

Josip Broz Tito



**THE YUGOSLAV
PEOPLES FIGHT
TO LIVE**

The Yugoslav Peoples Fight to Live

by

JOSIP BROZ TITO

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Introduction

HERE is a piece of contemporary military and political history by the man who played the chief role in the enactment of events it describes.

Less than a year ago, even to some of the best informed people in America and Britain, Tito was little more than a mysterious name. Today he is one of the most vivid figures to emerge from World War II, and the movement he heads is beginning to be understood as having not only Yugoslav but wider European significance.

As leader of a people who know what they want and are ready to sacrifice everything to get it, Tito has successfully conducted military operations in the face of almost impossible odds, accomplishing more with fewer tools of war than any other general, Allied or enemy, in this global conflict. At the same time, he developed step by step into a statesman of great force and tact, able to offer his complicated and hard-pressed country a political and cultural leadership that is both wise and shrewd. He became a personal symbol and center of a swiftly evolving situation: Yugoslavia in the throes of fighting her way clear into a better future.

One explanation of Tito's leadership is that he is an unusually fine and well-balanced human being. If he were not that, he would not have been accepted by the common people of Yugoslavia.

Allied officers coming out of embattled Yugoslavia have told about Tito in superlatives. He is nothing if not a natural democrat. He is personally incapable of becoming a dictator. If he can avoid it at all, he does not kill men who oppose him even after they have been sentenced to death by the courts of Yugoslav People's Liberation Council. Once he is said to have remarked: "One of the easiest things in the world is to kill a man." He has come up the hard way.

Reading this narrative of what happened in Yugoslavia since the spring of 1941, one is impressed by the fact that Tito has little to say about his own role in the process which he inspired and led. The first-person singular pronoun is used only when it cannot be avoided. Then it is used straight-forwardly, matter-of-factly.

Straight-forwardness and matter-of-factness characterize the whole story. From all reports, they have characterized Tito's conduct of the military operations and political developments. Through him work the compulsions of history.

For a long time, as already suggested, Tito and his movement were ill-understood in America and Britain. No doubt, this narrative was written to help remedy that situation. It was written in February,

1944, when Major Randolph Churchill, son of the British Prime Minister, arrived in Yugoslavia as his father's personal representative. A few months later—in June—Major Churchill said in the course of an interview:

"I was most vividly impressed with the fact that the Partisan movement is very much better organized than I had expected. We had heard about the gallant struggle which the Partisans are waging, a struggle that has evoked general enthusiasm in England and America. But we did not know that the organization was so complete, in particular the civil administration. What Marshal Tito and the Partisans have done should serve as an example to all enslaved peoples of Europe.

"They have perfected the technique of guerilla war in a manner rarely ever witnessed before. The way in which, starting from scratch, they have built up such a fine army with so excellent an organization sounds like a beautiful and romantic story. It is this which has evoked the great admiration of Americans and Englishmen.

"I have seen the lands completely ravaged. While traveling here from Bosnia, I was horrified when I witnessed the extent to which the whole countryside had been ruined. I never dreamed that the ravage would be so considerable. Villages burnt and pillaged by the enemy, without any struggle. Now I understand with what hardships the people and the Army are grappling and how much the population has suffered.

"Wherever I have been, I came across the greatest enthusiasm on the part of the people for the national liberation struggle. I was most impressed by the way in which the Partisan movement has succeeded in uniting all elements which form Yugoslavia. This is the more significant, since Yugoslavia is composed of various peoples.

"The Partisan movement has succeeded in overcoming local frictions and uniting all popular forces of Yugoslavia. This has impressed me most deeply. Apart from the splendid successes on the battlefield, this is indeed a triumph of statesmanship for Marshal Tito. He has succeeded in welding and molding all groups into one whole.

"In Yugoslavia one can see in miniature the new Europe which is being born. Just as Partisan warfare should serve as an inspiring example to other enslaved peoples, so the political set-up here should serve as a model for political construction to the other nations of Europe.

"Marshal Tito has shown himself to be as great a statesman as he is a warrior. I am convinced that the principles of tolerance and liberalism which are so characteristic of the National Liberation movement will ensure Yugoslavia a happier future." LOUIS ADAMIC.

Millford, New Jersey,
August 10, 1944.

The Yugoslav Peoples

Fight to Live

by JOSIP BROZ TITO

TO GIVE the world—deceived as it has been on every side—a clear picture of the real situation in Yugoslavia it is necessary briefly to review developments in Yugoslavia before its occupation by the enemy and up to the present time.

In his statement in the House of Commons about Yugoslavia's struggle against the invaders Prime Minister Churchill declared "Communist elements had the honor of being the beginners, but as the movement has increased in strength and numbers a modifying and unifying process has taken place and national conceptions have supervened." These laconic words express a fact which constitutes the pride not only of the Communists but of all other patriots among the peoples of Yugoslavia. Long before the attack on Yugoslavia—especially after the occupation of Austria and despite the fact that they were working under the most difficult of conditions because they had been declared an illegal group—the Yugoslav Communists constantly warned against the terrible danger threatening the peoples of Yugoslavia from predatory German fascism. They made every effort to rally all patriotic forces of the country to repulse a possible attack on Yugoslavia. Their efforts were not in vain. Responding to repeated appeals, the young people of Yugoslavia, especially high school students, young workers and the students in Belgrade University, prepared to face the hour of trial which Hitler's invasion had brought upon the country.

What was the situation prevailing in the ruling circles of Yugoslavia? Both militarily and politically Yugoslavia was in a state of chaos. Leading positions on the general military staff were held by such traitors in the service of the Germans as General Nedich. Moreover Yugoslavia swarmed with German spies who had come as "tourists."

Corruption and embezzlement reigned supreme in all Ministries, especially in that of War. Out of a total state budget of 12 billion

dinars 4 billions were allocated to war needs. And yet Yugoslavia was poorly armed and unprepared to defend itself. Nationality problems—particularly that of the Croats—became increasingly sharp. The compromise reached in the agreement between Machek and Cvetkovich actually covered only the sharing of power. It did not by any means solve the Croat nationality question. After 1935, with the advent of Stoyadinovich to power, the rulers in Belgrade steadily strengthened their connections with Axis countries while simultaneously they drifted away from their old alliances—for example from the Little Entente, and from their alliance with France and other countries. Everything was done to isolate Yugoslavia and to weaken her in order to make her an easy prey for the German invaders.

Yugoslavia was almost the only country in Europe whose rulers for twenty years ignored the people's demands that diplomatic relations be established with the Soviet Union. Recognition came only when the German invaders were loudly knocking on Yugoslavia's door.

March 27, 1941 will go down in the history of our people as one of our most memorable dates. Following the shameful signing of the "Tripartite Pact" and Yugoslavia's adherence to the Axis the regime of the traitor Prince Paul—in which Cvetkovich and Machek played the leading roles—was overthrown. Monster demonstrations throughout Yugoslavia, particularly in Belgrade, showed that the peoples of Yugoslavia preferred to make the greatest of sacrifices rather than become Axis slaves and see the glorious traditions of their ancestors betrayed.

But the new Simovich Government which succeeded the Cvetkovich Government proved unequal to its task because it failed to estimate the strength of the peoples correctly or to rely upon it. Furthermore it left intact the old corrupt state apparatus which was not only incompetent but openly sabotaged all measures necessary for the country's defense.

The ten days during which the invaders defeated our country constitute the most shameful period in its history. They brought out in bold relief all the rotteness, all the treachery hitherto covered up artificially. Were the peoples of Yugoslavia really willing to defend their country? Yes, they were. As soon as mobilization was announced, peasants, workers, young people and honest intellectuals rallied to the colors. Replying to a special summons from the leadership of the Communist party all party members fit for military service hastened to enroll. But this fighting ardor was in vain, for the politicians and the military leadership had betrayed the country. Volunteers were shifted from one recruiting station to another. Incorrect orders were

given to troop trains. Soldiers were dispatched to the front without ammunition. When matters had reached the point of surrender the commanding general and other high-ranking officers ordered their soldiers—under threat of shooting—to lay down their arms. In hundreds of cases the soldiers refused to carry out these commands.

