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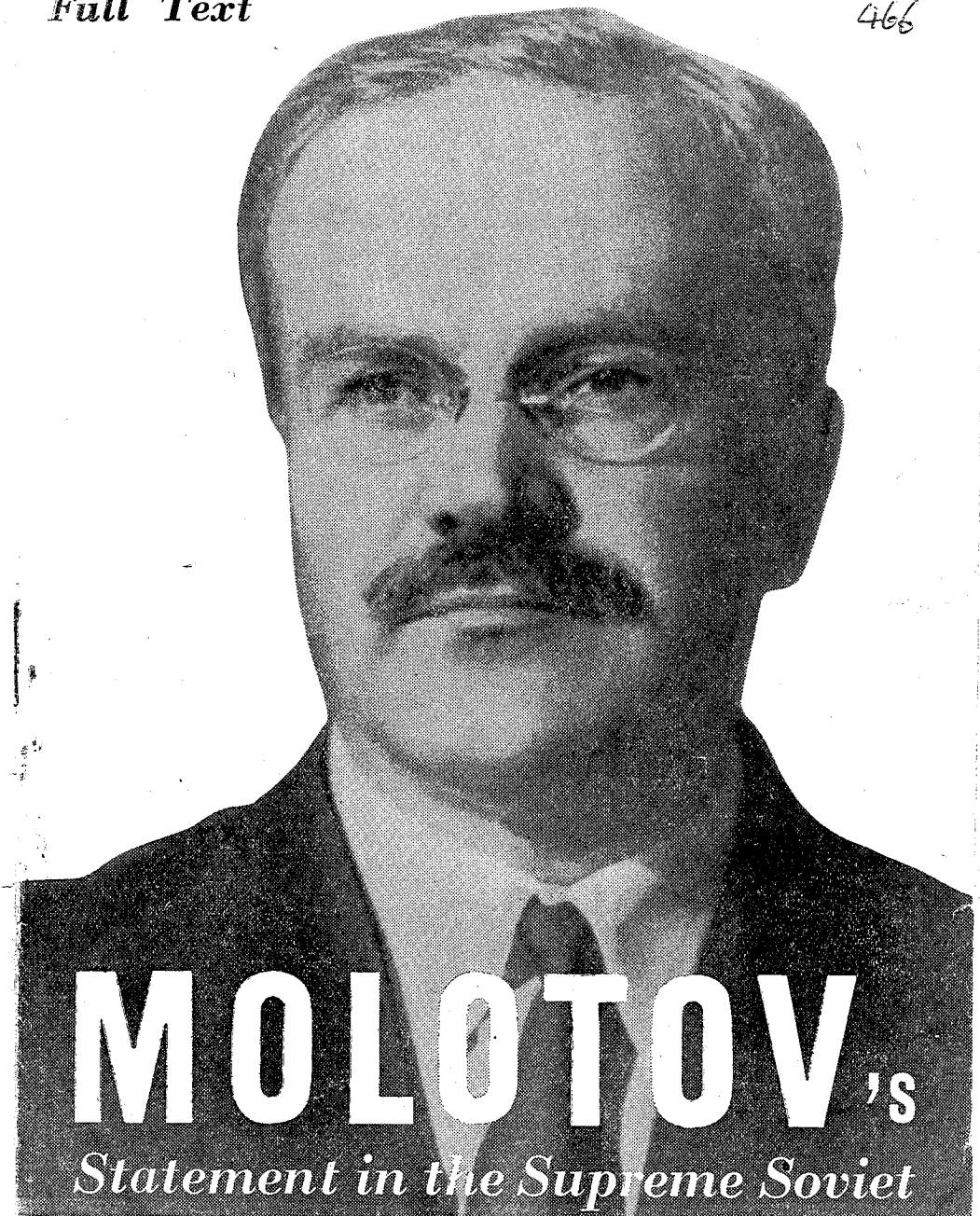
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MOLOTOV'S

Statement in the Supreme Soviet

*of the U.S.S.R. on the Ratification of
the Soviet-German Pact of Non-Aggression*

August 31, 1939

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MOLOTOV'S STATEMENT IN THE SUPREME
SOVIET OF THE U.S.S.R. ON THE RATIFI-
CATION OF THE SOVIET-GERMAN
PACT OF NON-AGGRESSION.

