

Also by Henri Michel

THE SHADOW WAR

Henri Michel

THE SECOND WORLD WAR

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ment a further Soviet demand: its composition would have to be gone into and changed. It was difficult to flout the solemn principles of the Atlantic Charter more fundamentally.

IX THE GERMAN PROBLEM

The Polish settlement was a foretaste of the fate of Germany, because it deprived her of territory that had been inhabited by Germans from time immemorial and it provided for a mass exodus of the population of German origin. This was only one aspect of the severity with which the Reich was going to be treated by her conquerors – and on this point they were at one.

Roosevelt advocated carving Germany up into six self-governing regions: Prussia, Hanover, Saxony, Hessen and the south Rhineland, Bavaria and Baden-Württemberg; two areas would remain under the protection of the United Nations: Kiel-Hamburg and Ruhr-Saar. In a word, he wished to deprive Germany of the bases of her inveterate imperialism: Prussian leadership, territorial unity and her economic power in which the Ruhr and Hamburg were the principal factors. Cordell Hull had worked out a scheme for the military occupation and tripartite administration of the whole of Germany, complete denazification and demilitarisation and heavy reparations. Going even further, Morgenthau advocated banning all industry in Germany and reducing her to a purely agricultural economy – the fate that she herself had intended for the countries she had conquered.

Churchill also thought that Prussia was the breeding-ground of Pan-Germanism; however, he was afraid that the little states that Roosevelt proposed reviving might be stillborn. He suggested a kind of revival of the Hapsburg Empire by creating a 'large Danubian Confederation as peaceful as a cow', containing Bavaria, Baden, Saxony and Württemberg, together with Austria and Hungary.

Stalin's policy was more ambiguous and his designs more mysterious. Officially, in his speeches, he had always distinguished between 'German Fascists' and the 'best Germans'. He refused 'to identify the Hitler gang with the German people' because 'Hitlers come and go but the German people remains'. It was thus not Germany that had to be destroyed but 'Hitler's state'. Stalin did not forget that the war was not over and the Germans must be prevented from remaining loyal to Hitler to the bitter end either through fear or fanatical patriotism. This was why, although agreeing in principle to unconditional surrender, he had expressed some reservations.

But to his partners, away from the public eye and out of earshot of any Germans, he expounded different views. As early as December 16, 1941,

when the Wehrmacht was still hammering on the gates of Moscow, he talked to Eden about dismembering Germany. At Teheran, he spoke out in favour of Roosevelt's plan – he would even have preferred splitting her up into smaller and thus weaker parts – and against Churchill's proposal of a confederation in which he saw the danger that the Germans might be reunited. 'The Germans,' he said, 'are all the same, there is no difference between the northerners and the southerners; they all fight like wild beasts.'

At Teheran, Germany was as yet not a source of discord between the three allies but on the contrary cemented their union – at Poland's expense. And beyond the fate in store for her there loomed the fate of the whole of eastern Europe, which was the preserve of the Red Army and the USSR.

X THE SOVIET WINTER AND SPRING OFFENSIVE, 1944

The Soviet winter offensive of 1944 was more localised than that in the summer of 1943 but it continued without pause; no sector remained static; *Stavka* strengthened the positions it had won and prepared for the big summer offensive, the direction of which had been dictated by political reasons; it was to be launched southwards, in order to hit at the states of the Danubian basin, while their leaders were plunged into anxiety by the Wehrmacht's defeats.

In the north, Leningrad had been finally relieved of all danger; the various German strongpoints had been taken in February; in the course of March, the Red Army reached Narva and Lake Peipus.

After recapturing Zhitomir, Vatutin advanced towards the Pripet in the north and the Bug in the south; in January a local counter-attack by von Manstein held him up at Vinnitza. Vatutin was replaced by Zhukov, a peasant's son and former factory worker who had been an NCO in 1917 and was a member of his regiment's soviet. He had organised the defence of Moscow and co-ordinated the battle of Stalingrad. Together with Koniev, he concerted a large-scale attack in the direction of the Carpathians, which was launched on March 15.

The thrust was so powerful and so broad that the whole German front gave way. In March, Koniev took Uman, crossed the Bug and then the Dniestr. On his left, after finally putting an end to resistance in Krivoy Rog in February, Malinovski took Odessa on April 10 and similarly reached the Dniestr on the 13th. The Romanians had lost Transnistria and their ambitions were all vanishing into thin air. Worse still, they were having to defend themselves in Bessarabia and Bukovina; but how could they when Hitler was firmly withholding their seven last divisions in the Crimea?

The Führer was in fact refusing General Jaenecke permission to open up a withdrawal route northwards by forcing the 'Perckop gap' and was paying no heed to Antonescu's anguished pleas. In doing this, Hitler was following Doenitz's advice that the loss of Sebastopol would seriously affect the situation in the Black Sea; the latter considered it possible to supply the garrison by sea and thus enable it to hold on for a considerable period. Hitler was also influenced by Goering's fears that the Romanian oil wells would be bombed from the Crimea – this was one of the Führer's recurrent nightmares. He was also afraid of the repercussions of any evacuation of the Black Sea on such wavering allies as Romania and Bulgaria and a hesitant neutral, Turkey. But after the fall of Odessa, the Red Army attacked the Crimea from the north; the whole peninsula was lost in under a week; three-quarters of the artillery were abandoned. Hitler authorised the evacuation of the wounded and nobody else; as he needed a scapegoat, he sacked Jaenecke. But on May 8 the garrison had to be hurriedly evacuated; 150,000 left in complete chaos; on May 12, Sebastopol fell. Some thousands of miles from the front, Hitler had once again taken far-reaching decisions with no knowledge of the real situation.

Hitler dismissed von Manstein and replaced Zeitzler by Guderian who had earlier also been dismissed. But switching responsibility did not prevent the Germans from making a disorderly withdrawal to a line running through Kovel, Lutsk, Tarnopol, Stanislawow, Iasi and Tiraspol.

The Russians took a breather and swiftly made good the destruction in White Russia and the Ukraine – particularly the communications. As early as 1943, this reconstruction had become the main concern of the Defence Committee. During 1943 and 1944, 25,000 miles of railway and the principal electricity generating stations had been repaired; the coal mines were again producing 44 million tons of coal and the blast furnaces nearly 3 million tons of steel and the same amount of iron. Soviet historians calculate that the total output of the liberated areas increased three-fold during these two years.

As manpower and machines were short, the Defence Committee arranged for direct liaison between the concerns which were to be rebuilt and the new ones which had taken over their function in the 'eastern provinces'; every factory in the Donbass was thus twinned with a similar factory in the Urals which provided it with tools, even if this restricted its own output; another big exodus took place but this time in the other direction. Requisitioning did the rest; 120,000 kolkhoziens were transferred to the coalmines.

The organisation of the Soviet state and the driving power of the Communist party were not the only explanations for such military and economic feats. A great upsurge of popular feeling had been involved which also found expression in the partisan movement.

XI PARTISAN WARFARE

Hitler fancied himself as a disciple of Clausewitz; but in his famous formula 'war is the extension of politics', Clausewitz meant by politics a rational unified conception of needs and aims. And 'the liquidation of the USSR' was not rational, nor was it an aim but a means – both immoderate and wrong. An unlimited war was not a policy; in fact, the means was overriding the aim. It was just such a deviation that Clausewitz warned against when he wrote that one should beware of the 'dynamics of war', by which one is led to forget the reasons that gave rise to the war by concentrating on day-to-day fighting, where the aims are moulded by defeats and victories.

The Führer had not achieved a consistent attitude towards the anti-Communist elements or the national feeling of the non-Russian racial minorities in the USSR. There was, indeed, a school for propaganda workers at the Dabendorff camp under the 'National Russian Committee' created by Vlassov; this committee published newspapers intended for Soviet prisoners of war and for its supporters; its membership was thereby increasing. But on hearing that in the course of the Kursk fighting deserters had gone over to the Soviet Army again in their thousands, Hitler flew into a rage and ordered Vlassov's units to be transferred to the west within forty-eight hours! Jodl insisted that Vlassov should sign an open letter to his supporters approving this transfer. According to Peter Kleist, the total strength of the 'eastern battalions' at the beginning of 1944 was 650,000 men, including 110,000 Turcomans, 110,000 Caucasians, 35,000 Tartars and 60,000 Cossacks. But they had no sort of autonomy; they were scattered throughout all the German forces and serving in every sector – in France, they could be found in Lyon, Lorient, Rodez, Oléron, etc. It is true that they had been recruited in many different ways; but in treating them purely as mercenaries, the Germans made it impossible for them to provide the seeds of revolt amongst the peoples of the USSR.

