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Introduction

TONY JUDT

The division of contemporary Europe, prepared at Yalta and consecrated in the years that followed, is a lasting and ironic monument to the achievements of Hitler and his war. It so dominates the landscape of the continent that it takes a constant effort of the imagination to see recent history in terms other than those of 'east' and 'west'. And even when we manage to recast this history through the revival of such a category as 'central Europe', it is still the shadow of Yalta against which we are struggling, an iron curtain of the mind whose centrality we reassert through the very obsession with its removal.

Matters were not always thus. Nor do we need to go back to 1939 and beyond to rediscover a time when Europe and its problems seemed quite different. It was not until 1948 at the earliest that the terms in which historians, political scientists, and policy-makers saw Europe's prospects began to harden into a single vertical division. In the immediate post-war years, the future of south-eastern Europe (Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Albania, and Greece) occupied people's minds no less than the problem of Poland, for example. Nor was attention confined to the eastern fringes of southern Europe. A generation of Fascist government in Italy, and the appalling débâcle with which the French Third Republic had ended in 1940, not to speak of continuing uncertainty about the future of Spain, had thrown into profound turmoil the political and institutional arrangements in the mediterranean region of western Europe itself. The organized strength and very real popular support enjoyed by the Communist parties of Italy and France opened up the disturbing scenario of post-war social revolution in these countries no less than in Greece or the Balkans.

We know now, of course, that the chance of a Communist seizure of power in France or Italy in 1944–5 was small. But such was not the perception at the time. Communist partisans in Italy (like their counterparts in Greece, for that matter) were not privy to the agreement at Yalta, nor to the thinking of Stalin in the months that followed. Nor was such ignorance confined to the lower echelons of these movements. Dimitrov, the Bulgarian Communist and former head of the Comintern, was still talking in February 1948 in terms that would be disavowed

by Stalin, while the leadership of the Yugoslav and French parties were both, in different ways, pursuing tactics that would shortly be condemned by the Kremlin.[1] No one, in short, had a secure vision of the likely shape of a definitive post-war settlement (including Stalin himself, who wavered between a number of options during these years). And the presence of allied armies in France and Italy did not in itself constitute an insuperable barrier to eventual revolution – many assumed, by analogy with the situation after the First World War, that the foreign troops would in due course be withdrawn and that the Americans, at least, would seek to disentangle themselves from Europe as soon as possible.

Precisely because the Russian position on southern and south-eastern Europe remained undefined (in contrast to the Stalinist plans for Poland or the Soviet zone of Germany, where the presence of the Red Army left little room for ambiguity), it was on the future of the lands of Mediterranean Europe that much attention was directed in the post-war years. These were also, and not coincidentally, the countries which had seen the emergence of an autonomous resistance movement during the war, a resistance in which the Communists had played a central (and in the Yugoslav case, pivotal) role. In these countries it was far from unrealistic to imagine that the mass support generated through the resistance to Fascism could be converted, under the direction of a Leninist party, into a political takeover. This was all the more plausible given that these were not regions in which liberation had come at the hands of the Soviet troops (with the brief and cautionary exception of north-eastern Serbia).

Considerations such as these give the Communist experience in Mediterranean Europe between the outbreak of war in 1939 and the final division of Europe nine years later a unity since obscured by later developments. And it is this experience which constitutes the common theme of these essays. Within such a general frame of reference many differences emerge, and some of these will be noted later in this introduction. But much more striking is the unity provided by a number of issues and choices which faced the anti-Fascist Left everywhere in southern Europe at this time.

All the European Communist movements in the years after 1939 faced certain common dilemmas. How should they respond to the Molotov–Ribbentrop pact of that year, which undercut the anti-Fascist role of Communist parties in the popular front era? Should they treat the war that followed as a conflict between capitalists and stand aside, or should they from the outset adopt the policy of 'national defence'? Such questions were harder in France, where Communist resistance would also entail opposing the 'legitimate' government of Vichy (for this reason, the German attack on the USSR, releasing Communists everywhere from the mortgage of the 1939 pact, mattered more in France than in, say, Yugoslavia, where resistance against Italian and German invaders had not depended upon such international considerations to the same extent).

The international dimension itself changed radically for all Communists with the dissolution of the Comintern in May 1943. In the short run this freed domestic Communist movements in their respective national resistance groupings from the

charge that they were little more than the foreign arm of Soviet policy. Hence the greater latitude available to men like Togliatti or Tito, able within limits to adapt their tactics to a strategic vision of their role in national politics. But taking a slightly longer view, we can see that the removal of a central direction was a distinct handicap. For it was not as though Stalin had lost all interest in the Communist movements of Europe. The dismantling of the Comintern enabled him to deal more flexibly with the western Allies, and it gave plausibility to the Kremlin's claim that it did not seek to turn the victory over Hitler into a springboard for revolutionary takeovers. But from Moscow's perspective such flexibility diminished in its appeal once the war was over and Soviet hegemony had been established in Poland and eastern Germany. At that point it became more urgent to ensure that the relative independence of the Communist movements in Mediterranean Europe especially did not encourage them to pursue goals *incompatible* with those of Moscow.

