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Report of Milovan Djilas about a Secret Soviet-Bulgarian-Yugoslav Meeting

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Summary:

Stalin calls a secret meeting with Soviet, Bulgarian, and Yugoslav officials regarding discrepancies and a general lack of coordination between the three governments in several recent incidences.

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Kardelj and Vacaric arrived in Moscow on Sunday, February 8, and until Tuesday, February 10, nobody gave them any news.[1] On Tuesday before noon Baranov[2] phoned to say that Kardelj and the others should stay put, because in the evening, at nine o'clock we would be invited to the Kremlin. Lesakov told us that the Bulgarians arrived on Monday, but stressed that these were "the top guys" from Bulgaria-Dimitrov, Kolarov and Trajco Kostov.

Indeed, we were invited to the Kremlin at nine o'clock in the evening. We arrived punctually, but since the Bulgarians were late, we sat for 10-15 minutes in Stalin's reception room, and when they joined us, we walked in [to Stalin's office].

So, the meeting took place on Tuesday, February 10, at 9:15 Moscow time, and it lasted about three hours. When we entered [the room], Soviet representatives were already there. Those present at the meeting were: Stalin (at the head of the table), Molotov, Malenkov, Zhdanov, Suslov and Zorin (to the right side from Stalin along the table), and Dimitrov, Kolarov, Kostov, Kardelj, Djilas, Vacaric (to the left side from Stalin along the table).

Molotov spoke first. At first, he stressed that this was already a matter of serious disagreement between them [the Soviets] and Yugoslavia and Bulgaria. These disagreements were inadmissible both from the party and the state point of view. As examples of the serious discord he gave three: firstly, the conclusion of the Yugoslav-Bulgarian Treaty of Union- lack of coordination between the USSR, on one hand, and Bulgaria and Yugoslavia, on the other hand; secondly, the declaration of Dimitrov about a Federation of East European and Balkan countries, including Greece - lack of coordination between the USSR, on one side, and Bulgaria, on the other; thirdly, the introduction of a Yugoslav division into Southern Albania (Korcha)[3] - lack of coordination between the USSR, on one hand, and Yugoslavia, on the other. As to the first point, he stresses that the Soviet government informed the Yugoslav and Bulgarian governments-and they agreed to this-that one should not conclude a treaty with Bulgaria until the expiration of limitations imposed by the Peace Treaty [with Bulgaria in 1946]. However, the Yugoslav and Bulgarian governments concluded the treaty, and the Soviet government learned about it from the newspapers. With regard to the second point he stresses that comrade Dimitrov grew too fond of press conferences. Meanwhile, if Dimitrov and Tito make announcements for the press, the whole world believes that such is also the view of the Soviet Union.[4]

At this moment, Stalin cut in to remind [us] that the Poles who were in Moscow in those days, spoke against [the Federation]. That means that the Soviet representatives first asked them what they thought of Dimitrov's declaration. And they said that they agreed, but when Stalin told them that the Soviet Union was against it, they also said that they were against, but they had previously believed that this was a position and request of Moscow.[5] Stalin adds that the subsequent clarification by Dimitrov (he probably had in mind the announcement of the Bulgarian telegraph agency) explained nothing. Stalin quotes from this announcement that says how Austria-Hungary had thwarted a customs union between Bulgaria and Serbia, and adds that it means-the Germans had worked against a customs union, and now we do (i.e. the Soviet Union).[6] Stalin adds that Dimitrov diverts attention from domestic issues to foreign affairs-Federation, etc.[7]

Then Molotov passes to a third point of disagreement and stresses from the very beginning that they [in Moscow] accidentally learned about the entry of the Yugoslav troops into Albania. The Albanians told the Russians that they thought that the entry of the Yugoslav troops had been coordinated with the Soviet Union, and meanwhile it was not so. At that moment Molotov began citing some sort of dispatches, and Stalin told him to read them aloud. He asks Stalin which message he should read. Stalin leans [over] and points out [one]. Molotov reads a message from [Soviet ambassador in Yugoslavia] Lavrent'ev about his meeting with Tito. From this reading, it becomes clear that the message is an answer to the question of the Soviet government if there

is a decision about the entry of Yugoslav troops into Albania, and it says that such a decision-coordinated with Hoxha-really exists, that the motive comes from the notification about a probable attack against Albania; then the message points out that Tito said that he does not agree with Moscow that in case of an entry of Yugoslav troops into Albania, the Anglo-Americans would intervene beyond a campaign in the press. Tito, according to the message, said that, if it came to anything serious, Yugoslavia and the USSR would sort it out [raskhlebitv kashu] together, however, after the Soviet demarche about this issue he would not send a division [to Albania]. At the end, Molotov points out that Tito did not inform them about his disagreement with Moscow. He stresses that disagreements are inadmissible both from the party and state viewpoint and that disagreements should be taken out [for discussion], and not concealed, and that it is necessary to inform and consult. One must be cautious with regard to press conferences.[8]