On the other hand, the extortionate behaviour of the Germans would in itself have been enough to unite the peoples of the USSR against the occupying power. Their organisation came from disbanded units of the Red Army which the Wehrmacht had not bothered to take prisoner as they advanced but had been content merely to break up. It seems that both the Communist party and the Red Army were surprised by the spontaneity of the partisans' reaction and the size of their forces in their fight against the Germans; the Party had been disorganised by the Germans' repressive action and the Red Army was suspicious – like all regular armies – of these anarchical bands of undisciplined volunteers.

The first Resistance leaders were often without party affiliations, that is,

they were isolated individuals. The Communist party set about organising their activities from Moscow. Instructions were broadcast by radio, newspapers printed and dropped by parachute and militant Communist organisers were sent out to join them. Gradually, the Party came to control the movement at every level; even meetings were organised. The indoctrination of the partisans was in the hands of political commissars. One of their shrewd moves consisted in considering that the partisans had shown themselves worthy to be Communists, that they had, as it were, received the call to become members of the Party.

Liaison with the Red Army was, in theory at least, all the easier because Lenin had defined the rules of subversive warfare and instruction in it had been provided in the Soviet military training establishments before the war; there had been exercises where regular had co-operated with irregular units. However, the partisans' general staff, under General Ponomarenko, retained a certain independence; according to him, he had met with hostility from Beria, the big white chief of the Soviet secret police. *Stavka* is also said to have shown a certain scepticism about the effectiveness of the partisans.

In any case, some decentralisation was made necessary by the size of the country and the depth of the German penetration; but by the second half of 1943, organisation from the centre had been more or less completed. From this time onwards, as the Red Army advanced, it took over the control and deployment of the partisans in the areas close to its operations; it dropped them weapons and sent them instructions; their leaders attended special courses in Moscow, Leningrad and Stalingrad.

The Soviet Resistance movement thus showed originality inasmuch as it tried to co-ordinate its activities with a regular government and a regular army, not situated abroad but in the country itself. It is rather difficult to assess its importance. For one reason, Soviet historians have very little to say about collaboration in the USSR, which is inseparably connected with the Resistance, since the latter was its antidote. Moreover, some of the accounts of the Resistance are not free from propaganda bias. The Communist party saw it as a link in the struggle of the people for their liberation, somewhere between anti-capitalism and anti-colonialism.

One thing is certain, however: it was a vast activity. It liquidated mayors and other authorities appointed by the occupier, it surreptitiously took over the organisations that replaced the *kolkhozes*, so as to supply the partisans, and it passed on instructions issued by Radio Moscow. Above all, as early as 1942, it turned to direct action, in the form of large-scale sabotage carried out by units sometimes several thousand strong; their targets were railway stations and railway lines, reservoirs, German depots and bridges. In addition, sabotage of industrial installations greatly reduced the occupier's output of coal, iron and manufactured goods in the

Donbass. At the end of 1942, there were 19,000 partisans operating in the district of Smolensk and 20,000 round Briansk. Over large areas the partisans succeeded in re-establishing Soviet institutions – fifty-eight rural soviets at Viazma – and more than 500 places were 'liberated' in an area of nearly 4,000 square miles round Briansk, during the same period. Leningrad was supplied by convoys which the partisans triumphantly escorted through the German lines into the town – one convoy consisted of 220 carts. One unit composed of Leningrad students raided 24 airfields, derailed 23 trains, destroyed 140 vehicles and captured 800 rifles. The partisans also attacked small garrisons, even when they were several hundred strong, so that during the winter the Germans abandoned most of the villages.

When the Red Army took the offensive, partisan activity assumed strategic importance. Thus the Kursk fighting was preceded by sabotage behind the German lines. The Red Army even systematically directed its attacks towards areas under partisan control. Sometimes, on the other hand, the partisans switched from one district to another to join up with the advancing regular troops. Their role in such circumstances was a dual one: they destroyed the enemy's supply lines but they also built bridges, repaired roads and occupied points of tactical importance.

One thing that was equally certain was that the Germans were taken completely by surprise by this sort of warfare. In July 1941, Hitler had stated that 'partisan warfare would enable hostile elements to be destroyed', but one year later, far from being pleased, he noted that these same partisans represented 'a grave threat in the east'. In theory the security police (SD) were in charge of preventive action and the repression of small groups while the Wehrmacht was responsible for major operations. In fact, the two bodies were forced to co-operate, more or less willingly. The Army formed a special staff and employed an increasing number of troops – von Manstein wrote that in the army under his command it was the equivalent of an army corps. The SS divisions, the Hungarians and other special units as well as regular divisions – eleven in 1943 – were thus taken out of the front line in order to fight an internal enemy, who was often impossible to locate.

Reprisals against the population only increased their hatred of the occupier; cleaning-up operations needed large forces and produced poor results; the net always had a hole in it somewhere, or else, having been tipped off, the birds had flown. Few German generals found any effective reply; in the Briansk sector, General Schnidt put a Russian civilian, Kaminski, in command of a militia; he distributed land, farms and cattle to the peasants and tried to persuade them to defend their property against the partisans. Other officers organised anti-guerrilla forces by amalgamating the best German soldiers with local collaborators. The

lessons of these experiments were collected into a 'Manual of Anti-Partisan Warfare' in May 1944. In this way good results were obtained but they were not very common, and collaborators had no really convincing reasons for fighting; moreover, the Red Army's successes regularly reduced their numbers as well as the influence they exercised on the population.

XII SOVIET ESPIONAGE

The USSR had ideological supporters all over the world and thus benefited from excellent intelligence sources. But her 'special services' had not escaped Stalin's massive purges and they had not yet been completely reorganised by the beginning of the war. It is difficult to assess the activity of her spy rings; only the ones uncovered by the enemy are known and they were not necessarily the best organised or the most reliable; no one knows how much the intelligence passed on by various sources, generally differing amongst themselves or even contradicting each other, affected the decisions of the authorities who received it. Much has been written, both by specialists and by authors of bestsellers, blurring rather than illuminating the true state of affairs – usually as a result of exaggeration but also by omissions dictated by reasons of personal or national security.

It is known that in December 1941 the Abwehr uncovered a Soviet spy-ring in Belgium. In Berlin itself, another ring, *Rote Kapelle*, which was broken up in August 1942, should have been able to send back useful information on the German offensive in the summer of 1942 – but Soviet historians say that it took the Red Army by surprise.

In Switzerland, the activity of the *Rote Drei* ring is said to have been so important that two authors felt able to write, quite bluntly, that 'the war was won in Switzerland'. Yet it is difficult not to be sceptical when one reads that Swiss army intelligence passed information on to these Soviet spies and stopped doing so when Moscow showed an unhealthy curiosity concerning the Swiss armed forces – for what purpose? The Russians are also alleged to have had agents – including Philby – in the British Intelligence Service itself.

Counter-espionage made great strides during the war by using lorries equipped with detecting devices which enabled a radio transmitting station to be accurately pin-pointed; the only way of avoiding them was for the agent to change his position frequently; but this meant having a large number of centres and a wide circle of well disposed natives, which was easier for a Resistance network, with local sympathisers, than for a group of professionals.

It is certainly true that the Communists in the occupied countries

would have been very happy to inform the USSR of everything they knew – after June 1941 this had become a patriotic duty. But what did they know? Although extraordinary cases of infiltration have been disclosed by post-war revelations, the social composition of the Communist parties as well as the mistrust surrounding them before the war meant that they had little chance of achieving high positions of responsibility. In the light of the notorious post-war 'defections to the east', one may well wonder what active sympathy the USSR benefited from during the war, particularly amongst atomic scientists.

One thing which is beyond doubt is that crypto-Communists or self-styled renegades joined Fascist party organisations, including the Nazi party. This is what happened in the case of the most amazing and famous Second World War spy, the German journalist Sorge. As press attaché at the German embassy in Tokyo, Sorge gained the confidence both of the ambassador and a certain number of high-placed Japanese, and he used the services of a few Japanese Communists fanatical enough to betray their country in time of war. It was thanks to him that Stalin is said to have had complete confidence concerning Japan's intentions towards Siberia. As Sorge was found out, his activity is fairly well-known; but his most recent biographers have shown that he mixed false information and unreliable predictions with correct ones; can we really be certain that he did not occasionally mislead the people he was trying to help?

