

2013

H-Diplo

H-Diplo Roundtable Review

www.h-net.org/~diplo/roundtables

Volume XIV, No. 28 (2013)

22 April 2013

Roundtable Editors: Thomas Maddux and Diane Labrosse

Roundtable Web/Production Editor: George Fujii
Commissioned for H-Diplo by Thomas Maddux

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Geoffrey Roberts. *Molotov: Stalin's Cold Warrior*. Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, 2011.
ISBN: 978-1-57488-945-1 (cloth, \$29.95).

Stable URL: <http://www.h-net.org/~diplo/roundtables/PDF/Roundtable-XIV-28.pdf>

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Introduction by Donal O'Sullivan, California State University Northridge

Remarkably, until recently Joseph Stalin's closest aide, Vyacheslav Molotov, has rarely been the subject of serious scholarly interest. Geoffrey Roberts was one of the first to see Molotov's files. He acknowledges his debt to Derek Watson's 2005 biography and to Albert Reiss who translated Feliks Chuev's conversations with Molotov.¹ In contrast with other historians, Roberts feels confident in authenticating Chuev's book, in particular after reading Molotov's archival files. In Roberts' book, Molotov emerges as a loyal and tough assistant, eager to shoulder a massive workload, and a skillful negotiator. Molotov was a stalwart servant of the revolution, and the conventional picture is that of the proverbial apparatchik, 'Mr. Nyet', persistently vetoing United Nations Security Council resolutions. Lenin called him "the best filing clerk in Russia" and Trotsky, of course, despised him as "mediocrity incarnate" (9). But as Stalin's right-hand man for over thirty years, Molotov's influence was vital to the establishment and development of Stalinist rule in the USSR. To comply with the format of the Shapers of International History series, Roberts concentrates on the political role of Molotov, and only very briefly mentions Molotov's upbringing and pre-revolutionary career. While some reviewers see the book as an important contribution, others find the study to be lacking in originality and criticize its findings. In general, the debate focuses on the evaluation of Molotov's influence and his policy ideas regarding the Cold War.

Jochen Laufer emphasizes Roberts' expertise regarding Soviet leaders, as was demonstrated in the 2006 book *Stalin's Wars*.² But while applauding the attempt to investigate Molotov's contribution to the postwar period, and deeming it "original and important", Laufer finds Roberts' treatment of Molotov to be too apologetic. For example, Laufer points out that Roberts does not explain the apparent Soviet lack of interest in deterring Hitler prior to June 1941. If, as he supposes, Stalin (and Molotov) feared Anglo-German reconciliation, then this would have shaped Roberts' interpretation of Soviet postwar moves. For Laufer, Soviet foreign policy aims in the period between 1939 and 1953 need to be seen as a long-term scheme "of creating zones of influence on her western frontiers". He also objects to Roberts' positive view of "moderate political reform" in the Soviet Union's satellite territories after 1944. Rather, the changes euphemistically called 'reforms' resulted in major societal upheavals that were designed to ensure Soviet power. He also warns against treating the Stalin Note of 1952 offering reunification of Germany as a serious offer rather than as a propaganda ploy.³ Laufer suggests that Roberts takes many

¹ Derek Watson, *Molotov. A Biography*. (Studies in Russian and East European History and Society) (London: Palgrave Macmillan 2005); Albert Reiss, ed., *Molotov Remembers* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1993); Feliks Chuev, *Sto Sorok Besed s Molotovym: Iz Dnevnika F. Cueva* (Moscow: Terra, 1991).

² Geoffrey Roberts, *Stalin's Wars. From World War to Cold War, 1939-1953*, (New Haven, Yale University Press 2006). See the H-Diplo Roundtable Review at <http://www.h-net.org/~diplo/roundtables/PDF/StalinsWars-Roundtable.pdf>

³ For a recent assessment on Stalin and Germany, see Peter Ruggenthaler, "The 1952 Stalin Note on Germany Unification: The Ongoing Debate," *Journal of Cold War History* 13:4 (Fall 2011): 172-212.

Soviet documents from 1950 at face value, and points to the absence of any real Soviet steps toward a unified Germany. In general, according to Laufer, Roberts fails “to close the circle” of Soviet policy by portraying Molotov as a “reluctant Cold Warrior.”

Roberts’ book is “very odd,” comments Jonathan Haslam. In his review, he focuses on the notion of ‘monolithic’ Soviet policy, which Roberts challenges. In effect, Haslam writes, this notion has long been debunked. Yes, Stalin had the last word, but trusted Bolsheviks – Molotov among them – could argue with the ‘boss’. For Haslam, published memoirs and previous studies have long established the differences of opinion among the Soviet leadership. Haslam vehemently disagrees with Roberts’ view that Molotov proved to be “the architect of détente” (132). In his opinion, the evidence presented is too thin and unconvincing. Molotov, in Haslam’s eyes, remained ever “the fundamentalist, averse to a policy of compromise.”

Wilfried Loth applauds Roberts’ attempt to improve our understanding of how the Kremlin operated. He agrees that Molotov was able, within certain limits, to shape policy. However, for Loth, the book adds little that is new for the specialist. But he hopes that Roberts’ compact and clear view of postwar developments will stimulate much-needed research. For Loth, a confidential 1952 message from East German Communist leader Walter Ulbricht to Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Vyshinsky that Roberts unearthed has significant value. The document offers further evidence that at this time, German Communists and Soviets earnestly pursued a policy of German unification, an assessment which Laufer does not share. Loth would have wished for more evaluation and reflection in the book but attributes this lack mostly to the concise format of the series.

Alexei Filitov writes that Roberts “presents an innovative piece of research based on through investigation of Russian archives.” While he makes some critical remarks regarding certain episodes, he praises the author for his attempt to challenge views of the “staunch Stalinist” Molotov. He emphasizes the need for a complex and nuanced narrative, setting aside broad generalizations. In his eyes, Roberts’ book is not an apology for Molotov, rather, an “overdue correction.”

Participants:

Geoffrey Roberts is Professor and Head of the School of History at University College Cork, Ireland. He is the author of *Stalin’s Wars: From World War to Cold War, 1939-1953* (Yale University Press: London 2006) and *Stalin’s General: The Life of Georgy Zhukov* (Random House: New York 2012), which has been awarded the Society for Military History Distinguished Book Award for Biography.

Donal O’Sullivan is Associate Professor of History at California State University, Northridge. He has published monographs on *Stalins cordon sanitaire. Die sowjetische Osteuropapolitik und die Reaktionen des Westens 1939-1949*. (*Stalin’s cordon sanitaire. Soviet Policy in Eastern Europe and the Western response*, 2003) and *Furcht und Faszination - deutsche und britische Russlandbilder 1921-1933*, (*Fear And Fascination - British And German Images of Soviet Russia* (1996). His most recent book is *Dealing with the Devil*.

Anglo-Soviet Intelligence Co-Operation During World War II (2010). His current projects include a study of document forgeries.

Alexei Filitov is a graduate of Moscow University (1960) and Chief Research Associate, Institute of World History, Russian Academy of Sciences, and a lecturer in Contemporary German History, Russian University for Humanities, Moscow. He has published monographs in Russian on *The Cold War: Debate in Western Historiography* (1991); *German Question: From Division to Unification* (1993); *Germany in Soviet Foreign Policy Planning, 1941- 1990* (2009) and various articles on the diplomatic history of the World War Two and of the Cold War. His current projects include editorial work on Volume Four of *The USSR and the German Question, 1948-49*, and a textbook on German History since 1900.

Jonathan Haslam is Professor of the History of International Relations at Cambridge University and a Fellow of the British Academy. His latest work is *Russia's Cold War: From the October Revolution to the Fall of the Wall* (Yale 2011), shortly to appear under paper cover. Current research is expected to lead to a history of Soviet secret intelligence, both civilian and military, from 1917 to 1989. China, culture and history, is increasingly a new focus of long term interest.

Jochen Paul Laufer graduated at Berlin Humboldt-University in 1986 as Dr. Phil. with a dissertation on German Policy towards South Afrika 1890–1898 and the Anglo-German Rivalry. Wissenschaftlicher Mitarbeiter at the Academy of Sciences of the GDR; since 1992 at the Potsdamer Zentrum für Zeithistorische Forschung. Published a 3 volume document edition “Die UdSSR und die deutsche Frage” (with Georgij Pavlovich Kynin): in Russian (“SSSR i germansky vopros 1941–1948, Moscow 1996, 2000, 2003) and in German (Duncker&Humblot, 2004). A fourth volume on the Berlin crisis and foundation of the two German states will be published this summer. Together with Rainer Karlsch “Die UdSSR und die Demontagen in Deutschland” (Duncker&Humblot, 2003). Böhlau published 2009 his main research: *Pax Sovietica. Stalin und die deutsche Frage 1941–1945*. Current research projects include Soviet economic policy and German/Soviet interaction in light of the Cold War.