Following Molotov, Dimitrov spoke. He, as well as the other Bulgarians and Kardelj (he was the only one among the Yugoslavs who spoke), did not give his reasons coherently, because Stalin kept interrupting him. He said that what Yugoslavia and Bulgaria publicized at Bled was not a treaty, but only a statement that a future treaty had been agreed upon. Soviet representatives affirm that they learned about this affair from newspapers, etc.[9] Dimitrov stresses that Bulgaria's economic difficulties are so serious that it cannot develop without cooperation with other countries. It is true that he got carried away at a press conference.[10] Stalin interrupts and tells him that he wanted to shine with a new word, and that is wrong, and it is a mistake because such a Federation is not feasible.[11] Dimitrov says that he did not target the USSR by his assertion that Austria-Hungary had blocked a Bulgarian-Serb customs union. He stresses, at last, that there are essentially no disagreements between the foreign policies of Bulgaria and the Soviet Union.

Stalin interrupts and asserts that there are substantial differences and there is a practice of the Leninists-to recognize differences and mistakes and to liquidate them. Dimitrov says that they make mistakes because they are only learning foreign policy, but Stalin replies to this that he [Dimitrov] is a senior political figure who had been engaged in politics for forty years, and in his case it is not mistakes, but a different perception [than the USSR's] (he [Stalin] said it two or three times during the meeting, addressing Dimitrov).[12] As to the repeated emphasis by Dimitrov on the fact that Bulgaria must get closer with other countries for economic reasons, Stalin says that he agrees if one speaks of a customs union between Yugoslavia and Bulgaria, but if one speaks of Romania (later, as I recall, he also mentioned Hungary), then he is against it. In general, when he spoke about such ties of Bulgaria with which the Soviet Union disagreed, most often [he] cited Romania as an example. It happens as a result of a clause about the customs union in the Bulgarian-Romanian treaty and because, I believe, that the joint Bulgarian-Romanian communique calls for coordination of plans between Romania and Bulgaria. These issues were raised at the meeting and often referred to by Soviet representatives. They have in mind a forthcoming conclusion of the treaties between Bulgaria and Hungary, and [Bulgaria and] other countries. Thus, Soviet criticism of Romanian-Bulgarian relations touches on future Bulgarian-Hungarian relations, and, obviously, on the relations of Yugoslavia with Hungary and Romania.

Then Kolarov began to speak. He says about this part from the Bulgarian announcement regarding a customs union between Serbia and Bulgaria, where nobody meant to hint at the USSR, and as to the customs union between Romania and Bulgaria, the Romanians are also all for it. Besides, the Romanian-Bulgarian treaty had been earlier sent to the Soviet government and it already made only one amendment so that an article [on the joint defense] against any aggressor would be replaced by an article against Germany or a power that could be in alliance with it, and there were no comments on the Bulgarian-Romanian customs union. Then a brief exchange between Stalin and Molotov occurs. Molotov confirms what Kolarov says. Stalin stresses again that he is against the Bulgarian-Romanian customs union, although Bulgarians have a reason to think otherwise, on the basis of dispatches. He

stresses that he did not know that there was an article about a customs union in the Romanian-Bulgarian treaty that had been previously sent to the Soviet government. Dimitrov says that that it was the very cause why in his statement he went further than necessary.[13]