Yet entire divisions and armies surrendered to the Germans almost without a struggle and the men were driven off into German slavery. General Milan Nedich (the Serbian Quisling who forced his units, to their certain doom, to face German tanks without any anti-tank weapons) was one of the first officers to surrender his army to the Germans. Seeing this vile treachery, soldiers burst into tears of indignation and wherever they succeeded in escaping from the grip of the German troops of occupation they left for their homes, uttering imprecations.

Thereupon the most horrible days in the history of our peoples set in. The Croats were mercilessly tortured by the Ustashi, headed by the criminal Croatian Quisling, Dr. Ante Pavelich, a creature of Mussolini and Hitler, who came to power in Croatia. A mass slaughter of Serbs was launched in Bosnia, Hercegovina, Slavonia, Vojvodina and elsewhere. Unfortunate peasants in these regions, together with their families, sought safety in the forests. But the Ustashi and the Germans savagely hunted these refugees down and destroyed them wherever they succeeded in locating them. The same terrible fate was suffered by all honest progressives in the country. Gradually people throughout Serbia began to offer resistance—at first unorganized—fighting for their lives with every means at their disposal. The same situation prevailed in Slovenia, where Germans and Hungarians began the destruction of entire villages, shipping tens of thousands of townsmen and peasants off to work in Germany.

The Resistance Takes Its First Steps

THE leadership of the Communist party took every possible step to organize a popular uprising. As early as the autumn of 1940, and in strict secrecy, a so-called Military Committee had been set up. This Committee was charged with the task of fostering a spirit of resistance among soldiers and officers of the Yugoslav Army in case of foreign attack and with taking over military leadership if the country should surrender. After the April surrender this Committee was broadened and became known as General Headquarters for the Guerrilla Detachments of Yugoslavia. Later this was reorganized into the High Com-

mand. Immediately following the surrender of Yugoslavia and the mass extermination of the Serb population in Croatia and Bosnia the Communist party sent its members to organize the refugees in the forest into guerrilla detachments.

Prior to the attack of the Hitlerite hordes against the Soviet Union, leaders of the Communist party in Yugoslavia had concluded an agreement with Dragoljub Jovanovich, leader of the Serbian Agrarian party, and with a group led by Dr. Ivan Ribar. On June 22, when the German armies suddenly invaded Russia, the leaders of the Yugoslav Communist party held an urgent meeting with the Military Committee at which it was decided to start revolts throughout Yugoslavia.

The men present also decided to rename the Military Committee the General Headquarters for the Guerrilla Detachments of Yugoslavia and to place it in charge of operations throughout the country. This headquarters dispatched members to various provinces to supervise the organization of guerrilla detachments and to conduct operations. Moreover territorial units were organized to wreck telephone and telegraph communications and to attack stores and other military objectives. During that period the youth of Belgrade displayed a heroism which will constitute the pride of our peoples for many generations to come. In broad daylight young girls and lads of fourteen attacked German trucks, poured kerosene on them and destroyed them. Defying the gallows set up in Terasia Square, Belgrade, high schools and university students and young workers carried out acts of sabotage with mounting vigor.

Whereas, before the attack on the Soviet Union, the only joint struggle (outside the cities) had been carried on in certain parts of the Bosnian and Hercegovinian mountains the guerilla movement rapidly spread across the rest of the country after the Soviet Union had been invaded. By July 1941 the Valjevo, Kragujevac, Uzice, Homolj and other guerrilla detachments were already making forays against the enemy. Operating in groups of twenty to thirty men, armed with one or two rifles and a few bombs they attacked small German groups and procured arms from the Germans whom they killed.

Growth of the Guerrilla Movement

WHILE the guerrilla movement grew and acquired a mass character in Serbia, a general uprising of the people under the leadership of the Communists had already been organized in Montenegro by July 13, 1941. At a given signal ten thousand Montenegrins attacked

Italian garrisons throughout Montenegro, occupied all towns with the exception of Cetinje and Podgorica, took some six thousand Italian soldiers and officers prisoner and captured rich booty.

Montenegrin patriots had begun their hard and bloody struggle against the several Italian divisions Mussolini had sent to suppress the revolt.

By August 1941 guerrilla detachments in Serbia had liberated Posavina as far as Obrenovac, nearly all of Macva, and had occupied the towns of Lajkovac, Jabljik, Krupanj, Loznica and Stolac. Early in September they captured Uzice, Cacak, Uzicka-Pozega, Gornji-Milanovac and other small localities. Thus, guerrillas liberated almost all of Western Serbia and a considerable part of Eastern Serbia.

Under the extremely difficult conditions which prevailed in August the Headquarters for the Guerrilla Detachments of Yugoslavia were moved from Belgrade to the small town of Krupanj and, later, to Uzice. At the beginning of September 1941 the first military conference was held in the Stolac mine, near Krupanj.

Notwithstanding all obstacles, delegates from Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia and other regions were present. The conference arrived at far-reaching and important decisions. The principal headquarters were renamed High Command for the Guerrilla Detachments of Yugoslavia; and divisional headquarters were set up for Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Montenegro (with commanders who were also members of the High Command). In addition to arriving at purely military decisions (such as, for example, the decision to collaborate with all other forces which had not sold themselves to the invaders) the conference adopted the Belgrade plan for clearing Western Serbia and mapped out a scheme for the conduct of military operations and for the establishment of bases in all other parts of Yugoslavia.

Although the principal headquarters for the guerrilla detachments were still located in Belgrade it was learned that Colonel Draja Mihailovich was hiding somewhere in the mountains of Ravna Gora with a group of officers who sought to escape capture by the enemy. Up to that moment Mihailovich had not fought in a single battle and Bosnian peasants who rebelled to defend their lives had never been under his command. As long ago as July, 1941, I personally left instructions at the headquarters of the Valjevo guerrilla detachment to establish contact with Mihailovich and induce him to agree to collaborate with us in a joint struggle.

But he categorically refused to make any move against the Germans—first because he had no armed forces whatever at his command and, second, because he feared reprisals. Our headquarters came into

possession of an interesting document. Through this document a member of the Mihailovich group who is close to us informed us that Mihailovich was about to send to Bosnia some insubordinate officers who wanted to fight the invader. Among them was lieutenant Ratko Martinovich who along with a priest, Vlado Zechevich, had collaborated with us from the very earliest days of the German occupation, organizing detachments of Chetniks in the Krupanj areas. This document further revealed that Mihailovich had decided to kill Martinovich (with the aid of a criminal) when the latter crossed the Drina.

My Meeting with Mihailovich

IMMEDIATELY upon my arrival in liberated territory in August 1941 I went to see Mihailovich in Ravna Gora. He received me in Vojvoda Mishich's house in the village of Struganik instead of in his own eyrie of Ravna Gora. Also present at the meeting were Major Mishich and the notorious advocate of a greater Serbia, Dragisha Vasich. These conversations yielded poor results. Saying that the time was not yet ripe and advancing other excuses Mihailovich stubbornly refused to begin to war on the Germans. At that time he already commanded some detachments of Chetniks whom his officers had organized in territory liberated by the guerrillas in Western Serbia. We got no further than to reach a verbal agreement that Mihailovich's Chetniks would maintain a loyal attitude toward the guerrillas and wouldn't attack them. Vojvoda Pechanat's Chetniks did.

Since for some unknown reason Mihailovich mistook me for a Russian and remained under that impression for some time, he spoke openly about the Croats and the other peoples of Yugoslavia. Asked his opinion of the national problem, he openly declared that Croats, Moslems and others must be mercilessly punished and that, after retribution had been exacted, they must be completely subordinated to the Serbs.

When I objected he replied that this program was fully justified inasmuch as all Croats were responsible for the Ustashi atrocities and that all who had sold out Yugoslavia to the Germans were Ustashi and traitors. In conclusion Draja promised to think it over and inform me how and when his units would begin the struggle.

