian army uniforms. "Ranković especially drew my attention to the fact that Tito was absolutely determined that at the same time as the coup d'etat, the Hungarian government would have to be arrested and three of its members, Rakosi, Gero and Farkas, would immediately have to be killed during the first action. Ranković said that, of course, a brutal appearance must be avoided. Perhaps it would be explained that one of them was an accident, the second caused by illness, the third committed suicide or was killed while try-

ing to escape. According to Ranković it was these three people whom Tito considered so dangerous that he absolutely insisted on their physical liquidation and wanted this duty fulfilled by a unit consisting mainly of Yugoslav cadres because they have excellent experience from the partisan struggles of how to get rid of people, and the adherents of the resolution of the Information Bureau who have been arrested or had tried to escape could also talk about these experiences."

Tito was demanding instant action, special units must be formed to take over the key ministries and buildings, the Yugoslavs with American help had arranged that former Horthy officers, adherents of the fascist Szalasi government who had fled to the West, would be mobilized and passed through Austria to Hungary the moment the coup started. Tito insisted that as soon as the coup started, Palffy must be made Minister of Defence and Antal Rob, former president of the South Slav Federation who fled to Yugoslavia after the Cominform resolution, must be the new Minister of Interior. Rajk, who by this time had been switched from Minister of Interior to Minister of Foreign Affairs, would of course, be Prime Minister in the new government. Foreign policy must be subordinate to Tito's policy and Hungarian industry would have to be geared to the Yugoslav Five-Year Plan even if this was contrary to Hungarian economic interests for the time being. The main thing, as Ranković kept stressing throughout the interview, was action as soon as possible.

Back in Budapest Rajk had a discussion with Palffy: "I told Palffy that all the forces in the army should be listed and units should be formed which would he suitable for carrying out such an armed putsch, taking into consideration that they would be supplemented by the Yugoslav units to be deployed by Tito and Ranković and with the Western units sent across from Austria.

J"udge: Did you not tell Palffy that Ranković had instructed

him to work out a plan?

"Rajk: I did not because Palffy had already got his orders from the Yugoslavs through his own channels before I spoke to him. He started to tell me about the plan and wanted to give me sketches. I didn't take these so he told me by word of mouth about the formation of various units for the occupation of institutions, telephone exchanges, ministries, etc..."

By the end of 1948, plans were worked out down to the finest details. The Yugoslavs obligingly sent in two experienced assassins who began shadowing Rakosi, Farkas and Gero, observing their habits, the time they left home, when guards were changed; if they took walks unattended, if they slept in rooms which could be reached by machine-gun fire from outside. Three weeks after the Paks meeting, Brankov called on Rajk and ordered more haste; two weeks later Mrazović called and said Ranković was very angry about the slow way things were going. Yugoslav troops were already concentrated on the border in an advanced state of readiness. Rajk, however, was nervous and told Mrazović that it was impossible to effect a putsch at that moment. But still the Yugoslavs pressed for action.

"Summing up at that time," said Rajk in the Court, "the more I came to the conclusion that it seemed almost impossible in view of developments that anyone in his right sense should think of carrying out a putsch, the more reckless and determined Premier Tito and his companions became in demanding the armed putsch."

Meanwhile he had one great shock for a brief moment when Brankov announced that he had deserted the Tito camp and declared himself for the Cominform. If that were true, all the plans would soon be known. He was soon reassured, however, by a visit from Brankov who said that he had to desert on instructions from Tito in order that he could maintain his relations with Rajk and supervise preparations for the putsch. As

an overt employee of the Legation, he would, of course, be completely isolated from all Hungarian officials after the Cominform resolution. In fact, Brankov continued to be the head of UDBA in Hungary until the day he was arrested.

General Palffy gave details of his part in the technical preparations for the coup, the signal for which would be the arrest of Rakosi, Gero and Farkas.

Palffy, a stocky figure with a bloated face and nervous twitching lips, a man one would say whose nerves were not good enough for a conspirator, told the Court, "The relevant part of the plan ran as follows: Colonel Korondy, who as Rajk had told me, had known of our illegal activities for a long time, was entrusted with the formation of three small groups each consisting of about a dozen men, who in the late hours of the evening would have to put into effect simultaneously the arrest of Rakosi, Farkas and Gero, and who would also have to kill them if they resisted. The plan, was — Rajk said this — that since it was the most important part of the plan, the putsch had to be carried out on a day when the three politicians were sure to be in Budapest, that is on a day of the meeting of the Politburo or of the Council of Ministers. He set the time for 11 p.m. or later, when they would surely sooner or later get home. After having spied out the residence, the groups would have attacked and disarmed the entourage and arrested those concerned. I even talked about this question in a concrete form with Korondy. This was in April 1949, a few days before May 1. Korondy already knew of the assignment from Rajk, but I talked it over with him in great detail. When I told him of the above task he said that he had subordinates who had been gendarmes (Korondy had been an officer in the Horthy gendarmerie) at present serving in the police and army. He could set up three groups from among these... I told Korondy that he could count on Yugoslav aid and would get a special force to perform this task.

“I told Rajk the outline of my plan orally, the substance being that the putsch must be started by ten battalions of the army and units of the police. In Budapest certain key points, first of all the Central Headquarters of the Party, the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Home Affairs, the State Defence Authority, the Radio and the offices of *Szabad Nep* (Party newspaper), public works, ministries, railway stations and in addition some working districts where we could count on resistance, would have to be occupied by these forces. Simultaneously with this, immediately before the occupation, the arrest of the three politicians mentioned previously had to be carried out by small groups. I would be commander of the whole armed force, while Colonel Korondy would command the police unit. This was my general plan. Rajk approved this. I received instructions to draw up a detailed plan later.

“Judge: From whom?

“Palffy: From Rajk. The reason for the delay was that we could not propose a day for the time of the putsch, as Ranković said that a definite date could only be set with his approval, so we first had to talk it over with him, because a score of events on account of which we had to keep on delaying things intervened. In the autumn of 1948 supervision of Party members began and this compelled us to wait, for we did not know who would be affected, perhaps the very people in the police and army on whom we based our plans. At the beginning of 1949, working class cadres gradually came to the foreground both in the police and the army. This again partly upset our plans. This was the reason why the matter took so long and we delayed the date. Therefore it was only in May 1949 that Rajk instructed us that we must not delay any longer, we must set the date for the end of May or for the beginning of June, and that I should work out the detailed plan. I worked this out for myself, noting down in my own hand on two pages the most important things. On a

separate sheet on an outline map of Greater Budapest, I marked the key points which had to be occupied and filled in the size of the occupying force. I indicated the three political groups and the time when they would have to step into action and also the kind of forces taking part in the putsch. I enumerated the points which would have to be occupied in Budapest, exactly calculating the time when the command would have to be issued from Budapest to the troops in the provinces. The whole thing was timed in such a way that it should start in the evening and by the next day even the last units should arrive from the country and occupy the important positions in Budapest that were marked out for them. It also contained whom I would appoint to command the individual units."

Everything was worked out down to the finest details. Even trial mobilizations were carried out. But in May 1949, it was Rajk and his colleagues who were arrested and not Rakosi, Farkas and Gero. They had waited too long and time had caught up with them. Rajk was already under a slight cloud when he was removed from the Ministry of the Interior in August 1948, but the security police had to be sure and doubly sure before they could move against a man of his importance. Small wonder the agitated discussion between Rajk and Palffy behind the May Day tribune, a discussion that certainly was not overlooked by the security police. A few days later Szonyi and Szalai were arrested. Rajk stumped the country making election speeches hoping to make himself the most popular figure in the country, preparing himself for his new role as prime minister, but there must have already been a sickening feeling in the bottom of his stomach. Both Rajk and Palffy felt, by May Day, that they were under suspicion and that the suspicion was increasing, an added reason to speed up the plans and strike quickly. Palffy told the court that Rajk promised him he could get Ranković's permission to strike at the end of May or beginning of June, but Rajk

denied this, which caused a momentary verbal duel between the two of them in Court.

Throughout the trial Rajk, who on the opening day spoke for more than six hours, acted with complete composure. Tall, slim, rather good-looking, with high cheekbones, he spoke and answered questions with a glacial calm and he stood up and received the death sentence without a flicker of emotion. He scorned to appeal against the sentence and never once during the trial did he express regret for his actions. Only once did he show any signs of emotion. For a moment the mask slipped and he showed something of his fascist character. The judge was questioning him about his name, after he had completed his evidence.

"Judge: How did your grandfather spell his name?

"Rajk: My grandfather, being of Saxon descent, wrote his name Reich.

"Judge: So your grandfather was called Reich. How did it become Rajk? Legally?

"Rajk: Yes, legally. I could not give the exact date when it was legalized. In my certificate of baptism it is still spelled with an 'a,' that is Reich became Rajk... But," he added, angrily with flushed cheeks, "I can't see how this can be of the slightest interest to the court. In this respect I wish to add that I am of Aryan descent and genuinely too, because on one side I am a Saxon. The Hungarian Aryan law..."

The Judge cut him short and said he was not interested in knowing whether he was an Aryan or not, he was only interested to know, how the name had been changed and if so if the matter had been legalized, Rajk was, of course, indignant because Reich can be a Jewish name and he thought the Judge was suggesting that he was Jewish.