Were there other spies like Sorge in Greater Germany and Greater Asia? This is not unlikely but they remain unknown and will probably never be known. One thing is certain and that is that intelligence supplied by spies is always scanty and incomplete; it is very dangerous for a government or a general staff to base their decisions solely on such information; the Wehrmacht's movements in the USSR, for example, could be discovered more accurately and surely by air reconnaissance than from scraps of information picked up by some official in a Berlin office. It is also plain that, among the three major Allies, the USSR enjoyed a special and formidable position. She was, of course, a country of vast dimensions and large population, with a powerful economy and a valiant army; but Moscow was also the Rome of a universal Communist church, the fabric of which had not been entirely destroyed by the suppression of the Comintern. As her regular troops began to beleaguer the German stronghold, other fighting units which were demolishing it from within were going to come into the open, first of all in the occupied countries but also in countries allied with Germany.

CHAPTER 3

Soviet Victories.

The Desatellisation of Greater Germany

(June–December 1944)

IN their offensive of June 1943, the Red Army's aims had been economic, like those of the Wehrmacht the year before; once again, the stakes were the grain-growing areas of the Ukraine and the Donbass mines. In June 1944, the Soviet attacks were dictated by political aims; they advanced on the southern end of the front towards the Danubian countries. This was not the shortest route to Berlin. Did Stalin want to forestall his allies in this sector, in which Churchill had shown such great interest at Teheran? Or did he think that the German satellites could easily be detached like dead branches from an ailing tree? Or yet again did he turn his attentions in that direction because of the difficulties raised by the Polish problem further north, which was going to culminate in the Warsaw uprising?

In any case, one after another, the states allied to Germany were going to be invaded, occupied and swiftly turned against her. At the same time, Communist parties which had generally been of little importance before the war made their appearance in force on the arrival of the Red Army and assumed power. In the areas that were still occupied, other Communists tried to involve as many patriots as possible in the struggle against the occupier, by co-operating with the Red Army in ways that had been perfected in partisan activity in the USSR.

I ALARM AMONGST THE SATELLITES

Romania was the first country to try to put an end to her subjection to Germany. Queen Helen, young King Michael's mother, was the moving spirit behind all the intrigues. Mihail Antonescu, the Foreign Minister, had contacted the Nuncio and the Swiss, Portuguese, Swedish and Turkish ministers; but these contacts did not bring him into touch with the Allies. Then in May 1943 he worked out a complete plan of action with Bova Scoppa, the Italian minister in Bucharest, who was also convinced

that the Axis powers were losing the war; Mussolini must be made to see the light; Ciano's successor, Bastianini, expressed agreement; but the Duce refused to negotiate 'under the shadow of defeat in Africa'; he did, indeed, contemplate calling a general conference but only in two months' time; he even dared to suggest that it might be held whether Hitler was present or not. In the end, he said nothing about the scheme to Hitler on July 19 at Feltre; and on the 25th, he was deprived of all his power.

The Romanian government then recognised the Italian Fascist Republic, although King Michael, who was keeping his distance from the Axis, refused to receive its representative. In March 1944, he sent Prince Stirbey on a mission to Ankara and then Cairo, but with no result. Two months later, the Allies called on the Axis satellites to surrender 'unconditionally'. Mihail Antonescu vainly pleaded for an 'honourable settlement' and pointed out that Romania was not at war with Britain or America and that she was not waging an ideological war but merely trying to recover her lost provinces. The Allies replied by bombing Ploesti and Bucharest.

In Bulgaria, King Boris' sudden death put the young Simeon II on the throne, with a council of regency to assist him; a period of political instability began and the Bulgarian press started talking of the 'historical friendship' linking the Bulgarians and the Russians with whom they were not at war. As for the Sofia government, in January 1944 it made overtures to London and Washington.

In Hungary, Premier Kallay also made contact with the British and Americans in Istanbul. In September 1943, he contemplated the possibility of Hungary's surrendering unconditionally on a date fixed by the British and Americans with the Russians' knowledge and consent; he promised that Hungary would not allow herself to be occupied by the Germans. Kallay recognised the representative of Badoglio's government and sent gold to a Swiss bank. To avoid the imminent occupation by the Germans which would be precipitated by the Russian advance, with the accompanying danger that Hungary's traditional enemies, the Romanians, would also enter Hungarian territory, General Zsombalethy asked Keitel to leave the defence of the Carpathians to Hungarian troops only. Keitel was suspicious and refused, demanding instead that German troops should be allowed to pass through Hungary.

In fact, Hitler had seen through the Hungarians' game. On March 18, 1944 he sent for Admiral Horthy and demanded Kallay's dismissal, general mobilisation of the Hungarians, German control of the country's economy and communications and the free passage of German troops into and through Hungary.

Horthy gave in and Kallay went, to be replaced by General Sztojaj. The new government banned political parties, closed down a number of newspapers, arrested some well-known personalities suspected of being

opponents of the régime, placed the trade unions under the control of government commissars and replaced senior civil servants whose allegiance was uncertain. The Germans demanded and obtained still more: a 'joint armament programme', 50,000 workers to be sent to Germany, Hungary to take over the occupation costs of the German troops, an increased credit for Germany in the clearing bank, the delivery of 700,000 tons of grain and similar quantities of oil and bauxite.

Hungary also put into operation anti-Semitic measures likely to please the Germans. Although these measures were delayed – the wearing of the yellow star was made compulsory only on March 29, 1944 – the decisions were then implemented very rapidly. By the beginning of April, Eichmann and Veessenmayer were beginning to force the Jews into ghettos. On May 15, 150,000 Jews were deported; it was planned that another 200,000 should follow them. For a short while, Horthy opposed the deportation of the Budapest Jews and then gave in. After this attempt to free herself, Hungary was now yoked more closely than ever to the German cause.

Finland had also begun negotiations with the USSR, this time through Sweden. But the Soviets' terms seemed too harsh and the talks had broken down.

Thus, by the spring of 1944, on the diplomatic level, Germany had made good to the best of her ability the effects of Italy's downfall and her own defeats in the USSR. She had plastered over the cracks of the anti-Communist coalition; there had as yet been no defections but the satellites were at the end of their tether and were liable to break away at any moment. They were held back by the Allies' decisions at Teheran and the British and Americans' insistence that they must discuss their method of exit from the war with the USSR. How much longer would they remain passively obedient? Had not Turkey, which was more independent, already shown that she considered that the die was cast by halting supplies of chromium to Germany?

II THE COMMITTEE FOR FREE GERMANY

For his part, Stalin thought that the stability of Nazi Germany herself had been sufficiently shaken for her to be weakened still further by skilfully fomenting disorder. He could rely on the devoted services of the Germans who had been exiled in the Soviet Union since 1933; these included Walter Ulbricht and Pieck; but these refugees had no hold over their compatriots. In Moscow in July 1943 a 'National Committee for Free Germany' was set up, under the nominal chairmanship of the writer Erich Weinert, assisted by a certain number of officer POWs, such as

Lieutenant von Einsiedel, a descendant of Bismarck's who had drawn up an appeal in May 1943 addressed to 20 generals and 300 officers captured at Stalingrad, encouraging them to join in the struggle against Hitler; he was wasting his time and succeeded only in being regarded as a traitor by his brother officers.

The organisers of the new Committee called a conference of 300 or 400 'delegates' from prisoner-of-war camps, not elected but chosen by the prisoners; they wanted to appeal to the mass of soldiers on every front and also to civilians living in Germany. They had a simple programme: 'anti-Hitler and in favour of immediate peace and a free and independent Germany'. The leaders were elected by acclamation – the list, very carefully compiled and prepared in advance, contained one-third Communists, one-third officers and one-third other ranks. In every occupied country, the Communists now began to appeal to the German soldier by means of tracts written in Germany and specially intended for him; but their activity was not helped, as in the USSR, by the presence of several hundred thousand prisoners demoralised by defeat and captivity. The 'Free German Committee in the West' was set up only at a much later date and had only limited appeal, although the BBC broadcast its instructions.

In the USSR, the Free German Committee published a newspaper, *Freies Deutschland*, which was distributed to POWs and dropped over the German lines; it received permission to send representative delegates to the various Soviet armies; at the front itself, they appealed to their German comrades by radio and loudspeakers, without much result. Discipline was still too strong in the Wehrmacht and fear of the 'Reds' too great.

In view of the poor results and against the advice of the Committee, the Soviet authorities made a direct appeal to the captured German generals who had till now remained aloof. In September 1943, General von Seydlitz, who had been in favour of refusing to obey Hitler's orders at Stalingrad and was apparently obsessed by the memory of Yorck at Tauroggen, was put in charge of a 'League of German Officers'. He was hoping to counteract the Communist influence in the Committee and encourage the generals to revolt against Hitler. Possibly the Russians made certain promises to von Seydlitz. According to Bodo Scheurig, General Melnikov had assured him that Germany would return to her pre-1938 frontiers, including Austria, if the Wehrmacht leaders revolted against Hitler. If such a promise was made it would have probably been before the Teheran Conference, but it was in contradiction with its conclusions.