August 31, 1939.

COMRADES! Since the third session of the Supreme Soviet the international situation has shown no change for the better. On the contrary, it has become even more tense.

The steps taken by various governments to put an end to this state of tension have obviously proved inadequate. They have produced no results. This is true of Europe. No change for the better has taken place in Eastern Asia either. Japanese troops continue to occupy the principal cities and a considerable part of the territory of China, nor is Japan refraining from hostile acts against the U.S.S.R. Here, too, the situation has become more acute.

In view of this state of affairs, the conclusion of a pact of non-aggression between the U.S.S.R. and Germany, which averts the danger of a war between Germany and the Soviet Union, is of immense positive value. In order clearly to define the significance of this pact, I must first dwell on the negotiations which took place in recent months in Moscow with representatives of Great Britain and France.

As you know, the Anglo-Franco-Soviet negotiations for the conclusion of a pact of mutual assistance against aggression in Europe began as far back as April. True, the initial proposals of the British government were, as you know, quite unacceptable. They ignored the prime requisites for such negotiations—they ignored the principle of reciprocity and of equality of obligations. Nevertheless, the Soviet government did not reject the negotiations and in its turn put forward its own proposals. We were mindful of the fact that it was difficult for the governments of Great Britain and France to

make an abrupt change in their policy from the unfriendly attitude towards the Soviet Union which had existed quite recently to serious negotiations with the U.S.S.R. based on the condition of equality of obligations. However, the subsequent negotiations did not bear fruit.

The Anglo-Franco-Soviet negotiations went on for four months. They helped to elucidate a number of questions. At the same time they made it clear to the representatives of Great Britain and France that the Soviet Union had to be seriously reckoned with in international affairs. But these negotiations encountered insuperable obstacles. The trouble, of course, was not one of "formulations" or of particular clauses in the draft pact. No, more important issues were involved.

The conclusion of a pact of mutual assistance against aggression would only have been of value if Great Britain, France and the Soviet Union had arrived at an agreement providing for definite military measures against the attack of an aggressor. Accordingly, for a certain period, not only political negotiations, but also military negotiations with representatives of the British and French armies were conducted in Moscow. However, nothing came of the military negotiations. The difficulty they encountered was that Poland, who was to be jointly guaranteed by Great Britain, France and the U.S.S.R., rejected military assistance on the part of the Soviet Union. Attempts to overcome the objections of Poland met with no success. More, the negotiations showed that Great Britain was not anxious to overcome these objections of Poland, but, on the contrary, encouraged them. It is clear that such being the attitude of the Polish government and its principal ally towards military assistance on the part of the Soviet Union in the event of aggression, the Anglo-Franco-Soviet negotiations could not be fruitful. After this, it became clear to us that the Anglo-Franco-Soviet negotiations were doomed to failure.

What have the negotiations with Great Britain and France shown?

The Anglo-Franco-Soviet negotiations have shown that the position of Great Britain and France is marked by glaring contradictions throughout.

Judge for yourselves.

On the one hand, Great Britain and France demanded that the U.S.S.R. should give military assistance to Poland in case of aggression. The U.S.S.R., as you know, was willing to meet this demand provided she herself received like assistance from Great Britain and France. On the other hand, Great Britain and France brought Poland on to the scene, who resolutely declined military assistance on the part of the U.S.S.R. Just try to reach an agreement regarding mutual assistance under such circumstances, when assistance on the part of the U.S.S.R. is declared beforehand to be superfluous and obtrusive.