Stalin says to him that he [Dimitrov] wanted to surprise the whole world and adds that it looked like the secretary of the Comintern was explaining tediously and meticulously what should be done and how. [Stalin] says that this gives food to American reactionaries [reaktziia]. He then speaks about the significance of the American elections and [says] that one should be careful to do nothing to give the reactionaries arguments that could facilitate their victory. In his opinion, we should not give the reaction anything to snatch at [nikakoi zatsepki]. The current American government still contains itself, but money bags [denezhniie meshki] and sharks can come to power. The reactionaries in American, when they hear such statements, say that in Eastern Europe there is not only a bloc in the making, but [the countries] are merging into common states. He tells Dimitrov and the others that they are overdoing it [perebarshchivaiut], like the Young Communists and then like women take everything to the streets. Then he makes a linkage to the issue of Albania. The three world powers-the USSR, England, and America guaranteed Albania's independence by a special agreement. Albania is our weakest spot, because other states are either members of the United Nations, or recognized, etc., but Albania is not [recognized]. If Yugoslav troops entered Albania, the reactionaries in England and America would be able to use it and step forward as defenders of Albanian independence. Instead of sending troops we should work intensely to build up the Albanian army, we should teach the Albanians, and then, if they are attacked, let the Albanian Skupcina [parliament] appeal to Yugoslavia for help. He makes an example of China, where nobody[14] can reproach the USSR,[15] but the Chinese are fighting well and advancing; he then adds that the Albanians are not worse than the Chinese and they must be taught. Then he adds that we should sign a protocol about joint consultations.[16] He says that the Bulgarians and the Yugoslavs do not report anything [to the Soviets], and they [the Soviets] have to find out everything on the street, usually ending up faced with a fait accompli.

Kostov then begins to complain how hard it is to be a small and undeveloped country. He would like to raise some economic issues. Stalin cuts him short and says that there are competent ministries to do it, and this is the discussion of the differences.

Kardelj starts to speak.[17] On the first point [of disagreements] he says that it was not a treaty that was published, but only a communiqué about the discussion leading to a treaty; he adds that we [Yugoslavs and Bulgarians] were too hasty. This triggers an exchange similar to that when Dimitrov made the same point. [Andrei] Zhdanov intervenes and says that they [in the Soviet Union] learned about this matter from the newspapers. On Albania he says that not informing them on that was a serious error. Stalin cuts in and says that we [in Yugoslavia] oversimplify this matter, but it is a complicated matter.[18] Kardelj then mentioned the constant Greek provocations, the weakness of the Albanian army, and that we are linked to Albania economically and that we underwrite [soderzhim] its army. Two or three times Stalin interrupted. For instance, regarding a Greek invasion of Albania, he said that it was possible. Then he asked if the situation was really such that one should not have any faith in the Albanian army, and added that the Albanians must be taught and their army must be built up. Molotov says that they have no information about any kind of attack on Albania and wondered that we withhold our information from them. Then, reacting to Kardelj's explanation that the anti-Albanian campaign in Greece is worsening, Stalin demanded [to know] if we believe in the victory of the Greek guerrillas. Kardelj responds that we do. Stalin says that recently he and the rest of his collaborators have had grave doubts about it. He says that one should assist Greece [i.e. guerrillas] if there are hopes of winning, and if not, then we should rethink and terminate the guerrilla movement. The Anglo-Americans will spare no effort to keep Greece [in their sphere],[19] and the only serious obstacle [zakavika] for them is the fact that we assist the guerrillas. Molotov adds that we are constantly and justifiably blamed for

assistance to the guerrillas. Stalin says that if there are no conditions for victory, one must not be afraid to admit it. It is not for the first time in history that although there are no conditions now, they will appear later.[20] Then Kolarov speaks and tells that the American, British and French embassies appealed to them [Bulgarians] with a warning not to recognize the government of Markos.[21] Kolarov says that the American ambassador is courteous, but the British ambassador is arrogant. Stalin cuts in and says that it means that the American is a great scoundrel and they [ambassadors of the US and UK] always trade roles. Stalin also said that we should not link the future of our state with a victory of the guerrillas in Greece. On Dimitrov's comment that a victory of the Monarchists-Fascists would seriously aggravate the situation in the Balkans, Stalin says that it is not proven.