Many ghosts from the past of Laszlo Rajk paraded through the courtroom during the course of the trial. There was his

brother-in-law, former Captain of the Horthy police, Dr. Lajos Bokor, short and fat with a heavy black moustache and bristling close-cropped hair, a typical old police officer. It was Bokor who intervened with the police in 1931 and got Rajk released after he promised to become a police spy. There was Inspector Detective Borszeki, purple-faced with great rolls of fat at the back of his neck, dressed in the black coat and the striped trousers of a respectable official of the Horthy regime. It was he who drafted the statement which Rajk signed in 1931. Three of the four persons present when Rajk signed the declaration were in court. Only police chief Hetenyi was absent. Bokor said, "As far as I can remember it went something like this: I, the undersigned Laszlo Rajk, bind myself immediately and confidentially to denounce to the political police every case I become acquainted with in connection with the preparation of Bolshevism, that is, of the communist revolution in Hungary."

Stolte from Rajk's student days and later interned with him in Germany, Cseresznyes with Rajk in Spain and France, Szebenyi, head of a department in the Ministry of the Interior — they all gave evidence which, even without Rajk's own clear statement, were enough to damn him apart from the completely corroborative evidence given by the other seven accused. The finest defence counsel in the world would have been hard put to find a useful line of defence after the eight accused and eighteen witnesses had given their evidence.

Rajk, Szalai and Szonyi were all condemned to death by the civil court, Palffy and Korondy by a military court. All five were executed.

That, with many omissions, is the story of the Rajk conspiracy. The chief accused touched on fascinating bits from conversations with Ranković and Tito for their larger plans to integrate the whole of Central Europe and the Balkans, eventually the whole of Eastern Europe into a new Empire of which

Belgrade would be the capital and Tito the new Caesar. Poland was ripe to fall, plans were further advanced in Czechoslovakia even than in Hungary, Bulgaria and Albania were already well organized. In Greece for the moment Tito was playing quietly because he could not afford an open clash with Anglo-American interests. There has not been space in one chapter to deal with the elaborate Yugoslav-American intelligence set-up in Switzerland or the precise exposure of Tito's plans by one of his most trusted and capable agents, Lazar Brankov.

When Brankov began to describe the ambitions of the new Balkan Caesar, I began to think of Tito's grandiose New Belgrade project, the enormous new administrative capital of the old Belgrade. It was opposed by many party people at the time it was planned on the grounds that workers' flats and factories were needed before a great prestige project for a new capital. It seems clear now that this grandiose scheme was projected for the new empire capital, to be completed by the time Southslavia included at least Hungary, Bulgaria and Albania, their economies feeding Tito's series of Five-Year Plans. And if this scheme was not the most perfect one from the Anglo-American point of view — they would much sooner have their own direct influence restored in these countries — at least it was making the best of a bad job. A rival bloc to the Soviet Union would have been created and where there are rival blocs there is always good fishing for experienced imperialist powers.

In the Western press, even in so-called liberal sections, an attempt was made to present Rajk, Palffy and Co. as a small group of nationalist-minded communists, people who wanted communism but independent of the Soviet Union. This is nonsense. There was not one convinced socialist among the whole band. They were mostly cheap police spies who in the first place became spies to save their skins, and who got deeper and deeper into the nets of their own weaving. The two military officers

were old style fascist officers who loathed everything connected with socialism or even bourgeois democracy. They were put and maintained in their places by the police spies and were promised key positions once the coup had been successful. They wanted the restoration of an authoritarian regime which would restore the army to its proper place in life and estates to their "rightful" owners.

They were a miserable collection of plotters without a human ideal between the lot of them. Brankov was perhaps the only one for whom one could find a spark of sympathy, as in the beginning he was serving Tito and his country as he had done as a partisan. Later he was forced into a traitorous role by threats of reprisals, from Tito himself, against his family. Before the court and before the Hungarian public, as all proceedings were broadcast from the Court, Rajk and his gangs were disclosed as miserable, bloodthirsty adventurers who would not hesitate to plunge the country into a ferocious civil war, to destroy everything of the new life which had been so painfully built up, to hand the country over lock, stock and barrel to a foreign power, to restore those same forces the people have fought against for so long. There were no regrets except from a few of the dispossessed and Horthy hangers-on, when the chief culprits were condemned to death and speedily executed.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN
TRAICHO KOSTOV AND TITO'S PLANS FOR EASTERN EUROPE

If Laszlo Rajk could be regarded as the right arm of Tito's plans for Eastern Europe, Traicho Kostov, member of the Bulgarian Politburo and Deputy Premier, was certainly his left arm. I sat in a crowded court in Sofia in December 1949, heard and watched Traicho Kostov and ten other accused and dozens of witnesses testify to a Yugoslav plan for Bulgaria every whit as diabolical and bloodthirsty as that for Hungary. In reality there was only one overall strategic plan with "Operation Rajk" and "Operation Kostov" as tactical moves. Kostov was a different type of man to Laszlo Rajk. Kostov was a political being, a man whose whole life and every action were guided by political motives. There was nothing of the South American dictator adventurer about Kostov; he was a Bulgarian Trotsky. Brilliant, ambitious, an intellectual, he had two things in common with Rajk. Firstly, when put to the test, he would betray his closest comrades to save his skin, and secondly, he was a man of great personal ambitions; a man with lust for power. Rajk, however, was a gambler who threw in his hand with the best grace possible when the game was up; Kostov played on right till the end the same crafty, double-faced game he had played during his whole political career.

Kostov was played up as a hero in the West, because in court he refuted his written confession and for almost the first time in such a trial, he pleaded "not guilty" to the main charges of treason and espionage. Without denying that he had written in his own handwriting the 30,000 word document, quoted in the indictment and which contained his political biography, in court he denied many of the facts in the statement.

In short the charges against Kostov were as follows: In 1942,

when he and other leading members of the illegal Communist Party were arrested, Kostov broke down under police beating and signed a document agreeing to work for Tsar Boris' police. As a result his life was saved although less important communists in the same trial were shot. This document was used later by the chief of British intelligence in the Balkans, Colonel William Bailey (former liaison officer with the Chetnik leader, General Mihailović) to recruit Kostov as a British agent. Kostov also maintained close contact with Tito and agreed to attach Bulgaria to Yugoslavia as the seventh Republic, with the help of the Yugoslav Army, before Dimitrov returned from Moscow. There were widespread ramifications in the plot and as they involved state military secrets, all the details were not revealed in the court. High ranking officers involved were tried later by military tribunals in camera.

It is fashionable in the West, even among leftist intellectuals, to regard with deep scepticism what they regard as the wearisome and repetitious tales of such plots in Eastern Europe. If one counts up over the last 30 years, the violent changes of government in Bulgaria, Hungary and other countries in Eastern Europe by just such coups as Tito, Rajk and Kostov planned, one will understand why the governments in these countries today view the matter in another light.

Kostov belonged to what was known as the "left-sectarian" faction of the Bulgarian Communist Party in the 1930s. The history of the Party, as noted earlier, is shot through with the struggle between the "left-sectarian" factions and the followers of Dimitrov and Kolarov.

Ironically enough Trotsky and later Kristu Rakovsky (tried with Radek and others in the 1938 Moscow trials) were at one stage sent down to Bulgaria by the Comintern to try and heal the breach, although "left-sectarianism" later became known as the Bulgarian version of Trotskyism.

Kostov always supported this faction when he was in exile in Moscow, and later when he returned to Bulgaria. In his written statement he said he had to camouflage his feelings when Dimitrov emerged as the great hero after the Leipzig trial. He paid lip service then to Dimitrov and Kolarov but in his heart he was against them. In general the difference in policy was that the "left-sectarians" opposed the united front with the Agrarians Union, they believed the Communist Party should act alone, drawing its sole strength from the industrial workers and the intellectual leadership. Later they developed a line of "National Communism" divorced from the Soviet Union.

In 1934 Kostov was in Moscow as chief of cadres at the Balkan Secretariat. One of his close associates was Bela Kun, the discredited leader of the Hungarian Communist Party in 1919, who also made costly mistakes by neglecting the peasants, a mistake which soon brought his government tumbling about his head. Kostov also knew Comrade Walter quite well in Moscow. "Walter" later became Marshal Tito of Yugoslavia. As chief of cadres in the Balkan Secretariat, Kostov was naturally responsible for party appointments in the Balkans. In court he denied that he had sent "Walter" to Yugoslavia and said he met him only once in his office when he completed his dossiers on the Yugoslav emigre. But in his written statement Kostov said:

"The position of the Yugoslav Communist Party was still difficult. Its leadership was torn by strong factional struggles. The question was to render assistance for a new Party leadership inside the country mainly from local Party functionaries.

"The choice of Bela Kun and Valetsky, who at that time were not yet unmasked as Trotskyists, had fallen on Tito. At that time he was known under the pseudonym of 'Walter.' The choice of Bela Kun and Valetsky proved not to be accidental because as I convinced myself through the materials at my disposal and through the personal Party files of 'Walter'-Tito, the latter

had also taken up Trotskyist positions… during 1934 Tito told me of his Trotskyist ideas, telling me about the troubles he had because of them… he expressed his hatred towards the leadership of the Soviet Communist Party headed by Stalin… Thanks only to the support of Bela Kun and Valetsky and thanks to the favourable characteristic given by me, Tito was able to leave in 1934 for Yugoslavia and assume a leading position there."