In September our guerrilla forces, together with one detachment led by Rachich, besieged and attacked Sabac. Rachich also won Mihailovich's disfavor at that time for joining us in the struggle. The attack didn't succeed. Germans quickly brought up two of their

divisions, two or three Croat regiments and several units from Ljotich's Serbian fascist movement and began their first offensive—one which, with interruptions, lasted until the end of November. Fighting was most violent in Macva, Cer, Porcerina, in the Jadar Valley and in Cavlak. Our units slowly retreated, stubbornly defending every inch of ground.

Before the German offensive was launched it was decided that peasants from Macva should transfer as large stocks of grain as possible to highlands near Krupanj and Sokolska Planina. Thousands upon thousands of peasant carts moved in the direction of the mountains. Constantly shelled by German bombers the peasants sought safety in the forests. The Germans succeeded in occupying Loznica and the area stretching up to the Jadar Valley. But with almost no anti-tank weapons our men succeeded in destroying 20 German tanks. More than 1,000 enemy soldiers fell in these battles and an additional 600 were taken prisoners. Having encountered very strong resistance and suffered heavy losses, the Germans didn't dare to continue the offensive in the highlands and began energetic preparations for offensive operations on a wide front, from Kraljevo in the direction of Valjevo up to the Drina River. Our guerrilla detachments again launched a counteroffensive and recaptured the greater part of Macva and Posavina, while the biggest guerrilla detachment—the Valjevo detachment—completely encircled the German garrison in Valjevo.

Jointly with Mihailovich's Chetniks our units also encircled the town of Kraljevo and with the aid of heavy artillery and tanks broke into the town. As early as October some 1,200 of Mihailovich's Chetniks participated jointly with our units in the military operations at Kraljevo and Valjevo. This was accomplished because at the time of the offensive against us I sent a letter to Mihailovich from Krupanj indicating the danger that would result from our loss of the liberated territory. Mihailovich agreed and his units fought with us from October until November 1941. But even during this brief period of joint action the Chetniks under the command of Major Mishich fled to Valjevo from the battlefields after the first serious clashes with the Germans, leaving guerrilla units to fight alone. After our guerrilla units had liberated Cacak, Uzicka-Pozega and Gornji-Milanovac, Mihailovich's officers began an energetic mobilization of the peasantry in our liberated territory in the name of the King and under the slogan, "Those who join the Chetniks will remain in their homes while those who join the guerrillas will forfeit their lives in unequal battles at the front." Although the guerrillas freed Western Serbia, the Chetnik command was granted permission to organize its units in

liberated territory and to organize joint local Chetnik and guerrilla squads in Cacak, Uzice, Gornji-Milanovac and other towns.

During the liberation of Uzice we captured rich military prizes—for example 100 motor vehicles, an arsenal, a tannery, a branch of the People's Bank with some 55 million dinars in cash, etc. Our own growing arsenal produced 150 rifles and 40,000 to 50,000 cartridges daily (which we succeeded in stepping up to 420 rifles and 80,000 cartridges daily).

The successes achieved by our guerrillas evoked alarm among the Germans and Nedich's men on the one hand and envy on the part of Mihailovich and his officers on the other. Even at that time, October 1941, they were secretly preparing to attack us with the object of wresting Uzice from us.

Nedich kept on sending more and more of his agents into the ranks of Mihailovich's Chetniks and these agents engaged in systematic provocation to produce an open clash between the guerrillas and the Mihailovich Chetniks. Capturing Uzicka-Pozega, they constantly harassed our railway communications at Cacak and Gornji-Milanovac and provoked clashes with us.

I Visit the Chetniks Again

OUR High Command did its utmost to avert such clashes and through Mitich, liaison staff officer, again proposed to Mihailovich that he negotiate an agreement. It was suggested to Mihailovich that negotiations be conducted in a neutral zone, near the township of Kosoric, but he constantly sought to evade them. After this I again went to Ravna Gora, accompanied by two members of the High Command, Sreten Zhujevich and Mitar Bakich. The draft proposal which I prepared covered ten points; but during the negotiations in the village of Brajici, near Ravna Gora (in the presence of some ten officers from Mihailovich's staff), we failed to reach an agreement on the most important point—the matter of the joint command. We had proposed the formation of joint administrations based on the principle of the People's Liberation Committee. Agreement was most easily achieved on the matter of dividing deposits in the People's Bank and armaments produced by the Uzice arsenal and on the question of military commandants in the towns. On the day following negotiations we immediately handed over to Mihailovich 500 new rifles and 25,000 cartridges from our arsenal. It is noteworthy that Mihailovich rejected

my proposal that the British Captain Hudson, who was in the adjoining room, participate in the discussions.

On the fourth day after the negotiations Draja Mihailovich's Chetniks attacked us at Uzicka-Posega with the very same rifles and cartridges they had received from us. And at Uzicka-Pozega, after this clash, Blagojevich, commander of our Sumadja detachment who was returning from headquarters, was forced off his train and brutally murdered by Captain Glishich's men. Captain Glishich himself acted under Mihailovich's orders.

Because I was totally unaware of Blagojevich's fate, I sent a most vigorous protest to Mihailovich's headquarters demanding that the commander be set free immediately. The reply came that nothing was known about the arrest of the person named. At the same time we came into possession of important documents from the Chetnik local command in Kremnja instructing all mobilized Chetniks to report on November 2 at 5:00 A.M. at the forest ten kilometers from Uzice. At once it became clear to us that Mihailovich was preparing an armed attack on Uzice.

Our conclusion was confirmed by the fact that Mihailovich removed 800 of his Chetniks from Kraljevo, with the object (as we later learned) of delivering an attack at Cacak. These Chetniks not only opened the road to Kraljevo to the Germans; by deception (and for use in their own attack at Cacak) they deprived our units along this front of several heavy guns and a couple of tanks. We in turn were obliged to withdraw one of our units from the front at Valjevo to defend Uzice and Cacak. But subsequent events have clearly revealed that this attack was planned in agreement with Nedich, and even with the Germans, to time it with the German attack before Kraljevo and up the slopes of Turina.

We Must War on the Traitors

AWARE of the exact movements of the Chetnik units in the direction of Uzice, we ordered our troops to deliver a counterattack on November 2 at 4 A.M. Eight kilometers from Uzice, at the intersection of three roads (Uzicka-Pozega, Uzice and Kosoric) our units met 800 Chetniks and, after a few hours of fighting, completely crushed them. Several hundred Chetniks, including their commander, were killed. We then issued orders for a general attack on Uzicka-Pozega, the Chetniks' principal base. After an extremely bloody battle which

lasted all day our units occupied Uzicka-Pozega and rapidly began to press the Chetniks toward Ravna Gora.

Our units enveloped Ravna Gora from three sides—from the directions of Cacak, Gornji-Milanovac and Uzicka-Pozega. Seeing that he was encircled, Mihailovich urgently dispatched liaison-officer Mitich to our headquarters imploring us to stop this bloody struggle.

Although the guerrilla troops were animated by bitter hatred for the Chetniks and wanted to put an end to this treacherous gang as soon as possible, I agreed to stop the struggle on the following conditions:

1. Immediate withdrawal of Chetnik units to the Kameni-Cabrajic line.
2. Immediate formation of a joint commission to investigate the Uzicka-Pozega incident and other crimes.
3. Immediate formation of a commission to carry out final negotiations.

The Negotiations Commission met in Cacak but it was impossible to arrive at an agreement because Germans had succeeded in puncturing our front at Valjevo and Kraljevo and with the help of supporting tanks were rapidly advancing. Extremely violent and bloody fighting against the Germans developed all along the sector from Kraljevo to Drina. At that time Mihailovich's Chetniks were openly collaborating with the Germans. One night at Gornji-Milanovac, for example, they deceived three hundred guerrillas, disarmed them, stripped them of their clothing in Ravna Gora and, after subjecting them to the most savage torture, dispatched them naked on a bitterly cold night to the Germans in Valjevo. Almost all of these heroes were brutally murdered by the Germans. At Mionica the Chetniks seized seventeen nurses and a doctor, brutally murdered them and reported their "heroic" deed to the Germans. From that time on, close collaboration was established between Mihailovich's Chetniks and the German forces.