In the first place, the very fact of organizing a resistance movement had meant appealing to national sentiment, whether against the Germans or against their local collaborators. This reinforced the instinct among Communists to think in national rather than international terms, and by extension to emphasize their patriotic identity over their revolutionary affiliations. Secondly, the war had *de facto* undermined the authority of the Comintern long before it was abolished. Communications in wartime being what they were, local Communist tactics were decided by increasingly independent partisan leaders operating far away from any instructions from the international 'Centre'.[2] If we think of this process as an extension of the experience of the civil war in Spain, in which Italian, French, and Balkan Communists played an active role, we can see that by 1945 a generation of Communist leaders and militants was emerging in southern Europe who were (from Stalin's perspective) dangerously disinclined to look to the USSR for instructions or for a model of revolutionary strategy.

After 1945, therefore, the dominant common theme was the ensuing tension between the local actions of Communists in Greece or Yugoslavia, in France or Italy, and the Soviet Union's interest in reconstructing an international movement once again subservient to a common strategy. It may seem odd to argue thus, given that the various national parties were behaving very differently among themselves. The Greeks were seriously envisaging a revolutionary resolution of their conflict with the British-backed 'official' government, while the Italians, prompted by Togliatti's 'svolta', were working hard to integrate themselves into the still-fluid mould of post-Fascist politics in Italy. Simultaneously, Tito's Communist partisans were actively converting a successful national resistance into a genuinely Leninist revolution. But this, of course, is precisely the point. These various different 'roads to socialism' (to use the phrase of the time) were direct outcomes of a reading of the local situation. They might well be what Stalin would have wished (in the Italian case in particular), but it was not his wishes that had fathered the local thought. And such independence boded ill for the future.

By 1948 Soviet hegemony had been reasserted. In France and Italy, this was

achieved by enforcing the return of the Communist parties to the political ghetto they had occupied before the popular front (a process abetted, though not as much as 'revisionist' historians sometimes suggest, by American pressure on non-Communist parties in these countries). In the Balkans matters were more complex, precisely because the local Communists had gone further along the road to power. The pivotal question concerned Yugoslavia, which was fast becoming an alternative 'centre' to Moscow, both as a model of revolutionary success and as the lynchpin of a projected 'Balkan Federation' in which it would have been the dominant power. The Soviet solution was to discredit the notion of any such Federation except in the most anodine form of an 'economic union', to withhold support for the Greek Communist insurgents (in accordance with the agreement with Churchill initialled in Moscow in 1944), and to seek the isolation of Tito and his revolution.

Hence the rapid moves in Hungary and Czechoslovakia, aimed at stopping any Titoist enthusiasms on the part of the local Communist parties, and hence the significance of the creation of the 'Cominform' in September 1947, whose only strategic purpose was to provide a formal device for the reassertion of the authority of the Soviet Union in matters of Communist revolution. The Russians' response was not, in its own terms, unreasonable. 'Titoism' was indeed emerging as a popular model for revolutionary action, for Yugoslavia was now the only country in Europe besides the USSR itself that could claim to have made an indigenous Communist revolution. Nor was this a revolution that could be dismissed as lacking in radicalism, for in its first few years the Communist regime under Tito was more Catholic than the Pope, pursuing democratic centralism *à la* Lenin in a way calculated to embarrass a Soviet government still (until 1947) seeking geopolitical compromise with its capitalist allies. And this Titoist 'heresy' appealed especially strongly in the other countries of southern Europe that had experienced comparably strong Communist partisan movements. Their leaders might know better, but many militant Communists in southern France or northern Italy looked to Yugoslavia and asked, 'Why not here?'. Even the Greeks, furious with Tito for closing the frontier at a vital moment in the Greek Civil War, still saw in Yugoslavia a possible model for their own revolution, based in the partisans of the mountains and seeking to convert anti-Fascist resistance into social revolution.

Thus far I have laid the emphasis on the specifically *Communist* dimension of the experience of the protagonists of this book. But the theme of *resistance* is just as important. Indeed, as David Travis argues in his essay, without a grasp of the experience of resistance in Italy we cannot properly appreciate the peculiarities of Italian Communist behaviour in the post-war world. And the same observation applies, *mutatis mutandis*, in the other countries treated here. Resisting the Nazis was a very, very difficult proposition. In central Europe (Poland, Czechoslovakia, later in Hungary, not to mention the occupied lands of the Soviet Union) resistance carried with it the very high likelihood of arrest and imprisonment or, more

probably, death. The potential leadership of any such resistance, whether political, religious, or intellectual, had been effectively destroyed (in Poland as a result of deliberate policy). It is easier to understand the limited resistance offered by the east European Jews to their own extermination when we recall that resistance as a whole in this region was weak and vulnerable. With the prospects of liberation so very slim, how many Lidices[3] was it rational to provoke?

