and death, and also bitterness. For this was a joy too for Yugoslav fighters suffering the misfortune of their own country. It was as though nothing else existed in the Soviet Union except this gigantic, compelling effort of a limitless land and multimillioned people. I, too, saw only them, and in my bias identified the patriotism of the Russian people with the Soviet system, for it was the latter that was my dream and my struggle.

5

It must have been about five o'clock in the afternoon, just as I had completed my lecture at the Panslavic Committee and had begun to answer questions, when someone whispered to me to finish immediately because of an important and pressing matter. Not only we Yugoslavs but also the Soviet officials had lent this lecture a more than usual importance. Molotov's assistant, A. Lozovsky, had introduced me to a select audience. Obviously the Yugoslav problem was becoming more and more acute among the Allies.

I excused myself, or they made my excuses for me, and was whisked out into the street in the middle of things. There they crammed me together with General Terzić into a strange and not very imposing car. Only after the car had driven off did an unknown colonel from the State Security inform us that we were to be received by Joseph Vissarionovich Stalin. By that time our Military Mission had been moved to a villa in Serebrennyi Bor, a Moscow

Milovan Djilas, Conversations with Stalin, Harcourt, Brace, 1962

suburb. Remembering the gifts for Stalin, I worried that we would be late if we went that far to get them. But the infallible State Security had taken care of that too; the gifts lay next to the Colonel in the car. Everything then was in order, even our uniforms; for some ten days or so we had been wearing new ones made in a Soviet factory. There was nothing to do but be calm and listen to the Colonel, and ask him as little as possible.

I was already accustomed to the latter. But I could not suppress my excitement. It sprang from the unfathomable depths of my being. I was aware of my own pallor and of my joyful, and at the same time almost panic-stricken, agitation.

What could be more exciting for a Communist, one who was coming from war and revolution? To be received by Stalin—this was the greatest possible recognition for the heroism and suffering of our Partisan warriors and our people. In dungeons and in the holocaust of war, and in the no less violent spiritual crises and clashes with the internal and external foes of Communism, Stalin was something more than a leader in battle. He was the incarnation of an idea, transfigured in Communist minds into pure idea, and thereby into something infallible and sinless. Stalin was the victorious battle of today and the brotherhood of man of tomorrow. I realized that it was by chance that I personally was the first Yugoslav Communist to be received by him. Still, I felt a proud joy that I would be able to tell my comrades about this encounter and say something about it to the Yugoslav fighting men as well.

Suddenly everything that had seemed unpleasant about

the USSR disappeared, and all disagreements between ourselves and the Soviet leaders lost their significance and gravity, as if they had never happened. Everything disagreeable vanished before the moving grandeur and beauty of what was happening to me. Of what account was my personal destiny before the greatness of the struggle being waged, and of what importance were our disagreements beside the obvious inevitability of the realization of our idea?

The reader should know that at that time I believed that Trotskyites, Bukharinites, and other oppositionists in the Party were indeed spies and wreckers, and that therefore the drastic measures taken against them as well as all other so-called class enemies were justified. If I had observed that those who had been in the USSR in the period of the purge in the mid-thirties tended to leave certain things unsaid, I believed these had to do with nonessentials and exaggeration: it was cutting into good flesh in order to get rid of the bad, as Dimitrov once formulated it in a conversation with Tito. Therefore I regarded all the cruelties that Stalin committed exactly as his propaganda had portrayed them—as inescapable revolutionary measures that only added to his stature and his historic role. I cannot rightly tell even today what I would have done had I known the truth about the trials and the purges. I can say with certainty that my conscience would have undergone a serious crisis, but it is not excluded that I would have continued to be a Communist—convinced of a Communism that was more ideal than the one that existed. For with Communism as an idea the essential thing is not what is being done but why. Besides

it was the most rational and most intoxicating, all-embracing ideology for me and for those in my disunited and desperate land who so desired to skip over centuries of slavery and backwardness and to bypass reality itself.

I had no time to compose myself, for the car soon arrived at the gates of the Kremlin. Another officer took charge of us at this point, and the car proceeded through cold and clean courtyards in which there was nothing alive except slender budless saplings. The officer called our attention to the Tsar Cannon and Tsar Bell—those absurd symbols of Russia that were never fired or rung. To the left was the monumental bell tower of Ivan the Great, then a row of ancient cannon, and we soon found ourselves in front of the entrance to a rather low long building such as those built for offices and hospitals in the middle of the nineteenth century. Here again we were met by an officer, who conducted us inside. At the bottom of the stairs we took off our overcoats, combed ourselves in front of a mirror, and were then led into an elevator which discharged us at the second floor into a rather long red-carpeted corridor.