Throughout almost the whole of November our guerrilla fighters rebuffed the superior forces of the Germans and Nedich's men. The most violent battles were fought at the Valjevo sector near Vukovik, in the Packi-Kupanj and Loznica sectors in Gornji-Milanovac and in the Kraljevo sector.

In this campaign the Germans used strong infantry forces, tanks and aircraft. Losses on both sides were very heavy. By November 25 the Germans succeeded in capturing Uzice and Cacak. The main body of our own forces retreated in the direction of Zlatibor and Ivanica and the last principal engagements were fought to the river Ujac between Sandjak and Serbia.

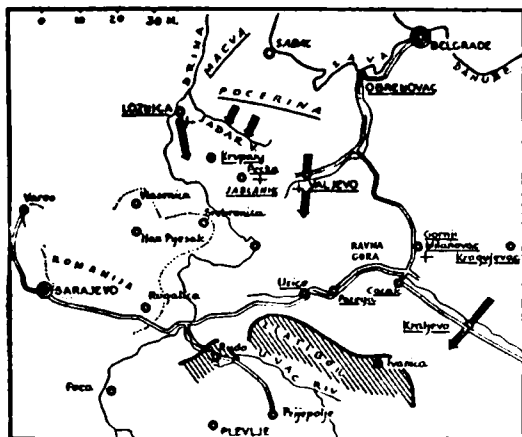
The greater part of the guerrilla forces filtered back in small detachments to the interior of Serbia, however, and from there continued their heroic struggle against the invaders and their henchmen. Out of the remainder were created our amazing First and Second Serbian Brigades—brigades which, together with Montenegrin brigades, have twice retraced a glorious path from Montenegro to Bosanska-Krajina.

From July 1941 on—while these events were taking place in Serbia and while the men and women of Serbia were engaged in a superhuman struggle against the invaders and domestic traitors—ceaseless fighting was in progress in Montenegro against the Italian invaders also. In December some 3,500 Montenegrin guerrillas attacked Plevlje, a strongly fortified town in Sandjak, held by an entire Italian division. With sweeping assaults our units broke through and in the course of violent fighting occupied a considerable section of the town. Some 2,000 Italian soldiers perished in the street fighting. But after two days of battle our units were obliged to withdraw from the town, for without heavy weapons they were unable to seize the fortifications from which the enemy artillery was constantly shelling the town. We too suffered heavily in this engagement.

Battles for Bosnia

SEVERE battles continued in Bosnia, particularly in Rogatica and Zvornik, and by October almost all of East Bosnia (including the towns of Rogatica, Vlasenica, Han-Pijesak and Srebrenica) had been cleared. Our troops were at the gates of Sarajevo, Romanija and Stambolchik. In Lika and at Kordun our troops likewise liberated much territory. In Bosanska-Krajina our troops had already occupied Drvar and a number of other localities during August. Here the fighting against Italians and Ustashi became very violent. And here too, even that early in the war, the Chetniks stabbed our units in the back. That period marked the beginning of the glorious and epic Kozara fighting which will forever remain the most brilliant page in the annals of our struggle. There were also severe clashes at Petrova Gora where the enemy undertook a number of violent offensive operations.

Action on a smaller scale began in the autumn in a number of other points in Croatia and Slovenia. Sabotage had gone on there continuously, however, from the very beginning. After our withdrawal from Serbia we occupied Nova Varos where our units had a chance for a respite. Then the High Command, with one unit of Serbian



- - - - - Tito's position before 2nd offensive (see both maps)
 ———— Casak
 ———— Underlined: position held before 1st or before 2nd offensive
 ———— Railway



→ Direction of German offensive (1st, 2nd) and main break-through
 [Hatched Area] Tito's position after 1st offensive (before the counteroffensive) and after 2nd offensive
 +

troops, started out in the direction of East Bosnia. En route they occupied the town of Rudo, where the first Serbian brigade was formed. (On the very day after its formation this brigade smashed three columns of Italians combined with Mihailovich's Chetniks who were advancing in the direction of Rudo.)

At about that time the position of the guerrilla movement in East Bosnia became very critical. Thus far friendly collaboration between guerrillas and Chetniks had been maintained in that part of the country. After the guerrillas had chalked up important successes in East Bosnia, however, officers sent in by Draja Mihailovich began to wreck the movement until gradually the elements which favored cessation of hostilities against the Germans and advocated warfare on the guerrillas gained the upper hand.

In East Bosnia Major Dangich and Major Todorovich were Mihailovich's chief deputies. Major Dangich was at that time in contact with the Germans and launched attacks against guerrilla detachments with the object of disarming them. Partly under the influence of the demoralizing propaganda of these officers, and partly under the compulsion of threats, peasants began to desert the guerrillas, going over to the Chetniks or returning to their homes. But the appearance of the First Serbian Brigade in Eastern Bosnia produced a radical change in the situation. As a strong unit, fit and disciplined, it rapidly acquired influence by virtue of its successes against the enemy and arrested the disintegration of guerrilla detachments. Those guerrillas who had gone over

to the Chetniks returned to the fold, realizing that they had been misled by the lying propaganda which alleged that the guerrillas had been destroyed in Serbia. It is noteworthy, therefore, that in East Bosnia guerrilla detachments joined our First Serbian Brigade in the fighting which took place in December at Varos and Romanija.

Germans Launch a Second Offensive

HARDLY had the guerrilla forces in East Bosnia reconsolidated their ranks when the Germans launched a second offensive from four directions: from Zvornik, from Visegrad, from Sarajevo (along the Visegrad railway line) and from Sarajevo through Romanija. Into this campaign they threw strong German forces supported by Ustashi conscripts (Pavelich's regular units) and Chetniks. And before the offensive got under way the Chetnik headquarters in East Bosnia (with Todorovich and Dangich in command) issued strict orders to the Chetniks not to fire a single shot against the Germans. Instead the Chetniks were either to hide or to help the Germans.

Bitter cold and heavy snow hampered our forces in these battles. In view of the shortage of ammunition our troops were obliged to abandon Rogatica, Vlasenica and other places after five days of fighting. Carrying out a skillful maneuver the Bosnian guerrilla detachments again attacked the enemy from the rear. In the meantime our Serbian Brigade was divided into two parts. One of these retreated with the High Command via Glasinac to Mount Jahorina. The other, accompanied by the Brigade's staff, made a number of astonishing marches and reached Foca by moving past Sarajevo through the Sarajevo Valley. During this march, one of the most difficult in the war, with the thermometer dropping to below 25 degrees centigrade, about 160 men suffered frostbite and many had to have their legs amputated.

The first column, jointly with the High Command, succeeded in checking the Germans and Ustashi on Mount Jahorina; and those Chetnik defenders of the sector who had been abandoned by their officers were placed under our command. A few days later Montenegrin troops and a battalion from the First Brigade occupied Foca, Gorazde and Cajnice. Thus a base was again secured, not only for rest and reorganization of units but also for mobilizing new reserves of manpower.

February, March and half of April were utilized for restoring order and regrouping those Chetnik units—more than 10,000 strong—

which, disappointed in Chetnik leadership, had joined our command.

Thus, in addition to the guerrilla detachments, so-called volunteer units were formed and the High Command changed its name to High Command of the People's Liberation Guerrilla and Volunteer Detachments. Throughout the winter and up to the middle of April 1942 (when the enemy embarked upon his third offensive) our guerrilla and volunteer units were engaged in very severe fighting in the Jahorina-Romanija sector; around Rogatice, which was encircled; at Kalinovnik, where the Italian garrison was likewise encircled; and especially in Montenegro, in the Kolasin-Sinjajevina and Niksic-Grahovo sectors. At that time our Serbian troops occupying the Prijepolje Nova-Varos sector reached Cajnice. There the First and Second Serbian Brigades were assigned the task of advancing toward Vlasenica to clear that territory of the Chetnik gangs led by Dangich and Rachich who were openly collaborating with the Germans. After a rapid advance our brigades reached Vlasenica and Srebrenica, where they completely smashed the Dangich units and hurled them across the Drina River into Serbia. En route the second Serbian Brigade completely destroyed the Chetnik staff in the Rogatica sector, near Borici.