The trial of Kostov was held in a Military Officers' Club in Sofia's main street, the Tsar Liberator Boulevard. In the old days, it used to be a very gay club indeed. Tsar Boris used to attend regimental balls there, and never failed to take part in the New Year's Celebration with the gallant officers and the loveliest ladies of Sofia's high society. There was a different audience this time. Shock workers and peasants, a sprinkling of soldiers and some relatives of the accused. They were a stern-faced audience as the catalogue of crimes against their new society unfolded. Kostov, a short stocky man, with a plump, crafty face and beautifully kept hands, which played a constant tattoo on his knees, listened intently as his statement was read.

There was not only a great contradiction between Kostov's written and spoken evidence, there was a still greater contradiction between his attitude in the trial of 1949 and his own account of his attitude in 1942.

The crucial question was whether or not he had saved his life by becoming a police agent in 1942. His real crime according to the indictment started from that point. The data about "left-sectarianism" referred to his background only, and did not form the substance of any charges. What happened when he was arrested in 1942? Only two men could give the answer. Kostov himself and Bulgaria's astutest political police officer, Geshev, who fled the country in September 1944, and is believed to be working for British intelligence in Istanbul.

Kostov told the Court, "I was beaten cruelly for three days

but never gave in. They paraded before me Anton Ivanov who said I was a member of the Central Committee. I said I had never seen Ivanov before. I did not disclose anything." The Judge pointed out that Kostov was the Secretary of the Central Committee, the other accused held less important posts, yet they were shot and Kostov was spared. "The others were sentenced to death," Kostov said, "and were shot. In my case extenuating circumstances were recognized, also in the case of Maslarov, the Komsomol secretary, and the death sentence was commuted to life imprisonment."

The extenuating circumstances given according to Kostov were the difficult circumstances of his family, his own health and his "ideological misconceptions." He admitted that all these factors applied even more in the case of his comrades but they were all shot. The reprieve (as was proved later when the fascist president and prosecutor of the court which tried Kostov in 1942 gave evidence) was ordered by King Boris himself through his Minister of War. The important thing about Kostov's statement in Court was that he denied having betrayed one name or fact despite the most cruel torture from Boris' fascist police in April 1942.

In his written statement he told another story: "During the first days of the police enquiry I was beaten cruelly and had to confront four of my co-defendants who confirmed that I was a member of the Central Committee and one of the most active. At first I denied the charges against me. About ten days after my arrest, I was called before Geshev, the most experienced and skilful worker in the Bulgarian Political Police, whose reputation was widely known among the Communists... Geshev warned me he had sufficient proof to condemn me to death... and declared the only chance for me to avoid this cruel fate was to become his collaborator...

"It was clear that as things were in 1942 with martial law,

Geshev's threats were not empty words... he gave me a quarter of an hour to think it over..." Kostov wrote that he was sure Germany would lose the war, Geshev would be finished and any pledge he gave would be cancelled out. "I accepted and Geshev replied that to show my sincerity I must give a detailed written account of the underground work of the Central Committee... In the evidence I wrote down for Geshev that night, which was so memorable for me, I admitted that I was a member of the Central Committee and gave away the other members. I described the functions of all members of the Central Committee, the decisions of the CC taken after the German-Soviet war began, for armed resistance against Germans in Bulgaria; for the creation of a military organization under Colonel Radoinov; for the formation of partisan units and sabotage groups... I wrote that contacts with the Yugoslav units had been established and that Bulgarian emigres were arriving from the Soviet Union by parachute and submarines; about the channels and contacts of our Party with other countries, as well as other essential details of our underground activities... Apart from this I wrote out a declaration and handed it to Geshev, in which I undertook to collaborate with the police in the future."

Geshev then promised that the beatings would cease, that Kostov would be tried but not sentenced to death. So that Kostov would not be regarded suspiciously by other communists, the prosecutor would treat him as one of the most active members of the CC and would demand the death penalty, but Geshev assured him the sentence would be commuted. Whilst Kostov was awaiting trial another communist he had named, Colonel Radoinov, was tried and executed. Of those accused with Kostov seven were shot, Kostov and Maslarov were spared.

The written statement of Kostov, read out before the People's Court in December 1949, was a long one. In it he gave the most detailed activities of the work of the illegal group he

gathered around him on Yugoslav and Anglo-American orders. He named no less than 14 leading Bulgarian communists, including seven Ministers, and Deputy Ministers, all free men at the time Kostov wrote his statement. A number of them were being tried with Kostov. Each of those 14 men arrested incriminated numbers more, probably running into several hundreds altogether, all denounced by Kostov. Apart from this he named about twenty leading Yugoslavs including several attached at that time to the Yugoslav Legation in Sofia.

In his oral statement to the Court, he denied having betrayed any person or party secrets under cruel torture in 1942, denied having put his name to any documents to save his life, but in 1949 he prepared a document which he never repudiated in which he betrayed dozens of his closest colleagues, important people in the Party and Administration, and caused them to be arrested by the State Security Police.

The press and diplomatic gallery in the courtroom was packed with correspondents from Western Europe, there was a representative from the American Legation present. If Kostov's written statement was a fraud and his oral denial correct, if he was the man of courage he depicted himself to be in 1942, no police pressure nor any threats of punishment afterwards should have prevented him from crying: "My statement is false. It was made under pressure. These other accused have been falsely arrested. Everything I wrote was a lie. I retract it all."

If Kostov was the man who withstood beatings and was prepared to face the firing squad rather than betray his comrades and his party in 1942, this is what he would have done in 1949. Firstly, he would never have written a statement; secondly, if a statement had been forced out of him, he would have retracted it. But he played the double-faced role he had played in the 1930s, the role he had played in the courtroom in 1942, when he admitted everything to Geshev, the role he played in

early 1949 after he was just denounced in the Politburo.

The accused who followed Kostov one by one to the witness stand did not know that Kostov had repudiated some of his evidence. They remained in court to hear the testimony of those that followed them, but did not hear those that preceded them. It was only after the hearing of evidence was completed, the case for prosecution and defence was closed, and the accused were given the right to the last word, that the other ten realized that Kostov was pleading not guilty to the main charges.

The second accused, former Minister of Finance, Ivan Stefanov, leapt to his feet and turned on grey-faced Kostov, his voice choking with rage. “I am deeply shocked,” he said, “that the chief organizer of this conspiracy, the man responsible for my being in this court today, had not the courage openly to admit his guilt for the crimes he has committed.” Stefanov took off his spectacles, and looked Kostov full in the face as he said, “It seems that Traicho Kostov wants to remain a traitor and wants to prove himself a coward to the very end.” Several others of the accused were equally furious with Kostov, for first of all having recruited them into his conspiracy, then betrayed them, and at the last minute repudiated his own part in the affair.

By Kostov’s bearing, the knowable parts of his background and the testimony of the other accused in the case, I believe the truth of the conspiracy was outlined by Kostov in his written statement. Some of his perfidious acts he could not deny, they were known to all members of the Central Committee who survived the resistance period. His double-faced behaviour after he was first denounced in December 1948 was known to all members of the Politburo and the Central Committee. Briefly summarised, his activities as described in his written statement were as follows, starting from the agreement to work for Geshev, in 1942.

It was more than a year before Kostov heard from the po-

lice chief again. In the meantime he was transferred to the Pleven prison and treated much better than at the Sofia Central Prison. In September 1943, a messenger arrived from Geshev telling him that there were three other prisoners at Pleven who had also saved their lives by agreeing to work with the police. Kostov should contact them. Their names were Ivan Maslarov, reprieved in the same trial as Kostov, Nikola Pavlov and Stefan Bogdanov. Without letting them know that he was cooperating with the police, Kostov approached them individually, told them he knew they had broken down, but that he would keep it secret and protect them when the war came to an end: "Thus at the beginning of 1944 a closely knit group of political prisoners was formed around me. Pavlov, Maslarov and Bogdanov knew nothing about each other's capitulation but their common friendship with me and the hope of my support after our liberation kept them together. The three did everything possible to strengthen my prestige with the other political prisoners."

Later Geshev ordered Kostov to use his authority as Secretary of the Central Committee to call off the partisan activity which was causing the police and Germans increasing difficulties. Kostov sent such instructions from his prison cell, but got a sharp reprimand back from the fighting Central Committee outside for his "defeatist conceptions." Partisan activity, instead of slackening, was stepped up. September 1944 came and with it liberation. Kostov was still Secretary of the CC. He appointed Bogdanov to a top position in the Security Service, Maslarov in charge of the key post of the Cadre Department of the CC (as Szonyi in Hungary). Pavlov he appointed to the Central Committee and later as Secretary of the politburo. Only three men to start with, but each in vital posts and each absolutely bound to Kostov. The first job was for Pavlov and Bogdanov to look through the police dossiers and remove any incriminating material. Kostov's dossier was found, but the declaration was not

in it. Kostov supposed that Geshev had burnt it before he fled. Pavlov found his own file and burnt it, but also found the files of a number of other important people who had been recruited by Geshev. These he handed over to Kostov who promptly used them as blackmail to recruit these people for himself. He appointed them all to key positions, with their dossiers locked away in his desk.

