

**Reflections on the 81<sup>st</sup> Anniversary of**

**THE MOLOTOV- RIBBENTROP PACT  
OF AUGUST 23, 1939**



*J. Stalin and J. von Ribbentrop, after signing the Nazi-Soviet  
Non-aggression Pact in Kremlin, Moscow, August 23, 1939 (Bundesarchiv Bild\_183-H27337)*

The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact is the commonly used name of the treaty signed by the German foreign minister Joachim von Ribbentrop and the Soviet foreign minister Vyacheslav Molotov. Officially its name was the *Treaty of Non-aggression between the German Third Reich and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR)*, signed on August 23<sup>rd</sup> late evening in Moscow, and it constituted the most important secret arrangement leading to the start of World War II. This war claimed between 50 and 80 million lives, including those brutally murdered by both signatories.

In addition to the statement of non-aggression, the treaty had a secret protocol, which was not known for a long time and divided Central and Eastern Europe into two *zones of influence* – Soviet Russia and Nazi German zones. It divided the territories of Poland, Romania, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Finland.

As an immediate result of this treaty, Germany invaded Poland from three directions (west, north and south) on 4:45 a.m. on September 1, 1939. After the Soviet-Japanese ceasefire, which started on September 16, the Soviet Union invaded Poland (from the east) early September 17.

On November 30, Soviet troops attacked Finland along its entire eastern border starting the bloody Winter War of 1939-1940. The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact brought to an end the European order established by the Treaty of Versailles in 1919 at the end of WWI. It had a direct impact on the Second World War, the division of Europe, and the subsequent Cold War, and starting misery and death from the communist oppression lasting in some nations to the present time.

The current violation of human and citizen rights in Belarus, and the war in Ukraine are chilling reminders that Putin's Russia follows in the footsteps of the USSR. It makes use of manipulation of historical facts and brutal force, to reconstitute its zone of influence lost in 1989 with the collapse of the USSR and the fall of the Berlin's Wall.

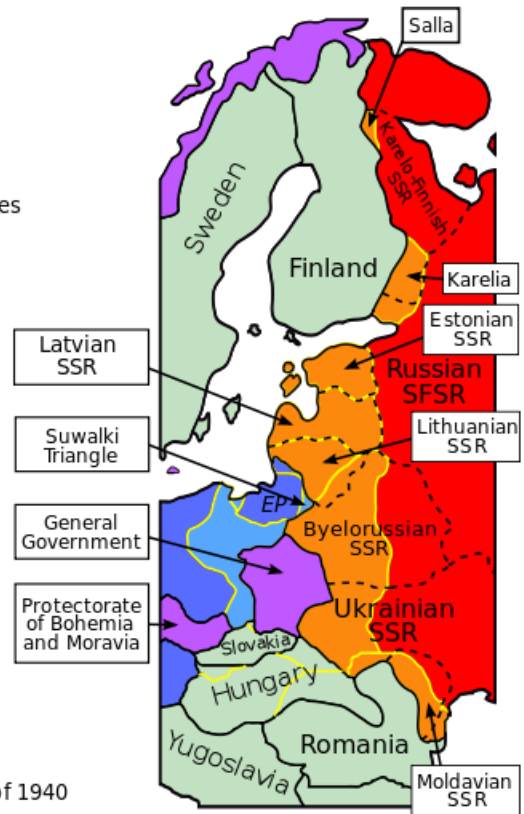
**Every year on August 23, Canada observes officially the Black Ribbon Day to commemorate the victims of Hitler's Germany and Stalin's Russia, two nakedly totalitarian regimes.**

**Planned division of Central Europe according to Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact**



- Soviet Union
  - Germany
  - Other countries and territories
  - EP East Prussia
- 1939** ◀◀
- Soviet sphere of influence
  - German sphere of influence
  - National borders as of 1939
  - Planned Borders
  - Soviet republic borders as of 1939
- 1940** ▶▶
- Annexed by the Soviet Union
  - Annexed by Germany
  - Occupied by Germany
  - National borders as of 1940
  - National borders as of 1938
  - Soviet republic borders as of 1940

**Actual territorial changes 1939-1940**



*Planned and actual changes of territories 1939 – 1940 as the result of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact (Wikipedia)*

**Lest We Forget**