This advance through deep snowdrifts around the highest mountain peak, Denetak, was brilliantly carried through by our troops. When in April 1942 it became clearly evident that the Germans, Italians and Ustashi were preparing for their third offensive, both brigades received urgent orders to return to the Gorazde Cajnice sector.

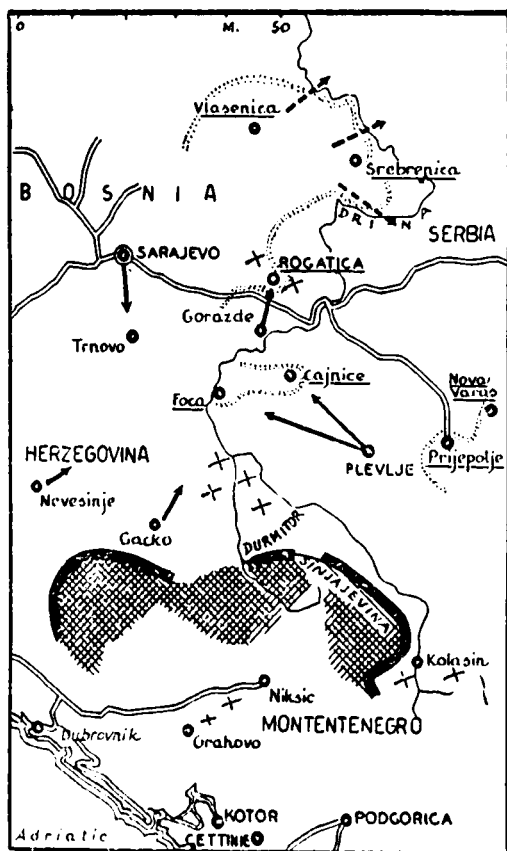
As I have already mentioned, very heavy engagements were in progress in Montenegro at this time—not only against the Italian invaders but also against the Chetniks under Mihailovich and Major Djurichich. How did matters come to such a pass?

Following the general popular uprising in July 1941 the greater part of Montenegro had been liberated. Numerous guerrilla detachments there attacked the forces of occupation constantly, menacing their communications. Niksic was encircled and the Italian invaders suffered tremendous losses in men and equipment. The Italians, who did their utmost to discover traitors among the Montenegrins, found them in the persons of Baja Stanishich and Major Djurichich. Moreover Draja Mihailovich sent a group of his officers to Montenegro in an effort to break the unity of the Montenegrins by creating detachments of Chetniks there. At that time Baja Stanishich still maintained contact with our general headquarters in Montenegro. Taking advantage of this fact, he secretly created his own organizations within the guerrilla detachments and thus succeeded in bringing a considerable number of guerrillas under his influence and transforming them into

Chetniks. His putsch occurred suddenly. Baja Stanishich, with a group of his guerrillas, split away and went over to the forces of occupation. In Vasojevici, Djurichich succeeded in mobilizing fairly strong forces and equipped them with Italian arms. Throughout February, March and almost the whole of April, and under the most difficult conditions, our Montenegrin guerrilla units fought the combined forces of Italians and domestic traitors. Therefore, when the enemy launched his third offensive, a considerable portion of our Montenegrin units were obliged to withdraw from Montenegro, fighting only rearguard actions.

The Third Offensive

THE third enemy offensive was thoroughly prepared and was conducted with almost all of the Italian and German forces, plus the Ustashi and Chetniks. Beginning in Bosnia and Montenegro, this offensive later spread to Slovenia, Dalmatia and Kozara. While the Italian Pusteria Division, as well as several Chetnik detachments from Serbia, were concentrated at Plevlje, two other Italian divisions were concentrated at Niksic, Podgorica and Kolasin. Another division was located in Hercegovina, near Gacko and Nevesinje. In addition to the Germans 30,000 Italian soldiers were concentrated in the Sarajevo Valley. While the Germans advanced on Trnov and from Sarajevo Kalinovnik, other enemy forces advanced from Plevlje toward Cajnice and Foca. In Romanija, Germans and Ustashi were advancing toward Rogatica from Gorazde. Beginning about the middle of March these battles continued until June 20. In the face of superior enemy forces our troops gradually withdrew from Bosnia in the general direction of Montenegro. In the middle of May 1942, when the enemy occupied Foca, our troops began to retreat from Mount Sinjajevino and Niksic, across Durmitor, toward Pivska Planina and Hercegovina. The severest fighting during this offensive took place on the Goransko-Gacko sector. Strong Italian forces and Chetniks exerted pressure from three directions. To save our units from encirclement at Pivska Planina the High Command issued orders to retreat via Planina Volujak and Magljic toward the river Suteska and swiftly transferred our best units—the First and Second Serbian Brigades—to the Gacko sector and to the country around Golija to stem the rapid advance of the Italians who (with the object of cutting our retreat) were driving toward Gacko, Cemerna and the upper reaches of the Suteska River. These units handled their job splendidly although it involved severe losses. A



strong force of heavy artillery concentrated at Gacko shelled our transports of the wounded who were being evacuated from Montenegro. But after several very bitter battles at the apex of the Hercegovina, Montenegro and Bosnia triangle all of our units, together with the wounded, reached the Tentiste-Kalinovnik sector. There, Montenegrin and Sandjak guerrilla detachments were regrouped into one

Sandjak, one Hercegovinian and two Montenegrin shock brigades. This was the end of the third enemy offensive in this most important sector.

Our Counteroffensive

THE Germans, who lacked adequate strength to continue the struggle in this area, concentrated their main forces against our heroic town of Kozara. Extremely severe battles ensued. The German objective was to destroy the uprisings centered in Bosanska-Krajina. The Italians were likewise unable to keep up the battle in this sector because it became urgently necessary for them to reinforce their units in Dalmatia and Slovenia since the popular uprisings had reached such proportions, especially in Slovenia where a sizable portion of the area had been liberated, that the enemy's most important communications

were menaced. Moreover the enemy expected our forces on this sector to be so worn down by hunger and battle losses as to be unfit for major operations for some time. We left a few small guerrilla detachments in Montenegro, the Sixth Bosnian Shock Brigade and several guerrilla detachments in East Bosnia and a Montenegrin and a Hercegovinian brigade in the Tentiste-Kalinovnik sector to protect our hospitals and to conduct minor operations. The High Command decided to march with the remaining units of the First and Second Serbian, Third Sandjak and Fourth Montenegrin Brigades toward Western Bosnia. In order to carry out this march through the difficult mountain regions of Treskavica, Belasnica and so on, a detailed plan was worked out. This plan called for surprise raids from Tarcina Trama on the Sarajevo-Mostar line in order to destroy all railway equipment and bridges. This operation, which was successfully carried out, resulted in the destruction of several trains, all the bridges from Tarcina Trama, a kilometer stretch of railway, all stations and about forty locomotives, most of which were specially designed for use in the highlands. In addition our units occupied the towns of Konjic, Ostrozak and other places. The enemy was taken completely by surprise and several hundred enemy soldiers caught in trains were made prisoner.

The move against this railway was carried out from two directions. One column advanced via Iguman (near Sarajevo) and, after completing its work on the railway, proceeded toward Kresevo, Fojnica and Bugojno. The second column advanced toward Konjic and the railway station of Bradina. Then, when it had completed its attack on the railway in two days of bloody fighting, this column occupied the strongly fortified township of Prozor. After the first column occupied Gornji, both columns joined forces for further operations. Yet before our arrival, units from Bosanska-Krajina occupied the town of Prijedor to ease the situation of encircled Kozara.

The arrival of these units at Bosanska-Krajina greatly encouraged further uprisings not only in Bosanska-Krajina and Dalmatia but also in Croatia and Slovenia. With the aid of guerrilla detachments from Bosanska-Krajina our units, in addition to occupying Prozor and Gornji-Vakuf, also took the towns of Livno, Tomislavgrad, Jajce, Mrkonjicgrad and others. The capture of Livno was important, especially in stimulating a popular uprising in Dalmatia, leading to the formation of new brigades and shock groups of guerrilla detachments from Krajina, Dalmatia, Lika, Croatia and Slovenia. The People's Liberation Army was formed then and the High Command was re-named the High Command of the People's Army of Liberation and Guerrilla Detachments of Yugoslavia.