Wilfried Loth is Professor and Chair of Modern and Contemporary History at the University of Duisburg-Essen / Germany. His major publications include: *The Division of the World, 1951-1955* (London/New York: Routledge 1987); *Stalin's Unwanted Child. The Soviet Union, the German Question, and the Foundation of the GDR* (London/New York: MacMillan 1998); and *Overcoming the Cold War. A History of Détente, 1950-1991* (Houndsmills/New York: Palgrave 2002). His current research interests are “History of European Integration” and “Theory of International Relations.”

Complimentary references to this reviewer's writings are widely scattered in the text and endnotes of Geoffrey Roberts' new book, and at one point the author attributed to one of our informal exchanges something like a crucial role in transforming his outlooks: "the scales fell from my eyes" (p. xv). The setting seems ready for the course of action so aptly described in a fable by a Russian Lafontaine's follower, Ivan Krylov: the cuckoo laid lavish praise on a cock's musical talents, the latter reciprocated in kind, and both came in the process to a self-gratifying agreement that their singing performance was much superior to that of a nightingale. Just to demonstrate the limited validity of the fable's morale I will begin with some critical remarks.

The first of them concerns the author's treatment of the plans for the dismemberment of Germany discussed among the Big Three during the World War Two. In a section of Chapter 3 on the Moscow conference of October 1943, Roberts maintains that "while there was no specific agreement on the postwar treatment of Germany, there was a broad meeting of minds on the need for the country to be disarmed, demilitarized, denazified, and *dismembered – broken into a number of smaller states* (my italics. .)" (68). A close reading of the conference transcripts does not support this contention: the Soviet position was formulated by Vyacheslav Molotov in the sense that there was no "meeting of minds" on dismemberment issue even inside "Soviet public opinion"; the use of the word "public" was misleading, of course, since what was meant referred to the opinions in the close ring of the Soviet foreign policy establishment¹. The author rightly notes that at the Yalta summit of February 1945 "Stalin pushed hard for dismemberment" (the same may be said of Molotov, by the way), but their stance on the subject soon changed: both began to "seek instead to gain some political benefit from supporting Germany's unification" (83, 85). What Molotov instructed Fedor Gusev, the Soviet representative on the London-based Commission on Dismemberment, "to drop" was not "the policy" (85), however, but rather the diplomatic ploy previously used to basically misinform the allies. Charles Bohlen's tentative explanation for the motives of Stalin/Molotov's overt (but insincere) advocacy of German dismemberment at Yalta - "to get the others [the Western powers] fully committed to the [dismemberment] idea, so their views would be useful in Soviet propaganda in Germany after the war"² - cannot be discounted, even though the issue is far from clear. At any rate, the game of the misinformation was employed even after V-E Day: in the course of a conversation with Harry Hopkins and Averell Harriman on May 28, 1945, Stalin stated that he had "not yet taken a firm decision, if Germany should be dismembered or not."³ Thus, when Roberts asserts that "henceforth (i. e. after instructions sent to Fedor Gusev on March 24, 1945) Molotov and Stalin spoke publicly and privately only of a united

¹ Московская конференция министров иностранных дел СССР, США и Великобритании (19-30 октября 1943 г.). М., 1984, 170.

² Charles Bohlen, *Witness to History* (New York, 1973), 183.

³ СССР и германский вопрос. 1941-1949: Документы из Архива внешней политики Российской Федерации- Т. 2: 9 мая 1945 г. – 3 октября 1946 г. / Составители Г.П. Кынин и Й. Лауфер. М., 2000, 143.

Germany” (85), it is at best a half-truth: Molotov who was present at the conversation with Hopkins and Harriman did not speak out, but there is no ground to suppose that he objected- even privately.

The second remark of mine refers to the too short description of Molotov’s performance during the Prague meeting of the Eastern bloc foreign ministers in October 1950. Contrary to the usual rhetoric on the “war criminals” allegedly in power position in West Germany (articulated by his Polish, Romanian and GDR counterparts), he cautioned against “lining up” all “Hitler’s generals” into this category. Rather mild was his characterization of Konrad Adenauer’s military advisor, Gerhard von Schwerin, and his attitude to “Adenauer’s government” in general⁴. Without mentioning those innovative approaches demonstrated by the Soviet representative at the meeting, the author’s laudatory comments (Molotov “displayed impressive skills in handling the discussion. . . , [he] was clear the Soviet aim was a united, democratic, and peace-loving Germany” – 121) sound a bit hollow.

The next ‘sin of omission’ concerns Molotov’s role in the events of the crucial year 1953. The German question was “revisited”, indeed, but much earlier than “on April 18”, as Roberts argues (133). It was just a month before, on March 18, that Molotov sent to the “Praesidium of the Ministers’ Council, for Comr. Malenkov” a proposal to repeal the plans for the “establishment of the border surveillance at the sectoral border of East Berlin”, i. e. for something close to what happened on August 13, 1961, and led to the erection of the Berlin Wall. It was an internal paper, not a diplomatic initiative, but, unlike so many public pronouncements, it brought about something real: more than eight years of the unrestricted movements of people through the “Iron Curtain”, albeit in a very restricted area of a German capital city. It might be an exaggeration to say that the Berlin Wall would not have come about with Molotov as Foreign Minister, but, judging by his persistent efforts to curb a confrontation in Germany (most of them are cited in Roberts’ book, some remain unmentioned, for instance, his opposition to the GDR admittance to the Warsaw pact⁵), the idea does not seem so preposterous.

My final remark is addressed not so much to the monograph’s author, but rather to the Series Editor, Melvin Leffler, who wrote a foreword, or, to be precise, to a single formulation contained therein. Molotov is said to have been “fearing Germany and hating NATO” (p. xii). For this reviewer it seems too broad a generalization. Molotov’s remarks at a Prague meeting of 1950 (cited above) did not testify to his excessive alarmism in relation to West Germany, and, with the first test of Soviet H-bomb in August 1953, the alarmist scenarios, if any, lost their credibility. The same applies to the image of the Western military bloc. It was changeable. At least, at Berlin conference of 1954, “Molotov was conciliatory in relation to NATO” (145). As a matter of fact, the acronym “NATO” was not

⁴See the excerpts from the Soviet transcript of conference proceedings in Charles Williams, *Adenauer. The Father of the New Germany* (London, 2000), 367-368. This book, where Molotov’s name came across several times, was not included in “Selected Bibliography” section of Roberts’ monograph.

⁵ Хрущев Н.С. Время, люди, власть: Воспоминания. Книга 4. М., 1999, 479-480.

much in use at that time: the Soviet minister used to speak of the “Atlantic alliance”. Anyway, one may say that while both Roberts and Leffler find the ‘fear of Germany’ complex in Molotov’s mind (to which the reviewer takes an exception), they differ on his ‘NATO complex’ (with this reviewer’s support for Roberts’ more differentiated thesis)

Readers of this review will easily come to a conclusion that it basically serves to buttress and amplify most of author’s arguments rather than to disprove them. This is a correct conclusion. Geoffrey Roberts presents an innovative piece of research based on a thorough investigations of the Russian archives. He is not an apologist for a person who was a staunch Stalinist with all the negative connotations that must be applied to this image. He is critical of a politician whose distorted worldview led him to be “tough” where more flexibility was required - as, for instance, in the Hungarian crisis of 1956 (180). Still, in assessing “his broad role as a Soviet foreign minister” the author considers it “positive in many respects”. It is an overdue correction to the standard view of Soviet foreign policy that either depicts it in a totally negative light, or ascribes more positive (or less negative) features to Stalin as opposed to his deputy. ⁶ Roberts’ book does much to redress the balance – and it is the main achievement of its author.

⁶As Zubok and Pleshakov assert, “[u]nlike Stalin, Molotov never had moments when his dogmatic version of the realpolitik gave way to bolder visions”. See Vladislav Zubok and Constantin Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin’s Cold War* (Cambridge, Mass., 1996), 83.