In western Europe the risks were lower, if only because of the absence of a Nazi predilection for treating the occupied peoples as sub-human. But even so, and even allowing for greater local support, the organized resistance in Denmark, Belgium, Norway, or the Netherlands never amounted to a serious *political* threat to the occupiers – at best, as in Denmark, it could aspire to save some Jews, for example, by facilitating their escape. In France, matters were more complex. There was little by way of organized resistance in the country before 1942. When the *maquis* began to grow, this was in large part because of the influx of men who would otherwise have been forced to go and work in German factories as part of Laval's 'deals' with the occupiers (something similar happened in Italy, where the conscription imposed by the post-1943 'Republic of Saló' and the German demand for workers drove many Italians into the mountains – and into *de facto* resistance). The disappearance of the Vichy 'zone' after November 1942 (when the Nazis occupied the whole of the country in response to the threat posed by the Allied landings in North Africa) also facilitated resistance, now that the fiction of an autonomous French government had been abandoned.

It was not that Vichy and Marshal Pétain provided an excuse for collaboration; rather, the existence of an administration which could claim to have been installed by the votes of the last parliament of the Third Republic made a genuinely patriotic resistance hard to organize. Pétain himself was wrapped in patriotic glory attendant upon his role as the 'Victor' of Verdun, and resisting the occupier in wartime France thus meant opposing an apparently legitimate and unquestionably popular regime, purporting to govern in some independence over one-third of the country. And a further complication arose from the general distaste for the parliamentary republic which Vichy had replaced – for their different reasons, very few parties or politicians had a good thing to say about the political system of the 1930s and its failures and disappointments.[4]

It followed that resistance in France could not appeal in the name of what had been destroyed, but only by promising something new. In effect, and in contrast to the resistance in the rest of north-west Europe, resistance in France was necessarily revolutionary. This was at least as true of Léon Blum, the socialist leader, writing of a moral regeneration of the nation, or the Gaullists planning radical post-war social change, as it was of the Communists themselves.[5] The prominence of the Communists in the resistance in its later stages was in part a function of this perception, in part a result of the refusal of the non-Communist movements to constitute themselves as political organizations (thus conceding political visibility to the PCF, the Parti Communiste Français), in part the consequence of excellent underground

structures, something to which communists were necessarily better adapted than were their non-Communist allies within the resistance councils.

Seen in this light, the experience of resistance in France comes much closer to that of the Italians (and one might add that the topography of southern France resembled that of Italy or the Balkans in the advantages it could offer to a partisan movement). For resistance in Italy, before July 1943, was also complicated by the difficulty of opposing an established government in the name of the 'national interest'. 'Revolutionary' opposition to Mussolini was easier, and had been the official position of the Italian Communists in earlier years. But it had never generated mass opposition to the Fascist regime, and would probably not have been able to mobilize many people even after the Italian entry into the war, with its attendant costs. It was only with the Allied invasion of the south, Badoglio's replacement of Mussolini, and the latter's collaboration with the German occupiers in the 'Republic of Saló' that anti-Fascist resistance could adapt itself unambiguously into a mass patriotic movement, fighting Fascism and German Nazism at the same time.[6]

As in France, the resistance could not look to the past. By 1943 the memories of liberal Italy were fading (indeed, for anyone under 30, the case of many of the resistance partisans, liberal Italy was history, not part of their own experience). Moreover, the *manner* in which parliamentary liberalism had collapsed in Italy in the early 1920s, much like the collapse of the French Third Republic, offered little by way of positive reference for those looking ahead to post-war Italy. Resistance, it was supposed, was the prelude to a major recasting of the social and political structure of the country. Togliatti's vision consisted of preparing his party to play an active and *positive* role in that process (in contrast with the failure of the Left to pursue any coherent policy in the face of the rise of Fascism twenty years before).[7]