After the occupation of Bihac our troops began to fight their way through to Central Bosnia and, after they had liberated a considerable part of its territory, occupied Prnjavor, Kotar, Varos, Teslic and other towns. This marked the liberation of a considerable part of Central Bosnia, almost all of Bosanska-Krajina, part of Dalmatia, almost all of Lika, Kordun and the greater part of Slovenia. Incidentally, the greatest losses in this offensive were incurred at Kozara. The third enemy offensive, concluded in Slovenia, failed because the People's Army had so grown in strength and spirit.

During the autumn of 1942 the High Command sent one of its members to Macedonia, there to enlist guerrilla detachments and to coordinate operations with Greece and other neighboring countries. It also dispatched its chief of staff and ten officers to Slovenia to organize existing guerrilla detachments into regular units.

Italian and German Invaders Alarmed

THE major successes which the peoples of Yugoslavia had achieved as a result of their superhuman struggle up to the autumn of 1942 seriously alarmed the German and Italian invaders. As early as December, therefore, they began preparations for their fourth offensive. With the object of tightening the ring around our main forces, this fourth offensive began with a deep strategic envelopment. This time too, as on previous occasions, the enemy directed his main blow at the point where our High Command was stationed (a point from which the most remotely situated units were under direct control.) The Germans concentrated their forces at Karlovac, Glina, Bosanska, Kostajnica and Banja-Luka. The Sarajevo concentration of enemy forces was effected later, when it was expected that most of our troops would be forced out of Bosanska-Krajina into the valley of the Neretva and Vrbas Rivers. As in Gospic-Ogulin and Knin and Sinj in Dalmatia, Italian divisions were concentrated for this offensive.

As far back as December 1942 we came into possession of documents revealing that Draja Mihailovich had concluded an agreement with the Germans to join forces with them in conducting a fourth offensive against us. Throughout Montenegro, Sandjak, Serbia and Hercegovina energetic propaganda was conducted among the Chetniks to undertake an offensive against Bosanska-Krajina, where the Chetniks were to take over power in the towns and villages and to liquidate the guerrillas and Ustashi.

The fourth offensive began in January. The Germans advanced simultaneously on Karlovac from Slunj, Glina and other points in the

Banija area, while the Italians made repeated attempts to break through the liberated territory of Lika. The Italians were repulsed with heavy losses but, after fifteen days of fighting, the Germans (hurling great numbers of bombers and assault planes into the battle) succeeded in occupying the whole of Slunj and all towns as far as Kordun and Banija. More than fifty thousand refugees from Kordun and Banija who retreated with our troops (who were constantly engaged in bloody fighting) were ruthlessly bombed by the German villains. The number of victims was very great.

When the enemy approached Bihac, the High Command moved to the Petrovac area.

There the High Command worked out the following plan: the Croatian forces were to remain in their territory in Lika to defend it. The Seventh Banja-Luka Division, stationed in the Slunj-Bihac sector, was to fight a rearguard action to slow down the enemy's advance in liberated territory. The First Bosnian Corps, now transformed into the Third Corps, was to harass the enemy's rapid advance in the mountainous region of Grmec and Mrkonjicgrad. The First and Third Divisions were at that time stationed in Central Bosnia near the Sava River and the town of Doboj, and the Second Division in the Livno sector in Dalmatia. The High Command decided to concentrate these three divisions immediately in a swift maneuver to smash weaker enemy garrisons in the valley of the Neretva and Vrbas rivers and to straddle the railway line from the Ivan Sedlo mountain pass to the town of Mostar, thus enabling our troops to retreat with some 4,000 wounded soldiers.

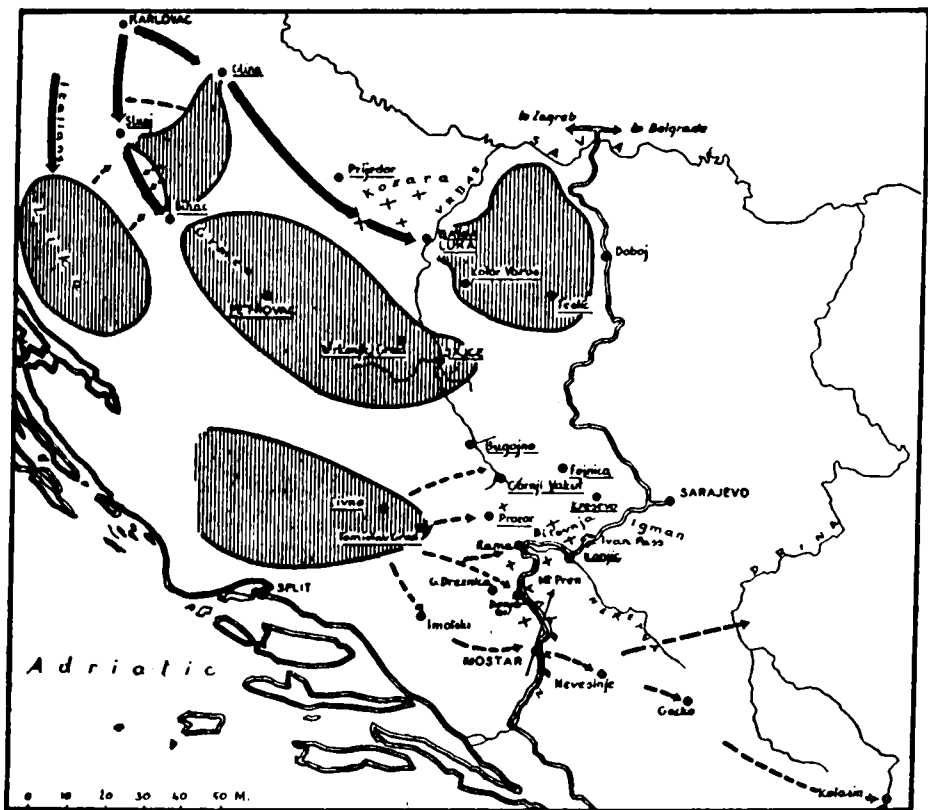
In addition the High Command decided, after the retreat across the Neretva River, to undertake a major operation in pursuit of Draja Mihailovich's Chetniks and to clear the vile henchmen of the invaders out of Montenegro and Sandjak as well as Hercegovina. To the Second Division was entrusted the task of launching a swift attack to capture the fortified town of Imotski and remaining points and of making an immediate thrust into the Neretva Valley near Mostar to cut communications between the Italian Command and its garrisons in Prozor, Konjic, Jablanica, Rama, etc. The Third Division was dispatched to take the strongly fortified town of Prozor, occupied by the Italians a month earlier. One brigade from the First Division was ordered to seize the Ivan Sedlo mountain pass, thus cutting the Konjica-Sarajevo line. Two other brigades from the First Division were ordered to defend the road to Bugojno. As a result of uninterrupted marches the three divisions reached their destinations in record time. They were determined to take Prozor at all costs because it was situated along our line of communications.

We Foil the Fourth Offensive

AFTER two days of bloody fighting, two brigades from the Third Division occupied the town, and the Italian garrison (about 1,000 strong) was completely wiped out. Extensive materiel was captured, especially supplies of food and ammunition, since the enemy had been preparing this town as a base for closing a ring around us as soon as the Germans should give the signal. The Second Divisions occupied Imotski, liquidated the Italian garrison at Dreznica and rapidly forged ahead in the direction of Jablanica, where the Italian regiment was stationed. After stiff fighting it captured Jablanica, destroyed almost all bridges spanning the Neretva and captured further supplies. The Ivan Sedlo mountain pass was also occupied but, owing to the rapid intervention of superior German forces, our brigades withdrew in the direction of Konjic (which they also failed to occupy during the first assault). The Italian Murge Division, which held the entire sector, was almost completely destroyed—only a few hundred men survived—and all its armaments fell into our hands.