Geoffrey Roberts has produced a slender and very odd book on Vyacheslav Molotov as *Stalin's Cold Warrior*, published at the invitation of Melvyn Leffler. The central justification for the book stated at the outset is that it “challenges the traditional stereotype of Molotov as simply Stalin’s acquiescent sidekick” (xv). Presumably this is one of the main reasons for publishing it and for reading it. If so, the publisher and the reader have been led astray. For this is an extravagant and misleading claim. The stereotype of which Roberts writes has not existed for quite some time; except in his published work. Roberts’ first book and his last - published only six years ago - steadfastly maintain the view, against known evidence, that Soviet foreign policy making under Stalin was fundamentally monolithic.¹

For someone long engaged in the history of Soviet foreign policy, Roberts appears unfamiliar with some of the literature. It was over two decades ago that I challenged the notion that Molotov, Stalin’s right hand man and Commissar for Foreign Affairs (then Minister) from 1939 to 1949, was nothing more than his master’s voice.² This, however, conflicted with Roberts’ presentation in his first book of the Soviet struggle for collective security as a uniform policy built on an unwavering commitment under Stalin. Hitherto Western political science—seduced by the totalitarian model—had uniformly adopted the opinion that under Stalin there could be no real discussion of, let alone serious argument about, foreign policy. Yet it always sounded inherently implausible.

On a long stay at the Institute of History at the Soviet Academy of Sciences back in 1977 my hardline ‘supervisor’ Vilnius Sipols, who had privileged access to the Foreign Ministry files and to what remained from the old guard, hinted at genuine differences in policy making. To get me off his back but not mislead me he shrewdly directed me towards Commissar for Foreign Affairs Maxim Litvinov’s diplomatic tactics detailed at the receiving end in Western archives. The Italian diplomatic archive proved particularly illuminating in this respect. Moreover, never interviewed before on the subject (she was a sculptor) Litvinov’s daughter told me in the early eighties of fierce disputes that echoed through the apartment in the

¹ Roberts’ denial of policy differences is apparent in his *Unholy Alliance* (London 1989) pp. 46-47 which, while relying on many of the sources I had used on the same subject several years before, denies my view that the struggle for collective security in Soviet foreign policy was fought at home (between Maxim Litvinov and fundamentalists like Molotov) as well as abroad. Indeed, in his most recent work Roberts perpetuates the myth he now claims he wishes to destroy by claiming that Molotov “could always be relied upon to stick closely to the Great Leader’s views.” – *Stalin’s Wars* (New Haven and London 2006), 234.

² See Haslam, *The Soviet Union and the Struggle for Collective Security in Europe 1933-39* (London and New York 1984) which hinges on differences of policy and *The Soviet Union and the Threat from the East, 1933-41* (London and New York 1992), 15-17. Also, “Soviet Russia and the Spanish Problem”, in R. Boyce and J. Maiolo, *The Origins of World War Two* (London 2003), 73 and 80, for instance. I am by no means alone. See also the leading Italian scholar, Silvio Pons, *Stalin and the Inevitable War 1936-1941* (London 2002), particularly his discussion of the emerging Nazi-Soviet pact in chapter 5.

1930s, above all with Molotov. Other evidence, though tidbits from memoirs, confirmed as much.

Later, in 2003, three years before Roberts' previous book was published and eight years before my most recent book, I reprised what I had published in 1992, in case anyone had missed it: "No one seriously disputes the fact that from 1929 Stalin had the last word on all questions of policy. But this did not rule out debate. We have direct evidence of this not only from the recollections of Marshal Zhukov...but also from those of Oleg Troyanovsky...who worked for Molotov. 'Some of Stalin's views I criticised...and told him personally', Molotov recalled. 'I consider that a Communist, a member of the Politburo, for thirty years, without an opinion is a chatterbox'...On another occasion he commented, 'I am not the kind of person who was riveted by what Stalin said [*Stalin v rot zglyadyval*], I argued with him, I told him the truth!'...Indeed, on a key issue of doctrine that had originally divided Stalin and Trotsky, Molotov and Stalin stood apart. This concerned the likelihood of world revolution and the possibility of establishing socialism in one country... 'I argued with him about it', Molotov remembers...Observers noticed with interest that whereas Molotov invariably referred to his country as the Soviet Union, Stalin was wont to use the term Russia."³

But, even accepting that Molotov had his own role under Stalin, how far can this be taken? Western governments at the end of the war were sometimes deliberately fooled by Stalin into the polite fiction that Molotov not Stalin was the source of obstruction that led to the Cold War. General Dwight Eisenhower was led to believe it was the generals (thus Stalin's death in March 1953 promised no relief; on the contrary). Of course, the generals were not all patsies: Marshal Vasilii Sokolovskii, for instance, undoubtedly played a role in prompting the Berlin blockade. Some at CIA vainly speculated that someone other than Stalin in Moscow had to be responsible for confrontation (this much is evident from the 'memoirs' of ex-ambassador to Moscow Walter Bedell Smith). As Molotov's assistant for Western Europe Vladimir Erofeev recalls, Lavrenty Beria was certainly no innocent in this or any other regard. And Litvinov inadvertently further complicated matters when from 1944 to 1946 he warned the West about the collision course taken by Moscow and he was careful never to name Stalin as the source of trouble, only Molotov.

We learned subsequently, however, from Felix Chuev's one hundred conversations with Molotov that the latter had opposed territorial claims made against Turkey.⁴ We understood from the memoirs of others with direct access such as Marshal Georgii Zhukov that Stalin at times lost his temper at Molotov's obduracy; which certainly suggested clashes over policy of one sort or another. But not, however, until the eagle-eyed Russian scholar Vadlimir Pechatnov unearthed a telegraphic exchange between Stalin and Molotov

³ "The Cold War as History", *Annual Review of Political Science*, Vol. 6, 2003, 89-90. This is updated in Haslam, *Russia's Cold War* (New Haven and London 2011), 64-68.

⁴ *Molotov Remembers: Inside Kremlin Politics, Conversations with Felix Chuev*, ed. Albert Resis (Chicago, Ivan R. Dee, 1993).

during the London conference of Foreign Ministers in the autumn of 1945 was it clear that Stalin emerges indisputably as the real cold warrior, whereas - certainly in this instance - Molotov proved the more prudent trimmer. It was also clear from the exchange that Stalin had never really confided his underlying assumptions about U.S. policy to his leading subordinate.

Then again, it became clear - from the recollections of Erofeev - that it was Molotov who had argued with Stalin that he should attend the San Francisco conference that founded the United Nations earlier that year. And it was, again, Molotov who argued with Stalin in 1947 that attendance at the Paris conference on the European Recovery Plan was vital to Soviet interests.⁵ But here more than a little restraint is needed: one can take this too far. When Molotov was dismissed by Stalin as Foreign Minister in April 1949, life in his inner office became dangerous, particularly after denunciation by Stalin following the 19th Party Congress in late 1952. His wife spent a horrific year locked up in the Lubyanka. Erofeev had his desk in Molotov's office searched, literally from top to bottom. And fallen between the cracks they found a postcard bearing a Picasso portrayal of Stalin. It is hard to see a Picasso portrait of anyone or anything as exactly flattering. In their tender ignorance as socialist realists, the MVD believed it deliberately defamatory: indeed, no less than an anti-Soviet provocation. Molotov only just saved Erofeev from the camps. There could be no doubt then that Stalin was in charge. But Roberts appears to be unaware of the existence of Erofeev's memoirs which, given his role for over a crucial decade side by side with the old man whose reputation Roberts attempts to rescue, is a damaging lacuna.

Roberts goes on to discuss Molotov's role after Stalin's death, where he can rightly argue that he is attempting to revise a consensus, at least in Western historiography, since he presents his subject as nothing less than a 'Partisan of Peace': the "architect of détente on the Soviet side was Molotov" (p. 132). If proven, it would indeed be a shattering revelation because Molotov emerges in every other account, including my own most recent book, as almost entirely obstructive of any substantial innovation in foreign policy that could lead to détente; in stark contrast to Anastas Mikoyan and to a lesser but still notable degree Nikita Khrushchev.⁶ The only other person to challenge the view of Molotov as a diehard is loyalist Andrei Alexandrov Agentov, who was later Brezhnev's foreign policy assistant.⁷ But the only evidence he adduces relates to settling with Iran (which dispute was a matter of dispute between Molotov and Stalin) and the ceasefire in Korea.

