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**German-Soviet Non-Aggression: Hitler’s Bluff**

Source: <http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=1545>

The German-Soviet Non-Aggression Treaty (August 23, 1939)

Summary: On August 23, 1939, Reich Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop (1893-1946) and Soviet Foreign Minister Viacheslav Molotov (1890-1986) signed the following treaty in Moscow. The German-Soviet Non-Aggression Treaty – which, in addition to the standard non-aggression and neutrality clauses, also included a secret protocol on the territorial division of Eastern Europe – sealed Hitler’s decision to invade Poland a week later. With the Soviet Union on his side, Hitler hoped for either of the following contingencies: that England and France would not come to Poland’s defense, or, if they did, that they could be held at the Western Front until the quick defeat of Poland allowed Germany to continue the war in the West.

Until 1989 the Soviet Union denied the existence of the secret protocols because they were considered evidence of its involuntary annexation of the Baltic states. Soviet leaders were initially unwilling to restore prewar boundaries, but the transformations occurring within the Soviet Union in the early 1990s made it virtually impossible for Soviet leaders to combat declarations of independence from the Baltic States in 1991.

What my research yielded: Through the multiple avenues of search engines my research took in an attempt to establish provenance, I discovered the interpretations of the pact from both political officials and average citizens in Germany.

Source of English translation: “Treaty of Non-Aggression between Germany and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics” (August 23, 1939). In United States Department of State, Documents on German Foreign Policy: From the Archives of the German Foreign Ministry. Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1956. Series D (1937-1945), The Last Days of Peace, Volume 7: August 9 – September 3, 1939. Document Numbers 228 and 229, pp. 245-47. (English translation accredited to the U.S. Department of State Division of Language Services and slightly edited by GHI staff)

Source of original German text: “Nichtangriffsvertrag zwischen Deutschland und der Union der Sozialistischen Sowjetrepubliken” und “Geheimes Zusatzprotokoll” (August 23, 1939). In German Foreign Ministry, Akten zur Deutschen Auswärtigen Politik, 1918-1945. Baden-Baden: Imprimiere Nationale, MCMLVI. Series D: 1937-1945. Volume VII: Die letzten Wochen vor Kriegsausbruch, 9. August bis 3. September 1939. Document numbers 228 and 229, pp. 205-07.

Biographical information:

Molotov: Vyacheslav Mikhailovich Molotov(9 March 1890 – 8 November 1986) was a Soviet politician and diplomat, an Old Bolshevik, and a leading figure in the Soviet government from the 1920s, when he rose to power as a protégé of Joseph Stalin. Throughout his teen years, he was described as "shy" and "quiet", always assisting his father with his business (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vyacheslav_Molotov>). His most important provisions to the non-aggression pact were added in the form of a secret protocol that stipulated an invasion of Poland and partition of its territory between Germany and the Soviet Union.

Ribbentrop: Ulrich Friedrich Wilhelm Joachim von Ribbentrop (30 April 1893 – 16 October 1946) was Foreign Minister of Nazi Germany from 1938 until 1945. Ribbentrop first came to Adolf Hitler's notice as a well-travelled businessman with more knowledge of the outside world than most senior Nazis and as an authority on world affairs (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joachim_von_Ribbentrop>). Before World War II, he played a key role in brokering the Pact of Steel (an alliance with fascist Italy) as well as the non-aggression pact. Ribbentrop was tried at the Nuremberg trials and convicted for his role in starting World War II and enabling the Holocaust. On 16 October 1946, he became the first of those sentenced to death to be hanged.

Molotov, V. M. The Meaning of the Soviet-German Non-Aggression Pact. New York: Workers Library Publishers, 1939.

 [http://ucsb.worldcat.org/title/meaning-of-the-soviet-german-non-aggression-pact/oclc/79665098&referer=brief\_results](http://ucsb.worldcat.org/title/meaning-of-the-soviet-german-non-aggression-pact/oclc/79665098%26referer%3Dbrief_results)

Also under the search, “Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact” yielded a result that is a primary source. *The Meaning of the Soviet-German Non-Aggression Pact,* by Vyacheslav Molotov himself. This source is a pamphlet published in 1939 in an attempt to tell the Russian public what this treaty meant for them after it was revealed to be no longer secret many years later. This is an interesting source because it explains the pact from the Russian perspective where previously I have been blindly focused on the German view. Using the “find more information tool” led me to over 600 more sources authored by Molotov ranging from before the war to the late 1970’s. A narrowed search of Molotov’s works during wartime dates yield no more significant information.

Wireless to THE NEW,YORK TIMES. "SOVIET ACCLAIMED BALTIC'S PROTECTOR." New York Times (1923-Current file): 5. Oct 12 1939. ProQuest. Web. 9 Mar. 2016 .

<http://search.proquest.com/hnpnewyorktimes/docview/102876263/134EA088BDE040F1PQ/6?accountid=14522>

Found in the New York Times contemporary database through the search phrase, “German-Soviet treaty”. This article released only a short while after the treaty was signed reveals that the Soviet Union would now be considered the Baltic States’ “protector” under the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact. The article goes on with skepticism in saying that how can the Soviet Union be trusted to amiably govern parts of Eastern Europe if its recent history of solving political problems have been drenched in blood.