Then Dimitrov and Kolarov spoke about other matters that did not relate to the agenda of the meeting. Among other things, Molotov cited a paragraph from the Yugoslav-Bulgarian treaty which read that Yugoslavia and Bulgaria would act in the spirit of the United Nations and would support all initiatives directed at the preservation of peace and against all hotbeds of aggression. Molotov cites from the treaty to reject Dimitrov's attempts at a linkage between the struggle against "hotbeds of aggression" with the actions of the United Nations. Stalin adds that it would mean a preventive war which is a Komsomol [i.e. juvenile] stunt, a loud phrase, material for the enemy. Stalin then tells a story, hinting at the Komsomol behavior, that there was a seaman in Leningrad after the revolution who condemned and threatened the whole world by radio.[22] Molotov then spoke about oats that Albania asked the USSR for, and that Tito had told Lavrent'ev that Yugoslavia would give oats, and after that the Yugoslavs are instructing the Albanians to buy oats in Argentina.[23] Stalin said half-jokingly that the Yugoslavs are afraid of having Russians in Albania and because of this are in a hurry to send their troops.[24] He also said that the Bulgarians and Yugoslavs think that the USSR stands against a unification of Bulgaria and Yugoslavia, but it does not want to admit it. Molotov raised some kind of a point from the Bulgarian-Romanian communiqué about the coordination of plans and mentioned that it would have been essentially a merger of these states. Stalin is categorical that this is inconceivable and that Dimitrov would soon see for himself that it is nonsense, and instead of cooperation it would bring about a quarrel between the Romanians and Bulgarians. Therefore mutual relations should be limited to trade agreements.

Then Stalin laid out a Soviet view that in Eastern Europe one should create three federations- Polish-Czechoslovak, Romanian-Hungarian and Yugoslav-Bulgarian-Albanian.[25] Bulgaria and Yugoslavia [he said] may unite tomorrow if they wish, there are no constraints on this, since Bulgaria today is a sovereign state. Kardelj says that we were not in a hurry to unify with Bulgaria and Albania, in view of international and domestic moments, but Stalin reacts to it by saying that it should not come too late, and that the conditions for that are ripe. At first, Yugoslavia and Bulgaria must unite, and then let Albania join them. This should be agreed upon through People's Skupcina [parliaments], by the will of the peoples. Stalin thinks that one should begin with political unification and then it would be difficult [for the West] to attack Albania. As to a Bulgarian-Yugoslav unification, Stalin repeatedly stressed that this question has ripened, and one even began a discussion about the name of [a united] state.

Then Kardelj returned to the issue about what after all one should do in Albania, but [Stalin's] answer boiled down to what Stalin said earlier, i.e., the Albanian army ought to be taught, and that Albania should ask for assistance in case of aggression. As to oats, Kardelj says that it is possible that the enemy interfered to spoil Yugoslav-Soviet relations (Molotov kept silent).[26] Then Kardelj says that he does not see any big differences between Yugoslavia and the USSR in foreign policy. Stalin interrupts him and says that it is incorrect, that there are differences and that to hide them would mean opportunism. We should not be afraid to recognize differences. Stalin stresses that even they, Lenin's pupils, many times disagreed with him. They would have a quarrel on some issue, then talk it over, work out a position and move on. He believes

that we should put the question more boldly about the guerrillas in Greece. Then he mentions the case of China again, but now he raises another aspect. In particular, that they [the Politburo] invited the Chinese comrades and considered that there were no conditions for successful uprising in China and that some kind of "modus vivendi" [with the Guomindang] had to be found. The Chinese comrades, according to Stalin, in words agreed with the Soviet comrades, but in practice kept accumulating forces. The Russians twice gave them assistance in weapons. And it turned out that the Chinese, not the Soviet comrades, were right, as Stalin says. But he does not believe that the case of the Greek guerrillas falls into the same category. On China he says that they [the Soviets] do not have their people there, except in Port Arthur [Lushunkov] which is a neutral zone according to the treaty with the Chinese government. He spoke about the tactics of the Chinese who avoided attacking cities until they had accumulated sufficient strength.[27]

Kardelj speaks again and says it was a mistake that we [the Yugoslavs] failed to inform them. Stalin interrupts him and says that it was not a mistake, it was a system [a policy] and that we do not inform them on anything.

Then Stalin and Molotov propose a protocol on mutual coordination of foreign affairs. Kardelj agrees with that. Stalin proposes that we inquire of them [the Soviets] on all questions of interest to us, and that they would also inform us about everything.[28]

Then Dimitrov diverted the conversation to economic and other issues. When Dimitrov says there are important economic issues, Stalin cut him short by remarking that he would speak about it with a joint Yugoslav-Bulgarian government. During subsequent discussion Stalin raised a question about how the Albanians would react to such a union, and Kardelj and Djilas explained to him that the Albanians would accept it well, because it would be in their national interests, considering that eight hundred thousand Albanians reside in Yugoslavia.[29] Stalin also said with regard to Albania that one on our side [u nas odin] has already committed suicide,³⁰ and that we want to overthrow Hoxha and that it should not be done hastily and crudely-"the boot on the throat"-but gradually and indirectly. Stalin says again that at first Yugoslavia and Bulgaria ought to unite, and then Albania should join them. And Albania must declare itself about its desire to join. Then Kostov raised the question that the [Bulgarian-Soviet] treaty about technical assistance, also about patents, licensing and authors' rights, is not favorable for the Bulgarians (he failed to mention if this treaty has already been signed). Molotov said that this matter will need consideration, and Stalin said that Kostov should submit a note [to Molotov].