The trouble is that the evidence Roberts also presents for his case is thin, largely speculative and entirely unconvincing. Not surprisingly given Molotov's core conviction

⁵ Vladimir Erofeev, *Diplomat* (Moscow 2005) quoted in Haslam, *Russia's Cold War*, 52-53 and 86.

⁶ Haslam, *Russia's Cold War: From the October Revolution to the Fall of the Wall* (New Haven and London 2011).

⁷ A. Alexandrov Agentov, *Ot Kollontai do Gorbacheva* (Moscow 1994), 56.

that the “imperialist Powers” were “implacably hostile to socialism”,⁸ Roberts quotes fascinating new evidence from the Foreign Ministry files that indicates support for German reunification and neutralisation from within the upper reaches of the *apparat*. This is undeniably an important find. But it nowhere indicates Molotov’s full support. And the evidence that Roberts ignores, including Molotov’s own recollections, exemplifies his defiant opposition to the German option resulting in dismemberment of the GDR. My own account is as follows:

“Proposals were prepared initially on 18 May 1953 for consideration by the Council of Ministers’ committee of three – Molotov, Malenkov, and Beria. In drafting the proposals on ‘Questions about the GDR’, however, Beria – backed by the pliant Malenkov – took advantage of the occasion to propose dissolving the regime in the GDR: in framing proposals ‘we should start from the fact that the basic reason for the unsatisfactory situation in the GDR is the course, mistaken in current circumstances, toward the construction of socialism carried out in the GDR’.”

Molotov rightly understood this to mean acceptance of capitalism in both halves of Germany; Beria confirmed as much. It was in fact Molotov who proposed changing the phrase about rejecting “the course towards socialist construction” and inserting instead rejection of “a rapid course toward” socialist construction. The rest of the leadership supported him and although Malenkov tried to shift opinion, he ultimately failed.⁹ There was thus no prospect of German reunification and neutralisation unless Moscow were prepared to jettison the construction of state socialism in the GDR. So much for Molotov as the partisan of peace. What did Molotov tell the Central Committee in 1955? That the neutralisation of a bourgeois Germany was “an illusion...a position alien to Communism.”¹⁰ What we are really witnessing is a diehard fundamentalist attempting at all costs to prevent a retreat which he saw as a rout in Cold War policy. Thus talk of collective security in Europe from February 1954 (usually with the Americans out – palmed off with ‘observer’ status – and the right of Soviet troops to walk back in if necessary) was utterly meaningless without settling the German problem on Malenkov’s lines since the whole problem was the imbalance of power in Europe to Soviet advantage. Geography mattered, including the fact that were the Americans to withdraw they might have to mount an invasion of Europe to get back in under adverse circumstances; whereas the Russians lived next door. The surprise Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968 illustrated precisely this asymmetry.

Roberts, indeed, quotes at length the radical Soviet view of how German policy should be, but from the mouth of Georgii Malenkov, not Molotov (135-136). And Malenkov’s former

⁸ From the archives: V. Nikonov, *Vyacheslav Nikonov Molotov: Molodost’* (Moscow 2005) 633.

⁹ Haslam, *Russia’s Cold War*, 143. Much of this has long been available in Molotov’s published recollections to Chuev, but is confirmed from the archives by former chief archivist Pikhoya.

¹⁰ Quoted from the minutes, *Ibid.*, 144.

aide Dmitrii Sukhanov echoes Malenkov's conviction. It is perhaps Malenkov not Molotov who deserves the title 'Partisan of Peace' if such terms are deserved, because Malenkov was ultimately willing - like Mikhail Gorbachev - to lay aside doctrine for pragmatism. And Beria stood four square behind him. Every other initiative in foreign policy came from Nikita Khrushchev who gave priority to inter-state relations over the prospects for world revolution. Austrian neutralisation in 1955 is a good example. Erofeev, then still working for the old man, tells us how Molotov dragged his feet on this: "No one suspected that...he put the brakes on preparation of this treaty for a long time, not wishing to hasten the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Austria."¹¹ Here it was Khrushchev who insisted, backed by the best Soviet foreign minister that never was, Mikoyan. Molotov equally opposed settling peace with Japan, had no interest at all in opening up inter-state relations with the Third World, and pressed for force to be used to crush the revolt in Hungary (1956).¹² Ever the fundamentalist, averse to a policy of compromise, Molotov's epitaph on Khrushchev's foreign policy, in the course of which much had been conceded, was that in 1953 the Soviet Union controlled 70% of mankind. "A morsel remained. But then Nikita blew it all."¹³

Thus Roberts' case for Molotov receiving the Nobel Peace Prize (1953), which apparently is by no means tongue in cheek, leaves the informed reader somewhat puzzled. Of course, the Prize has long been discredited, so perhaps we should not be too shocked. When Molotov's grandson Vyacheslav Nikonov produces the second and third volumes of his scholarly biography, we may well find some surprises judging by the thoroughness of the research into the first book; but it is most unlikely to serve anything like Roberts has dished up.

¹¹ Quoted in *ibid.*, 157.

¹² Aleksandr Fursenko and Timothy Naftali, *Khrushchev's Cold War* (New York 2006), 123.

¹³ Quoted from the archives: Nikonov, *Molotov*, 586.

Geoffrey Roberts' work has always commanded the greatest respect in Germany, for he is well known as one of the most knowledgeable experts on Soviet foreign policy. His previous book, *Stalin's Wars* (2006), was a standard-setting and highly important work taking Stalin seriously, and without any *a priori* arguments, without judging him solely by the multiple crimes committed throughout his reign. In the spirit of the principle that it is important to first understand Stalin's policies – their origins and development, their successes and their failures –, and only then to judge them, this reviewer hoped to find more new insights in this latest work. While Roberts presents an original and important portrait of Vyacheslav Molotov, in the end, *Stalin's Cold Warrior* does not always satisfy.

Roberts argues that since 1947 and especially six years later, Molotov was the instigator of a true Soviet openness on the German question. With his customary openness, Roberts admits that it was not the primary sources which opened his eyes to what he sees as Molotov's real innovations. Instead, he writes that "my first thought was that mid-level officials in the Foreign Ministry – the people who wrote the policy documents ...– were responsible for the innovation in foreign policy. However, when a Russian colleague, Alexei Filitov, pointed out that the officials could only be acting in accordance with Molotov's wishes the scales fell from my eyes" (xv). When I read the book, I repeatedly asked myself why Roberts continually defends Molotov to what appears to me to be the detriment of the objectivity of the book. It may be that he is simply taking Melvin Leffler's admonition in the introduction to the series in which this book appears, "to look at the forest, not the trees," too far. As it stands, without a critical look at individual 'trees,' many 'forests' are found which don't exist, but are instead 'Potempkin forests' which only have a ghostly existence within Soviet politics or, under the label 'unrealized possibilities,' haunt the historical literature.

Roberts quickly comes to address Molotov's role in the negotiations with both the Western Powers and the Nazis in 1939, and makes the following judgment: "The negotiations with France and Great Britain ... failed because Stalin had an alternative ... to negotiate with Germany" (27). But these negotiations were in no way a true alternative, instead they put the USSR on the side of an aggressor which had already begun to redraw the borders of Europe. The territorial gains which came from the alliance with Germany were laughable in comparison to the irreparable consequences for the international position of the USSR. Although the subsequent sovietization of the occupied areas of eastern Poland demonstrates that the Soviet occupation was not simply a tactical security measure, but that rather, a lasting occupation was planned from the beginning, Roberts nevertheless still seems to believe that "it was safe for the USSR to occupy by force its sphere of influence in eastern Poland" (31).

¹ Translated by Bruce B. Campbell.

Roberts argues that Stalin and Molotov both assumed in 1941 that the consequences of a German surprise attack would be manageable (49). This is probably right, but Roberts does not explain why the Soviet leader was interested in the expansion of trade relations with Germany and in the fulfillment of all obligations vis-à-vis what was the Soviet Union's most likely future enemy. Why did neither Stalin nor Molotov try to explore the possibility of preparing an alliance to deter Hitler with the Western Powers before June 22, 1941? Did Stalin fear an Anglo-German reconciliation more than a 'total war' with Germany? An affirmative answer to this question would have probably influenced Roberts' explanation of Soviet post war policy, which should be viewed in continuity with the Soviet prewar policy of creating zones of influence on her western frontiers.