Paulus' attitude towards the League, which was theoretically a branch of the 'Free German Committee', was very reserved although von Seydlitz staunchly asserted that he was not in the pocket of the Communists. However, Paulus eventually joined, together with fifty other generals, on

hearing the news of the attempt on Hitler's life on July 20, 1944, which had been instigated by his peers, who were serving officers. But despite this splendid addition to its ranks, the League did not achieve much success. Perhaps this was because, as Einsiedel has pointed out, it was received with scepticism and, later, hostility from the Red Army. Or perhaps its foundations were undermined by the failure of the attempt on Hitler's life on July 20 and by the subsequent savage repression of the opponents of Nazism, including some of its members' own families.

It seems more likely, however, that as the Red Army advanced towards Germany and the German troops still continued to offer fierce opposition, the Soviet leaders lost interest in such an unreliable body which was gradually becoming pointless. They reserved their support for the militant wing of the Free German Committee represented by the Communists and joined by a few generals with the request for courses in political training. Finally the Russian authorities dropped their mask and in November 1945 abolished both the Committee and the League, leaving only the Communist party, to which they handed over the administration of those parts of Germany occupied by the Red Army — with the help of other more or less reconstituted 'anti-Fascist' parties.

III THE RED ARMY SUMMER OFFENSIVE OF 1944 — FINLAND

During the first half of 1944, Soviet factories turned out 16,000 aircraft and 14,000 tanks for the Red Army; the opening of the second front gave them great superiority in manpower — 7 million men against 4 million; according to Soviet historians, this superiority was even greater in armaments: fifty per cent more tanks and four times as many combat aircraft. In addition the new heavy tank Joseph Stalin outclassed its German counterpart.

The Russians thus had the means of launching a still more powerful offensive than previously; on June 23, as Stalin had promised at Teheran, the attack began on a 750-mile front. In the Carelian Isthmus, twenty-nine divisions grappled with eight Finnish divisions, reinforced by one German division; and Ryti, the President of the Finnish Republic, sent a letter to Hitler pledging himself not to negotiate a separate peace.

But although they relaxed their pressure in Carelia, the Russians advanced in Estonia towards Nerva and then into Latvia; Finland's right flank was threatened and she had no way of defending it. On August 1, President Ryti resigned and Marshal Mannerheim was unanimously elected to succeed him. On August 17, Mannerheim informed Hitler that Finland considered herself free to act independently; on September 2, he accepted the Russians' terms: Finland handed over the whole of Carelia,

gave up Petsamo and informed the Reich that any German soldiers remaining in Finland after September 15 would be interned.

The Russians showed great moderation; it is true that they had other fish to fry; perhaps they were keen not to annoy Roosevelt who had warmly supported the Finns at Teheran? They did not occupy Finland; they were content to set up a control commission and insist that a government should be formed on which they could rely; its leader was Paasikivi whom they had found the most amenable negotiator.

It only remained to settle the fate of the German Twentieth Army out in the tundra, which Hitler had yet again ordered not to retreat. The Russians attacked in October by landing troops in its rear; the Finns then pursued the remnants as far as their frontier with Norway.

Meanwhile Bagramyan had taken Vitebsk and Govorov, another peasant's son, took Narva. The Red Army crossed the Dvina and liberated Tallinn on August 13; Memel was attacked on October 10 and Riga fell on the 13th. Until then, General Schoerner, who had barely thirty divisions at his disposal, had been able to do nothing but retreat. But when the Russians entered east Prussia, Hitler ordered him to counter-attack. The Führer wanted to prevent German soil from being 'defiled by the Reds'; he also wanted to cling on to the Baltic coast, where the secret weapons were being produced which were the magic charm to lure victory back into the German camp. So he left eight divisions in Courland which, though supplied by sea and gradually encircled, fought on until the end of the war; they would have been of more use elsewhere. By November 1 the Russians had occupied all the Baltic countries, including Lithuania.

IV POLAND

However, from the start of its offensive, the Red Army had directed the main weight of its attack against Byelorussia, doubtless in order to complete the liberation of the whole of Soviet territory, including the areas taken from Poland in September 1939. Four 'fronts' comprising 2,500,000 men supported by 45,000 guns, 6,000 tanks and 7,000 aircraft were faced by 1,500,000 Germans under von Busch, backed by only 17,000 guns, 1,500 tanks and 2,000 aircraft.

Soviet superiority was so great that, despite the number of wide rivers to be crossed, the Russians advanced an average of twelve to fifteen miles a day as far as Minsk and eight to ten miles a day thereafter. The front extended for nearly 450 miles; the Russians had little difficulty in breaking through the enemy's defence positions and their mobile units skirted the isolated pockets of resistance and attacked the Germans from the rear, making it quite impossible for them to stabilise their lines.

During this advance, the partisans played an effective strategic role. The OKH had mistaken *Stanka's* intentions; in the spring of 1944, they had used the strategic railway, the only one that existed, to move their reserves from north to south; the partisans let them go through without interference in accordance with the Red Army's instructions; but when the OKH realised its mistake and tried to bring their units back by the same route, the partisans sabotaged the permanent way – so much so that according to Colonel Teske, the head of Army Group Centre's transport, 'the German troop movements were paralysed'.

So the Russians managed to reach the Beresina on June 29, Minsk on July 5, Vilna on the 13th and Bialystok on 27th; on August 1, they had reached Kovno and by the 14th the Narev. As he headed for Warsaw, Rokossovski took Lublin on July 26 and Brest-Litovsk on the 31st. On August 1, he reached Praga, a Warsaw suburb on the right bank of the Vistula. He had covered 375 miles in little more than a month and he was still depending for his supplies on railway termini situated on the Dniepr; the few railway lines in conquered territory had not only been destroyed but also had had to be modified for the Russian gauge. The Germans now received reinforcements, including the Hermann Goering Division from Italy; Rokossovski was counter-attacked and had to retreat, which he took as a warning. He therefore halted his advance at the gates of Warsaw and this halt was to produce one of the most dramatic and violent incidents of the war.

The situation was that the Resistance movements which recognised the authority of the London government had gradually formed themselves into the 'Home Army' (AK), while a Communist Resistance movement had started up in Poland as a result of the creation of the 'Union of Polish Patriots' in Moscow. The Polish Communist party, harried in German-occupied Poland and until June 1941 banned in the Russian-occupied zone, had found it very difficult to build itself up again after the invasion of the USSR. First of all, it appeared in the form of small groups – 'The Hammer and Sickle', the 'Society of Friends of the USSR', which lacked any connection with each other and were mutually suspicious. Gradually unity was restored, thanks to militant organisers dropped by parachute from Moscow at the beginning of 1942.

Having arrived on the scene later than the 'Home Army', the 'People's Guard' formed by the Communists found some difficulty in recruiting supporters and obtaining weapons. It was not until the middle of 1943 that the Russians began to drop them arms by parachute. In the same period, the 'Union of Polish Patriots' in Moscow acquired an army corps intended to compete with Anders' army, which took its orders from London. The first division, called the Kosciusko Division, was formed in the middle of 1943 and was reinforced in January 1944 by a whole army

corps commanded by General Berling and trained near Smolensk; by March, it was 40,000 strong.

To co-ordinate the guerrilla warfare, a Polish partisan general staff was formed in May 1944 in Rovno in the Ukraine; when the Soviet offensive was launched, the Red Army treated the Polish Communist partisans as it had treated the Soviet ones and provided them with arms and officers. The instructors were Poles from Berling's army corps.

The 'People's Guard' now became the 'People's Army' (Armja Ludowa or AL); in June 1944, it was strong enough for its underground fighters to resist several thousand German troops for some days in the region of Zamosc, close to the USSR; they suffered heavy losses.

The Polish government in London was disturbed by this underground activity which was outside its control and it accused the AL of behaving in an irresponsible manner. But it was not excessively concerned; most of the Polish Resistance came under the AK and in certain districts AL units had even joined up with it.

