



Molotov's Magic Lantern: A Journey in Russian History

Rachel Polonsky

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When Rachel Polonsky went to live in Moscow, she found an apartment block in Romanov Street, once a residence of the Soviet elite. One of those ghostly neighbours was Stalin's henchman Vyacheslav Molotov. In his former apartment, Rachel Polonsky discovered his library and an old magic lantern. Molotov - ruthless apparatchik, participant in the collectivizations and the Great Purge - was also an ardent bibliophile. Molotov's library and his magic lantern became the prisms through which Rachel Polonsky renewed her vision of Russia. She visited cities and landscapes associated with the books in the library - Chekhov, Dostoevsky, Pushkin, Akhmatova and many less well-known figures. Some were sent to the Gulag by the man who collected their books.

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