At every turn an officer saluted us with a loud click of the heels. They were all young, handsome, and stiff, in the blue caps of the State Security. Both now and each time later the cleanliness was astonishing, so perfect that it seemed impossible that men worked and lived here. Not a speck on the carpets or a spot on the burnished doorknobs.

Finally they led us into a somewhat small office in which General Zhukov was already waiting. A small, fat, and pock-marked old official invited us to sit down while

he himself slowly rose from behind a table and went into the neighboring room.

Everything occurred with surprising speed. The official soon returned and informed us that we could go in. I thought that I would pass through two or three offices before reaching Stalin, but as soon as I opened the door and stepped across the threshold, I saw him coming out of a small adjoining room through whose open doors an enormous globe was visible. Molotov was also here. Stocky and pale and in a perfect dark blue European suit, he stood behind a long conference table.

Stalin met us in the middle of the room. I was the first to approach him and to introduce myself. Then Terzić did the same, reciting his whole title in a military tone and clicking his heels, to which our host replied—it was almost comical—by saying: "Stalin."

We also shook hands with Molotov and sat down at the table so that Molotov was to the right of Stalin, who was at the head of the table, while Terzić, General Zhukov, and I were to the left.

The room was not large, rather long, and devoid of any opulence or décor. Above a not too large desk in the corner hung a photograph of Lenin, and on the wall over the conference table, in identical carved wooden frames, were portraits of Suvorov and Kutuzov, looking very much like the chromos one sees in the provinces.

But the host was the plainest of all. Stalin was in a marshal's uniform and soft boots, without any medals except a golden star—the Order of Hero of the Soviet Union, on the left side of his breast. In his stance there was nothing artificial or posturing. This was not that

majestic Stalin of the photographs or the newsreels—with the stiff, deliberate gait and posture. He was not quiet for a moment. He toyed with his pipe, which bore the white dot of the English firm Dunhill, or drew circles with a blue pencil around words indicating the main subjects for discussion, which he then crossed out with slanting lines as each part of the discussion was nearing an end, and he kept turning his head this way and that while he fidgeted in his seat.

I was also surprised at something else: he was of very small stature and ungainly build. His torso was short and narrow, while his legs and arms were too long. His left arm and shoulder seemed rather stiff. He had a quite large paunch, and his hair was sparse, though his scalp was not completely bald. His face was white, with ruddy cheeks. Later I learned that this coloration, so characteristic of those who sit long in offices, was known as the "Kremlin complexion" in high Soviet circles. His teeth were black and irregular, turned inward. Not even his mustache was thick or firm. Still the head was not a bad one; it had something of the folk, the peasantry, the paterfamilias about it—with those yellow eyes and a mixture of sternness and roguishness.

I was also surprised at his accent. One could tell that he was not a Russian. Nevertheless his Russian vocabulary was rich, and his manner of expression very vivid and plastic, and replete with Russian proverbs and sayings. As I later became convinced, Stalin was well acquainted with Russian literature—though only Russian—but the only real knowledge he had outside of Russian limits was his knowledge of political history.

One thing did not surprise me: Stalin had a sense of humor—a rough humor, self-assured, but not entirely without finesse and depth. His reactions were quick and acute—and conclusive, which did not mean that he did not hear the speaker out, but it was evident that he was no friend of long explanations. Also remarkable was his relation to Molotov. He obviously regarded the latter as a very close associate, as I later confirmed. Molotov was the only member of the Politburo whom Stalin addressed with the familiar pronoun *ty,* which is in itself significant when it is kept in mind that with Russians the polite form *vy* is normal even among very close friends.

The conversation began by Stalin asking us about our impressions of the Soviet Union. I replied: "We are enthusiastic!"—to which he rejoined: "And we are not enthusiastic, though we are doing all we can to make things better in Russia." It is engraved in my memory that Stalin used the term *Russia,* and not Soviet Union, which meant that he was not only inspiring Russian nationalism but was himself inspired by it and identified himself with it.

But I had no time to think about such things then, for Stalin passed on to relations with the Yugoslav Government-in-exile, turning to Molotov: "Couldn't we somehow trick the English into recognizing Tito, who alone is fighting the Germans?"

Molotov smiled—with a smile in which there was irony and self-satisfaction: "No, that is impossible; they are perfectly aware of developments in Yugoslavia."