Further: on the one hand, Great Britain and France offered to guarantee the Soviet Union military assistance against aggression in return for like assistance on the part of the U.S.S.R. On the other hand, they hedged round their assistance with such provisos regarding indirect aggression as were calculated to convert this assistance into a fiction and to provide them with a formal legal excuse for evading the rendering of assistance and for leaving the U.S.S.R. isolated in face of an aggressor. Just try to distinguish between such a "pact of mutual assistance" and a pact of more or less camouflaged chicanery. (*Amusement.*)

Further: on the one hand, Great Britain and France stressed the importance and gravity of the negotiations for a pact of mutual assistance and demanded that the U.S.S.R. should treat the matter seriously and settle all questions relating to the pact without delay. On the other hand, they themselves displayed extreme dilatoriness and treated the negotiations very lightly, entrusting them to minor individuals who were not invested with adequate powers. It is enough to mention that the British and French military missions came to Moscow without any definite powers and without the right to conclude any kind of military convention. (*Animation.*) More, the British military mission arrived in Moscow without any mandate at all (*loud laughter*), and it was only on the demand of our military mission that, on the very eve of the breakdown of the negotiations, they presented written credentials. But even these credentials were of the vaguest kind, that is, credentials that were not up to par. Just try to distinguish between this light-minded attitude towards the negotiations on

the part of Great Britain and France and a frivolous make-believe at negotiations designed to discredit the whole business.

Such were the intrinsic contradictions in the attitude of Great Britain and France towards the negotiations with the U.S.S.R. which led to their breakdown.

What is the root of these contradictions in the position of Great Britain and France?

In a few words, it can be put as follows. On the one hand, the British and French governments fear aggression, and for that reason would like to have a pact of mutual assistance with the Soviet Union, inasmuch as it would strengthen them, Great Britain and France. But, on the other hand, the British and French governments are afraid that the conclusion of a real pact of mutual assistance with the U.S.S.R. may strengthen our country, the Soviet Union, which, it appears, does not answer their purpose. It must be admitted that these fears of theirs outweighed other considerations. It is only in this light that we can understand the position of Poland, who is acting on the instructions of Great Britain and France.

I shall now pass to the Soviet-German pact of non-aggression.

The decision to conclude a pact of non-aggression between the U.S.S.R. and Germany was adopted after the military negotiations with France and Great Britain had reached an impasse owing to the insurmountable differences I have mentioned. As the negotiations had shown that the conclusion of a pact of mutual assistance was not to be expected, we could not but explore other possibilities of ensuring peace and averting the danger of a war between Germany and the U.S.S.R. If the British and French governments refused to reckon with this, that is their lookout. It is our duty to think of the interests of the Soviet people, the interests of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. (*Prolonged applause.*) All the more since we are firmly convinced that the interests of the U.S.S.R. coincide with the fundamental interests of the peoples of other countries. (*Applause.*)

But that is only one side of the matter.

Something else had to happen besides this before a Soviet-German pact of non-aggression could come into existence. It

was necessary that the foreign policy of Germany should take a turn towards friendly relations with the Soviet Union. Only when this second condition was fulfilled, only when it became clear that the German government desired to change its foreign policy and secure an improvement of relations with the U.S.S.R., was the basis found for the conclusion of a Soviet-German pact of non-aggression.

Everybody knows that during the last six years, ever since the National-Socialists came into power, political relations between Germany and the U.S.S.R. have been strained. Everybody also knows that despite differences of outlook and political systems, the Soviet government has endeavoured to maintain normal business and political relations with Germany. There is no need just now to go back to individual incidents in these relations during recent years, which, comrades, are well known to you as it is. I must, however, recall the explanation of our foreign policy which was given several months ago at the Eighteenth Party Congress.

Speaking of our tasks in the realm of foreign policy, Comrade Stalin defined our attitude towards other countries as follows:—

“1. To continue the policy of peace and of strengthening business relations with all countries;

“2. To be cautious and not allow our country to be drawn into conflicts by warmongers who are accustomed to have others pull the chestnuts out of the fire for them.” (*Animation.*)

As you see, Comrade Stalin declared in these conclusions that the Soviet Union stands for the strengthening of business relations with *all* countries. But at the same time, Comrade Stalin warned us against warmongers who are anxious in their own interests to involve our country in conflicts with other countries.