Then we discussed the answer of the Sovinformburo to the slander of the Americans regarding [their] publication of the documents on Soviet-German relations.[31] Kardelj gave a positive assessment to the answer published in Pravda and Dimitrov says that the Western powers wanted to unite with Germany against the USSR. Stalin replies that he had nothing to hide [on vse vynosit otkrito], and the Western powers did not speak openly, in particular that Europe without Russia means against Russia. Molotov remarks during the conversation that the Bulgarians do not put enough camouflage on the number of their troops and that it exceeds the clauses [about limits] in the Peace Treaty, and the Bulgarians may be criticized for it. Dimitrov said to this that, on the contrary, the number is even below the limit stipulated by the Peace Treaty. Molotov was satisfied with that [answer] and did not mention it again.[32] Dimitrov raised the issue about the conclusion of a treaty on mutual assistance between the USSR and Bulgaria. He stressed that it would be of great significance for Bulgaria. Stalin agreed with this, but added that among the Quisling countries[33] [the USSR] would first conclude treaties with neighbors: with Romania-this treaty is almost ready, with Hungary and Finland.

Then Stalin underlines that we (i.e. Yugoslavia and Bulgaria) must build up our economy, culture, army, and that a federation is an abstraction.

Suddenly Stalin asked about "our friend Pijade,"[34] Kardelj told him that he is working on our legislation.

Kardelj asked [the Soviets] about their opinion what answer should be given to the Italian government who asked the Yugoslav government to support Italian claims to govern their former colonies. Stalin said that these demands must be supported and asked Molotov how [the Soviet side] responded. Molotov says that they still have to respond and that he believes they should wait. Stalin told them that there is no point in waiting and the answer should be sent immediately. He said that former Italian colonies should be put under Italian governance [trusteeship] and remarked that kings, when they could not agree over the booty, used to give [disputed] land to a weakest feudal so they could snatch it from him later at some opportune moment, and that feudal lords invited a foreigner to rule them so they could easily overthrow him when they become fed up with him.

On this note the conversation ended.

I would remind [napominaiu] that the criticism of Dimitrov by Stalin, although rough in form, was expressed in friendly tones. This report was composed on the basis of notes taken at the meeting and from memory.

[1] [Translator's Note: In Conversations with Stalin (1962) Milovan Djilas recounted this meeting in great detail. He mentioned that he had submitted a written report of that meeting to the Yugoslav Central Committee, but that he could not get access to it when he wrote the book. As the comparison of the document with the book reveals, Djilas' memory retained with remarkable precision some pivotal moments of the conversation.-V.Z.]

[2] Baranov, Leonid Semenovich-assistant director of the CC VKP(b) [Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (of Bolsheviks)] Department of Foreign Policy.

[3] The statement concerns the Yugoslav intention of deploying a division, which never took place.

[4] In the Bulgarian records, particularly Kolarov's account, this is presented in the following manner:

"It seems to us that com. Georgii Dimitrov has taken a fancy to press conferences and interviews, thus giving opportunity to be prompted with questions which ought not be discussed in the first place. This is misguided and undesirable. During the course of the interview a plan was set forth which goes too far without any attempt to consult with whomever it may concern. A question was put forth of creating a federation or a confederation, a customs union that would include both Poland and Greece. Com. Georgii Dimitrov speaks of all these things without being granted authority by anyone concerned. This is misguided in principle and is tactically harmful. This eases the burden of the creators of the Western bloc." And further: "We must take the position in such a way that all would know-both enemies and friends-that this is our point of view. We consider this absolutely wrong and unacceptable in the future." This is contained in slightly abbreviated form in the Soviet record as well.

[5] According to Bulgarian and Soviet records this was spoken by Molotov, not Stalin. Kolarov's account puts it in the following manner: "When we spoke with the Polish comrades, they said: We thought that this was Moscow's opinion. Everyone thinks that if Dimitrov or Tito speaks of a number of countries, it originates from the USSR. In essence, the Polish comrades said that they are against Georgii Dimitrov's idea and consider it misguided."