I was enthusiastic about this direct, straightforward

manner, which I had not till then encountered in Soviet official circles, and particularly not in Soviet propaganda. I felt that I was at the right spot, and moreover with a man who treated realities in a familiar open way. It is hardly necessary to explain that Stalin was like this only among his own men, that is, among Communists of his line who were devoted to him.

Though Stalin did not promise to recognize the National Committee as a provisional Yugoslav government, it was evident that he was interested in its confirmation. The discussion and his stand were such that I did not even bring up the question directly; that is, it was obvious that the Soviet Government would do this immediately if it considered the conditions ripe and if developments did not take a different turn—through a temporary compromise between Britain and the USSR, and in turn between the National Committee and the Yugoslav Royal Government.

Thus this question remained unsettled. A solution had to wait and be worked out. However, Stalin made up for this by being much more positive regarding the question of extending aid to the Yugoslav forces.

When I mentioned a loan of two hundred thousand dollars, he called this a trifle, saying that we could not do much with this amount, but that the sum would be allocated to us immediately. At my remark that we would repay this as well as all shipments of arms and other equipment after the liberation, he became sincerely angry: "You insult me. You are shedding your blood, and you expect me to charge you for the weapons! I am not

a merchant, we are not merchants. You are fighting for the same cause as we. We are duty bound to share with you whatever we have."

But how would the aid come?

It was decided to ask the Western Allies to establish a Soviet air base in Italy which would help the Yugoslav Partisans. "Let us try," said Stalin. "We shall see what attitude the West takes and how far they are prepared to go to help Tito."

I should note that such a base—consisting of ten transport planes, if I remember well—was soon established.

"But we cannot help you much with planes," Stalin explained further. "An army cannot be supplied by plane, and you are already an army. Ships are needed for this. And we have no ships. Our Black Sea fleet is destroyed."

General Zhukov intervened: "We have ships in the Far East. We could transfer them to our Black Sea harbor and load them with arms and whatever else is needed."

Stalin interrupted him rudely and categorically. From a restrained and almost impish person another Stalin suddenly made his appearance. "What in the world are you thinking about? Are you in your right mind? There is a war going on in the Far East. Somebody is certainly not going to miss the opportunity of sinking those ships. Indeed! The ships have to be purchased. But from whom? There is a shortage of ships just now. Turkey? The Turks don't have many ships, and they won't sell any to us anyway. Egypt? Yes, we could buy some from Egypt. Egypt will sell—Egypt would sell anything, so they'll certainly sell us ships."

Yes, that was the real Stalin, who did not mince words. But I was used to this in my own Party, and I was myself partial to this manner when it came time to reach a final decision.

General Zhukov swiftly and silently made note of Stalin's decisions. But the purchase of ships and the supplying of the Yugoslavs by way of Soviet ships never took place. The chief reason for this was, no doubt, the development of operations on the Eastern Front—the Red Army soon reached the Yugoslav border and was thus able to assist Yugoslavia by land. I maintain that at the time Stalin's intentions to help us were determined.

This was the gist of the conversation.

In passing, Stalin expressed interest in my opinion of individual Yugoslav politicians. He asked me what I thought of Milan Gavrilović, the leader of the Serbian Agrarian Party and the first Yugoslav Ambassador to Moscow. I told him: "A shrewd man."

Stalin commented, as though to himself: "Yes, there are politicians who think shrewdness is the main thing in politics—but Gavrilović impressed me as a stupid man."

I added, "He is not a politician of broad horizons, though I do not think it can be said that he is stupid."

Stalin inquired where Yugoslav King Peter II had found a wife. When I told him that he had taken a Greek princess, he shot back roguishly, "How would it be, Vyacheslav Mikhailovich, if you or I married some foreign princess? Maybe some good could come of it."

Molotov laughed, but in a restrained manner and noiselessly.

At the end I presented Stalin with our gifts. They

looked particularly primitive and wretched now. But he in no way showed any disparagement. When he saw the peasant sandals, he exclaimed: *"Lapti!"*—the Russian word for them. As for the rifle, he opened and shut it, hefted it, and remarked: "Ours is lighter."

The meeting had lasted about an hour.

It was already dusk as we were leaving the Kremlin. The officer who accompanied us obviously caught our enthusiasm. He looked at us joyously and tried to ingratiate himself with every little word. The northern lights extend to Moscow at that time of year, and everything was violet-hued and shimmering—a world of unreality more beautiful than the one in which we had been living.

