

Why did Hitler and Stalin sign the Non-Aggression Pact in 1939 (an action most historians believe led directly to war, as Hitler attacked Poland a few days after)

1. Use these documents to come to some various hypotheses. For each document, write a one sentence summary that explains why Hitler and Stalin signed this pact.
2. Then, evaluate the documents. Which documents support each other? Which documents contradict each other? Does the author/form of the document make it more or less trustworthy?
3. Then, develop an argument that explains the origins of the Nazi-Soviet Pact.

Doc A: The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, 1939

The Government of the German Reich and The Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics desirous of strengthening the cause of peace between Germany and the U.S.S.R., and proceeding from the fundamental provisions of the Neutrality Agreement concluded in April, 1926 between Germany and the U.S.S.R., have reached the following Agreement:

Article I. Both High Contracting Parties obligate themselves to desist from any act of violence, any aggressive action, and any attack on each other, either individually or jointly with other Powers.

Article II. Should one of the High Contracting Parties become the object of belligerent action by a third Power, the other High Contracting Party shall in no manner lend its support to this third Power.

[The section below was not published at the time the above was announced.]

Secret Additional Protocol.

Article II. In the event of a territorial and political rearrangement of the areas belonging to the Polish state, the spheres of influence of Germany and the U.S.S.R. shall be bounded approximately by the line of the rivers Narev, Vistula and San.

The question of whether the interests of both parties make desirable the maintenance of an independent Polish States and how such a state should be bounded can only be definitely determined in the course of further political developments.

Doc B: From the *Museum of Communism*, a website from the homepage of Bryan Caplan, a libertarian professor of economics of George Mason U.

<http://www.gmu.edu/departments/economics/bcaplan/museum/comfaq.htm#part11>

What does this excerpt suggest about the relationship between Stalin and Hitler, and what both men hoped to achieve from the Pact?

...Paul Johnson amusingly recounts the diplomatic festivities [during the signing of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact] in the Kremlin:

[German Foreign Minister] Ribbentrop reported: "It felt like being among old party comrades." He was as much at ease in the Kremlin, he added, "as among my old Nazi friends." Stalin toasted Hitler and said he "knew how much the German people loved the Fuhrer." There were brutal jokes about the Anti-Comintern Pact, now dead, which both sides agreed had been meant simply to impress the City of London and "English shopkeepers." There was the sudden discovery of a community of aims, methods, manners, and, above all, of morals. As the tipsy killers lurched about the room, fumblingly hugging each other, they resembled nothing so much as a congregation of rival gangsters, who had fought each other before, and might do so again, but were essentially in the same racket.

The Nazis and Soviets applied almost identical internal policies to their respective halves of defeated Poland. "While the Gestapo organized the persecution of 'racial enemies' in German-occupied Poland, the NKVD decrees of 1940 listed fourteen categories of people to be deported... Like the SS and the Gestapo, the NKVD was engaged, as General Wladyslaw Anders later put it, in 'beheading the community' - destroying any potential leadership which might organized opposition to Soviet rule." (Christopher Andrew and Oleg Gordievsky, *KGB: The Inside Origins of Its Foreign Operations from Lenin to Gorbachev*) Hitler and Stalin even traded dissident emigres: Stalin handed over the German Communists in exchange for the Russians and Ukrainians residing within Hitler's domain.

Doc C: From Winston Churchill's history of World War Two, v.1, pub. 1949—

Here, the former Prime Minister of Britain tells a story about meeting with Stalin in 1942, during World War Two, where the Soviet leader explains his rationale for signing the treaty with Hitler back in 1939. Churchill was not yet head of the British government in 1939.

At the Kremlin in August, 1942, Stalin, in the early hours of the morning, gave me one aspect of the Soviet position. "We formed the impression" said Stalin, "that the British and French governments were not resolved to go to war if Poland were attacked, but that they hoped the diplomatic line-up of Britain, France and Russia would deter Hitler. We were sure it would not." "How many divisions," Stalin had asked, "will France send against Germany against mobilization?" The answer was, "About a hundred." He then

asked, "How many will England send?" The answer was, "Two and two more later." "Ah, two and two more later," Stalin had repeated. "Do you know how many divisions we shall have to put up on the Russian front if we go to war with Germany?" There was a pause. "More than three hundred." I was not told with whom this conversation took place or its date. It must be recognized that this was solid ground, but not favorable for Mr. Strang [the British ambassador.]

Doc D: Rendezvous." David Low's cartoon, published in the London publication *The Evening Standard* on 20 September 1939, shows Hitler greeting Stalin, following their joint invasion of Poland, with the words, "The scum of the earth, I believe?". To which Stalin replies, "The bloody assassin of the workers, I presume?"

What is Low implying about the relationship between these two leaders, and how might this be an explanation of the Pact?



RENDEZVOUS

Doc E: 1938 Russian cartoon about Munich: [British Prime Minister] Chamberlain and [French President] Daladier act as traffic policemen for Adolf Hitler; the sign-post reads 'Left - Western Europe, Right - USSR'

To understand this cartoon—look at the direction Chamberlain and Daladier are pointing Hitler towards. What therefore seems to be the way the USSR viewed what had happened at Munich? What accusation is this cartoon making about the motives of France and England?



Doc F: A map of the “Partition of Poland” in 1939. How could this be viewed as a consequence of the Munich Pact?