In the Balkans, the implicitly revolutionary character of the partisan resistance movement was quite unambiguous. This was less a result of any programmatic intentions on the part of the resistance movements themselves, more the outcome of the impact of the war. For here as in east-central Europe, the Second World War constituted in itself a major social upheaval. The Nazi occupation of these lands, and the destruction of the pre-war social and economic fabric, was to leave the region in a condition profoundly different from that which had prevailed on the eve of the conflict. With national minorities decimated, property (and property records) transferred or destroyed, old elites discredited, and the local population systematically victimized by occupation and civil war, a return to the *status quo ante* was unimaginable. As in Czechoslovakia, Poland, or Hungary, so in Yugoslavia (and to a lesser extent Greece): whatever was to emerge by way of a social system following the defeat of the Germans and their allies would at a minimum have to offer a degree of social and economic justice, as well as centralized control of national reconstruction. If the resistance movements in the countryside were to emerge victorious, they would be well positioned to take control and direct a *de facto* social revolution according to their own ideological vision.[8]

In this respect, it is perhaps not too fanciful to think of the events of this period as constituting a return to the unfinished business of the revolutionary 'moment' that followed the end of the First World War. From 1918 until 1923, central and southern Europe were in a tumultuously unstable condition. The new nation-states between Russia and Germany had, all of them, grounds for dissatisfaction with the post-war territorial settlements (as had the Italians, resentful at the cession of border territories to the new Yugoslav state). The established socialist parties were uncertain how to proceed in the new circumstances: should they try to exploit post-war institutional anarchy and social conflict to foment political revolution, or should they reaffirm their commitment to the parliamentary politics of the pre-war generation? The left-wing of most of Europe's socialist parties broke away between 1919 and 1921 to form Communist parties, modelled on that of Lenin and defined not by any ideological differences with their former colleagues but by their acknowledgement of the direction newly-imposed from Moscow by the Third International.

By the time the Communist parties of Europe had come into existence, however, and had begun to practise 'Leninism' as then understood, the revolutionary moment had passed, the Red Army was in retreat (having advanced as far as Warsaw in June 1920), and the initiative lay with the radical reactionary movements born out of the fear of the very revolution that the Left had failed to carry through. From 1922 onwards, the existence of at least two Marxist parties in most European countries divided the Left at the very moment when unity in the face of the Right was most needed. Where parliamentary politics survived, the socialists reintegrated, more or less successfully, into the system. The Communists, whether legally or clandestinely, retreated to the status of a revolutionary clique, were progressively purged of their independent elements, and were 'bolshevized' under the direction of Stalin's Comintern.[9]

But the Left was not handicapped by bad timing alone. Even if the revolutionary opportunity of 1919 had been open to them in the 1920s they would still have been handicapped by their failure to address the national question. For the upheavals of 1918–23 were as much nationalist as they were social. All over central and southern Europe (and in contrast to the effects of the Second World War) it was the destruction of national, not social, structures which set the agenda for the post-war conflicts. And both from ideological predilection and tactical optimism, the Communists were unable to respond sensitively to such matters. In the new multi-national states of Czechoslovakia, Rumania, and Yugoslavia, the Communist parties persisted in treating the new regimes as a bourgeois creation, an impediment to the international revolution. In the quarrels between Czechs and Slovaks, in the Greek–Turkish wars of 1922–3, in the unceasing disputes among the nations, ethnic groups, and religious minorities of Yugoslavia, the Communists took a position consistent with Rosa Luxemburg rather than Lenin; they emphasized a proletarian unity across national and ethnic divisions, a unity whose absence was painfully clear. The socialists (in Czechoslovakia notably) did rather better on this

subject – not least through the influence of an earlier central European socialist sensitivity to the national question in the writings of men like Otto Bauer – but at the price of preferring nation-building to social revolution.[10]

The marginality of the Communists and the divisions of the Left were further accentuated by the Comintern strategy of the so-called Third Period, beginning in 1928. This constituted a further hardening of the ideological line on the grounds of the imminent return to revolutionary conditions in Europe. It meant treating the socialists, rather than Fascists or local nationalists and Rightist movements, as the enemy, the better to claim for the Communists a unique role on the revolutionary Left. The outcome is well-known in the case of Germany, but had its counterparts everywhere. Only in 1935, with this strategy in ruins, and Nazis or Fascists or reactionary nationalists and populists in control almost everywhere, did the Comintern switch to a policy of accommodation with the rest of the Left and Centre in the name of anti-Fascism.

This switch, inaugurating the popular front era, had the advantage of freeing the domestic Communist movements to benefit from patriotic or democratic local sentiment. But it quite removed revolution from the political agenda, in regions of Europe where the profound social and economic inequities, the political restrictions, and civil inequality had altered little since 1920 (or, in many cases, since 1914). That the Marxist Left was beginning to re-establish its credentials (whether on the ground or in exile) in national political debates, but at the price of abandoning any foreseeable plans for social revolution, was a paradox that could not indefinitely endure. From 1935 until 1944 the virtually unbroken struggle against Fascism, domestic and foreign, postponed any resolution of the dilemma (in this sense the 'hiccup' of 1939–41 was an irrelevance). After the defeat of Fascism, and in conditions which not only invited revolution but had to some degree already initiated it, Communist movements in their national contexts could no longer avoid the choice. But whereas local conditions after 1918 dictated the very flexibility and *political* sensitivity of which the newly-formed Communist parties were incapable, after 1944 these parties showed just such a nuanced responsiveness to local conditions and possibilities. Hence their strength – and hence, too, the fears of the Russians.