Somehow that is how it felt in my soul.

6

But I was to have still another, even more significant and interesting, encounter with Stalin. I remember exactly when it occurred: on the eve of the Allied landing in Normandy.

This time too no one told me anything in advance. They simply informed me that I was to go to the Kremlin, and around nine in the evening they put me in a car and drove me there. Not even anyone in the Mission knew where I was going.

They took me to the building in which Stalin had received us, but to other rooms. There Molotov was preparing to leave. While putting on a topcoat and hat, he informed me that we were having supper at Stalin's.

Molotov is not a very talkative man. While he was with Stalin, when in a good mood, and with those who think like him, contact was easy and direct. Otherwise Molotov remained impassive, even in private conversation. Nevertheless, while in the car, he asked me what languages I spoke besides Russian. I told him that I had French. Then the conversation took up the strength and organization of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia. I emphasized that the war found the Yugoslav Party illegal and relatively few in numbers—some ten thousand members, but excellently organized. I added, "Like the Bolshevik Party in the First World War."

"You are wrong!" Molotov retorted. "The First World War found our Party in a very weak state, organizationally disconnected, scattered, and with a small membership. I remember," he continued, "how at the beginning of the war I came illegally from Petrograd to Moscow on Party business. I had nowhere to spend the night but had to risk staying with Lenin's sister!" Molotov also mentioned the name of that sister, and, if I remember correctly, she was called Maria Ilyinichna.

The car sped along at a relatively good clip—about sixty miles an hour, and met with no traffic obstacles. Apparently the traffic police recognized the car in some way and gave it a clear path. Having gotten out of Moscow, we struck out on an asphalt road which I later learned was called the Government Highway because only Government cars were permitted on it long after the war. Is this still true today? Soon we came to a barrier. The of-

ficer in the seat next to the chauffeur flashed a little badge through the windshield and the guard let us through without any formalities. The right window was down. Molotov observed my discomfort because of the draft and began to raise the window. Only then did I notice that the glass was very thick and then it occurred to me that we were riding in an armored car. I think it was a Packard, for Tito got the same kind in 1945 from the Soviet Government.

Some ten days prior to that supper the Germans had carried out a surprise attack on the Supreme Staff of the Yugoslav Army of People's Liberation in Drvar. Tito and the military missions had to flee into the hills. The Yugoslav leaders were forced to undertake long strenuous marches in which valuable time for military and political activities was lost. The problem of food also became acute. The Soviet Military Mission had been informing Moscow in detail about all this, while our Mission in Moscow was in constant contact with responsible Soviet officers, advising them how to get aid to the Yugoslav forces and the Supreme Staff. Soviet planes flew even at night and dropped ammunition and food supplies, though actually without much success, since the packages were scattered over a wide forest area which had to be quickly evacuated.

On the way Molotov wished to know my opinion regarding the situation that had arisen in connection with this. His interest was intense but without any excitement —more for the sake of obtaining a true picture.

We drove about twenty miles, turned left onto a side road, and soon came to a clump of young fir trees. Again

a barrier, then a short ride, and the gate. We found ourselves before a not very large villa which was also in a thick clump of firs.

We no sooner entered a small hall from the entrance than Stalin appeared—this time in shoes and dressed in his plain tunic, buttoned up to his chin, and known so well from his prewar pictures. Like this he seemed even smaller, but also simpler and completely at home. He led us into a small and surprisingly empty study—no books, no pictures, just bare wooden walls. We seated ourselves around a small writing table, and he immediately began to inquire about events concerning the Yugoslav Supreme Staff.

The very manner of his inquiry showed a sharp contrast between Stalin and Molotov. With Molotov not only his thoughts but also the process of their generation was impenetrable. Similarly his mentality remained sealed and inscrutable. Stalin, however, was of a lively, almost restless temperament. He always questioned—himself and others; and he argued—with himself and others. I will not say that Molotov did not easily get excited, or that Stalin did not know how to restrain himself and to dissimulate; later I was to see both in these roles. But Molotov was almost always the same, with hardly a shade of variety, regardless of what or who was under consideration, whereas Stalin was completely different in his own, the Communist, milieu. Churchill has characterized Molotov as a complete modern robot. That is correct. But that is only one, external side of him. Stalin was no less a cold calculator than he. But precisely because his was a more passionate and many-sided nature—though all

sides were equal and so convincing that it seemed he never dissembled but was always truly experiencing each of his roles—he was more penetrable and offered greater possibilities. The impression was gained that Molotov looked upon everything—even upon Communism and its final aims—as relative, as something to which he had to, rather than ought to, subordinate his own fate. It was as though for him there was nothing permanent, as though there was only a transitory and unideal reality which presented itself differently every day and to which he had to offer himself and his whole life. For Stalin, too, everything was transitory. But that was his philosophical view. Behind that impermanence and within it, certain great and final ideals lay hidden—his ideals, which he could approach by manipulating or kneading the reality and the living men who comprised it.