But on July 21, 1944, in Lublin, that is in territory liberated by the Red Army, a 'Polish Committee of National Liberation' was set up under the 'left-wing Socialist' Osowska-Moravski as an enlarged form of the 'Union of Polish Patriots'. It called on the Polish people to rise up against the Germans and demanded that the mother-country should be given back 'the former Polish lands of Pomerania and Silesia', specifying that these lands extended as far as the 'Oder-Neisse line', which thus made its first appearance in history. The Committee agreed to hand over the eastern Polish territories to the USSR in accordance with the principle of 'self-determination of the Byelorussian and Ukrainian peoples'. At the same time, it assumed the role of a government by ordering the mobilisation of all Poles to form a national army, into which Berling's army corps and the People's Army were incorporated. The balance of power in the Polish Resistance was thus suddenly altered – the Lublin Committee hoped to obtain 200,000 men from conscription. As it referred to the London government as 'usurpers', it was clear that, on the strength of USSR support and the presence of the Red Army, it was setting itself up as the government on the spot. This became plain when it decided to introduce immediate agrarian reform by confiscating large properties without compensation and fixing the size of every farm, old and new, at 12½ acres; it was relying on this measure to win over the rural population to its cause.

V THE WARSAW UPRISING

The Red Army's advance into the disputed territories had faced the Polish government in London with a cruel predicament; it no longer had

any diplomatic relations with the USSR and the Lublin Committee offered a rival government, already set up in Poland. General Bor-Komorovski, the head of the Home Army, proposed – and his proposal was accepted – that the leaders of the Polish Resistance government should approach the Russians as representing the legitimate Polish government and suggest concerted action against the occupier; but in no circumstances should they agree to be incorporated in Berling's army corps. At the same time, all the non-Communist Resistance groups had informed London of 'the desire of the Polish nation to resist the new Soviet aggression in order to preserve its freedom and the freedom of Europe'; they were opposed to handing over any territory. The Polish government was thus far from being restricted by its partisans in its relations with the Soviet Union.

The Red Army leaders, either through lack of precise instructions or on the principle that every little helps, seem to have raised no difficulties in granting the Polish Resistance groups the status of regular units when contact was first made; indeed, there was mutual congratulation and decorations were awarded. But subsequently all Poles were simply incorporated into Berling's forces and anyone who refused was interned. The Red Army was now interested only in the Lublin Committee.

At this juncture, Bor-Komorovski pointed out to the London government the danger of leaving the Communists to take the initiative of launching an insurrection in Warsaw while accusing the Secret Army of inertia. On July 25, the London government gave him full power to take any action he might consider appropriate. On July 29, the Moscow and Lublin radios broadcast a call to revolt. 'People of Warsaw, take up your arms . . . a million Poles must become a million soldiers.' Bor-Komorovski thought that the time had come and that he must not allow himself to be forestalled; he fixed the start of the uprising for August 1.

The Home Army commander was sure of the approval of the Polish authorities on the spot and he had received a blank cheque from his government; his decision was only part of a plan for a vast national uprising, called Operation 'Tempest'. All the same, he had acted somewhat in the dark and without full knowledge of the international situation; neither the British and Americans nor the Soviets had been consulted or even informed; they were all faced by a *fait accompli*. At the time, Mikolajczyk, the head of the Polish government, went by plane to Moscow to discuss the 'liberation' of Poland with Stalin. If he imagined that the Warsaw uprising would put him in a position of strength in his talks with the formidable Stalin, he made a grave mistake.

Yet things started off quite promisingly. Did Stalin think that Rokossovski would take Warsaw quickly? He merely told Mikolajczyk that the uprising had been 'premature'. He put him in touch with Bierut, a Polish Communist who had been living in the USSR since 1927 and was the real

leader of the Lublin Committee: Bierut suggested to Mikolajczyk setting up a united national government in which the lion's share would go to the Lublin Committee with fourteen members as compared with the four allotted to the London government. On August 9, Stalin once more promised his guest that the offensive against Warsaw would start again as soon as possible – we know all this from Mikolajczyk himself, who can hardly be accused of kindly feelings towards Stalin.

And then suddenly things went wrong. Without warning, Stalin refused to send aid to the insurgents and Radio Moscow began to heap abuse and insults on them, in particular accusing them of 'provocation'. It seems that the extent of the uprising had taken Stalin by surprise; not only was the whole population of Warsaw totally involved, but even the Communists had joined in and placed themselves under Bor-Komorovski's leadership. On the other hand, the uprising had acted like a magnet in attracting German reinforcements. In short, not only would it now be a more risky operation for Rokossovski to capture Warsaw but it would also be difficult for him, if he succeeded, not to recognise the fact that power would actually be in the hands of the triumphant and victorious Home Army. And its power was opposed to the Communists inside the country and to the USSR outside.

Having been unable to forestall his opponents and refusing to strengthen their position, Stalin cold-bloodedly let the Germans crush the uprising. He stated that 'he dissociated himself from a reckless and terrible adventure', which had been instigated by 'criminals'. Not only did he refuse to provide any support for his allies fighting against a common foe but, as at the time of the big trials of his rival Bolsheviks, he even covered them with abuse and slander.

Churchill was more anxious to help the Poles than was Roosevelt, 'who was afraid of hindering the overall development of the war', in other words, of upsetting Stalin. But only the Americans had the heavy bombers capable of reaching Warsaw – but they could not make the return journey without refuelling. Eden suggested that they should fly on to the USSR; Stalin refused. The result was that the insurgents were abandoned by their allies because either they would not or could not come to their help.

At the end of August, Stalin changed his tune again; Rokossovski was now, in fact, ready to attack; the insurgents were no longer strong enough to be embarrassing but there were still enough of them to be useful. On September 14 the Russians took Praga; on the 16th, Berling tried to cross the Vistula but was repulsed. Not until September 18 did 104 Flying Fortresses drop arms and ammunition and much of it failed to reach their recipients. It was too late; on October 2, Bor-Komorovski surrendered; 50,000 inhabitants of Warsaw had been killed, wounded or taken pri-

soner; 350,000 were deported to Germany; the town was in ruins and the victorious Germans systematically destroyed what was left.

Polish Communist historians – particularly Kirchmayer – blame the Polish government in London for its ‘Jagellonian approach’, that is to say, its desire to expand eastwards and its hostility to Russia. What would have happened if it had accepted the Curzon line? It is doubtful whether Stalin would have been as gentle towards Poland, whom he wanted to exist only as a satellite state to provide a defensive barrier against Germany, as he had been towards Finland from whom he had nothing to fear, both because of her outlying position and her lack of strength. But at least time would have been gained and as a result the tragedy might have been averted; for their part, the British and the Americans – first and foremost Roosevelt – would have been less embarrassed in dealing with Stalin and under greater compulsion to support the Poles. But could the Polish government give up Polish territory?

Stalin’s duplicity towards the heroic insurgents earned him worldwide public censure. He is unlikely to have been greatly perturbed. Poor Poland had lost her second battle of independence.

Under pressure from Churchill and Eden, Mikolajczyk nevertheless agreed to go back to Moscow in October 1944. He was then informed by Stalin and Churchill, who was there as well, that Poland would have to accept the Curzon line. Thereupon the Lublin Committee demanded and indeed insisted that Lvov, which had never been Russian, should be handed over to the USSR; all the Polish oil is found in that area. In addition, Mikolajczyk had to accept a compromise over the composition of a government of national unity in which the Lublin Committee was in the majority, although he himself would be its head; Churchill sweetened the pill by stating that democratic elections would take place after the war. On his return to London, Mikolajczyk was unsuccessful in persuading his colleagues. He resigned and was replaced by an extremely anti-Communist Socialist, Arciszewski. But what hope was there for the Polish government in London, short of a dispute between the Allies and a Third World War? It was a high price indeed to pay for a revival of Poland as she was in 1919.

On December 27, 1944, Stalin wrote to Roosevelt that ‘the elements controlled by the Poles in London had committed the most heinous crimes’. He hinted that the Lublin Committee, the only one containing decent and honest Poles, would become the provisional government.

VI CZECHOSLOVAKIA

On July 15, Koniev attacked south of the Pripet marshes. On July 30 he took Lvov, crossed the Vistula in August, established a bridgehead at

Sandomir which he managed to hold despite Model’s counter-attacks but came to a halt at the Carpathians.

The Czech Communist party, which had concentrated its main effort in Bohemia and Moravia, had been seriously weakened by the arrests of some of its members in August 1943 and January 1944; it nevertheless continued its activity in the Beskides and the region of Olomouc.

Its failures in the field were compensated for by the political success of an agreement signed with the London government under Beneš. Unlike Tito, the Czechoslovak Communists continued to implement the instructions of the Comintern, even after it had been dissolved; some of them were members of the Beneš government in London. In December 1943, Beneš signed a pact with the Communist leaders Gottwald and Slansky in Moscow; he described the Liberation as ‘a national revolution combined with a social revolution’; he spoke of the ‘necessity of nationalising certain sectors’; he agreed that a Communist should be the head of the first united Czechoslovak government after the war. Beneš was sincerely convinced that Czechoslovakia’s future could only be guaranteed by and with the friendship of the Soviet Union.

