
I. THE COUNTRY

Introduction

The largest country on the Balkan Peninsula, Yugoslavia, or the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRJ) has an area about half the size of Manitoba and a population slightly smaller than Canada's. Although possessing a long coastline on the Mediterranean, it has borders with seven countries: Italy, Austria, Hungary, Bulgaria, Greece, Romania and Albania. Yugoslavia is a federal state, composed of six constituent republics (Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Slovenia, Macedonia and Montenegro), and two autonomous provinces (Kosovo and Vojvodina). Belgrade is both the federal capital and the country's largest city, with 1.4 million inhabitants. Other major regional centres include, in order of size: Zagreb, Sarajevo, Ljubljana and Skopje. Twenty-one percent of Yugoslavia is mountainous, while 56 percent is suitable for agricultural production. The country consists of three topographical regions: 1) the Northern plain, which covers one-fifth of the whole territory, is the country's main producer of grain, livestock, and dairy products; 2) the mountainous regions, which contain mineral and forest resources and are endowed with numerous valleys suitable for agricultural production; and 3) the coastal region, with its Mediterranean climate, which is important mainly for tourism, but is also capable of producing citrus fruits, grapes and figs.

History and Government

Yugoslavia is a young country, formed in 1918 after the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires; its present frontiers were not decided on until 1954. Because the population was made up of several ethnic groups, its history between the world wars was marred by internal antagonism between cultural, linguistic and religious communities, some of which fought each other during World War II. By 1945 an effective resistance movement against the Axis gave victory and political power to the Partisans under Marshal Tito and to the Communist ideology they espoused.