Exposing the hullabaloo raised in the British, French and American press about Germany's “plans” for the seizure of the Soviet Ukraine, Comrade Stalin said:

“It looks as if the object of this suspicious hullabaloo was to incense the Soviet Union against Germany, to poison the atmosphere and to provoke a conflict with Germany without any visible grounds.”

As you see, Comrades Stalin hit the nail on the head when he exposed the machinations of the West-European politicians who were trying to set Germany and the Soviet Union at loggerheads.

It must be confessed that there were short-sighted people in our country too, who, tending to over-simplify anti-fascist propaganda, forgot about this provocative work of our enemies. Mindful of this, Comrade Stalin even then suggested the possibility of other, unhostile, good-neighbourly relations between Germany and the U.S.S.R.

It can now be seen that on the whole Germany correctly understood these statements of Comrade Stalin and drew practical deductions from them. (*Laughter.*)

The conclusion of the Soviet-German pact of non-aggression shows that Comrade Stalin's historical prevision has been brilliantly confirmed. (*Loud and prolonged applause.*)

In the spring of this year the German government made a proposal to resume the commercial and credit negotiations. The negotiations were resumed soon after. By making mutual concessions, we succeeded in reaching an agreement. As you know, this agreement was signed on August 19.

This is not the first commercial and credit agreement concluded with Germany under her present government. But this agreement differs favourably not only from the agreement of 1935, but from all previous agreements, not to mention the fact that we had no economic agreement equally advantageous with Great Britain, France or any other country. The agreement is advantageous to us because of its credit conditions (a seven-year credit) and it enables us to order a considerable additional quantity of such equipment as we need. By this agreement the U.S.S.R. undertakes to sell to Germany a definite quantity of our surplus raw materials for the needs of her industry, which fully answers the interests of the U.S.S.R. Why should we reject such an advantageous economic agreement? Surely not for the sake of those who are generally averse to the Soviet Union having advantageous economic agreements with other countries? And it is clear that the commercial and credit agreement with Germany fully accords with the economic interests and with the defensive needs of the Soviet Union. This

agreement fully accords with the decisions of the Eighteenth Congress of our Party approving Comrade Stalin's statement as to the desirability of "strengthening business relations with all countries."

When the German government expressed the desire to improve political relations as well, the Soviet government had no grounds for refusing. This gave rise to the question of concluding a pact of non-aggression.

Voices are now being heard testifying to a lack of understanding of the most simple reasons for the beginning improvement in the political relations between the Soviet Union and Germany.

For example, people ask with an air of innocence how the Soviet Union could consent to improve political relations with a state of the fascist type. Is that possible? they ask. But they forget that it is not a question of our attitude towards the internal regime of another country, but of the foreign relations between two states. They forget that we adhere to the position of not interfering in the internal affairs of other countries and, correspondingly, of not tolerating interference in our own internal affairs. Furthermore, they forget an important principle of our foreign policy, which was formulated by Comrade Stalin at the Eighteenth Party Congress as follows:—

"We stand for peace and the strengthening of business relations with all countries. That is our position; and we shall adhere to this position as long as these countries maintain like relations with the Soviet Union, and as long as they make no attempt to trespass on the interests of our country."

The meaning of these words is quite clear: the Soviet Union strives to maintain friendly relations with *all* non-Soviet countries, *provided* these countries maintain a like attitude towards the Soviet Union.

In our foreign policy towards non-Soviet countries we have always been guided by Lenin's well-known principle regarding the peaceful co-existence of the Soviet state and capitalist countries. A large number of examples might be cited to show how this principle has been carried out in practice. But I will confine myself to only a few. We have had, for instance, a pact of non-aggression and neutrality with Italy ever since 1933. It

has never occurred to anybody as yet to object to this pact. And that is natural. Inasmuch as this pact answers to the interests of the U.S.S.R., it accords with our principle regarding the peaceful co-existence of the U.S.S.R. and capitalist countries. We have pacts of non-aggression with Poland and certain other countries whose semi-fascist system is known to all. These treaties have not given rise to misgivings either. Perhaps it would not be superfluous to mention that we do not even have treaties of this kind with certain other, non-fascist, bourgeois-democratic countries, with Great Britain herself, for instance. But that is not our fault.