[6] According to the Bulgarian and Soviet records, this was also spoken by Molotov, while Stalin supplemented this with separate remarks.

[7] Before these statements by Stalin, the Bulgarian records, particularly Kolarov's

account, show the following remarks by Molotov:

"[Czechoslovak President Eduard] Benes' newspaper immediately hastened to write that `Dimitrov puts out communist plans, and now the Czech communists must answer.' On the other hand, this position of Georgii Dimitrov contradicts the declaration of the nine communist parties." The same is corroborated by the Soviet record.

[8] According to Bulgarian and Soviet records, this statement by Molotov sounded more categorical. Kolarov's account records the following words: "In the future, com. Georgii Dimitrov must rid himself and us of the risks of such statements."

[9] [Translator's Note: This intervention is presented dramatically in Djilas's book. ""Yes, but you didn't consult with us!" Stalin shouted. "We learn about your doings in the newspapers! You chatter like women from the housetops whatever occurs to you, and then the newspapermen grab hold of it." (p. 175)-V.Z.]

[10] The Bulgarian and Soviet records note somewhat stronger self-criticism by Dimitrov. Kolarov recorded his words: "This was harmful and fundamentally misguided. This was self-indulgence. Such statements will not be repeated in the future."

[11] According to Bulgarian records, in particular Kolarov's, Stalin said: "We wanted to say another word. The Poles and Czechs are laughing at your federation. Ask them-do they want it?" The same is corroborated by the Soviet record.

[12] According to the Bulgarian records, in particular Kolarov's account, Stalin said to Dimitrov: "You are a politician and must think not only of your own intentions, but also of the consequences of your statements." Later, returning once more to this question, the Soviet leader said to Dimitrov: "You are an old politician. What possible mistakes could one speak of? You may have another goal in mind, but you yourself will not admit it. You must not give interviews so often." According to the Soviet record, Stalin, noting that Dimitrov has apparently another goal that must be revealed, added that these are not little children sitting here, and Dimitrov is not a "pre-schooler."

[Translator's Note: This part of the conversation is dramatized in Djilas' book in the following dialogue:

"Stalin, decidedly and firmly: `There are serious differences, Why hide it? It was Lenin's practice always to recognize errors and to remove them as quickly as possible.'

Dimitrov, placatingly, almost submissively: 'True, we erred. But through errors we are learning our way in foreign politics.'

Stalin, harshly and tauntingly: 'Learning! You have been in politics fifty years-and now you are correcting errors! Your trouble is not errors, but a stand different from ours.'"

Then Djilas writes that Dimitrov's ears "were red, and big red blotches cropped up on his face covering his spots of eczema. His sparse hair straggled and hung in lifeless strands over his wrinkled neck. I felt sorry for him...The Lion of the Leipzig Trials...looked dejected and dispirited." (pp. 176-177)-V.Z.]

[13] The entire conversation recorded by Djilas about the draft of a Bulgarian-Romanian treaty sent to the Soviet government, which in turn expressed no objections over the article on the customs union, is absent from the Soviet and Bulgarian records. Kolarov's account contains only the following phrase: "Kolarov points out that the treaty with Romania had been harmonized with Moscow."

[14] [Translator's note: "nobody" here means the United States and Great Britain, not the Communist Party of China. This phrase reveals Stalin's emphasis on realpolitik as a method to prevent "imperialists'" consolidation and intervention into Balkan affairs.-V.Z.]

[15] The Bulgarian records contain the following words expressed by Stalin over this matter: "You see the kind of war that is raging in China. We don't have a single one of our soldiers there."

[16] According to Bulgarian records, the question of signing a protocol on mutual consultation arose in connection with Dimitrov's statement on 10 February concerning Moscow: "We also receive little information from here." Stalin responded: "You have the right to demand from us to keep you informed. Let us then put

together a protocol on obligatory consultation between us on all important international questions." This is similarly recorded in the Soviet record.

[17] [Translator's note: According to Djilas, "he was red and, what was a sign of agitation with him, he drew his head down between his shoulders and made pauses in his sentences where they did not belong." (p. 179)-V.Z.]

[18] [Translator's note: The exchange on the failure to inform the USSR on sending Yugoslav troops to Albania was more serious and emotional, according to Djilas' book: ""Stalin shouted, "This could lead to serious international complications..." Kardelj explained that all that had not yet been final and added that he did not remember a single foreign problem but that the Yugoslav Government did not consult with the Soviets..."It's not so!" Stalin cried. "You don't consult at all. That is not your mistake, but your policy-yes, your policy!" Cut off, Kardelj fell silent and did not press his view." (pp.179-180)-V.Z.]