Kitchen, Martin. 1992. Review of Neutralität Und Totalitäre Aggression: Nordeuropa Und Die Groβmächte Im Zweiten Weltkrieg; the Molotov-ribbentrop Pact of 1939: The Baltic Case. The International History Review 14 (3). Taylor & Francis, Ltd.: 604–7. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40106637>.

This source is a peer reviewed scholarly journal discovered on JSTOR with the search phrase, “Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact”. The reviewed material is *The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of 1939: The Baltic Case by Izidors Vizulis 1990* and was reviewed by Martin Kitchen for *The International History Review* (Vol. 14, No. 30) in 1992. Kitchen praises Vizlulis’s work as a useful collection to students of World War II and Nazi Germany and provides these students with weapons to beat the revisionist historians who attempt to convince it was not Hitler’s war. This is significant not only for combating revisionists but understanding the non-aggression pact because Hitler had the full intent of breaking this treaty even before signing it.

Roberts, Geoffrey. 2001. "FROM NON-AGRESSION TREATY TO WAR: DOCUMENTING NAZI-SOVIET RELATIONS 1939-41. (Cover story)." History Review no. 41: 14. Academic Search Complete, EBSCOhost (accessed February 1, 2016).

 <http://web.a.ebscohost.com/ehost/detail/detail?vid=3&sid=e2a1765e-09ff-4497-8732-085001bfe36a%40sessionmgr4003&hid=4214&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWhvc3QtbGl2ZQ%3d%3d#AN=5754719&db=a9h>

Academic Search Complete/EBSCO host search titled, “soviet-german non-aggression pact”. Very few English results appeared for this search as well as for the search, “Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact”. I found this 2001 source by the author Geoffrey Roberts which provides a detailed breakdown in the Nazi-Soviet relationship and Hitler’s secret plans for eventually breaking the treaty.

Zisserman-Brodsky, Dina. 2003. Constructing ethnopolitics in the Soviet Union: samizdat, deprivation and the rise of ethnic nationalism. New York, N.Y.: Palgrave Macmillan.

<https://books.google.com/books?id=1jbHAAAAQBAJ>

I searched google books for the possibility of finding the full text of the 1939 pact. Instead I found a source that revealed in August of 1979 forty-five representative of the Baltic republics issued an appeal to the USSR, both of Germany’s governments, signatory states of the Atlantic Charter, and the United Nations to demand that the Soviet and German governments publish the full text, including the secret addendum from both parties, of the German-Soviet Non-Aggression Treaty. Further exploration on google books for this full text did not come up with any luck.

Moorhouse, Roger. 2014. The devils' alliance: Hitler's pact with Stalin, 1939-1941. New York: Basic Books, 2014. 432 pp.

[http://ucsb.worldcat.org/title/devils-alliance-hitlers-pact-with-stalin-1939-1941/oclc/870986783&referer=brief\_results](http://ucsb.worldcat.org/title/devils-alliance-hitlers-pact-with-stalin-1939-1941/oclc/870986783%26referer%3Dbrief_results)

World cat yielded a source which is available for checkout in the UCSB main library from the phrase, “Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact”*. The Devils' Alliance: Hitler's pact with Stalin, 1939-1941,* by Roger Moorhouse in 2014. The book’s abstract reads, “Explores the causes and implications of the Nazi-Soviet Pact, an unholy covenant whose creation and dissolution were crucial turning points in World War II. Forged by the German foreign minister, Joachim von Ribbentrop, and his Soviet counterpart, Vyacheslav Molotov, the nonaggression treaty briefly united the two powers in a brutally efficient collaboration. Together, the Germans and Soviets quickly conquered and divided central and eastern Europe; Poland, the Baltic States, Finland, and Bessarabia. The human cost was staggering: during the two years of the pact hundreds of thousands of people in central and Eastern Europe caught between Hitler and Stalin were expropriated, deported, or killed”. After waiting for UCSB’s physical copy of it to be returned, I was able to get my hands on it and track down specific information about the pact. Moorhouse describes in vivid and unsparing detail the consequences of the Nazi-Soviet bargain: the dismemberment of Poland and the violent murders, arrests, and deportations the Nazis and Soviets inflicted on their respective occupation zones.

<http://www.history.com/topics/world-war-ii/german-soviet-nonaggression-pact>

A simple google search engine run through of the phrase, “german soviet non-aggression pact” yielded many top results from websites such as history.com, Wikipedia, and the Brittanica world encyclopedia. The history.com website offered me primary source pictures, infographic images and video media. Included in the text was an overall synopsis of the events leading up to the signing of the treaty, the immediate effects of political standing between the two nations after signing and the overall impact the eventual violation of the pact had on the war. The second result from the google search let me know that this treaty was also known as the “Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact” which prompted my next search.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Molotov%E2%80%93Ribbentrop_Pact>

From the information gathered in my previous web search, googling “Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact” brought me to a Wikipedia page with more information regarding the build up to the pact. I learned that from April to July, Soviet and German officials made statements regarding the potential for the beginning of political negotiations, while no actual negotiations took place during that time period. This happened while the Soviets were still negotiating with the British and French missions in Moscow, which bear no fruit. The talks and signing of the pact between Germany and the Soviet Union was also kept secret from the rest of the world.