It was not that the Soviet leadership did not seek to capitalize upon the revolutionary situation in Europe. As in 1918, so in 1945, the security of the regime in Moscow was seen to depend in some measure upon the stability of its western frontiers, a lesson conveyed with efficient clarity by the invasion of 1941. The revolutionary upheavals of the years immediately following the end of the First World War had offered a brief prospect of Communist regimes in Poland, Germany, and Hungary, and of socialist-led revolutionary attempts in Austria and Italy. Once these all crumbled, and with the rise to power of Hitler in particular, the Soviet Union was vulnerable. Hence the popular front strategy of reassuring the western democracies of their common interest in defeating Fascism, even if this meant suspending all talk of revolution. With the collapse of the popular fronts the Soviet

interest reverted to territorial security. On the eve of war it secured eastern Poland and the Baltic states. During the war it negotiated and eventually claimed parts of eastern Czechoslovakia and northern Rumania.

Then came the post-war uncertainty. If revolution in the Balkans would secure the region for Soviet interests, then it was to be approved, but not at the risk of provoking Anglo-American hostility. The same was true in principle for Italy or France, except that there, given the greater interests and presence of the western Allies, revolution was *de facto* out of the question. Elsewhere, in Czechoslovakia and Hungary, for example, the Soviet Union initially encouraged a mixture of social revolution and political stability, seeking to ensure its indirect control of these lands without the need either to foment or suppress popular demands. Only in the face of the emergence of the Titoist alternative, revolutionary but independent, did the Russians move to impose by force their effective control of central Europe. In every case, political revolution might well be the preferred *form* in which Soviet security interests were protected, but it was always and everywhere subservient to the perceived demands of those interests.[11]

The connecting link in much of this story, the *grand absent* in the French sense, is of course the Spanish Civil War. Indeed, it might be supposed that a book dealing with resistance and revolution in Mediterranean Europe would contain at the very least a chapter on Spain itself. This would certainly be the case had this been a book whose subject was the 1930s, when Spain would have been not just one part of the story, but pretty much the whole story. After 1939, however, Spain dropped out of the picture. The refugees from the republican side straggled across into France (only to be interned and in some cases handed over to the Germans). The Communists abandoned the defeated republicans, while the leadership of the latter went off into a generation of exile. There was very little effective resistance against Franco after 1939, and the Spanish revolution(s) were defeated and destroyed well before then.[12]

The experience of the civil war, however, was central in forming the political imagination of the radical generation of the 1940s. There is no aspect of left-wing thought or action which was not coloured by the lessons of Spain. In the first place, it proved in retrospect to have been something of a rehearsal for the resistance movements of the 1940s, many of whose leaders learnt their soldiering in the Spanish battles. This was true for non-Communists (socialists and others) as much as for the communist partisans themselves. Indeed, for many non-Communists, a major lesson of the civil war had been that the Communists had an agenda of their own and were not to be trusted; hence the suspicions and divisions which marked the French and Italian Resistance movements.

For the Communists, the Spanish Civil War had provided invaluable political as well as military experience. Men like Togliatti, or some of the Czech, Hungarian, and Yugoslav participants who were to play prominent roles after the war, acquired a certain independence of perspective from their time in Spain. This

served them well during the war and in the post-war conflicts – the Communists emerged in 1945, after nearly a decade of continuous fighting and political manoeuvring, as master political tacticians. And in combining their credentials as veterans of civil war and resistance alike, they could take the moral high ground in radical politics (boosted still further by their association with the victory of Stalingrad, a powerful emotional asset in countries that had suffered Nazi occupation).

But there were ambiguities in the Spanish 'inheritance'. The Communist role in Spain was not widely known, but it was not exactly a secret. In the writings of Malraux, Orwell, Koestler, and others the Communists, especially in their relations with other parties of the Left (the Anarchists, or the POUM), had been revealed as self-interested, calculating, cynical, and brutal. For every Togliatti, a brilliant intermediary between local needs and Comintern strategy, there was an André Marty, prominent in the post-war French Communist leadership but known to many as a brutal commissar in the in-fighting of the 'allied' Republican forces in Spain.[13]

