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BOOK REVIEW

MOLOTOV'S MEMOIRS

Albert Resis (Ed.): 'MOLOTOV REMEMBERS: INSIDE KREMLIN POLITICS'; Chicago; 1993.

Vyacheslav Molotov was Stalin's closest comrade-in-arms, and held for many years very important positions in the Soviet Union. One might have hoped, therefore, that his memoirs would have contained valuable information on the way in which revisionists managed to wreck socialism in the USSR and clear the way for the restoration of capitalism.

The Assassination of Kirov

The book does, indeed, contain one or two interesting snippets of information hitherto unknown, or little known, outside the highest circles in the former Soviet Union. For example, he tells us:

"Krushchev hinted that Stalin had Kirov killed. . . . A commission was set up in 1956. . . .

The commission concluded that Stalin was not implicated in Kirov's assassination. Khrushchev refused to have the findings published since they didn't serve his purpose".

(Albert Resis (Ed.): 'Molotov Remembers: Inside Kremlin Politics'; Chicago; 1993; p. 353).

Revelations -- About the Memoirist

Sadly, however, for the most part Molotov's memoirs -- like most memoirs -- tell us more about Molotov's own deficiencies than about the events he recalls.

No one could question Molotov's dedication to socialism and the working class. He followed Stalin loyally during the latter's lifetime, but it is clear that once Stalin's guiding hand had been removed, his political acumen was not sufficiently acute to prevent the revisionists who surrounded him from using him as their tool in the critical years from Stalin's death in 1953 to his own expulsion from the CPSU by the revisionists in 1957.

Molotov's Tacit Endorsement of the Attack upon Stalin

Although he defends Stalin in many respects, Molotov admits that he kept silent during Khrushchev's savage attack on Stalin at the 20th Congress of the CPSU in 1956:

"Some people holding pretty much the same view blame me. 'Why did you

keep silent at the 20th Congress? . . . To keep silent, they say, is tantamount to consent That's how it turned out. I kept silent and thus consented".
(Albert Resis (Ed.): ibid.; p. 351).

He gives as his reason for remaining silent that the Party was 'not ready' for a Marxist-Leninist analysis of events and that if he and other Marxist-Leninists had spoken out against Khrushchev's slanders at the congress, they would have been 'expelled from the Party':

"The Party was not ready for such an analysis. We would simply have been kicked out. . . . No one would have supported us. No one".
(Albert Resis (Ed.): ibid.; p. 350).

He tells us that

" . . . I still hoped that if we remained in the Party we would be able to correct the situation gradually".
(Albert Resis (Ed.): ibid.; p. 350).

But in fact Molotov was not completely silent during the attacks on Stalin at the 20th Congress. On the contrary, at one of the open sessions of the congress he had no hesitation in

" . . . condemning 'the cult of the individual'"
('Keesing's Contemporary Archives', Volume 10; p. 14,748).

which was a clear prelude to the named attack on Stalin which followed at the secret session.

However, long after it had become patently obvious to anyone with even a smattering of Marxist-Leninist understanding that the Communist Party of the Soviet Union was dominated by open revisionists who were restoring an essentially capitalist social order in the country, Molotov tells us his main preoccupation in the years following his expulsion was not so much with fighting revisionism as with trying to persuade the revisionist leaders to reinstate him in the Party:

"I send letters to the Central Committee after each congress asking them to consider my application for reinstatement in the Party. . . .

Four times I applied to be reinstated in the Party. I wrote to Brezhnev. . . . I am going to send another application to the 24th Congress".

(Albert Resis (Ed.): op. cit.; p. 284, 356).

Indeed, he goes so far as to agree that he deserved punishment for opposing the revisionists, and merely maintains that expulsion was excessively severe:

"I ought to have been punished, true, but expulsion from the Party . . .?" (Albert Resis (Ed.): ibid.; p. 356).

The Case of Israel

The general picture of the development of revisionism in the former Soviet Union is now known, but it would have been useful if Molotov had filled in, from his personal knowledge, details of some of the more controversial

episodes in Soviet history -- such as the support given by the Soviet regime to the partition of Palestine and the coup against Lavrenti Beria.

Unfortunately, he largely fails to do perform this task.

A paper read to the Stalin Society earlier this year presented the evidence for the view that it was revisionists in the leadership of the CPSU who, under the leadership of Andrey Gromyko, Soviet Permanent Representative to the United Nations and Deputy Foreign Minister, succeeded in distorting Soviet foreign policy in favour of the partition of Palestine.

Molotov, who held the post of Soviet Foreign Minister at the time, gives a very garbled version of events. He appears to say that the American imperialists were 'opposed' to the formation of the state of Israel, while he and Stalin 'supported' it:

"Q: In the formation of the state of Israel, the Americans were opposed?

A: Everyone objected but us -- me and Stalin".
(Albert Resis (Ed.): *ibid.*; p. 65).