It isn't quite clear how Kostov saw the future for himself at this stage. The records were destroyed, his past was clear; the future was with the Communist Party of which he was a most honoured member. Kolarov and Dimitrov were still out of the country. Kostov was the senior communist inside the country, 15 years younger than Dimitrov, 20 years younger than Kolarov. His star seemed set for an unlimited ascendancy. But Kostov's speculations soon received a brutal jolt when he was invited to lunch with the chief of the British Military Mission, General Oxley. The General withdrew after coffee and left Kostov alone with Colonel Bailey, who shocked him by his revelation that Geshev had been a British agent for many years; that Geshev had acted on British instructions, transmitted via King Boris, when he intervened to save Kostov's life. Kostov's declaration of 1942 and his report on the Communist Party were in safe British keeping, and Colonel Bailey was sure Kostov was an honourable man who would redeem his bond.

At this stage Kostov could have gone to the Party and explained everything. He would have been reprimanded, could never have held his high post in the Party, but he would have been forgiven. He had given way under severe torture and such things are understood. (Another accused Vasil Ivanovsky told the Court that he had also betrayed three communists, members of the regional committee including Peter Chengelov, a leader of the Party. The three were hanged. Ivanovsky had tried to commit suicide rather than betray them, but he had failed

and it was while he was still recovering from the suicide attempt that the information was wrung out of him. He told the Party what had happened and he was forgiven.) But Kostov capitulated again. He was too ambitious and individualist to even consider losing his high post in the Party or wrecking the bright future opening out for him. He agreed to work for Bailey and it was arranged that contact should be maintained by one Kiril Slavov, a Bulgarian industrialist who managed to worm his way into the Party but who had long been a British agent. The meeting with Bailey took place in November, 1944, two months after the Liberation.

There were other shocks to come and one was a visit by Kardelj, Tito's closest confidant after Ranković. He called on Kostov late one night in November 1944, two weeks after Kostov's agreement with Bailey, on his way from Belgrade to Skopje, capital of Macedonia. He laid down Tito's grand strategy for Eastern Europe. "Kardelj informed me," continues the narrative, "in strict confidence that during the war the British and Americans supplied the Yugoslav partisans with arms and munitions on condition that at the end of the war Tito would keep Yugoslavia away from the USSR and would not allow the Soviet Union to establish its influence either in Yugoslavia or in the rest of the Balkans. On this basis a formal agreement was concluded between Tito on the one hand and the British and Americans on the other during the war."

The best way to implement this would be for Bulgaria to attach herself to Yugoslavia as a seventh republic in the federation immediately. The advantages were numerous as Kardelj listed them. Firstly, Bulgaria would be part of a victorious country, an ally of the West instead of a defeated partner of the nazis. Secondly, Bulgaria would be part of a powerful state stretching from the Black Sea to the Adriatic with a population, for a start, of twenty-five million. Thirdly, there would be no reason

for Soviet troops to remain in the country as Bulgaria would be a part of an Allied country. Fourthly, the British and Americans had agreed to the plan in principle. "Kardelj told me that the Western Allies had warned Tito that they would make a formal protest and would raise the usual noise in the press in order to put the blame for the whole thing on the Soviet Union. They would use this as an excuse to refuse to honour unpleasant obligations to the Soviet Union... As for the Soviet attitude, Kardelj thought they might object to the union being carried out before the end of the war because of complications with the Western Allies, but the Soviet Union would have to resign itself confronted with the accomplished fact of Federation."

Kardelj was anxious for immediate action before Dimitrov returned from Moscow and Kostov agreed with this. He had long been envious of Dimitrov, had carried on a personal feud against him and feared he would have to play a secondary role once Dimitrov returned. Kostov writes that he saw an immediate advantage in Tito's proposal in that Bulgaria would be the largest and most important republic in the federation in which he would be the leading figure, close to Tito. He would also have redeemed his pledge to Bailey, seeing that Tito's plans were approved by the British and Americans. Kostov put the matter of federation up to the Politburo of the Party in a very different form to that proposed by Kardelj, hiding the fact that it was intended as a counter-weight to the Soviet Union, hiding the fact of Tito's understanding with the West, hiding the fact of the minor role Bulgaria would play.

The Politburo considered the proposal favourably but eventually insisted, against Kostov's wishes, that it be submitted at first to Dimitrov in Moscow. Dimitrov immediately urged caution. In March 1945, Tito sent his propaganda chief, Milovan Đilas to see Kostov. Đilas bitterly reproached him for having sent the proposal to Dimitrov and for having delayed the pro-

posed fusion. When Kostov said that he was forced by the Politburo to refer the matter to Dimitrov, Đilas replied, "Then you should have announced to the Politburo that Dimitrov had given a positive answer and quickly proclaimed the Federation." The Bulgarian Army would have been immediately placed under Tito's command and Dimitrov and the rest of the Politburo faced with a fait accompli.

In 1946 Kostov left for Belgrade and had his first talk with Ranković. "Late at night," he writes, "I retired with Ranković to his office where we could have a frank conversation. Ranković, who had a little too much to drink at dinner, gave free rein to his tongue." The Yugoslav Minister of the Interior told Kostov he must pack the Ministry of the Interior with trusted persons, he must make arrangements for the Yugoslavs to have access to all government offices, the Army Ministry, Ministry of the Interior, all offices of the Party and the Administration. The pretext should be preparations for Federation. Kostov arranged this and an UDBA agent was even given an office in the Bulgarian Ministry of the Interior with access to all secret files. The rough Yugoslav wine loosened Ranković's tongue considerably it seems, and he began to discuss the larger aspects of Tito's plans:

"In his fervour, Ranković developed the perspective that in case of success the policy of Tito would become not only Yugoslav and Bulgarian, but also Hungarian, Romanian and Albanian. 'Then,' exclaimed Ranković, 'a bigger community would be formed of the countries of South-East Europe, headed by a federation, which under the leadership of Tito would represent an impressive force, which other states must take into account.'"

The next morning Kostov met Tito, for the first time since Kostov had packed him off to Yugoslavia from Moscow, twelve years previously.

"I had not seen Tito for 12 years," he continues, "and was

greatly impressed by the remarkable change in him. He looked pompous in his military uniform with his bejewelled fingers. During our meeting Tito was constantly posing and with his outer appearance and manner of conversation he gave himself airs of being a great man. Tito met me as an old friend, but nevertheless he behaved in a haughty way, giving me to understand that he was not the same Tito of 12 years ago... He thanked me for the service rendered to him in Moscow, giving me to understand that otherwise he would not have been able to hold the position he had now secured for himself in Yugoslavia."

Tito also urged Kostov to speed up preparations, said he knew and appreciated the line set by Ranković and told him he must pack the state apparatus with reliable men. "When I questioned Tito about the orientation of Yugoslavia's foreign policy, he expressed his disdain of the British, who were, according to him, on the wane as a great power and must give way to American capitalism. He promised to put me in touch with Americans." Kostov went back to Sofia and made arrangements for free access of Yugoslav agents to all military and security installations and also for a great propaganda campaign to boost Tito's popularity in the country. Dimitrov and Kolarov had returned from Moscow in the meantime, elections had been held and Dimitrov was made Premier, Kostov Vice-Premier and Kolarov Foreign Minister. Dimitrov was Secretary-General of the Communist Party and Kostov Secretary of the Central Committee. Kostov was at pains to keep the question of federation well to the fore and Dimitrov, quite unsuspecting Kostov's and Tito's real aims, expressed the feelings of the Politburo at that time in a speech favouring a South Slav federation, the age-old dream of the Balkan peoples. *Pravda* promptly sounded a note of warning about rushing too quickly into such a federation. Tito's intrigues in other parts of Eastern Europe were beginning to attract attention in Moscow where they were better

known than they could have been in Sofia.

Kostov, in the meantime, had opened every door to the Yugoslavs in Sofia; "Beginning with the official representatives of the Macedonian government, Lazar Koliševski, who was with me in the Pleven prison, Dimitar Vlahov, whom I had known since 1933, and ending with the counsellors of the Yugoslav Legation, Mangovski, Zafirovski, and Hadžipanzov, all these secret and open agents and spies, were assured free access to the CC of the Bulgarian Communist Party. They often came to me too and I saw to their demands."

Their demands were that as Kostov had failed to bring about the complete federation, he must pave the way for Tito to annex Pirin Macedonia. And here a few words must be said about the much vexed and complicated problem of Macedonia.

The Macedonians have been the longest oppressed of any of the Balkan peoples. An ancient mountain people with unbroken traditions stretching back through the centuries to their golden period under Philip and Alexander the Great, they were the last of the Balkan states to be liberated from the Turks, against whom they waged an unceasing struggle. When the Turks were expelled, instead of the independent state that had been hoped for, Macedonia was split up among Greece, Serbia and Bulgaria. It became a catspaw in the Balkan Wars of 1912-13. Bulgarian chauvinists wanted to attach Vardar Macedonia in Serbia to Bulgaria. The Serbian chauvinists wanted to get Pirin Macedonia from Bulgaria. The end of the first World War left Macedonia still divided, with the Vardar region in the new Yugoslavia.

The Macedonians had no reason to love Greeks more than Serbs or Bulgars, to love Serbs more than Bulgars or vice versa: Every land had persecuted them, had cruelly suppressed their strivings for independence. On balance they fared better with the Bulgarians than elsewhere, and traditionally when they

were persecuted, they migrated further East. There are 600,000 Macedonians in Bulgaria today, almost ten per cent of the population; their language is nearer Bulgarian than Serb. The Bulgarian Communist Party supported IMRO, the Macedonian Revolutionary organization, and always stood for an independent Macedonia.