Nor were the ambiguities of the legacy of Spain confined to relations between the Communists and others. If it had just been a matter of convincing their wartime allies of their good intentions and patriotic (or revolutionary) sincerity, the Communists would have been relatively untroubled by the memories of Spain. But an important aspect of the Communist role in Spain was the problems it posed, to the Comintern, concerning international control and discipline. For the men and women who fought in Spain were often the same ones who were to go on and join the Communist partisans in the Balkans, in France, and in Italy. Displaced or exiled Communists from all over Europe, finding themselves abandoned by Moscow in August 1939, had little choice but to enter the resistance, especially following the fall of France. The French resistance especially was full of Czechs, Hungarians, Spaniards, Italians, and others, many of whom had first made contact in Spain. In due course they returned to their own country and played prominent roles in the establishment of Communist regimes in central Europe. But these were not people to the taste of the Kremlin. They were too independent, with an independence they had often displayed by opposing the Molotov–Ribbentrop pact, by preparing post-war alliances and programmes without waiting for Soviet instructions (or else failing correctly to anticipate what these would be), and above all by achieving a political credibility and support which was not dependent upon the official imprimatur of Soviet approval.

The Spanish Civil War, in other words, had spawned a generation of potential Titoists. In France or Italy their independent views might amount to little more than a reputation for personal heroism in the resistance. But in countries like Greece or Hungary, where they nurtured hopes of ending up in political control, their instinctive reliance on their own judgement and popular backing boded ill for Soviet influence in these places. The Russians felt more comfortable with their own chosen instruments, men who had spent the 1930s and the war years in Moscow without

showing the slightest inclination to question Stalin or his policies. They might lack charisma or any popular appeal, but for just that reason they would be all the more dependent on Russian support and thus the less likely to question Soviet desires.

It was thus no coincidence that so many of the people purged in the arrests and trials which accompanied the Soviet establishment of control in eastern Europe after 1948 were veterans of Spain. Indeed, one of the main charges against them was that, starting in Spain, they had established relations with westerners and begun a trajectory which led them into 'anti-Soviet' actions. But these purges could only operate in areas under direct Russian control – Rumania, Bulgaria, Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia. In the Communist movements of Greece, Yugoslavia, Italy, and France, where the impact of the fighting in Spain and the local resistance had been greatest, such independent-minded Communists could not so readily be removed. In Italy they had the partial protection of Togliatti, in Yugoslavia they were in power. There were indeed a number of secret 'trials' in the French Communist Party during the early 1950s, in which prominent communist partisans like Charles Tillon or André Marty (!) were accused of precisely the same heresy and indiscipline which had characterized the indictments of Rajk in Hungary or Slánsky in Czechoslovakia. But the PCF could only imitate the Soviet model up to a certain point, and the victims of these 'trials' survived the experience, bearing witness in their memoirs to the Stalinist dislike of any Communist partisan who made a name for himself in Spain.[14]

The ambiguous legacy of the Spanish experience lay at the heart of the larger ambiguity of the popular front strategy. The latter, which lasted in fact if not in name from 1935 until 1947 and which gives a certain coherence to Communist behaviour in this period, hinged on the need to contain and defeat Fascism. It gave very little thought to the question of what comes next (the same dilemma confronted the Socialists in the popular front, both in the Spanish revolution and in France, where Léon Blum's party had no clear idea of what to do with the power it had won in the popular front elections of 1936). Purging the international Communist movement of those of its militants who had learned their politics in the era of popular front, civil war, and resistance was a way to re-establish the discipline that had existed before 1935, but it was not a solution to other difficulties. In essence, these boiled down to the following question – what does a Communist movement exist to achieve? The cynical reply, that it exists in order to advance the interests of the Soviet Union, rather misses the point, since that was never in doubt. What, after all, were the 'interests' of the Soviet Union? If they were not the fomenting of revolution, then the European Communists after 1945 were in an absurd condition, with no reason to exist. And if, in the longer run, the USSR *did* indeed wish to support Communist revolutions elsewhere, why did it so conspicuously fail to support the efforts of the Greek Communists? Why did it oppose any discussion of armed Communist insurrection in France or Italy? And why was it so ambivalent (and ultimately antagonistic) towards Tito's revolution? In the case of Yugoslavia the Soviet argument was rule-utilitarian: whatever the specific local

advantages of independent Communist revolutions, they constituted a weakening of international Communist direction and discipline, and were thus undesirable in the wider interests of Soviet (revolutionary) strategy. Once the USSR had definitively, if briefly, re-established its complete control (a control lasting from 1948 until 1956), it had no need of such sophisms, of course, and could simply assert the primacy of Stalinist authority.

There is a risk inherent in this way of presenting the history of Communism and resistance in these years. The emphasis upon the international dimensions of the Communist movement, and the common or overlapping experiences of war and resistance in Europe, whether in Spain or in the rest of the continent, cannot help but imply a degree of uniformity in the history thus told. That some such uniformity existed is not in question – indeed it is one of the purposes of this collection of essays to bring out the various ways in which it is helpful to think of these years in Mediterranean Europe as a whole. But, and this will be clear to anyone reading the various contributions gathered here, there were important, sometimes startling, differences in the various national histories, differences that have had a marked impact on the contemporary development of these countries. It may thus be helpful to point to a few of them here.