The Red Army’s approach brought Slovakia into the limelight. This woody and mountainous region was well suited to guerrilla warfare; however the early groups were unsuccessful; the mass of the peasantry remained aloof and the Central Committee of the Communist party was arrested in 1943. Slovakia was also a clerical, anti-Czech country with Fascist tendencies; political traditions and social structure were unsuitable for organising an uprising.

But this state which had been brought into being by the Nazis was falling apart; in 1943 there were mass desertions from the Slovak units fighting in the USSR – a whole regiment 2,000 strong, led by its officers, went over to the Red Army; 800 others joined the Ukrainian partisans. The Russians began to send arms and agents trained in Kiev into Slovakia; they also set up a Czechoslovak unit in the Red Army; similarly Soviet partisans sometimes crossed the frontier to join the Slovakian partisans.

The Communist party’s problem was to provide the peasants with the necessary organisation to encourage them to revolt. But the London government was also anxious to control the uprising; it intended to make it a purely military operation and it despatched two generals to lead it. Some of the officers in the Slovak Army were strongly nationalistic and were ready to change sides if Slovakia was guaranteed her independence. The Communists did not hesitate to establish contact with these officers; they stated that, even though Czechoslovakia certainly existed, she consisted of two absolutely equal peoples, Czechs and Slovaks – on this point they seemed rather ahead of Beneš.

In July, the Slovak uprising took place, on a grand scale; bands of

escaped prisoners of war joined in, including some French. All over the country 'National Committees' were set up, as had been decided in the agreement concluded between Gottwald and Beneš. The small German garrisons were attacked, as well as road and rail convoys. A 'Slovak National Council' was established at Banská-Bystrica; it seemed to have achieved a very broad spectrum of unity – even the Slovak Communists were slightly nationalistic.

The Slovak government launched several attacks against the rebels; they came to nothing. But then the Germans came on the scene and the insurgents were driven out of the plains into the mountains. There were harsh repressive measures. The uprising failed because it had not received the help that it had expected from the Red Army. It was in fact not until mid-November that Petrov crossed the Carpathians and entered sub-Carpathian Ukraine; and then he moved off obliquely towards Hungary.

The motivation and course of the Slovak uprising were not always clear; the Communists in Slovakia and those who were dropped from Russia disagreed as to who should take the credit, and then blamed each other for the failure; one can vaguely discern a pattern of suspicion towards the Czechs on the part of the Slovaks anxious to assert the weight of their majority; the part played by the generals despatched from London and their tragic fate are also not very clear. It seems, however, that the Communists who insisted, in France for example, that mobility was the essence of guerrilla warfare, here made the mistake of setting up 'central mobilisation strongholds' as in the Vercors. Tactics which were possible in the vast spaces of Russia became a trap when applied to more restricted areas. But henceforth it was difficult for the Germans to retain any confidence whatsoever in the Slovaks.

VII ROMANIA

The Slovakian mountains were hardly suitable terrain for the Russian tanks; accordingly, the Red Army had decided to strike hardest towards Romania. When the front stopped short at the Carpathians, it continued its advance in the south.

In the spring of 1944, the German army group south of the Ukraine had started to withdraw from the Dniepr to the Dniestr, where it set up a defensive front; but to hold this front, some 400 miles long, it could provide only two German and two Romanian armies; the fighting spirit of the latter was suspect and they had been sandwiched between the Germans; it was thought that this would prevent the collapse of large areas of front, as on the Don. On the other hand, Marshal Antonescu, though militarily subordinated to the German command, jealously guarded his

privileges as head of the Romanian government and there were frequent clashes between the allies – more particularly over the evacuation of the Crimea.

In order to meet the Soviet attacks in the north, Hitler had withdrawn eleven divisions from this sector, including four out of the six Panzer divisions, and they had not been replaced. In addition, General Schoerner who was familiar with the troops and the terrain, had relinquished his command to General Friesner, who knew nothing about either. Friesner had noticed that the right wing of his positions had an excessive bulge and was open to attack from the north southwards; he asked permission to shorten his line by withdrawing from the Dniestr to the Danube; Hitler refused.

The Russians attacked on August 20 from Iasi and Tiraspol; once again, they pounced on the enemy's weak point, the two Romanian armies, so as to encircle the German Sixth Army which was sandwiched between them. By the evening of the 20th they had crossed the Dniestr; by the 22nd, their manoeuvre had succeeded, although Friesner, with Antonescu's approval, had given the order to withdraw before receiving Hitler's permission. The Führer then insisted that the Focsani-Galatz-Danube delta line should be held in order to protect Bulgaria, which was restless and causing him concern.

But on August 23 a palace revolution broke out in Bucharest. King Michael, who must have been reflecting on Victor Emmanuel's example, had Antonescu arrested and formed a government of national unity under General Zănătescu, including Communists; previously, the elder statesmen Maniu and Brătianu had once more appealed to the British and Americans who had referred them to the Russians.

Hitler bombed Bucharest, thus enabling King Michael to declare war on Germany on August 24; the Romanians immediately invaded Transylvania to take it back from the Hungarians. On August 28, the Red Army entered Bucharest where they at first behaved as enemies. Then on September 12, the Russians granted an armistice on moderate terms – the war was not over – and the Romanians benefited from their timely switch. The USSR took back Bessarabia and north Bukovina from the Romanians and returned Transylvania, at the Hungarians' expense. Molotov came to Bucharest and promised that the Romanian political and social structure would remain unchanged; but an 'Allied Control Commission' was set up in Romania under the Russians.

The situation of the German forces had become critical; they could now escape only over the mountain passes of the Carpathians. 'There's no longer any general staff and nothing but chaos,' wrote Friesner, 'everyone, from general to clerk, has got a rifle and is fighting to the last bullet.' The result was the surrender of nearly 200,000 men and the loss of

the oil wells so crucial for the Luftwaffe. The operation carried out at Iasi by Malinowski and Tolbukhin was one of the most successful of the war.

VIII BULGARIA

In Bulgaria in the summer of 1944, pro-Russian feeling was running high. The 'Fatherland Front' contained Communists, Socialists and representatives of the 'People's Agrarian Union'; it operated through many hundreds of underground committees. As early as 1942, groups of partisans were carrying out sabotage in the Pirin, Rila and Rhodope districts and in the Balkans. From 1943 onwards units deserted from the Army to join the underground Resistance fighters who by 1944 numbered 18,000 men. Mass demonstrations and strikes followed thick and fast in Sofia and Plovdiv.

The Bagrianov government withdrew its troops from Greece and Yugoslavia; at the same time it sought the protection of the British and Americans; whilst the Red Army was preparing to invade Bulgaria, it sent a delegation to Cairo. It received the same answer as the Romanians; the Bulgarians should seek a settlement with the Russians. The latter had in any case not waited before sending an ultimatum which the Bulgarians were compelled to accept.

On September 5 Muraviev formed a new government which asked the Russians for an armistice, although the Bulgarians were not at war with them. But on August 26 the 'Fatherland Front' had decided on a national uprising which began in Sofia on September 9; mutiny broke out in the Army; street fighting took place in Sofia where the 'Fatherland Front' seized power. On September 8 the Red Army suspended its operations and on the 18th marched into Sofia. Bulgaria mobilised, declared war on Germany and sent 150,000 men to fight side by side with their Red Army comrades.

IX YUGOSLAVIA

The policy of the British and Americans was thus clear and consistent; they considered that they should do nothing to embarrass the USSR in the Red Army's own operational theatres. Moreover, apart from Poland, the Russians behaved with apparent moderation; they confined themselves to reversing the situation to their advantage; they set up governments of national unity which they controlled from within by their Communist members and from without by armistice commissions, theoretically

interallied but under Russian control. Bent only on ending the war with Germany, they did not seem to be including Communist revolution in their baggage-train.

The Russians were also ignoring Greece which, by agreement with the British, did not come into their zone of influence. But on September 6, they joined up with Tito's partisans in an atmosphere of extraordinary enthusiasm; though Tito may have disobeyed Stalin, he and his followers had always considered the Soviet Union as their elder sister, Slavs as well as Communists, and the Red Army as their natural ally. All that Hitler could now do was to order von Weich's Army Group E to retreat from Greece and southern Yugoslavia, a difficult operation when hemmed in by Greek and Yugoslav underground fighters who were growing in numbers and aggressiveness as they scented victory.

The Red Army could be supplied via Romania's ports and railway system, none of which had been destroyed and which would not have been available had it been advancing from Warsaw towards Berlin; strategic needs as well as problems in Poland had thus turned the countries in the Danube basin and the Balkans into a Russian preserve, whereas previously the governments in these parts of Europe had been anti-Soviet.