Since 1926 the political basis of our relations with Germany has been the Treaty of Neutrality, which was prolonged, already by the present German government, in 1933. This Treaty of Neutrality remains in force to this day.

The Soviet government had even before considered it desirable to take a further step towards improving political relations with Germany, but circumstances were such that this has become possible only now. It is true that it is not a pact of mutual assistance that is in question, as in the case of the Anglo-Franco-Soviet negotiations, but only of a pact of non-aggression. Nevertheless, conditions being what they are, it is difficult to over-estimate the international importance of the Soviet-German agreement.

That is why we favoured the visit to Moscow of Herr Von Ribbentrop, the German Minister of Foreign Affairs.

August 23, 1939, the day the Soviet-German pact of non-aggression was signed, is to be regarded as a date of great historical importance. The treaty of non-aggression between the U.S.S.R. and Germany marks a turning point in the history of Europe, and not of Europe only.

Only yesterday the German fascists were pursuing a foreign policy hostile to the U.S.S.R. Yes, only yesterday, we were enemies in the sphere of foreign relations. To-day, however, the situation has changed and we are enemies no longer. The art of politics in the sphere of foreign relations does not consist in making more enemies for one's country. On the contrary, it consists in reducing their number and in turning the enemies

of yesterday into good neighbours who maintain peaceful relations with each other. (*Applause.*)

History has shown that enmity and war between our country and Germany have been to the detriment of our countries, not to their benefit. Russia and Germany were the countries that suffered most in the war of 1914-18. ("*Hear, hear!*") Therefore the interests of the peoples of the Soviet Union and Germany do not lie in mutual enmity. On the contrary, the peoples of the Soviet Union and Germany need to live in peace with each other. The Soviet-German pact of non-aggression puts an end to enmity between Germany and the U.S.S.R., and that is in the interest of both countries. Difference of outlook and political system must not and cannot be an obstacle to the establishment of good political relations between the two states, just as it is no impediment to good political relations between the U.S.S.R. and other, non-Soviet, capitalist countries. Only enemies of Germany and the U.S.S.R. can strive to create and foment enmity between the peoples of these countries. We have always stood for amity between the peoples of the U.S.S.R. and Germany, for the growth and development of friendship between the peoples of the Soviet Union and the German people. (*Loud and prolonged applause.*)

The importance of the Soviet-German pact of non-aggression lies mainly in the fact that the two largest states in Europe have agreed to put an end to the enmity between them, to eliminate the menace of war and to live in peace with each other. The field of possible military conflicts in Europe is thus narrowed. Even if military conflicts in Europe should prove unavoidable, the scale of hostilities will now be restricted. Only those who would instigate a general war in Europe, only those who under a mask of peace wish to ignite a general European conflagration, can be displeased with this state of affairs.

The Soviet-German pact has been the object of numerous attacks in the British, French and American press. Conspicuous in these efforts are certain "socialist" newspapers, anxious to serve their "own" national capitalists, to serve those of their masters who pay them well. (*Laughter.*) It is

clear that the real truth cannot be expected from gentry of this calibre.

Attempts are being made to spread the fiction that the conclusion of the Soviet-German pact of non-aggression was responsible for the failure of the negotiations with Great Britain and France for a pact of mutual assistance. This lie has already been nailed in the interview given by Comrade Voroshilov. In reality, as you know, the very reverse is the case. One of the reasons the Soviet Union signed the non-aggression pact with Germany is that the negotiations with France and England had encountered insurmountable differences and ended in failure through the fault of the British and French ruling circles.