A whole book could be written about the intrigues in Macedonia during and after World War II. Tito was determined to secure the whole of Macedonia for Yugoslavia, while the war was still going on, even if it meant liquidating the last partisan on the Bulgarian side of the border, according to Macedonians who fought in the Pirin region throughout the occupation. But at the end of the war, the frontiers were the same as before, cutting through Macedonia with Pirin on the Bulgarian side, and the Vardar region on the Yugoslav side.

It was hoped that under stable conditions after the war, the South Slav federation of communist states would be created, with that part of Macedonia in Bulgaria and Yugoslavia at least joined together in an autonomous state with equal rights with Bulgaria and Yugoslavia. It was hoped that a new democratic Greece would give the Macedonians there a chance to decide whether they wanted to attach themselves to the new state and give it an outlet to the sea with a capital at Salonika.

By the end of 1946, Kostov had arranged for Yugoslav agents to swarm over the Pirin area, openly giving lectures about the forthcoming incorporation of the region into Yugoslavia. Frightened peasants began packing their belongings to move further East, out of Pirin, but they were told that was useless as Bulgaria as a whole would soon be absorbed. Portraits of Dimitrov were torn down and replaced by those of Tito.

On the home front, Kostov began to consolidate his position by enlarging his nucleus of dependables and by promoting those already installed; Pavlov was moved up to Secretary of the

Politburo, Chief of the Prime Minister's Cabinet, as well as Secretary of the CC for economic questions. Maslarov was made a member of the CC, as well as chief of cadres and chief of organization. Kostov urged them to work on packing all important posts with men loyal to Kostov's line. He had, of course, long since taken them into his confidence as to the role he was playing; had told them of the tie-up with Tito with the blessings of the British and Americans. He arranged the appointment of Stefanov, an old-time Trotskyist, as Minister of Finance; Sekelarov, another Trotskyist, to Minister of Electrification; Kunin (whose dossier as police agent Pavlov had found) as Minister of Industry, others as Deputy Ministers of Railway, Transport and Commerce, mostly men whom Pavlov's researches had uncovered to be former police agents. His contact man with Slavov, Nikola Nachev, an old-time British agent, Kostov appointed as his own personal assistant. Kostov at this time, in addition to his other duties, was President of the Supreme Economic Council. Each one of those appointed was expected to, and did, pack his department with similar "dependables."

On the military side, Kostov had won over the chief of Military Intelligence, General Peter Vrenchov, and the Deputy-Commander of the Frontier Guards, Colonel Lev Glavinchev, as a nucleus on which to build. On the security side, he had Bogdanov in a key post.

In August 1947, Dimitrov headed the Bulgarian delegation to Yugoslavia to negotiate a treaty of friendship with Tito. The discussion took place at Bled. Tito formally broached the question of federation again, but Dimitrov insisted that the time was not ripe. He did agree that Yugoslav teachers and librarians could enter the Pirin region to introduce the new written Macedonian language and prepare Macedonian people for an eventual union in an autonomous state within the larger framework of a future South Slav federation. When this time came,

Bulgaria would be given back her "Western Territories," an area west of Sofia awarded to Yugoslavia after the first World War.

Tito came to Sofia to sign the treaty at the end of 1947, and the occasion was used by Kostov to arrange a great personal publicity tour of Bulgaria by the new Balkan Caesar, who behaved, according to Kostov, "as if he were already master of Bulgaria." Tito arrived in great state, with one guard train preceding his special train, another following it. "I took all steps," writes Kostov, "that he might be welcomed most pompously and with the greatest glamour. Tito arrived in all the splendour of his imagined grandeur. Along the entire route of his tour from Sofia to Varna through Northern Bulgaria, and back to Sofia through Southern Bulgaria, Tito's face was wreathed with smiles. He thought the warm feelings of the Bulgarian people were for him personally and not for the Yugoslav people. He already felt himself master of Bulgaria as well. He behaved in a haughty way and lost no chance of expressing his arrogant and scornful attitude towards everybody, even including Georgi Dimitrov. His example was followed not only by Đilas and Ranković, but by the most insignificant members of his guard. They showed an offensive mistrust of the Bulgarian guards. The apartment set aside for Tito at the Euxinograd Palace, which had been carefully prepared and scrupulously examined by Bulgarian security agents, was turned upside down by Tito's guards. This was done purposely to underline that in every way Yugoslav organization was superior." (Rajk gave a similar account of Tito's visit to Budapest. He was ordered by the Yugoslavs to arrange the greatest possible display for Tito, including torch-light processions, complete control of arrangements by Tito's security police and the finest villa in town. Rajk was forbidden by the Hungarian government to overdo things and at the last moment Tito warned he would not come unless at least the finest villa in Budapest was cleared and placed at his dispos-

al. Rajk did his best, arranged some things without reference to the Cabinet and the great man arrived with all the pomp of Mussolini on a state visit to an Italian colony.)

Kostov accompanied Tito on his triumphal tour and the two conspirators had plenty of chances for intimate discussion of their plans. "My conversation with Tito this time assumed a more heart to heart character. It was a meeting of old friends and adherents, following a common aim."

Tito announced that he would soon break openly with the Soviet Union. He disagreed with the Soviet rejection of Marshall Plan Aid and took the view that backward countries like Yugoslavia and Bulgaria could not advance without American help, "But — Tito told me — the Americans insisted on one condition, that we be detached from the USSR," Kostov continued. "Tito declared pompously that in all the people's democracies he and the new Yugoslavia alone enjoyed sufficient prestige to rally all the countries around him in a bloc separate from the Soviet Union and oriented towards Britain and America. 'The Americans admit now,' said Tito, 'that only through me can the people's democracies be won away from the Soviet Union' !"

Tito this time demanded decisive action before the open break came with the Soviet Union. Kostov must form a new government and immediately announce union with Yugoslavia and Tito described how simply the whole thing could be accomplished. "The moment you announce union with us," Tito explained, "Bulgaria will be part of Yugoslavia. We can send in our armed forces immediately and that cannot possibly be regarded as aggression. That would be assistance within the framework of the federation itself." Merely the despatch of troops from one part of Yugoslavia to another. No cause for anybody, neither the Soviet Union nor the Western Powers to intervene. A purely local problem. It was diabolically simple, but Kostov warned Tito

that it was difficult for him to act as long as Dimitrov was still the head of the government and pointed out that Dimitrov was a sick man who could not live much longer.

"Tito could not restrain his hatred at the mention of Dimitrov's name. 'How long will this old man continue to cross my path,' he thundered. It was obvious that Dimitrov stuck like a fishbone in his throat."

Kostov told Tito he thought the best solution was a natural one, to await Dimitrov's death which would surely make Kostov chief of the government and the federation a painless process. Tito thought this was a good idea as long as it was certain Dimitrov's death would not long be delayed. "Otherwise," said Tito, "you should be ready to act in the most resolute way, to arrest, and if necessary to liquidate Georgi Dimitrov, relying on our immediate aid as well." Ranković gave Kostov the same advice, urging swift action, and after Tito and his entourage had left, Kostov talked the whole matter over with his chief lieutenants. They were nervous about internal reactions to any coup which "liquidated" Dimitrov, and they decided to await his death. In the meantime they would do everything possible to increase Kostov's prestige in the party leadership and to decrease Dimitrov's popularity among the people by embarking on large-scale sabotage to cause distress and unrest among the population. When Kostov took over, he could then immediately win popularity by blaming everything on the past regime and promising swift improvement.

In April 1948, Kostov was visited by the Yugoslav Ambassador, Colonel Obrad Cicmil, who told him that the break with the Soviet Union would soon come out into the open... In case Kostov could not bring off his coup before this, Kostov must support the official Communist Party line in the matter, otherwise he would be denounced and would become useless. Kostov should not be alarmed if the Yugoslav press started an offensive

against him, this would be just so much sand in the eyes of the Cominform. Contact would be maintained by some Yugoslavs who would declare themselves for the Cominform. Meanwhile the plan was still in force. Developments in Hungary were excellent, good news could be expected at any time. Publicly Kostov must support the Cominform resolution, privately through the people he had grouped around him, he must oppose it with propaganda which would reach as far down as possible among party cadres.

(In fact, considering the number of collaborators Kostov had in key positions in the party and administration, it is surprising that he had practically no support at regional level and none at all among rank and file party members. This is probably explained by the fact that only one of his group, Ivanovsky, who played an unimportant role, was of working class or peasant origin. The others were all intellectuals, professional people or former businessmen who were isolated from the worker and peasant members of the Communist Party. Their work was exclusively at a high level and as such, dangerous enough, but as it had no roots the whole thing passed off without creating any crisis in the Communist Party or the government. Such a crisis would have occurred, with civil war the outcome, had Kostov acted on Tito's advice; carried out a coup and assassinated Dimitrov.)

In July 1948, at a meeting of the CC of the Party, Kostov felt strong enough to launch a vicious personal attack on Dimitrov, who was in very poor health at the time. He blamed all the mistakes the party had made since its foundation in 1919 on the General Secretary. He tried to play off Dimitrov against Kolarov, and was, of course, supported by members of his group. In the Court, Kostov had to admit this one fact about which every member of the CC knew: "I criticized Dimitrov sharply and unobjectively, and even made personal attacks on him. It was an attempt on my part to lower his prestige." In his written

statement he states: "With all these activities of mine I inflicted a blow on Dimitrov's morale and I worsened his already precarious health."