To be sure, from the end of 1941 on, Stalin pushed for a permanent weakening of Germany through division, and yet: "There was general agreement among the Big Three that dismemberment was a good idea in principle, but how this would be achieved in practice did not figure in the active diplomacy of the Grand Alliance during the war" (71). This is certainly correct, but does not, unfortunately, go far enough beyond the surface of that which has been known for a long time. Roberts doesn't see that the insistence on unconditional surrender and the complete occupation of Germany opened up new possibilities for all participants, for British proponents of the dismemberment of Germany just as for Stalin and Molotov. As soon as the USSR and its allies took supreme power over Germany jointly but independently in their pre-determined zones of occupation (as was agreed 1944 in the European Advisory Commission), the foreseeable likelihood that the different occupational zones would develop in divergent directions offered a possible path to the lasting division of Germany. From 1945 on, the USSR pushed this development. Even before the end of the war and without any consultation with the U.S. and Great Britain, the USSR turned over the eastern portion of the Soviet zone of occupation to the Polish provisional government which it favored. In the remaining portion of the zone which was directly administered by a Soviet military administration, the USSR worked together with the other occupational powers only in so far as it served Soviet interests, such as in de-nazification and de-militarization.

Roberts takes the Soviet leaders seriously, but not the Soviet war – or peace – aims. It seems to me self-evident that the Soviets did not fight and win victory in the war simply to reconstruct the prewar social order in those countries which it already considered to be within its sphere of influence before 1941, and they still had much of the same fears of a revival of Germany as an independent power. In light of this political concept, the division of Germany appears to be the ultimate solution to the Soviet security problem. The far-reaching policy in the sphere of currency, in agriculture (land reform), in education and culture as well as in the expropriation of Nazis and war criminals which was followed in the Soviet zone of occupation in Germany and the countries of Eastern Europe under Soviet control was certainly wrapped in the clothes of democracy, but was no less profound for all that. Yet Roberts concludes that "[I]n terms of communist political strategy, Stalin was advocating a moderate political course, one that focused on reform rather than revolution" (83). In fact, what the Soviets labeled simple reforms were actually profound changes through the disempowerment of old elites, which reached deeply into social structures and the balance of power between social classes. These revolutionary changes were defended

no less vehemently in the Soviet zone than they were in Russia itself after 1917. Even more important, the Soviet Union resisted any actions by the Western Powers which it feared might limit its sovereignty in the Soviet zone of Germany. Roberts overlooks the fact that the propaganda for Germany unity and a 'fair' peace treaty from 1946 on which was initiated by the Socialist Unity Party of Germany and the Soviet Union, and had its origin in the very real divergence between the western zones of occupation on the one hand, and the Soviet zone on the other. It is apparent that the Communists in East Berlin and Moscow had learned from history that they needed to prevent the 'national question' from again falling into the hands of their enemies. The Soviet Union thereby allowed itself to give the false impression that it was primarily interested in extending the Soviet reforms to all of Germany, thus expanding the range of Soviet control. In fact, this propaganda was more the expression of weakness than of strength.

In looking at Molotov, Roberts portrays the Cold War as something which the Soviet Union could simply either accept or refuse. He sees Stalin as accepting rather quickly "the transition from a peacemaking scenario to Cold War", and contends that "Molotov turned out to be a surprisingly reluctant cold warrior" (90). This view contrasts starkly with Molotov's own insight, which he expressed in 1974 to the Soviet writer Felix Chuev, that "Cold War" meant to push back the capitalist order. He indicated that the Western powers "hardened their line against us, but we had to consolidate our conquests. We made our own socialist Germany out of our part of Germany, and restored order in Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary, and Yugoslavia, where the situations were fluid."²

Roberts places the German question in the middle of Molotov's foreign policy thinking, beginning with the Moscow meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM) in the spring of 1947. He argues that "Molotov pushed hard for an agreement on procedures for negotiating a German peace treaty" (116). Roberts never considers the possibility that the USSR simply wanted to attack western plans to declare a separate West German state, and thus calculated that the Western Powers would never be able to actually consider seriously and agree to the Soviet proposals as long as they stuck to their own goals. This lack of insight also colors his treatment of the Berlin-crisis of 1948/49 (the "Berlin Blockade"). He sees Stalin's goal not as an attempt to remove the Western barrier (which the Allied presence in West Berlin represented) to the long-planned founding of an independent East German Democratic Republic, but rather as just the opposite: Roberts interprets this episode as Stalin's attempt to persuade the Western Allies to abandon their plans for the founding of an independent German Federal Republic and to force them back to negotiations in the CFM (119). Unlike other interpretations of these same events, Roberts doesn't admit the possibility that Stalin might have had nothing at all against the formation of a block of Western-dominated states, so long as this coincided with the recognition of the Eastern Block and the acknowledgement that the German Democratic Republic was a part of it. On the other hand, Roberts' portrayal of the role of the peace movement for Soviet foreign policy is both new and noteworthy (123). Yet he only briefly considers the 'Stalin

² See Albert Resis (ed), *Molotov Remembers: Inside Kremlin Politics. Conversations with Felix Chuev* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dees, 1993), 59.

Note', which he interprets as having been initiated by Molotov, and which he takes seriously as a "Soviet offer to the West – a united Germany in exchange for its disarmament and neutralization" (127).

Roberts sees this as Molotov's chief innovation on the German Question. In the main part of the book, under the heading "Partisan of Peace" (131–174), the real methodological problematic of Roberts' research is quite clear. His arguments about Molotov's German initiatives are based on many official documents published already in the 1950's, but he focuses on a very special document from June 2, 1953, which he himself first published³ and which is preserved in Malenkov's papers. According to Roberts, this document gives "the most frank exposition ever of the political logic of the Soviet position on the German question", and openly addresses the potential implications which were "consequently elided" in the public declarations. This culminates in the statement that "the abandonment of the accelerated building of socialism in the GDR and the course of the unification of Germany in the form of a bourgeois democratic state on conditions of its transformation into a peaceful and democratic country [was necessary]" (135–136). Yet in following this line of interpretation, Roberts fails to consider that all Soviet initiatives on Germany after 1946 remained limited to public declarations, and that no real steps towards a change in conditions in the Soviet zone/GDR ever followed. In particular, the Soviet Union was never ready to make any concessions to free elections, which all critics of their policy constantly demanded. Roberts does admit that nobody in Moscow ever asked "what would happen if ... the Soviets had to choose between the strategic advantages of a neutral, united Germany and the political imperative of holding on the communist position in the GDR" (136-137), but fails to recognize that nobody ever had to ask this question, because until 1989 no one ever allowed the USSR to be faced with this possibility. Accordingly, Roberts downplays those parts of the accusations against Beria at the Central Committee Plenary Session in early July 1953 which concerned Germany (138). Yet here the Soviet leadership clearly demonstrated that any sacrifice of East Germany was a deviation from socialist principles (Georgi Malenkov's argument), all discussions with capitalist states were to be mistrusted (Nikita Khrushchev's argument) and that Beria was to be seen as an enemy of the Soviet Union (Molotov's argument).

Roberts fails to close the circle of Soviet foreign policy; he never connects Molotov's efforts from the summer of 1953 on to bring about a pan-European conference on security (141ff) with Maxim Litvinov's call for collective security in the 1930's. In the broad discussion of the Molotov initiatives from 1953 to 1956 Roberts speaks as an advocate for Molotov, and thus argues against the charges made against the Soviet Foreign Minister in western sources and the 'orthodox' literature. Roberts' arguments become, in effect, an unspoken attack on the policies of the West, which failed to seize the chances offered it. The sources Roberts uses to support this show, at the most, that Molotov tried from 1953 on to integrate the growing impulses within the Soviet foreign policy apparatus towards a reduction of tensions with the Western Powers into the Stalinist foreign and German

³ Geoffrey Roberts, "Malenkov on the German Question, 2 June 1953," Cold War International History Project e-dossier no. 15.

policy. But in the end it was precisely Molotov's helpless conflict with the new Soviet Party chief which demonstrates that he lacked the potential to take over the leadership of the Soviet Party and state. In this context Roberts doesn't ask what might have happened if Molotov's attempts to topple Khrushchev in 1956-57 had succeeded. Though Roberts' reevaluation of Molotov is suggestive, he does not recognize that Molotov was the last imaginable politician to lead an opening of the Soviet Union to the West and thereby drive the internal modernization of the Soviet Empire forward, and not simply since 1953, either.