The way had now been cleared for forcing the Neretva River. But our units on this sector were tied down by the wounded, who were still some hundreds of kilometers from us and who had to be evacuated. Under the most difficult conditions of adverse weather and muddy roads our trucks constantly carried the wounded to the Prozor sector, whence it would be necessary to dispatch them across the Neretva by truck as soon as Konjic should fall. The battle that developed in this sector lasted 37 days. The Germans rapidly brought up forces. In Bugojno the 369th Division, the 36th and units of the 114th were concentrated as well as strong forces of conscripts and Ustashi. The 118th Division, swollen by Ustashi and conscripts, was advancing from Sarajevo. Across Mount Pren, from Mostar and from Glavaticevo, the traitor Draja Mihailovich dispatched over 10,000 Chetniks who, together with the Italians, were to stab us in the back and block our way. But, employing tactics of swift maneuvering along interior lines, we fought one of our most glorious battles for liberation there.

Battles between Donji-Vakuf and Prozor took on a dramatic character. The Germans had already succeeded in breaking through to a point two kilometers away from our wounded. Rapid intervention by the heroic Fourth Montenegrin and the Third Krajina Brigades saved our wounded. Fighting went on day and night. Our side put into action every weapon (such as heavy guns, tanks and other armaments) it had captured during the rout of the Italian divisions. In the bitterly cold weather prevailing in the mountains the Maklin and Radusa



Titoic

Underlined: towns held by Tito at beginning of the 4th German offensive

➔ Direction of German offensive



Position of main bodies of Tito's armies when Germany launched 4th offensive

➔ Mihailovich's stab in the back

=== Railway

➔ Tito's offensive, counteroffensive

+ Most famous battle areas

positions changed hands time and time again. Fighting ceaselessly day and night, soldiers, especially those of our Seventh Division, were so worn out that many died from sheer exhaustion in their forward positions. During this time forces of our Fourth Montenegrin Brigade and units of the Third Division were engaged in constant attacks on Konjic, while the greater part of the Third Division was ceaselessly engaged in stubborn fighting against Germans and Ustashi in the foothills of Bitovnja. Then, just as our units were occupying a section of the town on the left bank of the Neretva River, Draja Mihailovich's Chetniks struck our troops. Four of our divisions, along with 4,000

wounded, were under attack from all sides. Nevertheless the High Command decided to smash the enemy at all costs and to get the wounded across the Neretva. After many days of stubborn fighting and strong artillery action on our part, our units crushed the Germans in the Gornji-Vakuf sector and sent them reeling back in the direction of Bugojno.

Before our units crossed over to the left bank of the Neretva the High Command issued orders to destroy all remaining bridges across the river, despite the fact that we still had to get our wounded and the army across. This stratagem, designed to mislead the Germans into thinking that we had chosen to make our breach in a different direction, succeeded completely. Near the ruined railway bridge all our wounded and almost the whole of our army were able to cross over. In addition to the four divisions mentioned above, the Ninth Dalmatian Division which had retreated from Dalmatia in the face of superior enemy forces also crossed over to the left bank.

The wounded were taken across to the left bank of the Neretva. The enemy was crushed at Gornji-Vakuf and needed much time to effect reorganization. Completely routed on the left bank of the Neretva, the Chetniks and Italians beat a panicky retreat. Since, however, we had wrecked all bridges before breaking through, we had to destroy all our tanks and heavy guns.

But pursuit of Draža Mihailovich's Chetniks began immediately. Our forces advanced in two directions: toward Nevesinje in Hercegovina and toward Kalinovnik. In the mountain area near Glavaticevo and Kalinovnik, Mihailovich's Chetniks were again so completely smashed as to be rendered incapable of any further resistance. Many of them began to desert to our side. Many more in their panic shaved their beards and changed into peasant garb to prevent guerrillas from identifying them as Chetniks. After forced marches our units reached Drina, crossed the river in the face of heavy odds and smashed the Italian Taurinense Division on the right bank of the Drina. During a swift march Nevesinje and Gacko in Hercegovina were occupied, while in Montenegro our troops got as far as Kolasin.

A Fifth Blow from the Enemy

THE month of May was to be a month of rest for our glorious divisions. But while we were busy clearing the Chetniks out of Montenegro, the Germans and Italians and Ustashi were already preparing for their fifth and most violent offensive against us. Our

army countered this fifth offensive under the most difficult of conditions. Several thousand men were recuperating from typhus. Owing to exceptional rigors encountered en route, thousands of our wounded were completely exhausted and required a long rest. But the enemy gave us no respite and prepared his fifth offensive with the aim of destroying us. He was aware of the fact that the High Command and our best units were in Montenegro. This time, therefore, taking greater pains to prepare his offensive, he dispatched far stronger forces against us.

He transferred some of his divisions from Greece (for example the First Alpine Division) to this new campaign and also threw Bulgarians, Italians and followers of the puppets Nedich and Pavelich against us. The fifth—and likewise the severest—battle began. And again—though at the cost of tremendous sacrifice—our glorious units inflicted tremendous losses on the enemy and emerged without losing their fighting capacity. Because the world has already heard much about this fifth offensive and much will be written about it in days to come, I shall not go into a description of its battles.

The fourth offensive was followed by our victorious campaign in Montenegro which completely liquidated Draja Mihailovich's Chetniks. Since that time they have ceased to be of any military importance. During both the fourth and the fifth offensives the units which I have mentioned bore the main brunt of the war. But it was waged against a background of fighting throughout much of Yugoslavia. Guerrillas and brigades from the sixth Corps in Slavonia harassed enemy communications incessantly. Fighting was also in progress in Slovenia, Dalmatia, Serbia and other places. Popular uprisings were spreading throughout the whole country.

Far from intimidating our people and our fighters, the great attacks which the troops of occupation launched against the main body of our forces had a stimulating effect. Feats of mass heroism performed in these battles will buttress our peoples' pride for many centuries to come.

The People Begin to Govern Themselves

THE growth of the guerrilla detachments and People's Liberation Armies integrated the power of our people. As early as 1941 People's Liberation Committees were set up in villages and towns in the liberated territories of Serbia, Montenegro, etc. They replaced all the old rural and other local administrations which had gone over

to the service of the occupation authorities. Originally these committees had as their principal task the provision of supplies to guerrilla detachments but gradually they took over all the duties which rest upon local, communal, municipal and district authorities. In the autumn of 1942, when the greater part of Yugoslavia had been liberated, the necessity arose for establishing a central political body for all Yugoslavia to direct all these committees and to relieve the High Command of various political functions which had been constantly piling up through the force of circumstance. It was decided to convene an Antifascist Vece, or assembly, of the People's Liberation Movement of Yugoslavia. It will be remembered that the Vece met on November 26, 1942, in the town of Bihac and was attended by delegates representing all the peoples of Yugoslavia. Far-reaching historical decisions were adopted and an executive committee was elected. The Vece represented all anti-fascist parties and united all political trends, regardless of religion and nationality. The Vece was charged with mobilizing all means for helping the People's Liberation Army and with continuing to organize People's Liberation Committees, not only in liberated sectors but in territory still occupied by the enemy.

In addition to the Anti-fascist Vece of the People's Liberation Movement a body with similar functions, known as the Slovenian Liberation Front, was set up in Slovenia in 1941. In the spring of 1941 a regional Anti-fascist Vece was set up in Croatia and in the second half of the year regional Anti-fascist Veces of People's Liberation were also set up in Bosnia, Hercegovina, Montenegro, Sandjak, etc. Simultaneously throughout Serbia the People's Liberation Committees organized a regional committee as their central body. The difference in names is explained by the fact that because of the mass terror maintained by Axis occupation forces, by the followers of Nedich and by Mihailovich's Chetniks in Serbia, it was impossible to hold there general elections for this body.

On November 29, 1943, the Second Plenary Session of the Anti-fascist Vece of the People's Liberation Movement, held in the town of Jajce, was attended by twenty delegates from all parts of the country. This session likewise adopted far-reaching and historic decisions. The Anti-fascist Vece was transformed into the supreme legislative body of Yugoslavia, with all the rights of a parliament. The presidium was elected—with 56 members and with Dr. Ivan Ribar at its head. The Yugoslav National Liberation Committee was formed as the provisional people's government.