Dimitrov indeed was fighting a valiant battle with death at that time, and was four months in bed after Kostov's attack. Kostov thought the long battle had come to an end. He took over Dimitrov's functions and awaited daily news of his death. Dimitrov meanwhile was preparing for one last gigantic effort, the political report which amounts to a history of the Bulgarian Communist Party and a guide to its future, which he was to present in a six-hour speech to the Fifth Congress of the Party in December 1948.

Kostov was so sure of his position that he overreached himself. He began to act in an arrogant way not only towards Soviet representatives in Sofia, who, naturally enough, had always enjoyed special privileges. (Not only was the Soviet Union the fatherland of the communist parties, not only did the Soviet Army liberate Bulgaria, not only did the Soviet Union alone support the Bulgarian resistance movement throughout the war, not only did the Soviet Union from 1919 onwards give every support to the Bulgarian Communist Party and open its door to every communist seeking refuge, but the Soviet Union saved Bulgaria from famine in the first postwar years when the country was dogged by three bad harvests in succession.) Soviet representatives received special information about prices, export-import arrangements and other commercial data. Kostov, acting as Prime Minister, put a stop to this and applied the State Secrets Act to Soviet representatives. A Soviet complaint about this led to the first thread which gradually unrolled the whole skein of Kostov's activities. This was as Kostov expressed it, "the stone which upset my applecart."

The question of Traicho Kostov was discussed by the Politburo in December 1948, and again in January. Kostov's behav-

iour then was quite consistent with his whole life and with his attitude in the Court. The Politburo subjected a good deal of his past to searching debate. They did not know anything like the full story, and when Kostov had established how much they knew, he made a self-criticism which covered just those points brought up by Politburo members. He then went away for a holiday — to the Soviet Union of all places — and apparently decided that his position was not too bad after all. The Politburo had only brought up matters of his "nationalist deviation," Kostov, from the Soviet Union, then circularized individual members of the Central Committee with letters, withdrawing most of his self-criticism, trying to restore his prestige and again attacking Dimitrov. But the Politburo's criticism was only the beginning of a deep inquiry into the double-life of Kostov.

At first he was dismissed from the Politburo and his post of Vice-Premier, but remained a member of the Central Committee. He continued to intrigue desperately. His only chance was to smear Dimitrov's reputation and restore his own prestige. In Court he said, "Comrade Judges, I plead guilty to an attempt to drive a wedge between the Politburo and the Central Committee... if my efforts had been successful they would inevitably have caused a crisis within the Party at the moment when the internal and international situation demanded maximum unity within the party and our country."

In his written disposition, he said: "I wrote several contradictory declarations in which I first admitted and then again denied my guilt... I tried all sorts of manoeuvres to deceive the Central Committee and the Party, to save myself and whatever could still be saved of my position..." But the investigation had dug deep and turned up evidence which was as great a blow to Dimitrov and Kolarov as anything that had ever happened inside the Bulgarian Party. Kostov was dismissed from the Central Committee, and eventually expelled from the Party and his

deputy's mandate removed. On June 20, 1949, he was arrested, and as he had done seven years earlier, he made a full 30,000 word confession, giving the minutest details of his activities, implicating all those whom he had drawn into his service. If he later denied parts of his confession, this was only in keeping with his whole life.

After he was sentenced — and he had sat in Court and heard everyone of the other ten accused give a long and damning account of his activities, Kostov sent a letter to the Presidium admitting that his written confession was correct and pleading for mercy.

"I plead guilty to the accusation brought before the Court," he wrote, "and fully confirm the dispositions written in my own hand during the enquiry. Realizing barely at the last moment the incorrectness of my conduct before the People's Court... regretting sincerely this conduct of mine which was a result of extremely excited nerves and the morbid selfishness of an intellectual, as well as those of my activities and crimes in my capacity of Vice-President of the Council of Ministers and President of the Committee for Economic and Financial questions... I beg you to revoke my death sentence if you consider it possible and to commute it to close confinement for life..:"

No mercy was shown to Traicho Kostov, however, and he was hanged on December 16, 1949, two days after the trial ended.

It has been argued in the West that Kostov actually committed no crime even if he planned one, but Bulgarian law as far as treason is concerned provides that a plot to commit treasonous action constitutes treason and provides grounds for prosecution. The law expresses the view that it must act before the plot has been put into operation and the state overthrown. As far as the charges of sabotage are concerned, they were well and clearly proven by the testimony of several accused supported by

documentary evidence. The chief saboteur, apart from Finance Minister Stefanov, was a remarkable figure, a former millionaire industrialist, Ivan Gevrenov, who made a twenty-five years study of sabotage methods and was given his big chance to operate by Kostov.

A brief account of his activities will serve as an illustration of Kostov's methods to undermine the popularity of the Dimitrov government.

Gevrenov, a big, handsome man, bald-headed except for a tuft of hair above his forehead, clad in a very smart business suit, was delighted to tell the court of his activities. Sabotage was his hobby and he had been able to indulge his passion on a wide scale; he even seemed proud of his successes.

Like so many of Kostov's colleagues, he came from a wealthy family, but he enjoyed the luxury of progressive ideas and preferred the company of leftist intellectuals to that of his business colleagues. He studied abroad and associated with leftist groups in France and Belgium. Back in Bulgaria he told the Court, his socialist ideas gradually evaporated as "they came into conflict with my material interests." He married the daughter of a wealthy landowner, founded a rubber factory, and by the 1930s was one of the richest men in Bulgaria. For some reason he had a morbid interest in sabotage, studied the accounts of sabotage by workers in Germany and Italy, cut out newspaper accounts of the sabotage trials in Moscow. He wrote to France and Switzerland asking for books on the subject, but to his surprise found nothing had been published. He decided to fill in the gap himself and on the basis of his newspaper clippings, from Paris, London, Rome, Berlin and Moscow, he produced a book in 1935 entitled *Sabotage, Plunder, Diversion Activities and Espionage*. It was a strange study for a millionaire industrialist. However, it served him well when his own workers started to sabotage rubber production after the German occupation of Bulgaria.

He knew just where to look and was able to nip the sabotage attempts in the bud. Later, after September 1944, his factories were nationalized. To get his revenge Gevrenov pretended to be a friend of the regime, joined the Communist Party and acted as an enthusiastic supporter of the Fatherland Front. Eventually he was contacted by Finance Minister Stefanov and enrolled in the Kostov organization. He was put in charge of the Rubber Trust and Canning Industry, and later entrusted with the regrouping of small industries into large combines. “I reduced the production of shoes in one factory from 4,000 pairs daily to 1,500,” he said and jotting a few figures down on a pad, added: “I estimate that in two and a half years in the Bakish factory alone, I reduced production by 850,000 pairs of shoes... In Ivanov’s factory I cut down tire production by 9,000 sets... The canning industry production was also wrecked... after jars and cans are filled up with the juices in which the latter have been boiled, with concentrated juice which improves the flavour and preserves them... we filled them up instead with cold water... In the regrouping of factories I closed down the profitable ones and let the less profitable ones work... instead of grouping small plants around large modern ones I dismantled the modern ones and sent the machinery all over the country... or moved it to some place where there were no buildings ready to receive it... I so arranged things that dismantled machinery was lying around rusting in every railway yard, with no locomotives to shift it and no buildings to receive it even if it were shifted... Much of it was ruined by rust, rain and snow... when Traicho Kostov heard of these results in my branch, he was very well satisfied.”

The total damage caused by Gevrenov’s activities was estimated by himself and confirmed by the Commission of Experts at about fifteen million pounds. Small wonder that Gevrenov sat down with a satisfied smile after he had finished his testimony and returned his pad to his pocket.

Dimitrov played an active part in the final unmasking of Traicho Kostov. He knew his days were numbered but he was determined that the future of the party and the country should remain in hands which would not betray the Bulgarian revolution; hands which would not hand Bulgaria on a platter to Tito to be incorporated in an anti-Soviet bloc. Dimitrov personally directed the early stages of the enquiry into Kostov's activities. When Dimitrov was already lying ill in a sanatorium near Moscow, Kostov was finally stripped of all his party and government functions. He sent a message from his deathbed after Kostov had been expelled from the Central Committee expressing his relief that Kostov had been finally exposed.

"So far as Kostov and those that think like him are concerned," he wrote in a letter to the Central Committee, "that matter is not yet finished. After reading the minutes and the very long statement of Traicho Kostov, I have come to the conclusion that we are dealing not only with an intellectual individualist and a ruthless careerist but with a sly, unscrupulous traitor who cannot remain in a genuinely Bolshevik Party. Traicho Kostov is filled with base hatred and hides stones in his bosom, hoping to exploit any future difficult situations in his favour in order to come to the top again with his unparalleled intrigues and treachery."

Dimitrov died on July 2, by which time Kostov was already behind prison bars. Kolarov was able to carry on for another six months while the crisis in the top ranks of the Party and government was surmounted. Within a few weeks of the completion of the Kostov trial, Kolarov too died, but the crisis was finished, the leadership of the party and state was in the hands of men who would carry on the traditions of the Dimitrov-Kolarov leadership. But as far as Tito was concerned, Dimitrov and Kolarov had both lived just one year too long.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN
LIBERTY IN EASTERN EUROPE

Bulgaria and Hungary about which I have written most in this book are countries which are virtually excommunicated by the Western world. They have been denied membership to the United Nations. Their crimes are that they have defended their independence, have resolutely brought to trial those who plotted and intrigued against them — even British and Americans, as Mr. Sanders and Mr. Vogeler found to their sorrow when they became involved in espionage against the Hungarian state.