[19] [Translator's Note: In Djilas's book Stalin says: "No, they have no prospect of success at all. What do you think, that Great Britain and the United States-the United States, the most powerful state in the world -will permit you to break their line of communication in the Mediterranean Sea! Nonsense. And we have no navy. The uprising in Greece must be stopped, and as quickly as possible." (p. 182) -V.Z.]

[20] As noted in the Bulgarian records, in particular in Kolarov's account, Stalin cautioned the Yugoslav side against careless involvement in Albania, where the USA and England might strike back, claiming to be defenders of Albanian independence. With this in mind, Stalin put this question to Kardelj: "If the Greek partisans are defeated, will you go to war?" Kardelj replied in the negative. To which Stalin said: "I am arguing on the basis of an analysis of the current forces of the partisans and their enemies. Recently I have started to doubt the prospects of a partisan victory. If you are not convinced that the partisans will win, the partisan movement ought to be wrapped up. The Americans and the English are very interested in the Mediterranean sea. They want to have a base in Greece and will spare no means to preserve a government that listens to them. This is an important international question. If the partisan movement is wrapped up, then they will have no reason to attack you. It's not so easy to start a war now. If you are convinced that the partisans have a chance of victory, then that's a different matter. But I somewhat doubt it."

The Bulgarian records note the following remark by Kostov: "We believe that a defeat of the partisan movement in Greece would create a very difficult situation for other Balkan countries." To this Stalin replied:

"Of course the partisans must be supported. But if the prospects for the partisan movement are falling, it is better to postpone the fight until better times. That which is lacking in relative forces cannot be supplemented with moans and exclamations. What is needed is a thoughtful reckoning of forces. If this shows that at the present time the matter is moving nowhere, one must not be afraid to admit it. There have been other instances when partisan movements were terminated given an unfavorable situation. If it's impossible today, it will be possible tomorrow. You are afraid to state the question clearly. You are under the impression of a "moral obligation." If you cannot lift the weight which you have hoisted upon yourselves, you must admit it. You must not be afraid of some kind of a "categorical imperative" of moral obligation. We do not have such categorical imperatives. The entire question rests in the balance of forces. We go into battle not when the enemy wants us to, but when it's in our interests."

Further discussion of the Greek question, following these observations by Stalin, is recorded in the Bulgarian records:

"Kardelj: Over the next several months the chances of the partisans will become clear.

Stalin: In that case, fine, you can wait. Perhaps you are right. I also doubted the abilities of the Chinese and advised them to come to a temporary agreement with Jiang Jieshi [Chiang Kai-Shek]. They formally agreed with us, but in practice continued on their own course-that is, mobilizing the forces of the Chinese people. After this, they openly raised the question: we will continue to fight; the people support us. We said: fine, what do you need? It turned out that the conditions were very favorable to them. They turned out to be right, we turned out to be wrong. Maybe we will turn out

to be wrong here as well. But we want you to act with certainty. Kolarov: Will America allow a partisan victory?

Stalin: They won't be asked. If there are enough forces for victory, and if there are persons capable of employing the force of the people, then the fight must be continued. But one must not think that if things are not successful in Greece, then everything is lost."

The Soviet record overall corroborates this course of discussion, but sets it down in significantly condensed form, without a number of details. In particular, it does not record Kostov's remark found in Bulgarian records on the difficult consequences the defeat of the Greek partisans would bring to other Balkan countries (in the Djilas report this remark is attributed to Dimitrov), and Kardelj's negative reply to Stalin's question whether Yugoslavia would go to war in the event of a Greek partisan defeat. In addition, the Soviet record corroborates Kardelj's optimistic assessment, noted by Djilas, of the prospects of a partisan victory in Greece, though at the same time noting his qualification that this is possible only in the absence of direct US assistance to the Greek government, apparently meaning intervention by the American military.

[21] The reference is to the creation of a Provisional Democratic Government of Greece, declared by the decision of the leadership of the Communist Party of Greece in late December 1947. This government would be headed by the commander of the partisan forces, member of the Communist Party Politburo, Markos Vafiadis, known at the time as "general Markos." The Bulgarian records note that at the 10 February 1948 meeting Stalin said on this subject: "The bordering countries must be the last to recognize the Markos government. Let others, who are further away, recognize it first." This statement by Stalin that Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, and Albania must refrain from recognizing the Greek revolutionary government, and allow other "people's democracies," not bordering Greece and not accused of interfering in its internal affairs, to recognize it is absent from the Soviet record. However, it does contain a statement by Kardelj (not present in the Bulgarian records) declaring that it would be better for Albania or Bulgaria to recognize Markos, and not Yugoslavia, for the latter is a member of the UN.