With this new book, Geoffrey Roberts continues his study of Soviet foreign policy in the initial phases of the Cold War. Already in *Stalin's Wars: From World War to Cold War, 1939-1953*, he expanded and refined our knowledge of the intentions and beliefs of the Soviet leadership at the beginning of the Cold War.¹ The results of his archival work on Vyacheslav Molotov's foreign policy after Stalin's death were published for the first time in a comprehensive working paper of the Cold War International History Project.² Roberts' contribution to the series "Shapers of International History" situates these results within a biography of Stalin's long-time companion and foreign minister. The author thereby confirms the results of recent research, which because of the nature of its new insights has frequently been met with skepticism and rejection. At the same time, he helps us better understand the functioning of Soviet foreign policy under Stalin.

Roberts convincingly demonstrates that the conventional view of Molotov as an assistant to Stalin without a will or principles of his own is extremely misleading. Even with all his loyalty to the Soviet leader, Molotov had a mind of his own; and he took certain risks in seeking to have his own views prevail: "I was not one to hang on Stalin's every word. I argued with him, told him the truth," Molotov said in retrospective to Felix Chuev. "That was why Stalin valued me. He saw that I had my own views and my own thinking on the issues. Of course, I can't say he would always agree with me, but I must say that he did frequently agree with me. Otherwise we wouldn't have worked closely together for thirty years."³ In terms of foreign policy, Molotov was the better analyst and shrewder strategist of the two. Stalin was ill advised if he did not consistently follow Molotov's counsel and instead gave in to the impulses of his deep mistrust and his hubris.

Regarding the major outlines of Stalin's foreign policy after the defeat of Nazi Germany, this book offers the specialist little that is new. The hope of continuing the alliance with the Western Powers, the great fear of renewed German aggression, expectations of progress toward socialism via the parliamentary path, hesitancy regarding the assessment of the Marshal Plan, the attempt by means of the Berlin Blockade to stop the founding of a West German state, and, finally, the attempt to mobilize the West Germans for the conclusion of a peace treaty—all this has been well known for a long time. However, Roberts offers a compact and clear presentation of these developments, one that can serve as a very good introduction to the present state of the research. Indeed, his book is eminently appropriate for drawing greater attention to the state of the research on this topic.

¹ Geoffrey Roberts, *Stalin's Wars: From World War to Cold War, 1939-1953* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006).

² Geoffrey Roberts, *A Chance for Peace? The Soviet Campaign to End the Cold War, 1953-1955*. Working Paper No. 57 (Washington, DC: Cold War History International Project, 2008).

³ Albert Resis (ed.), *Molotov Remembers* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1993), pp. 211, 369.

Thanks to new sources, Roberts is at many points able to substantiate research results that have been contested. For example, he quotes German Communist chief Walter Ulbricht in a conversation with then Soviet Foreign Minister Andrey Vyshinsky on 23 August 1952 expressing a positive opinion of the Soviets' fourth German note: "Ulbricht welcomed the note, saying that it would strengthen the GDR's struggle for a united Germany. Some people, said Ulbricht, thought that since the GDR had embarked on the course of building socialism there would be no more talk of German unity, but the Soviet note had made it clear that the aim remained a united, democratic Germany" (128). This clearly demonstrates that the note initiative of 1952 did not constitute a purely propaganda exercise for either the East German communist leader or the Soviet foreign minister. In light of this, the contrary thesis held by many historians now appears even less plausible than it already was.

Roberts makes clear once again that the removal of Molotov from the post of Foreign Minister in March of 1949 changed nothing in regard to his responsibility for leading Soviet foreign policy. In his new function as chairman of the Foreign Policy Committee of the Politburo, the operative leadership of foreign policy still rested in his hands. New Foreign Minister Andrei Vyshinsky, who had earlier been his deputy, continued to function as an assistant to Molotov. In fact, Molotov still conducted the meetings with the foreign and defense ministers of the other East Bloc states. As I demonstrated in a reconstruction of the origins of the 'Stalin Note' of 10 March 1952, it was Molotov who was the driving force behind this initiative too. He directed it down to the smallest detail and in the end had to accept a reformulation by Stalin that harmed the note's prospects of success.⁴

With this background, it is revealing that—as Roberts shows—Molotov did lose operative leadership of foreign policy after the failure of the 1952 note initiative and that in the first session of the Central Committee after the Nineteenth Party Congress of the CPSU in October of 1952, Stalin criticized him "as being a capitulationist in the Cold War struggle" (129). Clearly, the failure of Molotov's note initiative contributed to his fall from grace. Furthermore, in the period after Stalin's death, when Molotov once again was serving as foreign minister, Soviet policy on Germany reverted to the continuity seen up to the time of the note initiative. Molotov appears as the consistent proponent of this line, which had fundamentally been that of Stalin too but which had no longer been pursued by the Soviet leader in the course of the note campaign. Returning to the center of power after Stalin's death, Molotov did his utmost yet again to achieve an understanding with the Western Powers on a democratic Germany that would not be part of the Western Bloc.

The relationship between Molotov and Lavrentiy Beria as the other driving force behind Soviet German policy after Stalin's death in spring 1953⁵ remains somewhat unclear in

⁴ Wilfried Loth, "Die Entstehung der 'Stalin-Note.' Dokumente aus Moskauer Archiven," in Jürgen Zarusky (ed.), *Die Stalin-Note vom 10. März 1952. Neue Quellen und Analysen* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2002); Wilfried Loth, "The Origins of Stalin's Note of 10 March 1952," in *Cold War History* 4, No. 2 (2004), pp. 66-88.

⁵ On this see Wilfried Loth, "The German Question from Stalin to Krushchev. The meaning of new documents", in *Cold War History* 10 (2010), pp. 229-245.

Roberts' account. The author does not provide any information as to how he sees Molotov's distancing of himself from Beria at the Plenum of the Central Committee from 2 to 7 July 1953. Was Molotov unaware that he was damaging his own position on German policy with the distinction he made between the "accelerated" building of socialism in the GDR (which he rejected) and the building of socialism in general (whose rejection he imputed to the "bourgeois" Beria)? In any event, Molotov was soon to learn that this was the case during the dispute with Nikita Khrushchev, which Roberts traces following the work of Alexei Filitov.⁶ The final defeat of Molotov's German policy concept, which came at a session of the Presidium of the Central Committee on 6 November 1955, was also a milepost on the way to this long-term foreign minister's loss of power.

In general, it would have been good at times to have something more in the way of qualifying and evaluating the concepts and actions presented in the book. This reserve is likely attributable to the constraints of the format, however. The books in the series "Shapers of International History" are intended to be "short, evocative, and provocative," as series editor Melvin P. Leffler writes in his foreword (p. xi). Roberts' account fulfills this mandate. Yet, it is "provocative" only for those readers who have not yet become sufficiently acquainted with the progress in examining the sources on the history of the Cold War contained in the Eastern archives. Roberts' book should contribute to making such ignorance unacceptable in the future.

⁶Alexei M. Filitov, "The Post-Stalin Succession Struggle and the Austrian State Treaty," in Arnold Suppan, Gerald Stourzh, and Wolfgang Mueller (eds.), *The Austrian State Treaty 1955* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2005), pp. 121-143; Alexei M. Filitov, *Germaniya v Sovetskom Vneshnepoliticheskom Planirovanii, 1941-1990* (Moscow: Nauka, 2010), pp. 230-233.

Author's Response by Geoffrey Roberts, University College Cork Ireland

I would like to thank the H-Diplo editors for organising this roundtable review of my study of Vyacheslav Molotov's career as Soviet Foreign Minister. They have brought together a distinguished panel of experts, each of whom has been a major influence on my research. In the 1970s and 1980s Jonathan Haslam and his mentor E.H. Carr were pioneers in utilising published Soviet archival sources on Moscow's foreign policy which were being made available in large quantities. In the 1990s it was Jochen Laufer who encouraged me to go to Moscow to conduct research in the Russian foreign policy archives, and his own work on the USSR and the German question is an indispensable source. I have long admired Wilfried Loth's challenges to conventional thinking about the history of the Cold War, not least his striving to establish the authenticity of the so-called Stalin Note of March 1952 that proposed the reunification and neutralisation of Germany. Over the years I have had many conversations about Molotov with Alexei Filitov, and his work in the Russian archives has been instrumental in shaping my own research on post-Stalin Soviet foreign policy.

In responding to the roundtable I will not reply to every critical point or query. I will focus on what seem to me to be the essential issues in dispute.