In retrospect it seems to me that these two, Molotov, with his relativism, with his knack for detailed daily routine, and Stalin, with his fanatical dogmatism and, at the same time, broader horizons, his driving quest for further, future possibilities, these two ideally complemented one another. Molotov, though impotent without Stalin's leadership, was indispensable to Stalin in many ways. Though both were unscrupulous in their methods, it seems to me that Stalin selected these methods carefully and fitted them to the circumstances, while Molotov regarded them in advance as being incidental and unimportant. I maintain that he not only incited Stalin into doing many things, but that he also sustained him and dispelled his doubts. And though, in view of his greater versatility and penetration, Stalin claims the principal

role in transforming a backward Russia into a modern industrial imperial power, it would be wrong to underestimate Molotov's role, especially as the practical executive.

Molotov even seemed physically suited to such a role: thorough, deliberate, composed, and tenacious. He drank more than Stalin, but his toasts were shorter and calculated to produce a particular political effect. His personal life was also unremarkable, and when, a year later, I met his wife, a modest and gracious woman, I had the impression that any other might have served his regular, necessary functions.

The conversation with Stalin began with his excited inquiries into the further destinies of the Yugoslav Supreme Staff and the units around it. "They will die of hunger!" he exclaimed.

I tried to show him that this could not happen.

"And why not?" he went on. "How many times have soldiers been overcome by hunger! Hunger is the terrible enemy of every army."

I explained to him, "The terrain is such that something can always be found to eat. We were in much worse situations and still we were not overcome by hunger." I succeeded in calming and assuring him.

He then turned to the possibilities of sending aid. The Soviet front was still too distant to permit fighter planes to escort transports. At one point Stalin flared up, upbraiding the pilots: "They are cowards—afraid to fly during daytime! Cowards, by God, cowards!"

Molotov, who was informed on the whole problem, defended the pilots: "No, they are not cowards. Far from

it. It is just that fighter planes do not have such a range and the transports would be shot down before they ever reached their target. Besides, their payload is insignificant. They have to carry their own fuel to get back. That is the only reason why they have to fly nights and carry a small load."

I supported Molotov, for I knew that Soviet pilots had volunteered to fly in daytime, without the protection of fighter planes, in order to help their fellow-soldiers in Yugoslavia.

At the same time I was in complete agreement with Stalin's insistence on Tito's need, in view of the serious and complicated circumstances and tasks, to find himself a more permanent headquarters and to free himself of daily insecurity. There is no doubt that Stalin also transmitted this view to the Soviet Mission, for it was just at that time, on their insistence, that Tito agreed to evacuate to Italy, and from there to the island of Vis, where he remained until the Red Army got to Yugoslavia. Of course Stalin said nothing about this evacuation, but the idea was taking shape in his mind.

The Allies had already approved the establishment of a Soviet air base in Italy for aid to the Yugoslav soldiers, and Stalin stressed the urgency of sending transport planes there and activating the base itself.

Apparently encouraged by my optimism regarding the final outcome of the current German offensive against Tito, he then took up our relations with the Allies, primarily with Great Britain, which constituted, as it appeared to me even then, the principal reason for the meeting with me.

The substance of his suggestions was, on the one hand, that we ought not to "frighten" the English, by which he meant that we ought to avoid anything that might alarm them into thinking that a revolution was going on in Yugoslavia or an attempt at Communist control. "What do you want with red stars on your caps? The form is not important but what is gained, and you—red stars! By God, stars aren't necessary!" Stalin exclaimed angrily.

But he did not hide the fact that his anger was not very great. It was a reproach, and I explained to him: "It is impossible to discontinue the red stars because they are already a tradition and have acquired a certain meaning among our fighters."