Perhaps the most important concerns the special nature of the Balkans. This region, broadly encompassing what is now Rumania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Albania, and Greece (together with European Turkey), was the heart of the Eastern Question which so absorbed nineteenth-century statesmen. Its difficulties were multifold. The decline of the Turkish Empire risked leaving a vacuum of power, one into which all the Great Powers aspired to insert themselves. The chief actors were Russia and Germany, for whom the lands of eastern and south-eastern Europe constituted an opportunity for economic as well as political control. The French also had an economic interest (notably in Serbia) while the British were above all concerned with keeping the Russians *out* of the area.

These conflicting interests were played out via the national aspirations and conflicts of the local populations. At various times between 1878 and 1914, the Great Powers gave their support to Greek, Serbian, Bulgarian, and Rumanian efforts at state-building or expansion, doing little to resolve the local disputes but a lot to inflame ethnic resentment. When the First World War brought about the collapse and disappearance of both the Turkish and Austro-Hungarian Empires, the Eastern Question was still as yet unanswered.[15]

The post-war settlement was inevitably a compromise. The Greeks sought unsuccessfully to take advantage of Turkish defeat to assert territorial claims to the east. Bulgaria (like Hungary) was disadvantaged by its wartime alliance with the central powers and lost territory to its neighbours, one of whom, Serbia, now saw itself expanded into a South Slav (Yugoslav) state incorporating national groups from both the defeated empires. These constituent elements of the new Yugoslavia varied enormously in their nature and expectations. The Slovenes and Croats of

the north and north-west were culturally and economically a part of central Europe, and resented from the start the hegemony of a Serb nation different in its historical, religious, and social formation. Albanian, Montenegrin, and Macedonian minorities all protested against their inclusion in the new state, and the Macedonian region in particular proved volatile, with local resentment fuelled by Greek and Bulgarian encouragement.

From the outset, therefore, it was natural for the Balkans to play an important role in the history of Communism. In the first place the Russian strategic interest in the region was in no way diminished by the Soviet takeover – on the contrary, the Comintern in the years 1922–3 especially saw south-eastern Europe as the best medium-term hope for revolutionary expansion. The very fact that the post-war national settlements had *not* been accompanied by social revolution (in this region any more than in Germany or central Europe) made the new states and their ruling elites potentially vulnerable to widespread social protest. That the Communists failed to benefit from this situation owed much to the growing tactical rigidity of the Comintern under Stalin, wilfully ignoring and denying national sentiment and downplaying the importance of peasant protest in a part of Europe where the working class was still in a tiny minority.[16]

In the Balkans as in Italy, therefore, it was radical populism rather than Marxism which appealed successfully to peasant resentment, and despite continuing Comintern interest in the area the role of the Communists was negligible after 1925. By contrast, the Communist focus upon the region after the Second World War was tied to a much more realistic sense of local needs. The Communists still had little purchase on the mass of the rural population (and in the course of establishing Soviet control had to suppress by force the populist movements in Bulgaria or Poland, for example). But, following the example of the Yugoslavs, they no longer treated with disdain the national and ethnic considerations at the heart of the region's history.

This was, of course, peculiarly the case in Yugoslavia. From April 1940, Tito pursued a policy aimed at an eventual federal South Slav state which contrasted not only with the policies of his non-Communist rivals (all of them rooted in ethnic or regional interests), but also and more remarkably with the policies of his own party over the previous twenty years. The KPJ (Communist Party of Yugoslavia) could hardly avoid being dominated in practice by Serbs, but it was distinctly concerned, and was seen to be concerned, with the country as a whole. This gave it an advantage over the political movements of the Croats, for example, whose parochial perspective limited their appeal and tempted some of them into collaboration with the occupier (in a clear parallel with the Slovaks, whose anti-Czech sentiment led them to similar acts after 1940). The political legitimacy that the KJP acquired from its new stance on the national question was to last for over thirty years, and quite obliterate from memory its position in the years 1928–35, for example, when it had favoured secession from the Yugoslav state for all non-Serb peoples.

The Greek case was in some ways more complex still. Greece was the Balkans' Balkans. It had achieved independence from Turkey in the early part of the nineteenth century (1821–9), but with a very restricted territory, leaving many ethnic Greeks still ruled by foreigners. Even after the 1881 acquisition of Thessaly the national aspirations of the country remained unfulfilled and Greece was engaged in a series of wars with Turkey and Bulgaria right up to the eve of the First World War. The disputed territories, essentially Macedonia and the coastal fringe of Turkey-in-Asia, were still being fought over in the 1920s, and the Macedonian question especially ensured that Greece would be embroiled in the wider political disputes of the region, despite the relative ethnic, linguistic, and religious homogeneity of Greece itself.