This Committee decided to annul and reconsider all agreements concluded by the refugee Yugoslav Government. It declared invalid

any agreement which might be negotiated by that government in future and it further decided to forbid the return of King Peter II until the question of the monarchy and the over-all system of administration was finally determined after the war by the free will of the people. Finally, it decided that Yugoslavia was to be constituted a democratic federated union in which all peoples were to have equal rights. Croatia, Serbia, Slovenia, Montenegro, Macedonia, Bosnia and Hercegovina were considered members of the federation.

This form of internal organization for Yugoslavia is not an abstract ideal but represents a solution based on the will of all Yugoslavs, a will tutored by the bitter experience of the past.

The attack on our country by German, Italian, Bulgarian and other invaders marked the beginning not only of the extermination of our peoples but also of a campaign of violence fanning up such flames of hatred among the various nationalities as to threaten all with a general conflagration. Under German instigation the Ustashi killed hundreds of thousands of Serbs. Mihailovich's Chetniks, incited by Germans and Italians, destroyed tens of thousands of Croats. Our people were menaced with unspeakable dangers and faced complete destruction. When our Serbian units reached Eastern Bosnia, thousands of bodies of innocent women, children and aged Moslems were already resting at the bottom of the Drina River. In Bosnia and Hercegovina, particularly in Krajina, we found huge gullies filled with the bodies of massacred Serbian women, children and old people. We immediately dedicated ourselves to putting an end to this horrible carnage. We adopted the slogan, "Fraternity and Unity among the Yugoslav Peoples" and exerted every effort to prove to the enraged Serbian people and misled Chetniks that not all Croats were villains, that not all Moslems were vicious, that only some of those in Ustashi uniform were guilty of perpretrating crimes—and that those had been committed at the instigation of the Germans.

We used all the means at our disposal to prove to the unfortunate Moslem and Croat population that the villains responsible for these crimes were not the Serbs but a handful of Chetniks led by Mihailovich, Pechanats and Nedich. This work required tremendous effort on the part of our heroic brigades and guerrilla detachments which were engaged at the same time in a ruthless struggle against the forces of occupation and also against Ustashi and Chetnik criminals—tools in the hands of the occupation authorities. In this our efforts were crowned with success: as a result of our superhuman struggle, lasting unity and brotherhood, such as had never existed before the war, have now been established among the peoples of Yugoslavia. Today

Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, Montenegrins, Macedonians and every other people are animated by one thought—that of speeding the expulsion of the invaders from our country and of preventing the revival of anything which in prewar Yugoslavia had contributed to the catastrophe; of punishing those chiefly responsible for bringing this terrible tragedy down upon our peoples; of building up a truly democratic, federated Yugoslavia in which the various peoples of Yugoslavia will live in friendship.

The tremendous enthusiasm which spread among the peoples of Yugoslavia (both in liberated and occupied areas) after the decisions reached at the second session of the Anti-fascist Vece were announced indicates that the principle which has guided us throughout our three years of war—and which will finally end with the triumph of our cause—was sound. It demonstrates, too, that we were justified in starting a popular uprising at the very beginning of the war, before the enemy was able to put his infernal designs into practice.

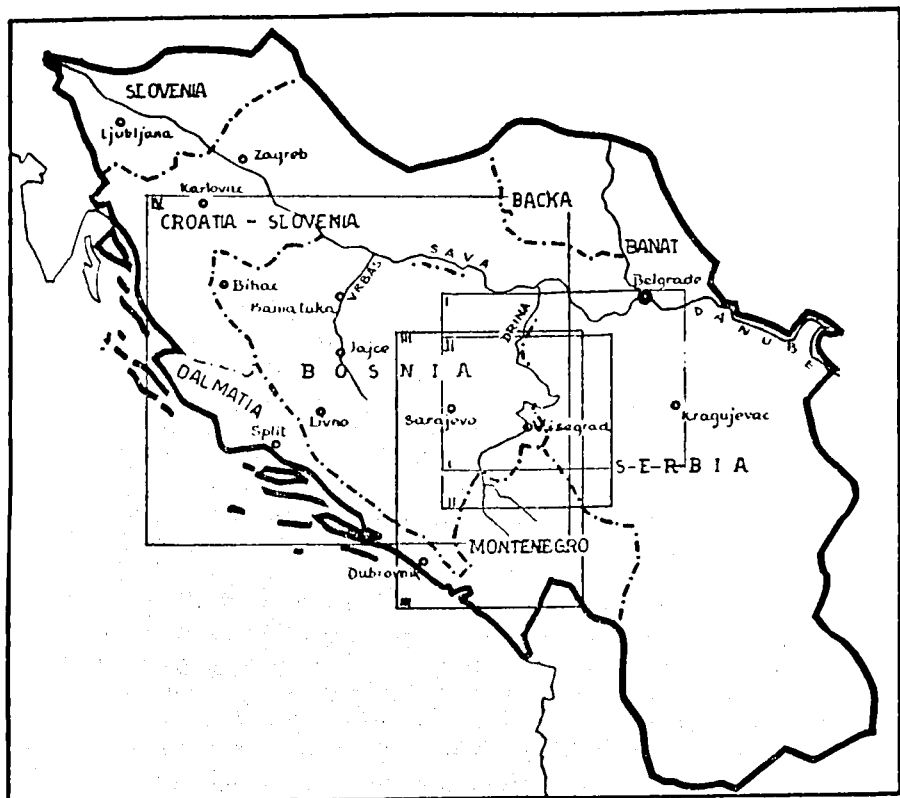
During three months of 1941, with the aid of Ustashi villains, the Nazis succeeded in exterminating more than half a million Serbs in Croatia, Bosnia, Hercegovina and Vojvodina.

A Plea for Recognition

THOSE who at home and abroad constantly preached that the time was not yet ripe were guilty of a real crime against our people, because they sacrificed their countrymen's lives to the murderous sword of the invaders. And for more than two years the world was deceived about the real state of affairs in Yugoslavia.

It is easy to understand how this confusion has complicated our struggle. Our fighters and the peasants in the villages gnashed their teeth when they heard the traitor Draja Mihailovich praised by various broadcasting stations and newspapers at the very time when he was fighting against us under the command of German officers. Let us take but one example, the battle for Konjic in which Mihailovich with his 1,800 Chetniks fought on the side of the Germans, Nedich's men, Bulgarians, etc. During this period foreign broadcasting stations reported that Mihailovich was attacking the enemy from the South, thereby helping the guerrillas. It would be hard in all history to find a parallel for the injustice thus visited upon our people while they were making such sacrifices.

An end has now been made to this lying deception. The traitor Mihailovich, along with Pavelich and Rupnik, has been nailed to the



pillory of history. We are thankful to our allies for realizing, although belatedly, who it is who is doing the fighting in Yugoslavia and to whom aid must be given.

During three years of superhuman struggle we were called upon to fight under conditions for which there is hardly a precedent. A small citadel of democracy within Hitler's European Fortress, we are under constant attack from overwhelming enemy forces bent upon destroying us. But what has frustrated the realization of Hitler's plans? First, the unbending will of our peoples and their determination to die fighting rather than become slaves of the fascist invaders. Second, the profound faith in an Allied victory, brought nearer by the Soviet Union. Third, the emergence, in this gigantic and unequal combat, of our heroic People's Army of Liberation—an army increasingly tempered and seasoned.

Today we have an army 300,000 strong, equipped with armaments captured from the enemy. With Allied aid in armaments we can build

up an army of 700,000 to 800,000 men. Working with our Allies, this army will deliver the final blow to the German and fascist invaders.

Today we have our own true People's Government, developed in the process of this struggle and elected by popular vote. Our people desire—and believe—that the Allies will soon accord official recognition to this government as the only real representative of the Yugoslav people.

Today we have a supreme legislative body, the Anti-fascist Vece of the People's Liberation Movement of Yugoslavia. Its task is to prepare the reorganization of our country's institutions on the basis of truly democratic principles. We also have—and this is our greatest achievement—brotherhood and unity among the peoples of Yugoslavia.