Standing by his opinion, but without great insistence, he turned to relations with the Western Allies from another aspect, and continued, "Perhaps you think that just because we are the allies of the English that we have forgotten who they are and who Churchill is. They find nothing sweeter than to trick their allies. During the First World War they constantly tricked the Russians and the French. And Churchill? Churchill is the kind who, if you don't watch him, will slip a kopeck out of your pocket. Yes, a kopeck out of your pocket! By God, a kopeck out of your pocket! And Roosevelt? Roosevelt is not like that. He dips in his hand only for bigger coins. But Churchill? Churchill—even for a kopeck."

He underscored several times that we ought to beware of the Intelligence Service and of English duplicity, especially with regard to Tito's life. "They were the ones who killed General Sikorski in a plane and then neatly shot down the plane—no proof, no witnesses."

In the course of the meeting Stalin kept repeating these warnings, which I transmitted to Tito upon my return and which probably played a certain role in deciding his conspiratorial night flight from Vis to Soviet-occupied territory in Rumania on September 21, 1944.

Stalin then moved on to relations with the Yugoslav Royal Government. The new royal mandatory was Dr. Ivan Šubašić, who had promised the regulation of relations with Tito and recognition of the People's Liberation Army as the chief force in the struggle against the forces of occupation. Stalin urged, "Do not refuse to hold conversations with Šubašić—on no account must you do this. Do not attack him immediately. Let us see what he wants. Talk with him. You cannot be recognized right away. A transition to this must be found. You ought to talk with Šubašić and see if you can't reach a compromise somehow."

His urging was not categorical, though determined. I transmitted this to Tito and to the members of the Central Committee, and it is probable that it played a role in the well-known Tito-Šubašić Agreement.

Stalin then invited us to supper, but in the hallway we stopped before a map of the world on which the Soviet Union was colored in red, which made it conspicuous and bigger than it would otherwise seem. Stalin waved his hand over the Soviet Union and, referring to what he had been saying just previously against the British and the Americans, he exclaimed, "They will never accept the idea that so great a space should be red, never, never!"

I noticed that on the map the area around Stalingrad was encircled from the west by a blue pencil mark. Apparently Stalin had done this in the course of the Battle of Stalingrad. He detected my glance, and I had the impression that it pleased him, though he did not betray his feelings in any way.

I do not remember the reason, but I happened to remark, "Without industrialization the Soviet Union could not have preserved itself and waged such a war."

Stalin added, "It was precisely over this that we quarreled with Trotsky and Bukharin."

And this was all—here in front of the map—that I ever heard from him about these opponents of his: they had quarreled!

In the dining room two or three people from the Soviet high echelon were already waiting, standing, though there was no one from the Politburo except Molotov. I have forgotten them. Anyway they were silent and withdrawn the whole evening.

In his memoirs Churchill vividly describes an improvised dinner with Stalin at the Kremlin. But this is the way Stalin's dinners were in general.

In a spacious and unadorned, though tasteful, dining room, the front half of a long table was covered with all kinds of foods on warmed heavy silver platters as well as beverages and plates and other utensils. Everyone served himself and sat where he wished around the free half of the table. Stalin never sat at the head, but he always sat in the same chair—the first to the left of the head of the table.

The variety of food and drink was enormous—with meats and hard liquor predominating. But everything else was simple and unostentatious. None of the servants

appeared except when Stalin rang, and the only occasion for this was when I requested beer. Everyone ate what he pleased and as much as he wanted; only there was rather too much of urging and daring us to drink and there were too many toasts.

Such a dinner usually lasted six or more hours—from ten at night till four or five in the morning. One ate and drank slowly, during a rambling conversation which ranged from stories and anecdotes to the most serious political and even philosophical subjects. Unofficially and in actual fact a significant part of Soviet policy was shaped at these dinners. Besides they were the most frequent and most convenient entertainment and only luxury in Stalin's otherwise monotonous and somber life.

Apparently Stalin's co-workers were used to this manner of working and living—and spent their nights dining with Stalin or with one of their own number. They did not arrive in their offices before noon, and usually stayed in them till late evening. This complicated and made difficult the work of the higher administration, but the latter adapted itself, even the diplomatic corps, insofar as they had contacts with members of the Politburo.

There was no established order according to which members of the Politburo or other high officials attended these dinners. Usually those attended who had some connection with the business of the guest or with current issues. Apparently the circle was narrow, however, and it was an especial honor to be invited to such a dinner. Only Molotov was always present, and I maintain that this was not only because he was Commissar, that is, Minister for

Foreign Affairs, but also because he was in fact Stalin's substitute.