But it is clearly nonsense to say that the US imperialists were opposed to the formation of the state of Israel:

"US support of the partition was critical in bringing about passage of the resolution (for the partition of Palestine and the creation of the state of Israel -- Ed.) by a two-thirds majority of the Assembly".
(*'Encyclopedia Americana'*, Volume 15; Danbury (USA); 1992; p. 533).

However, Molotov goes on to explain that what he and Stalin supported was not, in fact, the formation of a racist Israeli state, but a state of Palestine in which Arabs and Jews shared power:

"We proposed, however, an Arab-Israeli (clearly he means 'Arab-Jewish' -- Ed.) union, for both nations (clearly he means 'nationalities' -- Ed.) to live together".
(Albert Resis (Ed.): *op. cit.*; p. 65).

In other words, Molotov appears to support the view expressed in the Stalin Society paper -- that Stalin supported the formation of a Palestinian state in which Jews and Arabs shared power.

The Case of Beria

In a paper read to the Stalin Society entitled "The 'Doctors' Case' and the Death of Stalin", the evidence was presented for the view that, following the death of Stalin, leading revisionists, headed by Khrushchev, deceived honest members of the leadership into believing that Lavrenti Beria was an agent of imperialism and into participating in a military-style coup against him. The sole reason which Molotov gives for agreeing to participate in the coup was that Khrushchev told him that 'apparently' Beria was 'up to something'!

Molotov's story of these events is almost identical with that of Khrushchev:

"If you are interested in . . . the final Politburo session on Beria,

you must bear in mind that some preliminary work had been done before that. In this Khrushchev showed he was an exceptionally energetic and efficient organiser. The initiative was in his hands as he was the Party secretary. He was definitely a good organiser.

He summoned me to the Central Committee building, and I came over. 'I'd like to talk to you about Beria., He can't be trusted'.

I said: 'I fully support this idea. He must be removed and expelled from the Politburo'. . . .

Immediately before the session we agreed that expelling Beria from the Politburo would not be enough. He had to be placed under arrest. . . .

Two days later we all gathered in session. . . .

Khrushchev . . . was the organiser of the entire affair. Why? . . . Apparently he had been informed that Beria was up to something. And Beria had troops under his command. . . .

He was arrested at the Politburo session. . . . We were all friends.

. . . .
I was one of the first to speak. I said that Beria was a degenerate, . . . and that he was no communist. . . .

Then Beria took the floor to defend himself. . . .

Beria had arrived at the session totally unaware of what lay in store for him. . . .

The room was securely guarded, but sitting in Poskrebyshv's room, which adjoined the meeting room, was a group of military officers, headed by Zhukov. The group was waiting to be called in to arrest Beria. Malenkov pressed the button. That was the signal. . . . The group of officers led by Zhukov entered the room.

Malenkov says: 'Arrest Beria'. . . .

Q: Was that a complete surprise for Beria?

A: Exactly . . .

'I fell into a trap', he cried. He didn't expect that from Khrushchev. . . .

Moskalenko was also involved. Khrushchev had him promoted to marshal.

. . . .
Moskalenko was put in charge of the jail where Beria was kept".
(Albert Resis (Ed.): *ibid.*; p. 343, 344, 345, 346).

While the official indictment against Beria was that he was a

" . . . hireling of foreign imperialist forces",
(*'Keesing's Contemporary Archives'*, Volume 9; p. 13,029).

Molotov insists that Beria was not an agent of imperialism in this sense:

"Q: To this day, people still argue whether Beria had been an agent of some foreign intelligence service.

A: I don't think he was". . .

(Albert Resis (Ed.): *op. cit.*; p. 339).

He charges Beria only with being 'an agent of imperialism' in that in 1953 he supported within the leadership a policy which objectively assisted imperialism:

"He played the role of an agent of imperialism, that's the point. . . . I regard Beria as an agent of imperialism. Agent does not mean spy".
(Albert Resis (Ed.): *ibid.*; p. 340).

Many years later Molotov still declares that he has 'no regrets' about

participating in the coup and praises Khrushchev for organising it!:

"I consented (to take part in the coup against Beria -- Ed.). I have no regrets about it now. On the contrary, I believed, and I continue to believe, that this was to Khrushchev's great credit. That's my opinion". (Albert Resis (Ed.): *ibid*,1; p. 345).

Molotov reveals that the charge of 'serving imperialism' levelled against Beria was concerned with the policy which the Soviet government should adopt towards the building of socialism in occupied East Germany. The Marxist-Leninist position on 'the export of socialism' was put by Stalin in his interview with American newspaper magnate Roy Howard in March 1936:

"Howard: May there not be an element of danger in the genuine fear existent in what you term capitalist countries of an intent on the part of the Soviet Union to force its political theories on other countries?

Stalin: There is no justification whatever for such fears. If you think that Soviet people want to change the face of surrounding states, and by forcible means at that, you are entirely mistaken. Of course, Soviet people would like to see the face of surrounding states changed, but that is the business of the surrounding states".