[22] [Translator's Note: This "seaman" must be Fedor Raskolnikov, a famous Bolshevik and agitator of the Baltic fleet, later a Soviet emissary to ignite the Muslim revolution in Asia. He defected in 1937 from Bulgaria, where he was ambassador and wrote a letter to Stalin denouncing his regime and the purges of Bolsheviks in the USSR.-V.Z.]

[23] On 13 December 1947, Lavrent'ev, on orders from Moscow, informed Tito of the Albanian government's request for a shipment of 5 thousand tons of oats from the USSR, and inquired whether Yugoslavia had any objections to this. Two days later, Tito replied to the ambassador that the shipments from the USSR are not needed: Albania will receive the oats from Yugoslavia. However, the oats promised by Yugoslav never arrived in Albania. Even after the meeting in Moscow, during the second half of February 1948, Lavrent'ev, in his discussion with Kardelj, attempted to find out why this occurred. Kardelj explained this through a misunderstanding and lack of cooperation between the corresponding government bodies in Yugoslavia. AVP RF, f. 0144, op. 32, p. 128, d. 8, ll. 3, 8, 96, 102-103, 114-115.

[24] The Bulgarian records note this statement by Stalin in the following manner: "The Yugoslavs, apparently, are afraid that we will take Albania away from them. You must take Albania, but wisely." The Soviet record notes this statement by Stalin in more detail. It notes his words that "the Yugoslavs, apparently, are afraid that we will take Albania from them, and that's why they want to deploy their forces there sooner. They believe that we are tearing away from them their union both with Bulgaria and with Albania, and want to present us with a fait accompli."

[25] The Bulgarian records present this thought by Stalin in the following manner: "Only three federations are possible and naturally inherent: 1) Yugoslavia and Bulgaria; 2) Romania and Hungary and 3) Poland and Czechoslovakia. These are the possible and realistic federations. A confederation among ourselves is something far-fetched." Somewhat further along in the Bulgarian records are the following words by Stalin: "You must not delay with uniting three countries-Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Albania." The Soviet record does not include the idea of three federations, and only mentions that Stalin remarked on the natural rapprochement between Yugoslavia and

Bulgaria, Romania and Hungary, and Poland and Czechoslovakia, while calling the idea of a single federation of all countries "nonsense." According to the Soviet record, Stalin used the term "federation" only in connection with the Bulgarian-Yugoslav union, though also noting that first Bulgaria and Yugoslavia could be united, and then Albania could also be included. Neither the Soviet nor Bulgarian records contain any mention of a conversation, found in the Djilas report, regarding the name of the united Yugoslav-Bulgarian country.

[26] Kardelj's reply on possible enemy interference in the shipment of oats is not mentioned either in the Soviet or Bulgarian records. The Soviet record mentions only Kardelj's words that the question of oats is unclear to him.

[27] Ed. Note: For the Bulgarian version of this Greek-Chinese comparison, see footnote above.

[28] The Bulgarian and Soviet records do not contain such a dialogue between Stalin and Kardelj. According to the Bulgarian records, such a dialogue took place between Stalin and Dimitrov.

[29] According to the Bulgarian records, this was stated not by Kardelj and Djilas, but by Stalin himself.

[30] [Translator's Note: This is a reference to Nico Spiru, a member of the Albanian leadership with links to Belgrade, who committed suicide in November 1947.-V.Z.]

[31] [Translator's Note: Early in 1948 the US Department of State published the documents on the Nazi-Soviet talks and agreements in 1939-41, seized in Germany at the end of the Second World War.-V.Z.]

[32] According to the Soviet record, Dimitrov said nothing of the kind, and, indeed, said that the Bulgarian government would take measures to cover more carefully their forces and weapons.

[33] [Translator's Note: In other words, the countries that collaborated with Nazi Germany during the Second World War.-V.Z.]

[34] [Translator's Note: A member of the Central Committee of the Yugoslav Communist Party. On Stalin's remarks about Pijade to Djilas, see Conversations with Stalin, p. 154.-V.Z.]