At these dinners the Soviet leaders were at their closest, most intimate with one another. Everyone would tell the news from his bailiwick, whom he had met that day, and what plans he was making. The sumptuous table and considerable, though not immoderate, quantities of alcohol enlivened spirits and intensified the atmosphere of cordiality and informality. An uninstructed visitor might hardly have detected any difference between Stalin and the rest. Yet it existed. His opinion was carefully noted. No one opposed him very hard. It all rather resembled a patriarchal family with a crotchety head whose foibles always caused the home folks to be apprehensive.

Stalin took quantities of food that would have been enormous even for a much larger man. He usually picked meat, which reflected his mountaineer origins. He also liked all kinds of specialties, in which this land of various climes and civilizations abounded, but I did not notice that any one food was his particular favorite. He drank moderately, most frequently mixing red wine and vodka in little glasses. I never noticed any signs of drunkenness in him, whereas I could not say the same for Molotov, and especially not for Beria, who was practically a drunkard. As all to a man overate at these dinners, the Soviet leaders ate very little and irregularly during the day, and many of them dieted on fruit and juices one day out of every week, for the sake of *razgruzhenie* (unloading).

It was at these dinners that the destiny of the vast Russian land, of the newly acquired territories, and, to a considerable degree, of the human race was decided. And

even if the dinners failed to inspire those spiritual creators—the "engineers of the human spirit"—to great deeds, many such deeds were probably buried there forever.

Still I never heard any talk of inner-Party opposition or how to deal with it. Apparently this belonged largely to the jurisdiction of Stalin and the Secret Police, and since the Soviet leaders are also human, they gladly forgot about conscience, all the more so because any appeal to conscience would be dangerous to their own fate.

I shall mention only what seemed significant to me in the facile and imperceptible rambling from subject to subject at that session.

Calling to mind earlier ties between the South Slavs and Russia, I said, "But the Russian tsars did not understand the aspirations of the South Slavs—they were interested in imperialistic expansion, and we in liberation."

Stalin agreed, but in a different way: "Yes, the Russian tsars lacked horizons."

Stalin's interest in Yugoslavia was different from that of the other Soviet leaders. He was not concerned with the sacrifices and the destruction, but with what kind of internal relations had been created and what the actual power of the rebel movement was. He did not collect even this information through questioning, but in the course of the conversation itself.

At one point he expressed interest in Albania. "What is really going on over there? What kind of people are they?"

I explained: "In Albania pretty much the same thing is happening as in Yugoslavia. The Albanians are the

most ancient Balkan people—older than the Slavs, and even the ancient Greeks."

"But how did their settlements get Slavic names?" Stalin asked. "Haven't they some connection with the Slavs?"

I explained this too. "The Slavs inhabited the valleys in earlier times—hence the Slavic place names—and then in Turkish times the Albanians pushed them out."

Stalin winked roguishly. "I had hoped that the Albanians were at least a little Slavic."

In telling him about the mode of warfare in Yugoslavia and its ferocity, I pointed out that we did not take German prisoners because they killed all of our prisoners.

Stalin interrupted, laughing: "One of our men was leading a large group of Germans, and on the way he killed all but one. They asked him, when he arrived at his destination: 'And where are all the others?' 'I was just carrying out the orders of the Commander in Chief,' he said, 'to kill every one to the last man—and here is the last man.' "

In the course of the conversation, he remarked about the Germans, "They are a queer people, like sheep. I remember from my childhood: wherever the ram went, all the rest followed. I remember also when I was in Germany before the Revolution: a group of German Social Democrats came late to the Congress because they had to wait to have their tickets confirmed, or something of the sort. When would Russians ever do that? Someone has said well: 'In Germany you cannot have a revolution because you would have to step on the lawns.' "

He asked me to tell him what the Serbian words were

for certain things. Of course the great similarity between Russian and Serbian was apparent. "By God," Stalin exclaimed, "there's no doubt about it: the same people."

There were also anecdotes. Stalin liked one in particular which I told. "A Turk and a Montenegrin were talking during a rare moment of truce. The Turk wondered why the Montenegrins constantly waged war. 'For plunder,' the Montenegrin replied. 'We are poor and hope to get some booty. And what are you fighting for?' 'For honor and glory,' replied the Turk. To which the Montenegrin rejoined, 'Everyone fights for what he doesn't have.' " Stalin commented, roaring: "By God, that's deep: everyone fights for what he doesn't have."

Molotov laughed too, but again sparely and soundlessly. He was truly unable either to give or to receive humor.