For this they are ostracized by the Western nations. Bloody coups and counter-coups could be permitted in other countries, in South America or in Syria, in countries where America and Britain had much closer interests than in Bulgaria or Hungary. But suppression of coups could not be tolerated in the people's democracies. The Anglo-American official conception of democracy in the Balkans seemed to be on the Greek pattern with overflowing prisons and firing squads executing the country's best citizens at the rate of ten or twelve daily. The truth of the matter is that any country which can guarantee safety for British and American investments, no matter what the colour of its regime, is acceptable to Whitehall and the White House, whether it be a personal dictatorship in Santo Domingo, clerical fascist in Spain, semi-fascist in South Africa or a gangster regime in a South American Republic.

The corrupt regimes of Eastern Europe before the war, the periodical massacre of a few thousand communists, the complete suppression of civil and political liberties, were never the subject of official criticism from England and America. If the dictator were a Horthy, a Tsankoff or Filov, a King Boris or King Carol, with their feet well planted on the neck of the people, there would be no protests about denial of liberties. If

it were a Dimitrov, a Rakosi or a Pauker flung into jail for years without trial, there would be no flutter of excitement in the Foreign Office or State Department.

The difference is that today the people, an alliance of workers, peasants and intellectuals are in charge in these countries, they are building the new life that their poets have written about for centuries. There is no place in this new life for foreign trusts or for foreign influence which can be used against the interests of the people. The money-changers have been driven out and given something of a scourging into the bargain. One after another, the reserves of British and American capitalism have been marched into the front line against these governments and one after another they have been shot down. Their last trump card, Marshal Tito (probably played unwillingly because he was at best cutting their losses), failed as miserably as did the local opposition and the Church, and the traitors in the Party ranks. Bitter disappointment and tragic blunders in the past have forced men like Rakosi and Dimitrov to build on a sure foundation this time and to maintain that eternal vigilance which is the price of liberty.

Liberty itself is a relative term. There is a suppression of liberties in Bulgaria and Hungary. When one type of regime has been violently destroyed and another has taken its place it would be courting suicide for the new government to grant full rights to the supporters of the regime it has supplanted. The French revolutionaries adopted the great human slogans of "liberty, equality and fraternity," the slogan of the bourgeois revolution, glowing words that kindled hope in the hearts of Europe's masses struggling to free themselves from the shackles of feudalism. The slogan blazed across Europe like a forest fire sweeping away feudal privileges and inspiring revolutions in a dozen states. But the French revolutionaries certainly had no intention to grant "liberty, equality and fraternity" to the

royalists. They quite properly chopped their heads off and prevented as many as possible from leaving the country to plot a counter-revolution with British and German help.

Jozsi Bacsi, whom we met in an earlier chapter, believed there is no liberty in Hungary, because he cannot get a passport to go and live off his cronies along the Riviera. But what about Janos, a Budapest bricklayer, who laid three times as many bricks as was considered normal before the war and spent last year's vacation at Karlovy Vary in Czechoslovakia. He and his wife got passports and enjoyed a liberty which they could never have believed possible a few years ago. How many bricklayers had ever been out of the country before? You could count them on the fingers of one hand. What about the thousands of Czech miners who, last year, filled their lungs with the bracing air of the Black Sea at Balchik, Burgas and Varna — (now Stalino) — in Bulgaria?

There's a former banker I know in Sofia who complains that there is no liberty in Bulgaria, because several of his properties have been taken away and he now works as an employee in one of the nationalized banks. He would like to settle down in Italy.

But what about Georgi, the gnarled old shepherd guarding a flock of brown and black sheep on the mountain road at the cooperative near Klisura? He was the finest shepherd in the cooperative, never lost a newborn lamb, always knew where the sweetest picking was for his flock, could tend twice as many sheep as another man and never get their fleece roughed up with brambles. A fine old man with jet black eyes and a face as brown and wrinkled as a walnut. One son had been killed right there where the cooperative farm was, killed by Tsar Boris's police as he came down from the mountains for food for his partisan group.

"I'd not thought it possible that they could have found a place for an old man like me in the cooperative," he told me,

"but in one year they've given me enough money to build a new house for my second son. He can now get married and there's still some money left over for myself." The co-op manager patted his back affectionately and said "Djedja earns more than anyone else because he's still an excellent shepherd, and he got paid for over 500 working days last year." For every disgruntled banker there are 10,000 like Georgi.

The whole of Bulgaria's working population get free medical and dental attention, their children free education and the possibility for higher university education. There are three times as many university students as under King Boris, and most of them are children of workers and peasants. How can one balance Jozsi's passport and the banker's requisitioned houses against these things?

For the worker and the peasant, the people that created the wealth which provided the privileges for Jozsi Bacsi and the bankers, the new governments are providing new liberties, real privileges which make a mockery of any suggestion that these governments are based on a suppression of liberties. Try and tell the artists who receive monthly advances for their uncompleted work, to whom the government has given studios, for whom the finest villas and castles in the country have been thrown open to work in, that their liberties have been taken away from them. Try and tell the Hungarian factory workers who have been selected for their capabilities and are being trained for posts in the foreign office that their liberties have been suppressed. Visit workers in their rest homes in the mountains or on the coast all over the people's democracies, former villas of the landowners and industrialists, and ask them where their liberties are. Ask the coal miners of Pernik — now Dimitrovo — where Georgi Dimitrov grew up and organized the first great strike in 1906, if they have been robbed of their liberties. They will tell you that liberty in the days between the wars meant to work on an

average of two or three days a week only, to live in miserable hovels miles away from Dimitrovo, to see their families starve, to be shot down if they tried to organize. Liberty in 1950 meant a full working week, wages equal to twice that of a cabinet minister for underground workers, finest education for their children, new apartments into which they were being moved at the rate of 20 families weekly throughout the year in the city itself, for which they paid no rent, no gas or electric light bills; four weeks' paid holiday every year, constant free medical attention.

I spoke to one miner who had been a university student at the time of the 1923 revolt. He was suspected of being a sympathizer and expelled. In the end he drifted to the mines as an underground worker. He had worked there ever since and was still working. "My sons now have the chance which I was denied," he said. "One has just graduated in Slav studies from Sofia University, the other will graduate next year in Law."

Miners that took part in the 1923 revolt can retire on a pension of 60 per cent of the earnings. If they care to continue working they are given 30 per cent plus their wages. Dimitrovo is being built up as a modern city instead of a black, miserable coal town. It has the second best symphony orchestra in Bulgaria. The miners have fought and suffered terribly for their conception of liberty since the beginning of this century, and if you ask them if they have now won out, the answer is a thundering "yes." It is a reply which should reach the ears of striped-trousered gentlemen in the White House and Whitehall, if the legations in Sofia were really doing their job instead of organizing espionage and listening to the hard luck stories of dispossessed bankers.

If one asks the women in the villages what they think about this question of liberty, they will not say they have been denied a passport to go to Monte Carlo. They will say that in five years they have been lifted out of centuries-long bondage. They will

talk about their newfound economic independence, that they too get paid for their work, that they are now the equal of the menfolk, that they have been liberated from their age-old double role of working by day as a slave in the fields, and a slave by night in the home. They will talk of new liberties introduced with the creche, the communal laundries and canteens where husbands can get a quick, cheap snack. They will speak of neighbour Rada Ivanova, who has become a member of parliament. That is what they will speak about in discussing liberties, and it's no good going into flights in the stratosphere and quoting from Mr. Bevin or Mr. Acheson because they won't be interested. No religious liberty? Don't I go to Church myself every feast day and who is there to stop me? Cardinal Mindszenty? Pooh! Serves him right for shoving his nose into politics. Liberty of the press? I listen to the *Voice of America* sometimes and it talks about nothing but war, war, war, and says stupid things about our country that any fool knows are wrong! Should we have a press like that perhaps?

Ask the hundreds of thousands of youths who turn out each summer to work on the great construction projects, on roads, dams and railways in the people's democracies, what restrictions there are on their liberties. They are joined by thousands of youths from all over Western Europe, England and the New World each year, who work with them for a spell to go back to tell of the new life, but not of suppression of liberties. The truth is that each of these youths can look forward to a full and creative life. He will be trained according to his abilities at the expense of the state and he can be sure of a job awaiting him when the studies are over. The job will not depend on his social background, not on the colour of his tie, not on his accent, but on his qualifications. Liberty is a relative term with different values as it moves East into the people's democracies. Under English liberty who could think of a career in the British Foreign Office, without the correct tie, accents and contacts? The son of a

Welsh miner, a Scottish shepherd, a Cockney taxi-driver?

Ask the gypsies in Hungary what they think about Western liberties and the suppression of liberties in present-day Hungary. If you strike one who knows his history he will tell you of the gypsies' experiences of Western ideas of settling their problem and how it is being tackled today. There were numerous attempts to deal with the gypsies from the time of Empress Maria Theresa to the time of the nazis and the Szalasi fascists. Under Maria Theresa gypsy girls were taken forcibly from their parents and farmed out among "respectable middle class" families. Later, if the girl could prove she had been reared with such a family and had become a "devout Catholic," she received a dowry from the state, providing she married a non-gypsy. The nazi Szalasi method was simpler: to castrate those men they could lay their hands on and drive the women off to be worked to death in the concentration camps. They were to be exterminated together with Hungary's Jews as "racial degenerates."