Alexei Filitov and I agree about many things but we do not agree about Soviet plans for the dismemberment of Germany that were formulated during World War II. According to Filitov, Moscow's stated preference during the war for dismemberment was disinformation and a ploy probably designed to draw the western powers into a commitment that could then be turned against them by Soviet propaganda after the war.¹ The problem with Filitov's position is that Joseph Stalin's support for dismemberment during the war is absolutely clear, a fact the Soviet authorities later tried to cover up by distorting their records of the Tehran, Yalta and Potsdam summits.² At the end of the war Stalin abandoned the policy of dismemberment for reasons that are not entirely clear but it seems to have been connected to his sense that the western powers were backing away from such a solution to the German problem. But I do agree with Filitov that after the war Stalin's and, more especially, Molotov's policy was oriented toward the reunification of Germany provided there were safeguards for Soviet security.

Filitov is right to point to the importance of the Prague conference of October 1950 and I should, perhaps, have made more of Molotov's role in the proceedings, especially since I have a complete copy of the Soviet transcripts of the meeting. Molotov had been removed as Foreign Minister in March 1949 following the arrest of his wife as part of the purge of the Soviet Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee but he remained a member of the Politburo and

¹ See further A.M. Filitov, *Germaniya v Sovetskom Vneshnepoliticheskom Planirovanii, 1941-1990*, Nauka: Moscow 2009 chap.1.

² See Geoffrey Roberts, "Stalin at Tehran, Yalta and Potsdam", *Journal of Cold War Studies*, vol.9, no.4, Fall 2007 pp.6-40.

in overall charge of foreign relations. He was present in Prague because of his particular interest in the German question and his longstanding role in Soviet efforts to sign a German peace treaty with the West – efforts which culminated in their first phase with the Stalin note – a note that should, as Filitov has argued, be called the Molotov Note. It was the failure of this initiative that led to another falling out with Stalin and to Molotov's isolation within the Soviet leadership until after the dictator's death in March 1953.

In relation to Molotov's role as Soviet Foreign Minister after Stalin's death Filitov and I are basically in agreement, perhaps because we have had the opportunity see many of same files in the Russian Foreign Ministry archive. But I am not convinced by his argument that because of the Soviet H-Bomb Molotov did not fear a German revival. If anything, the atomic bomb accentuated Molotov's fears because of the danger that German rearmament could include the acquisition of nuclear weapons. During the course of my research I have seen scores of Soviet files on the German question and it is clear that Moscow's stated fear that Germany's rearmament could lead to a new world war was not merely a propaganda ploy. In Molotov's case the perception of such a threat was reinforced by an ideological world view that saw war as inevitable unless the warmongers could be prevented by the forces of peace.

The most critical review is by Jonathan Haslam, who was invited to take part in the roundtable at my suggestion, which only seemed fair since I had recently subjected his latest book to a 5000-word critique.³

Haslam claims that I think "Soviet foreign policy making under Stalin was fundamentally monolithic." I'm not clear what he means by "foreign policy making" but my view has always been that while its implementation could be described as monolithic – in the sense that no opposition was brooked once a decision had been made – nevertheless, the preceding discussions were often characterised by disagreement and division. This has been a central theme of every book and article I have published on the history of Soviet foreign policy and I will not further labour the point here.⁴ The difference between my work and that of Haslam is that I use the archival evidence to refute the Western cold war stereotype of these internal differences. The stereotype continues to cast Molotov as a conservative hardliner who in the 1930s opposed Maxim Litvinov's policy of collective security and instead favoured a deal with Hitler; and in the 1950s cast him as a hawk opposed to détente with the west. As Haslam notes, evidence from the Soviet archives does indeed dent this outdated stereotype, revealing instead that Stalin was more of a Cold warrior than was Molotov. But as his contribution to this roundtable shows, elements of the stereotype persist.

³ Geoffrey Roberts, "The Cold War as History", *International Affairs*, November 2011 pp.1475-1484..

⁴ But see in particular "A Soviet Bid for Peaceful Coexistence with Nazi Germany, 1935-1937: The Kandelaki Affair", *International History Review*, August 1994,466-490; "The Fascist War Threat and Soviet Politics in the 1930s" (in S. Pons and A. Romano (eds),*Russia in the Age of Wars, 1914-1945*, Milan 2000), 147-158; and "Litvinov's Lost Peace, 1941-1946", *Journal of Cold War Studies*, vol.4, no.2, Spring 2002,25-56.

Haslam cites memoir evidence to support his interpretation. I don't regard this as persuasive. The first rule of historical evidence is, surely, that memoirs are not to be trusted without supporting documentary evidence. That point must apply to Felix Chuev's often-cited conversations with Molotov⁵ being used as evidence of Molotov's thinking at the time of action in question. Yet all those so-called memoirs tell us is what Molotov said to Chuev. These statements constitute useful evidence of Molotov's views in the 1960s and 1970s but not those he held in the 1940s and 1950s.

Haslam bases much of his review on the memoirs of Vladimir Erofeev, who served with Molotov in the 1940s and 1950s. He writes that I appear to be unaware of the existence of Erofeev's memoirs and that this is "a damaging lacuna". Erofeev's memoir is listed in my bibliography, but I transliterated Erofeev's name as Yerofeyev. Erofeev's is an interesting memoir and I regret not making use of it to add some more colour to my description of Molotov's personality and working methods. But compared with the original documentary sources now available, that memoir is of little evidentiary value concerning Soviet foreign policy. Haslam cites Erofeev's claim that Molotov argued for Stalin to send him to the founding conference of the United Nations in San Francisco. The documentary evidence shows that Stalin decided to do this after Roosevelt's death in order that, en route, Molotov could meet with the new President, Harry Truman. Similarly, we have plenty of documents to help us explain why, for reasons of policy and calculation, the Soviets decided to participate in the 1947 Paris conference on the Marshall Plan proposal.

The core of Haslam's critique is his rejection of my account of Molotov's role in post-Stalin Soviet foreign policy and his reiteration of the conventional narrative that casts Georgy Malenkov and Lavrenty Beria as the policy innovators in relation to the German question. Haslam acknowledges that I have found "fascinating new evidence" that indicates support for German reunification and neutralisation in the upper reaches of the Soviet foreign ministry. But, he argues, this does not prove that Molotov shared such a position.

As I state in the book, my first thought on seeing this evidence was the same as Haslam's: that the innovators were Molotov's officials, who drafted the documents I read in the files. Alexei Filitov helped change my mind by asking me if I really believed these Soviet officials would express views independently and not in accordance with Molotov's own. I had to agree. Hence, the policy positions formulated within the Soviet Foreign Ministry are powerful evidence of Molotov's own views. I found no contradictory evidence in the files that would lead me to doubt that. Indeed, it is clear from tracking the processes of drafting and approval that many of these documents were formulated not only with Molotov's consent but also at his instigation.

A second tranche of evidence as to Molotov's views is the role he played in various negotiations with the Western powers after Stalin's death. Particularly striking is what

⁵ *Molotov Remembers: Inside Kremlin Politics, Conversations with Felix Chuev*, ed. Albert Resis. Chicago, Ivan R. Dee, 1993

happened at the two Foreign Ministers' conferences of this period - in Berlin in January-February 1954 and Geneva in November-December 1955. In Berlin Molotov launched the Soviet proposal for pan-European collective security – basically a plan for a united but neutral Germany contained within a common European security system. Molotov worked hard to make this proposal acceptable to the Western powers, even agreeing to consider the claim that the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was a defensive organisation and not an aggressive alliance directed against the USSR. Then on his return to Moscow Molotov steered through the Presidium a dual policy proposal that the United States should be a member of the pan-European collective security organisation while the USSR would consider joining NATO. Such a radical proposal could not have been promulgated by the Foreign Ministry without Molotov's full and active consent.⁶

Nearly two years later Molotov pursued the same policy at the Geneva conference, i.e., a negotiated settlement of the German question in the context of European collective security. This stance brought Molotov into direct conflict with Nikita Khrushchev who vetoed any trade off between German reunification and collective security. Halfway through the conference Molotov returned to Moscow to try to persuade the Presidium to continue discussions with the West on the basis that there could be all-German elections under certain conditions, but he was overruled by Khrushchev who insisted that the USSR must hang on to a communist-controlled German Democratic Republic (GDR) at all costs. It was Khrushchev, not Molotov, who was the conservative, the hardliner and the obstructor of détente.