Stalin inquired which leaders I had met in Moscow, and when I mentioned Dimitrov and Manuilsky, he remarked, "Dimitrov is a smarter man than Manuilsky, much smarter."

At this he remarked on the dissolution of the Comintern, "They, the Westerners, are so sly that they mentioned nothing about it to us. And we are so stubborn that had they mentioned it, we would not have dissolved it at all! The situation with the Comintern was becoming more and more abnormal. Here Vyacheslav Mikhailovich and I were racking our brains, while the Comintern was pulling in its own direction—and the discord grew worse. It is easy to work with Dimitrov, but with the others it was harder. Most important of all, there was something abnormal, something unnatural about the very existence

of a general Communist forum at a time when the Communist parties should have been searching for a national language and fighting under the conditions prevailing in their own countries."

In the course of the evening two dispatches arrived; Stalin handed me both to read.

One reported what Šubašić had said to the United States State Department. Šubašić's stand was this: We Yugoslavs cannot be against the Soviet Union nor can we pursue an anti-Russian policy, for Slavic and pro-Russian traditions are very strong among us.

Stalin remarked about this, "This is Šubašić scaring the Americans. But why is he scaring them? Yes, scaring them! But why, why?"

And then he added, probably noticing the astonishment on my face, "They steal our dispatches, we steal theirs."

The second dispatch was from Churchill. He announced that the landing in France would begin on the next day. Stalin began to make fun of the dispatch. "Yes, there'll be a landing, if there is no fog. Until now there was always something that interfered. I suspect tomorrow it will be something else. Maybe they'll meet up with some Germans! What if they meet up with some Germans! Maybe there won't be a landing then, but just promises as usual."

Hemming and hawing in his customary way, Molotov began to explain: "No, this time it will really be so."

My impression was that Stalin did not seriously doubt the Allied landing, but his aim was to ridicule it, especially the reasons for its previous postponements.

As I sum up that evening today, it seems to me that I might conclude that Stalin was deliberately frightening the Yugoslav leaders in order to decrease their ties with the West, and at the same time he tried to subordinate their policy to his interests and to his relations with the Western states, primarily with Great Britain.

Thanks to both ideology and methods, personal experience and historical heritage, he regarded as sure only whatever he held in his fist, and everyone beyond the control of his police was a potential enemy. Because of the conditions of war, the Yugoslav revolution had been wrested from his control, and the power that was generating behind it was becoming too conscious of its potential for him to be able simply to give it orders. He was conscious of all this, and so he was simply doing what he could—exploiting the anticapitalist prejudices of the Yugoslav leaders against the Western states. He tried to bind those leaders to himself and to subordinate their policy to his.

The world in which the Soviet leaders lived—and that was my world too—was slowly taking on a new appearance to me: horrible unceasing struggle on all sides. Everything was being stripped bare and reduced to strife which changed only in form and in which only the stronger and the more adroit survived. Full of admiration for the Soviet leaders even before this, I now succumbed to a heady enthusiasm for the inexhaustible will and awareness which never left them for a moment.

That was a world in which there was no choice other than victory or death.

That was Stalin—the builder of a new social system.

On taking my leave, I again asked Stalin if he had any comments to make concerning the work of the Yugoslav Party. He replied, "No, I do not. You yourselves know best what is to be done."

On arriving at Vis, I reported this to Tito and to the other members of the Central Committee. And I summed up my Moscow trip: The Comintern factually no longer exists, and we Yugoslav Communists have to shift for ourselves. We have to depend primarily on our own forces.

As I was leaving after that dinner, Stalin presented me with a sword for Tito—the gift of the Supreme Soviet. To match this magnificent and exalted gift I added my own modest one, on my way back via Cairo: an ivory chess set. I do not think there was any symbolism there. But it does seem to me that even then there existed inside of me, suppressed, a world different from Stalin's.

From the clump of firs around Stalin's villa there rose the mist and the dawn. Stalin and Molotov, tired after another sleepless night, shook hands with me at the entrance. The car bore me away into the morning and to a not yet awakened Moscow, bathed in the blue haze of June and the dew. There came back to me the feeling I had had when I set foot on Russian soil: The world is not so big after all when viewed from this land. And perhaps not unconquerable—with Stalin, with the ideas that were supposed finally to have revealed to man the truth about society and about himself.

It was a beautiful dream—in the reality of war. It never

even occurred to me to determine which of these was the more real, just as I would not be able today to determine which, the dream or the reality, failed more in living up to its promises.

Men live in dreams and in realities.