(Josef V. Stalin: Interview between Josef Stalin and Roy Howard (March 1936), in: 'Works', Volume 14; London; 1978; p.136-37).

Stalin therefore maintained that the Soviet government's concern with post-war Germany was limited to the question of preventing future German aggression. In a speech in November 1943 he defined Soviet war aims in this connection as to

" . . . establish such an order in Europe as will completely exclude the possibility of fresh aggression on the part of Germany".

(Josef V. Stalin: Speech at Celebration Meeting of Moscow Soviet (6 November 1943), in: 'War Speeches, Orders of the Day and Answers to Foreign Press Correspondents during the Great Patriotic War: July 3rd 1941 - June 22nd 1945'; London; 1945; p. 82).

As far as can be gathered from Molotov's somewhat garbled account, Beria maintained the position that the Soviet government's only concern with defeated Germany should be to ensure that it was anti-fascist and peaceful, and that the question of the building of socialism in any part of Germany was a matter for the German working people:

"After Stalin's death, . . . Beria took an active stand on the German question. . . .

Beria, who was then becoming particularly active, advanced the following argument: ' . . . Let it (the GDR --Ed.) just be a peaceful country. That is sufficient for our purposes'. . . .

Beria kept insisting that . . . 'the most important concern was that Germany must be peaceful"

(Albert Resis (Ed.): *op. cit.*; p. 333, 334).

However, Molotov relates, other members of the Politburo -- including Khrushchev and Molotov himself, demanded that the Soviet government should move to establish a socialist society in East Germany:

"The Politburo was nearly split on the issue. Khrushchev supported my position. . . .

Malenkov remained silent, and I knew he would follow Beria, . . .
I objected that there could not be a peaceful Germany unless it took the road to socialism".
(Albert Resis (Ed.): *ibid.*; p. 335, 336)

This was then, according to Molotov, the main issue which provided the pretext for accusing Beria of being an "imperialist agent". If so, it was an issue in which Beria was following Marxist-Leninist principles, while Molotov and Khrushchev were in breach of them!

Molotov's Failure Correctly to Assess Revisionism

Even many years after international revisionism had thrown off its mask, Molotov signally failed to recognise its counter-revolutionary character.

Indeed, despite his general admiration for Stalin, we find him repeating some of the revisionist slanders about him:

"He (Stalin -- Ed.) succumbed to sickly suspiciousness. . . . In his last years he suffered from impaired judgment. . . .
In his last years Stalin suffered from a persecution mania".
(Albert Resis (Ed.): *ibid.*; p. 317, 324).

We find him praising the revisionist Yuri Andropov as a 'godsend':

"Andropov . . . has introduced a fresh stream of thought and a good direction. . . .
Andropov is a godsend. . . .
Andropov . . . is firm in politics, a man of broad horizons, a reliable person. . . . He has proved to be quite trustworthy".
(Albert Resis (Ed.): *ibid.*; p. 395, 407).

We find him describing the French revisionist Maurice Thorez as

" . . . a very good man -- a Stalinist",
(Albert Resis (Ed.): *ibid.*; p. 82).

and the German revisionist Walter Ulbricht as

" . . . a dedicated communist, a politically conscious comrade".
(Albert Resis (Ed.): *ibid.*; p. 334).

He depicts even Khrushchev as no worse than 'a not especially dedicated communist':

"I don't consider Khrushchev an especially dedicated communist".
(Albert Resis (Ed.): *ibid.*; p. 356).

IN 1984, AT THE AGE OF NINETY-FOUR, MOLOTOV ACHIEVED A LONG-HELD AMBITION. HAVING SATISFIED THE REVISIONIST LEADERS OF HIS HARMLESSNESS TO THEIR AIMS, HE WAS READMITTED TO THE COMMUNIST PARTY.

HE DIED TWO YEARS LATER -- STILL CLINGING TO THE ILLUSION THAT SOCIALISM IN THE SOVIET UNION WAS BASICALLY INTACT AND SECURE, THAT A COMMONWEALTH OF SOCIALIST STATES EXISTED, AND THAT, DESPITE SOME MINOR RIGHTIST DEVIATIONS, THE SOVIET UNION WAS ADVANCING TOWARDS A COMMUNIST SOCIETY:

"Now we have a powerful country and a commonwealth of socialist states. . . .

I think the dreams of counter-revolution will not come true. Our state, like the entire socialist camp, is still the strongest in the world. . . .

We are undeviatingly moving forward, but more slowly than is desirable. . . .

The line we are pursuing . . . is Leninist, it is socialist, but not enough. . . .

We are building socialism and moving towards communism because state power and the vanguard of the people rest solidly on the policy pursued by the Party, That's the main thing.

In our country the vanguard is preserved, it is growing in strength, it is socialist, communist -- this is the main thing".

(Albert Resis (Ed.): *ibid.*; p. 381, 409, 413).

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The aim of the Communist League is to establish in Britain a Marxist-Leninist Party of the working class free of all revisionist trends.