Further, they go so far as to reproach us because the pact, you see, contains no clause providing for its denunciation in case one of the parties is drawn into war under conditions which might provide somebody with the colour of an excuse to designate it as the aggressor. But for some reason or other they forget that no such clause or proviso is contained either in the Polish-German non-aggression pact, signed in 1934 and annulled by Germany in 1939 against the wishes of Poland, or in the Anglo-German declaration of non-aggression signed only a few months ago. The question arises, why cannot the U.S.S.R. do what both Poland and England did long ago?

Finally, there are those who like to read into the pact more than it contains. (*Laughter.*) For this purpose all kinds of conjectures and hints are circulated in order to arouse distrust of the pact in certain countries. But all this merely goes to show the hopeless impotence of the enemies of the pact, who are exposing themselves more and more as enemies both of the Soviet Union and of Germany, striving to provoke a war between the two countries.

In all this we find fresh corroboration of Comrade Stalin's warning that we must keep a vigilant eye on the warmongers who are accustomed to have other people pull the chestnuts out of the fire for them. We must be on our guard against those who see advantage to themselves in bad relations between the U.S.S.R. and Germany, in enmity between them, against those

who do not want peace and good relations between Germany and the Soviet Union.

We can understand it when this policy is pursued by inveterate imperialists. But we cannot ignore the fact that some leaders of the socialist parties of Great Britain and France have recently distinguished themselves by their extraordinary zeal in this respect. These gentlemen have got so busy, they are just jumping out of their skins. (*Laughter.*) These people positively demand that the U.S.S.R. allow herself to be drawn into a war against Germany on the side of Great Britain. Have these presumptuous warmongers taken leave of their senses? (*Laughter.*) Is it really so hard for these gentlemen to understand the meaning of the Soviet-German non-aggression pact, under which the U.S.S.R. is not obliged to involve herself in war either on the side of Great Britain against Germany, or on the side of Germany against Great Britain? Is it so hard to understand that the U.S.S.R. is pursuing and will continue to pursue her own independent policy, a policy based on the interests of the peoples of the U.S.S.R., and only on those interests? (*Prolonged applause.*) If these gentlemen have such an uncontrollable desire to fight, let them do their own fighting, without the Soviet Union. (*Laughter and applause.*) We shall then see what sort of fighters they are. (*Laughter and applause.*)

In our eyes, in the eyes of the entire Soviet people, they are just as much enemies of peace as all the other instigators of war in Europe. It is only those who want a new grand slaughter, a new holocaust of the nations, who would like to set the Soviet Union at loggerheads with Germany; it is only they who would like to prevent the restoration of good relations between the peoples of the U.S.S.R. and Germany.

The Soviet Union signed the pact with Germany in the full assurance that peace between the peoples of the U.S.S.R. and Germany is in the interest of all peoples, in the interest of universal peace. Every sincere supporter of peace will see the truth of this.

This pact accords with the vital interests of the working people of the Soviet Union and can in no wise serve to weaken

our vigilance in the defence of these interests. This pact is backed by a firm confidence in the reality of our forces, in their complete preparedness in case of any aggression against the U.S.S.R. (*Loud applause.*)

This pact (like the unsuccessful negotiations between Great Britain, France and the Soviet Union) shows that no important questions of international relations, and still less questions affecting Eastern Europe, can be settled without the active participation of the Soviet Union, and that all attempts to ignore the Soviet Union and decide such questions behind her back are doomed to failure. (*Applause.*)

The Soviet-German non-aggression pact marks a turn in the development of Europe, a turn towards an improvement in the relations between the two largest states in Europe. This pact not only means for us the elimination of the menace of war with Germany, narrows the field of possible military conflicts in Europe and thus serves the cause of universal peace; it must open new possibilities for the growth of our forces, for the consolidation of our position, for the further growth of the influence of the Soviet Union on international development.

There is no need to dwell here on the separate clauses of the pact. The Council of People's Commissars has reason to hope that the pact will meet with your approval as a political document of cardinal importance to the U.S.S.R. (*Applause.*)

The Council of People's Commissars submits the Soviet-German pact of non-aggression to the Supreme Soviet and moves that it be ratified. (*Loud and prolonged applause. All rise.*)