Thus although the Greek Communists did not have to struggle with the national question *per se* (the legitimacy of a Greek state was not in question), and although the Greek resistance was an unambiguous matter of fighting the invader (first Italy, then the Germans), the post-war settlement could not help but depend upon events in the rest of the Balkan peninsula. Initially the Greek Communists were absorbed with the question of the allocation of power *within* the domestic resistance. The question of whether to work with the non-Communist resistance, and on what terms, resembled the dilemmas facing the French Communists at the same time. But once the Greek Communists made the decision to oppose the British-backed monarchy and its local supporters, they placed themselves in a difficult situation. Greece was a vital strategic region for the western Allies, given its maritime location, and the October 1944 understanding between Stalin and Churchill had confirmed the determination of the British to keep it out of the Soviet sphere, a position which Stalin seems to have accepted. But unlike Tito, the Greek Communist leadership was not in a position to impose its will on the ground. The partisans might hold the mountainous north, but any serious attempt to take Athens would bring them into conflict not just with the anti-Communist resistance but also with the British (and, later, the Americans).

The actions of the Greek Communists were thus from the outset in conflict with the preferences of Stalin, and the pursuit of the civil war depended heavily on the support of the Yugoslav Communists to the north. But the latter had no good reason to jeopardize unnecessarily their relations with the Soviet Union (or Bulgaria, with whom a Balkan Federation was still being discussed as late as January 1948). If the Greeks had succeeded in moving rapidly and successfully from partisan resistance to social revolution the Yugoslavs would have been willing to provide the necessary assistance, as they initially did. But the Greeks had no such realistic chance of success, and their eventual isolation was inevitable. The Greek Communists were thus the unique instance of a resistance movement flying in the face of local and geopolitical reality in the attempt to convert popular resistance into political revolution. It is significant that the Italian Communist leadership quoted the Greek example as a warning against those partisans who dreamt of similar efforts in Italy itself.

Both the Greeks and the Yugoslavs, then, were refractory in the face of international (and Russian) considerations, though with markedly different outcomes. It is noteworthy that the German invasion of Russia in June 1941, and the abolition of the Comintern in May 1943, played little part in developments in these countries. The contrast with France and Italy is notable. Much of the history of the role of the Communists in the French resistance turns on the significance of these international shifts. Indeed, as we shall see, the whole historiographical controversy surrounding the French Communists in these years is focused on the period August 1939–June 1941, when the PCF opposed official resistance against the Germans and treated the war as an imperialist conflict of no concern to French workers. It took a lot of dead Communist partisans, and some selective historiographical airbrushing, to erase the memory of this period of near-collaboration.

That such a situation should have arisen was not the result of some peculiar deficiency in the moral make-up of Communists in France. The problem lay elsewhere. By 1934, the PCF was the only major Communist party still operating freely in a political democracy. As such it had benefited from the full focus of Comintern attentions. More than any other party, the French Communists by 1939 were a disciplined local extension of Soviet policy. The party leadership (Maurice Thorez in Moscow during the war years, Jacques Duclos in Paris) followed Russian tactical shifts faithfully. Like Communist leaders everywhere, they knew quite well that their party would do better if it were more responsive to local needs and the exigencies of republican politics in France in particular. The successes of the popular front era, when the party membership rose from fewer than 35,000 to nearly 400,000 in just three years, were proof enough. But they were also willing to risk the loss of such a national prominence in order to keep faith with international Communist tactics – in 1939, but also in 1947 and again as recently as 1977.

Thus the German invasion of the USSR came as a great relief, since it allowed the PCF to throw itself into the resistance 100 per cent, in the name of the defence of all the democracies (socialist and capitalist alike) against the forces of evil. But there could never be any question of converting the successes of armed resistance into popular insurrection. When Stalin recognized de Gaulle as the legitimate leader of the French, and Thorez returned from Moscow after the war with instructions to work with de Gaulle and the rest of the resistance coalition in the reconstruction of French democracy, the party leadership readily obeyed. This meant instructing the well-organized and -equipped Communist partisans of the south and south-west to hand in their weapons and accept the authority of de Gaulle's representatives, and encouraging the organized industrial workers of the north to produce more coal. It was not even a question of calculating the chances of success in a struggle for power against the Gaullists and the Allied armies; the instructions from Moscow were clear and they were followed – indeed, getting the partisans to obey was one of the ways in which the PCF leadership could re-establish its authority over the rather too independent Communist militants of the local resistance networks.[17]