A third tranche of evidence concerning Molotov's views is what he said in public. Again the contrast with Khrushchev, who peddled a more orthodox line, is instructive. In San Francisco to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the UN in June 1955 Molotov said: "The Soviet Union stands for the reunification of Germany – reunification on a peace-loving and democratic basis. In a united Germany the regime that exists in Eastern Germany should not prevail, and neither should the regime that exists in West Germany. Which regime should and will prevail in a united Germany is as matter that must be decided by the German people themselves in free all-German elections." Compare this to Khrushchev's hardline statement in Berlin on his way home from the Geneva summit of July 1955: "The German question cannot be resolved at the expense of the GDR...Could the working people of the GDR accept the liquidation of all their social and political achievements, the liquidation of their democratic reforms? We are convinced that the working people of the GDR will not agree to go down such a path."⁷

⁶ I have published Molotov's proposal to the Presidium here: "Molotov's Proposal that the USSR Join NATO, March 1954, Cold War International History Project e-Dossier no.27, December 2011 <http://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/e-dossier-no-27-molotovs-proposal-the-ussr-join-nato-march-1954>

⁷ G. Roberts, *Molotov: Stalin's Cold Warrior*, Potomac Books: Washington DC 2012 p.131, 165.

Of course, the picture is not clear-cut. At the plenums that denounced Beria (July 1953) and Malenkov (January 1955) Molotov bowed to Khrushchev's rhetoric about the importance of holding on to the socialist GDR. It seems likely, too, that Molotov had illusions about the level of popular support there would be for the communists and the left in a united Germany. But what is remarkable is the persistence with which he pursued a politically risky resolution of the German question. This endeavour has been lost to history because Molotov's Khrushchevite opponents were able to label him as anti-détente, a refrain subsequently taken up by Western historians seeking another stick with which to beat 'Stalin's cold warrior.' Among the litany of charges against Molotov when he was ousted from the leadership by Khrushchev in June 1957 was that he had opposed the Austrian State Treaty of May 1955 – a charge recycled by Erofeev in his memoirs and repeated by Haslam. As I show in the book it is not a charge that is substantiated by the Foreign Ministry archives which show that Molotov was, as always, careful in his approach to the Austrian question but not obstructive.

Jochen Laufer and I agree that during the war Stalin and the Soviets planned the dismemberment of Germany. The collection of documents on the German question from the Soviet archives that he edited with Georgy Kynin provides ample evidence to that effect⁸, as does his monograph *Pax Sovietica: Stalin, die Westmächte und die deutsche Frage 1941-1945* (2009).⁹ We disagree over whether the policy of dismemberment was maintained after the war in the form of a preference for an East-West division of Germany. The main architect of Soviet German policy after the war, I argue, was Molotov and he stood for a united Germany under certain conditions. This policy can be traced from Potsdam in 1945 and the Moscow Foreign Ministers conference of April-May 1947 through to the Molotov Note of 1952 and to post-Stalin Soviet proposals on the German question.

In support of his side of the argument, Laufer points to the dynamic towards division created by the Allied demand for unconditional surrender and their plan for the prolonged and total occupation of Germany by the allies. He argues that it made sense for the Soviets to maintain political control of their zone in order to preclude a revival of the German threat. He points to the role of the East German communists in pushing for a social transformation of the GDR that would deepen its differences and division with West Germany. His strongest point is that for all the declaratory statements about desiring a united Germany, the Soviets did little or nothing to restrain the socialist transformation of the GDR nor took steps to create conditions that could have facilitated eventual reunification.

⁸ G. Kynin & J. Laufer (eds), *SSSR i Germanskii Vopros*, vol.1 (1941-1945), Moscow 1996 (also published in German).

⁹ Jochen Laufer. *Pax Sovietica. Stalin, die Westmächte und die deutsche Frage 1941-1945*. Köln, Weimar, Wien: Böhlau, 2009. See the H-Diplo roundtable on the book: <http://www.h-net.org/~diplo/roundtables/PDF/Roundtable-XII-23.pdf>.

Laufer's contribution highlights the fact that Moscow was not the only player that was framing Soviet policy on the German question – the East German communists were an important actor, too. There is no doubt that a divided Germany suited them and that they were among Khrushchev's strongest supporters. The ability of Molotov's Foreign Ministry to control events was limited. Molotov's policy of a united but neutral Germany plus European collective security was highly problematic in practical terms. But my argument concerns the *content* of the policy, not its feasibility, and Laufer presents no evidence that the Soviets' public policy of a united Germany was not also the private preference, at least for Molotov.

Laufer suggests that in my presentation of Molotov's post-Stalin foreign policy there is an implicit attack on the failure of the Western powers to grasp the opportunities it presented. I do believe that after Stalin's death there were opportunities to attempt to resolve the German question and to end the Cold War – opportunities missed because Western politicians and diplomats, like some historians still, did not understand the Soviet position. Whether these opportunities could have been successfully realised is another matter entirely.

Like the Soviets, the Western powers defended their interests and values as best they could. They favoured free all-German elections because they calculated that the result would be positive for them. They believed the Soviet Union, not Germany, represented a dire threat to European security and that the best way to contain German power was to integrate it into the Western bloc and at the same time to deploy it against the Soviet threat. It is not an attack on Western policy to point out that at least some of these perceptions and calculations were wrong. There was no Soviet threat in the western Cold-War sense, as opposed to a communist political and ideological challenge. Soviet proposals for a united Germany and European collective security were not simply a cynical design aimed at disrupting western plans for strengthening their bloc. The proposals were intended as a genuine alternative to build on the wartime alliances so as to guarantee security for all. It was not unreasonable, given recent history, for the Soviets to demand advance guarantees of their security in the event of a united Germany.

Laufer writes that I fail to connect the circle of Soviet foreign policy and to link Molotov's campaign for collective security with that of Litvinov in the 1930s. It is a fair point, although I did present a paper on that very topic at a conference in Moscow on the 70th anniversary of the Munich Crisis. More importantly, Molotov completed the circle himself when he argued to Western politicians on more than one occasion that the lesson of prewar history was that if collective security failed the result would be a revived aggressive Germany and a new world war.

Laufer's review overlooks an important point about my treatment of the Soviet campaign for European collective security: it almost succeeded. By summer 1955 the Soviet political and diplomatic campaign had forced the Western states to propose their own version of pan-European collective security. Those proposals were remarkably similar to the Soviet position and there was a bridgeable convergence apparent at the Geneva foreign ministers conference in November 1955. But in return for collective security, the West wanted free

all-German elections and a united, pro-western Germany. This was unacceptable to the Soviets but Molotov was willing to negotiate on the basis that there could be such elections if other demands could be satisfied. It was Soviet party leader Nikita Khrushchev who blocked such negotiations. Had the west moved closer to the Soviet position on collective security earlier – when Molotov’s position within the Soviet leadership was stronger – the outcome of this internal debate might have been different. In the end it was Khrushchev, not the Western powers, who stymied the Soviet campaign for European collective security and a negotiated resolution of the German question.

To Wilfried Loth’s review I have little or no objections, except that I am not sure we agree fully on the extent to which the GDR really was Stalin’s unwanted child.¹⁰ It seems to me that Stalin was always uncertain about whether a united Germany or divided Germany would be the best outcome for the Soviet Union, and he was sceptical about the prospects for the success of the campaign for a German peace treaty as pressed for by Molotov. It was this ambiguity that provided the space for the East German communists – or some of them – to pursue the semi-independent line pointed to by Laufer. Stalin’s scepticism came to the fore after the failure of the 1952 note initiative when Molotov was scapegoated as an appeaser of the west (along with Mikoyan). By the eve of his death Stalin seems to have settled on a divided Germany and a communist GDR as the best practical solution to the German question. The inheritor of Stalin’s position on the German question was, of course, Khrushchev, who fought a long battle with Molotov to hang on to the GDR at all costs. This line of reasoning leads me to question whether the 1952 note initiative could have succeeded while Stalin lived. The best chance for German reunification was not in 1952 but in 1953-1955, after Stalin’s death, when Molotov took control of Soviet foreign policy.¹¹

Stalin’s Cold Warrior is a revisionist history of Molotov’s career as Soviet Foreign Minister that seeks to challenge the conventional wisdom in a concise but evidence-based manner. It is not intended to be my last word on the subject and I look forward to participating in future debates about Molotov and his crucial role in the history of Soviet foreign policy.

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¹⁰ See W. Loth, *Stalin’s Unwanted Child: The Soviet Union, the German Question and the Founding of the GDR*, London 1998.

¹¹ But see further the development and refinement of Loth’s position in his *Die Sowjetunion und Die Deutsche Frage*, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht: Gottingen 2007.