and morals. As Flanders observes, evangelist John Wesley's assertion that cleanliness is next to godliness "before the 19th century would simply have made no sense." Victorian children were the first to have their own rooms and furnishings, and many sanitary measures focused on the nursery. Domestic hygiene's sine qua non, however, was the new bathroom. Following the flush toilet's triumph at the Great Exhibition of 1851, fine china manufacturers such as Wedgwood and Doulton produced "lavatories" as gorgeous as dinnerware.

Inside the Victorian Home is an engaging, informative book. Its strength is Flanders's research, which encompasses the motto of Thomas Crapper's eponymous product ("A certain flush with every pull"), the sometimes-lethal use of opium for teething, the domestic observations of eminent Victorians such as Jane Carlyle and John Ruskin, and much else. Picky readers might sometimes wish for less matter and more art, but even they will never again see a Victorian house in the same old cozy, comfortable way.

—Winifred Gallagher

STALIN:
The Court of the Red Tsar.
By Simon Sebag Montefiore. Knopf.
785 pp. $30

In 1935, enchanted by Grigory Alexandrov's cheerful films (*The Jolly Fellows* left him feeling as if "I'd had a month's holiday"), Joseph Stalin decided to get personally involved in the director's work. Alexandrov had planned to call his next film *Cinderella*, but the Soviet dictator proposed 12 alternative titles. His favorite, which Alexandrov wisely adopted, was *Shining Path*. Stalin also decided to compose new lyrics for a song in the film, producing this verse:

> A joyful song is easy for the heart;
> It doesn't bore you ever;
> And all the villages small and big adore the song;
> Big towns love the tune.

Since Stalin had an excellent voice—one memoir suggests that he might have become

Joseph Stalin

a professional singer—the old brute can be imagined singing the lyrics to himself at his Kremlin desk.

"The foundation of Stalin's power in the Party was not fear: it was charm," writes Simon Sebag Montefiore, a novelist and biographer. The father of the Gulag "worked hard to envelop his protégés in an irresistible embrace of folksy intimacy that convinced them there was no one he trusted more." The charm seems to have worked on the ladies, too. Stalin told one woman, "You should teach Soviet women how to dress!" This is Stalin unzipped, as it were, and for the first time a credible human character begins to emerge.

The book's mid-1930s vignettes provide all the more grisly a contrast to the period immediately after, when the purges get under way and we are back in the familiar territory of Stalin the psychopath. Montefiore develops this murderous phase in numbing detail, but his long interviews with descendants of Kremlin survivors and his excavations in family archives and memoirs manage to bring the horror to life. Some people seem to have been purged merely for their housing. When internal security commission chief Genrickh Yagoda fell, his successor, Nicolai Yezhov, took his apartment and Stalin assistant Vyach-

eslav Molotov took his dacha. The odious prosecutor Andrei Vyshinsky, having long envied a dacha owned by one Leonid Serebryakov, prosecuted him and took it. After Stalin's death, Serebryakov's relatives petitioned for the property's return and were granted half of it. The families of prosecutor and victim have been unhappy neighbors ever since.

Montefiore's tight focus on Stalin and his court produces some flaws of context. It is interesting to learn that when Mao Zedong visited Moscow in late 1949, on the eve of the Korean War, Molotov patronizingly quizzed him about Marxism and found that he had never read *Das Kapital*. But Montefiore wrongly assumes that Stalin didn't assist when the Chinese advanced against American troops in 1950. He provided air cover, and both Moscow and Washington conspired to hush up the consequences, including a U.S. Air Force raid on the Soviet base from which the MiG-15s were flying.

On the whole, though, Montefiore has produced a remarkable and riveting work, one that reminds us of the extraordinary continuity of Soviet life, despite the bloodletting. "The families of the grandees who remained in power, Mikoyans, Khrushchevs, and Budyonnys, are regarded as a Soviet aristocracy even now," he notes. Politics hardly seem to matter: "Nina Budyonny, still a Stalinist, is best friends with Julia Khrushcheva, who is not."

—Martin Walker

Contemporary affairs

EMERGENCY SEX AND OTHER DESPERATE MEASURES: A True Story from Hell on Earth.
By Kenneth Cain, Heidi Postlewait, and Andrew Thomson. Miramax. 304 pp. $25.95

In the 1990s, as the number of United Nations peacekeeping and observer missions ballooned, hundreds of young people from the United States and elsewhere signed on. Some sought escape, adventure, and a substantial paycheck; others aspired to serve God by serving humanity; and a fair number—reciting "new world order" like a mantra—wanted to be part of the big effort to spread democracy.

At first, making peace seemed to be all about making love under an intense tropical sun, trying on different cultures like so many exotic outfits, living in colonial houses with cooks and maids, and partying with abandon and guiltless pleasure, secure in the knowledge that they were serving a righteous cause. Then came the spectacular failures of UN peacekeeping in Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, and Rwanda.

The three authors—Kenneth Cain, a Harvard-trained lawyer, Heidi Postlewait, a New York social worker, and Andrew Thomson, a New Zealand doctor—met and became friends during their UN service. They tell of first arriving in conflict zones in half-disbelief. "I'm in a movie," Cain marvels as a Black Hawk helicopter takes him to Mogadishu, Somalia, in 1993. When UN colleagues there start to die, "it's not real," he thinks. "It's *M*A*S*H*; it's *China Beach*." Within weeks, several U.S. Black Hawks are shot down, and the United States and the United Nations recoil rather than retaliate. Illusions crumbling, the friends race to Haiti, Rwanda, Bosnia, and Liberia, where the United Nations and its most influential member, the United States, repeatedly place the safety of UN troops and workers over the needs of the people they have come, ostensibly, to serve. Hundreds of thousands of civilians die.

In vivid and intimate first-person accounts that range from a few paragraphs to 15 pages, the authors sequentially limn and reflect on experiences rarely exposed publicly. Cain arrives with a legal team in post-genocide Rwanda and, knowing that the UN had pulled out in the midst of the Hutus' massacres of the Tutsis just months earlier, finds himself ashamed to be there, assigned to beseech the survivors to treat genocide suspects more humanely. Postlewait describes the unsound security practices that