Until now Tito had been backed and armed only by the British and when King Peter showed signs of returning to his country using two British aircraft that he was hoping to lay hands on, he was stopped by them. They forced him to dismiss Mihailović and replace his Prime Minister Purčić by Subasić, a member of the Croatian Peasant party who had gone to see Tito on the island of Vis in June 1944. An agreement was signed, sponsored by the British; Tito pledged himself not to raise any questions concerning the political régime for the duration of the war – though in fact in the areas under his control he had already taken certain measures that would be difficult to reverse; two of Tito's partisans joined the London government; in exchange, Subasić urged the members of all the Resistance movements in Yugoslavia to join the partisans.

In August, Churchill met Tito in Naples; if he hoped to find him meek and grateful, he quickly had to change his tune. Tito talked to His Majesty's powerful Prime Minister as equal to equal, if not even with arrogance. At that time he had conquered the whole of Serbia after defeating the combined forces of his enemies in the area round Toplica and Jablanica – roughly 30,000 men, Bulgarians, Nedić's and Mihailović's Chetniks, Ustashis and Germans. He had obviously forgotten the time when he had been saved from a mass German parachute drop at Drvar in Bosnia by nearly 1,000 sorties by the Allies – although it was not very long ago, in May 1944. The massive aid represented by British war equipment did not seem to carry much weight, although it had been made

possible by the Balkan Air Force which had been formed in Italy and by the priority that the British had given to Yugoslavia in arms deliveries over other European Resistance movements; and it was through this help that Yugoslavia had acquired the equipment which enabled her to transform her guerrilla bands into an army that even had tanks and aircraft, driven and piloted by men trained in Italy by the British.

Tito categorically refused to agree to King Peter's return to Yugoslavia; he claimed Trieste and Istria; he bluntly rejected any idea of British or American operations in Yugoslavia, even going as far as to say that he would resist them by force, thus spelling the doom of Churchill's schemes aimed at the 'soft underbelly of Europe'. He would not pledge himself not to set up a Communist régime in Yugoslavia.

The Red Army's successes were obviously not unconnected with this stiffening of Tito's attitude; unlike King Michael and the Regent Horthy, Tito was far from being scared by the approach of the Red Army. At the beginning of September, without informing Churchill, he had flown to Moscow to see Stalin although the Russians had been the last to despatch a mission to him and had not yet provided him with any material aid. Tito gave the Red Army 'permission to enter Yugoslavia'; it undertook to withdraw as soon as it had accomplished its task.

Churchill now bitterly regretted the support he had provided for the ungrateful Tito. He did not know that the interview between Tito and Stalin had been a stormy one. The latter had asked him to reinstate King Peter; when Tito reacted violently, he became more explicit: 'Not for always, just for the time being; if he gets in your way, at the first opportunity just stab him gently in the back.'

Meanwhile, on October 4, Tolbukhin reached the Morava; helped by partisans, he entered Belgrade on the 19th; the partisans freed the rest of Yugoslavia by themselves and threatened Trieste. The Germans forming the Löhr Group, about 350,000 men, were beating a laborious retreat, harassed at night by partisans and by day by Allied bombers – a large-scale joint operation had been laid on to attack the whole of Yugoslavia's communication routes.

But having accomplished his mission, Tolbukhin moved back northwards; he crossed the Danube and joined up with Malinovski. In order to protect the road to Vienna, Hitler had decided to make his stand in Hungary.

X HUNGARY

Both the Hungarians and Romanians had based their whole policies on establishing their 'rights' in Transylvania; they had both been equally

anxious to convince the Germans on the subject; and now that the Wehrmacht was a broken reed, they had both set out to gain the good graces of the Allies. The Hungarians lost; the arrival of the Red Army in Romania had given her the advantage; once the Romanian Army had marched into Transylvania, the only thing left for Hungary to do was to fight it; but by doing this, she found herself sucked into the German camp – the losing side.

The Hungarians had made another miscalculation: they thought that they could hold up the Russians on the ridges of the Carpathians long enough to enable the British and American forces from Italy to arrive in Hungary first. But Romania's sudden change of sides rendered Hungary vulnerable from the east and the south.

Admiral Horthy now tried to revive his July plan: Hungary should reassert her sovereignty *vis-à-vis* the Germans and ask the British and Americans for an armistice. On August 29, he replaced Sztojaj's government by a military cabinet under General Geza Lakatos; but his anti-Communism prevented him from making contact with the Russians at the right time, although Harrison, the American ambassador in Switzerland with whom he was in touch, had informed him of his government's view that he should do so. When he finally resigned himself to sending a delegation to Moscow at the end of September the Germans had had the time to collect their thoughts and work out a plan of campaign in which Hungary was an essential pawn.

On October 11 the Hungarian delegation in Moscow finally signed the preliminaries to an armistice, the terms of which were approved by Churchill who was also in Moscow; this agreement laid down that Hungary should break with Germany and declare war on her. Horthy carried out only half of it; on October 15 he disclosed his request for an armistice to Rahn and Veessenmayer, the German diplomats in Budapest, but he promised not to attack German troops. Fearing internal political repercussions, he also refused to come to an agreement with the anti-German groups in Hungary. He relied solely on the Army.

But the first result of the Regent's apparent indecision was to immobilise the Army. The Germans had Szalassí and the Arrow Cross up their sleeves; aided and abetted by sympathisers in the Army, this contingent took control of the Army by neutralising the officers who were hostile to them and Szalassy seized power. German troops occupied the strategic points in the city and the radio stations. Horthy was left with his castle in Buda and his bodyguard; he hesitated and finally decided not to use this last line of defence; he resigned, was arrested and taken away to Germany.

Meanwhile, Malinovski had reached the Tisza, taken Szeged on October 7 and then, after a ten-day siege, Debreczen; but instead of finding

friends in power ready to open up the gates of Budapest to them, as in Bucharest, the Russians found themselves compelled to set about besieging it. In order to weaken the Hungarian opposition, the Russians encouraged the formation of a provisional government at Debreczen on December 24 under General Dálnoki Miklos, who called for a national uprising against the Germans and the Arrow Cross government. On January 25, 1945, he signed an armistice with the Red Army.

XI THE AGREEMENT OF OCTOBER 1944
BETWEEN CHURCHILL AND STALIN

Churchill was more alarmed than Roosevelt at Russia's dominance in the Danube basin which seemed likely to result from the Red Army's successes. He had suggested to his allies dividing Europe into zones of influence, an idea which Cordell Hull had rejected out of hand as a matter of principle, but which the more pragmatic Roosevelt, overriding his Secretary of State, had accepted for a provisional three months' period, so that the British gave Russia a free hand in Romania in return for a free hand in Greece, on the old system of tit-for-tat.

This agreement was never put into writing and was based on a few words exchanged between Eden and the Soviet ambassador Gusev. In any case, it was due to come to an end in September. Tito's unexpectedly pro-Soviet attitude increased Churchill's alarm. He suggested another meeting of the Big Three, which Roosevelt refused to attend, since presidential elections were impending; all he could do was to send Harriman as his delegate, but purely as an observer with no power to take any decisions binding on the USA.

So Churchill and Stalin met in Moscow in October 1944 for one of those private talks of which they were both so fond. They easily reached agreement on the armistice terms to be imposed on Hungary. As for Poland, Stalin was adamant and Churchill had to be content to pass on his partner's wishes to Mikolajczyk; but Stalin on the other hand raised no difficulties about making compensatory concessions to Poland at the cost of the Germans - Stettin and the 'Oder-Neisse line', that is to say that Poland would gain nearly 40,000 square miles in the west and lose 70,000 square miles in the east, though this was poorer land.

As for the fate of the Danubian and Balkan countries, Churchill and Stalin came to a very strange agreement, rather like thieves disposing of the swag. This is how Churchill tells the story:

The moment was apt for business, so I said:

Let us settle about our affairs in the Balkans. Your armies are in Roumania and Bulgaria. We have interests, missions and agents there.

Don't let us get at cross-purposes in small ways. So far as Britain and Russia are concerned, how would it do for you to have ninety per cent predominance in Romania, for us to have ninety per cent of the say in Greece and go fifty-fifty about Yugoslavia?' While this was being translated I wrote out on a half-sheet of paper:

Romania	(per cent)
Russia	90
The others	10
Greece	
Great Britain	90
(in accord with USA)	
Russia	10
Yugoslavia	50-50
Hungary	50-50
Bulgaria	
Russia	75
The others	25

I pushed this across to Stalin, who had by then heard the translation. There was a slight pause. Then he took his blue pencil and made a large tick upon it, and passed it back to us. It was all settled in no more time than it takes to set down. . . . After this there was a long silence. The pencilled paper lay in the centre of the table. At length I said, 'Might it not be thought rather cynical if it seemed we had disposed of these issues so fateful to millions of people, in such an offhand way? Let us burn the paper.' 'No, you keep it', said Stalin.