The new Hungarian government, which may not enter the United Nations because of its "violation of human rights" and "suppression of liberties," gave the gypsies full civil rights and political rights and started a great drive to educate the children. Special gypsy schools were established with a nine-year education and vocational training program. Three-month literary courses for adults were also set up, as a large proportion of Hungary's 120,000 gypsies were illiterate. Psychologists carefully watch the children for special talents which can be developed — apart from music, for which they all show a natural aptitude. Adults are taught homecrafts suitable to the districts in which they live. Many of them have been given land.

Budapest's 15,000 gypsy musicians, the life and soul of the little restaurant orchestras, formed their own trade union, and were given a fine headquarters with a home attached where old-timers, too old to draw a bow or beat the *zimbal*, have been

settled with decent pensions. The union has a hostel for friends who come in from the country, and another one for gypsy youths who show promise as musicians, and who can now go ahead and study at the Conservatorium of Music.

These gypsies could give an interesting answer to the question of suppression of liberties and the violation of human rights in the people's democracies, as could every other member of a national minority, Greeks, Circassians, Armenians, Jews, Romanians, Turks, Slovaks or Germans.

Drop in at the school-house of some remote village in the Stara Zagora mountains on a winter evening. There will be kerosene lamps on the desks, because electric power is just now beginning to creep over the land. There will be stubbly cheeked peasants, in rough sheepskin coats, women with warm scarves over their heads, painfully trying to copy down words written on a blackboard. After half a lifetime they are getting their first chance to learn to read and write in the government organized evening courses. Ask them about lack of freedom of the press; tell them Mr. Bevin and Mr. Acheson are worried about the violation of human rights in Bulgaria. If they are as kind as most Bulgarian peasants are, they will shake their heads and think you are mad. If not, they might chase you out of the school house.

There are suppressions of liberty in the Western sense of the word, but nothing which can offset the undreamed of liberties which have been brought to ninety per cent of the people by the people's democracies. If you want an affirmative answer to your question, join the landowners and former Horthy officials in the Vaci Street cafes in Budapest. Their liberties have been suppressed. They cannot leave the country; their estates have been taken away from them; they have been dismissed from their jobs; in short they are oppressed. Better still go to the country and talk to the kulaks in Hungary or Bulgaria. They are the

ones who are really finding life hard today. Their liberties are disappearing. Landowners, bankers and officials probably have some hobbies or are at least adaptable in idling the time away and are not bound to stay in one place. The kulak, the wealthy peasant, is a man with no spiritual resources, no interest in life but adding another few decares of land to his holding, a few more cows to his herd, a little more money in the bank (or more likely in a hole under the fireplace). The only pleasures he knows are adding to his property, eating himself full and drinking himself stupid. Avaricious and gross, he is traditionally the most merciless employer, a would-be large landowner with none of the saving social graces. And today, bluntly expressed, he has no future, and the present is hard. If he read books, he would know that he had no future, even if he read the newspapers he would know it. But each individual kulak thinks he is cunning enough to trick the government by hoarding his grain, hiding his machinery, slaughtering his livestock illegally, salting his money away, leasing his ground to straw men and other devices tried and condemned as useless as far back as the time of the Soviet revolution. But each one in each district in each country goes through the same motions and slowly but surely he comes to a bad end.

What is a kulak? He is not always easy to define but, in general, he is a peasant who has more land than he can work with his own family and one hired labourer. There is no hard and fast limit of acreage as to the amount of land a man may possess and escape the opprobrium of being labelled "kulak." If he is energetic and with a large family he may have 50 acres. If he has a small family 25 acres in Hungary and less than that in Bulgaria may put him in the kulak category. By Western or New World standards these may seem ridiculously small holdings for the owner to be classed as wealthy. It must be remembered that in Bulgaria the average size of farms owned by ninety per cent of

the peasants is only seven acres. There is almost no way of ceasing to be a "kulak." He may not sell his excess land. Even if he rents it at nominal rent he will still be regarded as a "kulak." He may on rare occasions rent it to the village cooperative, but it is now "harder for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle" than a rich peasant to enter a cooperative. At first the kulaks thought there was a way out by putting their large farms into the cooperative and drawing rent for them as well as payment for the working days. But they adopted a domineering attitude, tried to boss the little men who, in the old days, had worked as hired labourers on their farms; they tried to get control of the cooperative movement and a reaction started against them and most of them were thrown out of the cooperatives with as much of their land as they could get back.

In the villages the "kulaks" are socially ostracized. If they go to the village taverns, the villagers won't speak to them. They have been dismissed from places they at first occupied in the village councils. Their old power and prestige in the villages have been completely exploded. The bluster has gone out of them and the little men, former farm servants, seasonal labourers, farmers with pocket handkerchief sized holdings, are now the people who decide things. What is the solution for "kulaks"? There is no solution for them except to till the land as small farmers, get used to living on a modest scale, not try to cheat on paying their taxes and delivering their food quotas. There are about 50,000 of them in Hungary, somewhat less in Bulgaria. They are not organized, nor were they ever. They have no political expression. Scattered over the whole country they only amount to two or three families in every village and their power is broken.

There will not be a future generation of "kulaks" so historically speaking their agony will not last very long. There is, of course, no discrimination against their children, who have the same chances as every other child in the village school of being

turned into useful citizens.

If one adds the kulaks, the large landowners, dispossessed industrialists and dismissed fascist officials together, one would have a figure well under ten per cent of the population who really suffer from a restriction of their liberties. They are much more articulate however than the ninety per cent so their voices are heard more abroad. The restrictions on their liberties will increase in direct proportion to the war preparations made by the Western powers and to the Western efforts to develop espionage and sabotage networks in the people's democracies. The leaders of this ten per cent would imperil the historic extension of liberties to the ninety per cent.

The injustice to the overwhelming mass of the people in Hungary and Bulgaria has lasted for centuries, the injustices to the former privileged ten per cent will endure at most for a generation.

Over a period of four and a quarter years, from the end of World War II, I have been constantly travelling into the countries of Eastern Europe. For the first three and a quarter years, I was based in Berlin but travelled to Poland, Czechoslovakia, Eastern Germany, Greece, Yugoslavia, Hungary and Bulgaria. For the past year I have been based in Budapest, dividing my time between Hungary and Bulgaria, with an occasional trip to Yugoslavia. I have been forced to the startling conclusion that while in Eastern Europe, with the exception of Greece and Yugoslavia, the mass of the population has been granted an extension of basic liberties on a generous and ever-expanding scale, the opposite is the case in Western Europe. The mass of the people there is faced with a constant shrinkage of their basic liberties, which surely include the right to work and to human happiness, the right to lead a creative life, to care for their young and be cared for in their old age.

What liberties have two million unemployed in Italy and

two and a half million unemployed in Western Germany? Does it help a starving Ruhr worker that a director of his factory has the liberty to get a passport and travel to the United States? What does a landless peasant in Italy care if the absentee landlords have the right to passports to the gaming casinos of Monte Carlo, while he starves or is shot down for daring to seize the unused land?

Liberty is a relative term! Let Mr. Bevin and Mr. Acheson be sure what they are talking about.

Over a great part of the earth's surface today, millions of people are beginning to understand the difference of liberty in its Eastern and Western concepts. The Korean people understand what the Western world means by liberty as their towns and villages are destroyed, thousands of men, women and children are executed for their political sympathies. The miserable peasants of China who received land from the communists understand it and so does the crowded population of Shanghai bombed almost daily by American planes with American trained pilots. The partisans fighting in the Grammos mountains in Greece understood it when they were burned to death by firebombs, dropped from American planes, often enough with American observers aboard. The Vietnamese understand it as they are shot down with American weapons wielded by German SS troops on orders from the Republic which invented the slogan: "Liberty, Equality and Fraternity!" The Malayans and Indonesians understand well enough what the British and Dutch mean when they speak of liberty. It is a word to shudder at. Even Chief Seretse Khama of the Bamangwato tribe in Bechuanaland understood what liberty in the British sense meant when he exercised his personal liberty to marry a white woman and was hounded out of his country for it by a British socialist government. Even the British government is beginning to find out the American understanding of the word, as pres-

sure is constantly increased by the groups behind the Marshall Plan for Britain to buy American oil, American food and dozens of other items of which she has no need.

Liberty which is paraded in the West as a holy grail to keep the masses quiet, descends on their necks as a rubber truncheon when they organize to demand their real liberties, their basic rights to work, to land, to a secure future. There are hundreds of millions of people in the world today who have decided that liberty is something to do with everyday life and work. They are not interested in a liberty of the press to promote religious and racial hatreds; not interested in a liberty for publishers to flood bookstalls with pornographic literature; not interested in the liberty of scientists to devote their best brains to inventing hydrogen bombs or other means of destroying the world; not interested even in the theoretical liberty of the ballot box to decide between two groups of political parties both bent on maintaining the privileges of one tiny group of people over the great majority of the population.

If the same advance is made in the next twenty years as has been made in the past five years in bringing real liberties to the workers and peasants of the people's democracies, and if the Western powers give up their morbid plans to destroy the people's democracies by force of arms and the hydrogen bomb, the whole population will be enjoying liberties of a quality not yet dreamed of in the Western world.