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Rank : Ambassador at large
Unit : Foreign Office, Berlin
Capt'd: 7 May 1945 - Garmen-Patenkirchen

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I.O.: Capt. HALLE

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Report : Molotov's Visit to Berlin in November 1940.

New and important political developments, the most decisive of the entire war, occurred in November 1940. The Russian Commissar for Foreign Affairs, Molotov, came to Berlin, ostensibly to return Ribbentrop's visit to Moscow of 1939, but really to obtain the necessary clarification of the relations between Germany and Russia. Russia had declared that it desired to remain neutral in the war between Germany and Italy on the one side, and England and her allies on the other; nonetheless, she had let it be seen that she did not intend to remain a passive observer, but was seeking the consolidation and further extension of her own position in eastern Europe. It was therefore, becoming even more important to determine the price which Hitler was willing to pay for Russian neutrality. Would he be satisfied with the compromise which had been reached in Poland and the position which he had taken in Roumania, or would his plans also extend to areas where the Russians had vital interests ?

In his conferences with Hitler and Ribbentrop, Molotov sketched Russia's policy about as follows: Moscow knew of the guarantee which Germany had extended to Roumania and the Russians in their turn intended to have Bulgaria accept a guarantee from Moscow. They planned to assure themselves of military influence in Bulgaria, by establishing certain instrumentalities without interfering with the independence of Bulgaria: King Boris could remain at the head of the government if he would submit to the Russian proposal. Molotov also stated that Russia would have to have definite assurances regarding the Dardanelles. As far as northern Europe was concerned, the Russians reserved to themselves a free hand in Finland. Finally, Russia also had an interest in the Danish narrows to assure themselves a free passage to the North Sea. In the event of German concurrence with these objectives Molotov showed Russia's willingness to a more positive development of relations with Germany.

The reactions of Hitler and Ribbentrop to these statements were essentially negative or evasive. Beyond doubt, Hitler had already resolved at that time that there would be an eventual trial of strength with the Russians; there is no other explanation for his behavior during the conference with Molotov. In the program put forth by Moscow he saw clear evidence of further Russian pressure to the west which was incompatible with his plans. He would certainly have agreed to a Russian expansion to the South in the direction of the Indian Ocean, but he would not consent to a division with Russia, or hegemony in Europe to the extent which Russia desired.

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It was nevertheless clear that this was the price necessary for a continued guarantee of Russian neutrality.

Thus, the visit of Molotov ended with seeming friendship but under conditions which were bound to result in a further cooling of the relations between the two countries. A further exchange of views was contemplated, but the die had already been cast. At that time the government in Moscow may not have thought that Hitler was planning to attack the Soviet Union a few months later, but may rather have assumed that Hitler would lessen his demands as the war went on. Nevertheless the tune in Moscow was to prepare itself militarily for all eventualities. These preparations were intended to impress Hitler with the constant threat from the east.

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