Next day Eden and Molotov had a lively discussion to 'revise' these percentages and the Russian Foreign Minister managed to raise the Soviet Union's interests in Hungary and Bulgaria to eighty per cent. This procedure was all the more extraordinary since these figures did not lend themselves to any exact interpretation, either in territorial terms or in the proportion of pro-British or pro-Russians in the post-war governments of these countries.

In addition, this agreement violated the previous decision reached at Teheran, whereby the Allies had agreed that a 'European Consultative Commission' should examine all territorial problems that needed settling at the end - but only after the end - of the war and make suggestions to the Allies jointly approved by representatives of all three powers. The Americans and first and foremost Roosevelt, attached great importance to this formula; their failure to react, as a result of the extraordinary power vacuum created by the untimely occurrence of presidential elections in the middle of a war, allowed two unrepentant imperialists to carve up

Europe on their own, as their counterparts had done in Africa in the nineteenth century. For the two confederates, however, it was a straightforward bargain: it meant that Britain was washing her hands of Bulgaria and Hungary, was resigned to the effects of Tito's sudden switch, was determined to maintain an interest in Romania and intended to keep Greece under her thumb, while Bulgaria would no longer be pressing Greece for an opening on to the Aegean.

Stalin and Churchill also discussed the fate of Germany. Shortly before, in Quebec, Churchill had approved the Morgenthau plan to destroy Germany's heavy industry in favour of those countries which had suffered from Hitler's ambitions. This plan was also approved by Stalin; any scheme likely to impede Germany's recovery was immediately attractive to him. The question thus once more arose of placing the Ruhr and the Saar under 'international control' – no more explicit interpretation of the term was offered. Churchill again raised his idea of a federation of Germany's southern provinces with Austria, which was, he suggested, the natural historical counterweight to Prussian influence; Stalin showed less hostility to this plan than before, perhaps because he had received the *quid pro quo* of a free hand in south-east Europe. But he made no pledges; in any case, it was impossible not to wait for Roosevelt's views on all these matters that did not require an immediate solution; accordingly, it was decided to leave the question to be examined by the 'European Consultative Commission'.

XII GREECE

The Communist underground in Greece was much stronger than their associates and rivals, because they had been able to lay hands on the stocks of arms left behind by the Italians when they surrendered. In March 1944, ELAS had formed a National Liberation Committee foreshadowing the government which it intended Greece to have after the Liberation. The movement had even contaminated the armed forces of the Greek government in Cairo; in April 1944 mutiny had broken out in the Greek fleet commanded by Admiral Alexandris which made up one-third of the Allied naval forces in the Mediterranean; the mutineers asked for ELAS representatives to be admitted to Tsouderos' conservative exile government; the rebellion had to be forcibly overcome and the participants disarmed and interned.

This incident was not without significance and it alarmed Churchill sufficiently for it to be a possible explanation of his trip to Moscow and his agreement with Stalin. A preliminary measure was to persuade King George to widen the basis of his government. The liberal leader, Papan-

FORCES EMPLOYED IN THE SOVIET COUNTER-OFFENSIVES

Operational theatres	Length of front (in miles)	Numbers (in thousands of men)	Guns and mortars	Tanks and self- propelled guns	Combat aircraft
1. Winter campaign 1941-42 Moscow offensive In depth	3,000 625 (24%) 60-160	4,200 1,000 (25%)	32,000 8,000 (25%)	2,000 720 (35%)	3,700 1,170 (32%)
2. Winter campaign 1942-43 Stalingrad offensive In depth	3,860 500 (13%) 60-100	6,120 1,000 (18%)	77,800 14,000 (18%)	7,000 1,325 (19%)	3,250 1,115 (34%)
3. Summer campaign 1943 Byelorod-Kharkov- Orel operations In depth	2,700 375 (12%) 160-190	6,400 2,300 (38%)	103,000 34,000 (34%)	10,000 5,000 (50%)	8,400 3,700 (44%)
4. Campaign of first half of 1944 Ukraine offensive	2,750 750 (27%)	6,160 2,370 (39%)	92,600 28,900 (31%)	5,360 2,040 (38%)	8,500 2,400 (28%)
5. Summer campaign, 1944 Operations in Byelorussia In depth	2,780 750 (26%) 350-375	6,420 2,500 (40%)	92,600 45,000 (48%)	7,750 6,000 (70%)	13,450 7,000 (53%)
6. Spring campaign, 1945 Vistula-Oder operation In depth	1,500 315 (21%) 362	6,530 2,200 (33%)	108,000 39,000 (36%)	12,900 4,500 (36%)	15,600 5,050 (33%)

1. From Colonel Constantini's translation into French of an article by General Pavlenko in the *Soviet Review of Military History*, March, 1966.

dreou, was brought from Athens, and in September 1944 he summoned a conference in Beirut of all shades of opinion of the Greek Resistance movements. Whether or not it was a result of the tacit understanding between the British and Russians at the time, the Greek Communists showed themselves much less demanding than their Polish counterparts; they agreed to dissolve the National Liberation Committee and to be in a minority by providing only five members of the government of national unity.

German troops evacuated Greece on October 18 and the Papaandreou government was set up in Athens. By an interallied agreement signed at Caserta, all the Greek troops came under the command of the Allies and the Greek government attempted to disband the armed Resistance groups. But ELAS refused to hand over their weapons and a general strike was declared in Athens. It is unlikely that the USSR either ordered or even encouraged these two events and her delegate with ELAS probably tried to prevent them; they may well have been caused by Tolbukhin's advance and probably also by Tito's example in Yugoslavia at the same time.

However this may have been, Papaandreou's government was in no position to put down the revolt. Churchill dealt with it, as he had dealt with the Greek sailors' mutiny in Alexandria. British troops landed in Greece and 'restored law and order' in Athens; both Churchill and Alexander had considered the situation serious enough to warrant a visit to the Greek capital. Neither Roosevelt nor Stalin protested against this display of force.

Nonetheless, it was the final act of an extraordinary reversal in the state of affairs. In countries in which the Communists had been a weak minority before the war, the Soviet Union was finding little difficulty in establishing a dominating position that seemed likely to last a long time, either because of the internal Resistance movements or because of the Red Army's success and mostly owing to both these factors. On the other hand, Britain was losing on every score: she had been obliged to abandon Poland to her fate, although she had entered the war on behalf of the Poles; and in Greece, Churchill, the very man who had championed resistance, had succeeded in maintaining Britain's position only by using British soldiers against the Greek Resistance forces. For their part, the United States were already showing blatant and symptomatic indifference towards territorial problems whose solution would create the shape of things to come in post-war Europe. Were the British not paying the price for their delay in opening the second front and for the fact that the Red Army had enjoyed too long a monopoly of success against the Wehrmacht?

CHAPTER 4

The War in Italy

(September 1943–December 1944)

IN Teheran Churchill had not dwelt too much on the fact that he regarded the Italian front as of prime importance; he had spoken chiefly about the Dodecanese expedition; this had come to a lamentable end, but the British resources used in the undertaking had been small and he was hoping to begin again with Turkish and above all American support. Now that the landing across the Channel was no longer in doubt, the Americans were quite willing to admit the importance of Mediterranean problems for their allies. They had approved of the Anglo-Turkish treaty of 1943, which seemed to indicate that Turkey would enter the war; they were delighted at being able to bomb the southern regions of Germany from the airfields in the south of Italy. But they were quite determined that the Mediterranean must continue to be a minor operational area; Marshall categorically refused to give up men and boats for that 'damned country', as he called the Dodecanese; and when Roosevelt, whom Churchill could twist round his little finger, contemplated replacing the divisions which had been taken from Italy for 'Overlord', Marshall was so violently opposed to it that the President backed down.

In these circumstances, the Allied armies in Italy were going to slog their way all the way up the boot – 'like a bug on one leg', said Churchill. And so the disorder which had become rife in the country dragged on and grew worse until it degenerated into civil war. But since Churchill was doggedly persistent and did not easily admit defeat, there were going to be endless interallied discussions on the final direction of the Anglo-American attack which would make Nazi Germany give in.

I THE MILITARY OPERATIONS

In terrain broken by steep mountain chains dropping precipitously into narrow valleys, Todt had packed the narrowest part of the Italian peninsula between the Garigliano and the Sangro with trenches, casemates,