

Stalin's speech to the Politburo on 19 August 1939, reconstructed from renderings in *Novyi Mir*, Moscow, and *Revue de Droit International*, Geneva

Pieced together by Carl O. Nordling, Sweden.

Boldface = in both versions

Normal = only in *Novyi Mir*

Italics = only in *Revue de Droit International*

The question of war and peace has entered a critical phase for us. *Its solution depends entirely on the position which will be taken by the Soviet Union. We are absolutely convinced that if we conclude a mutual assistance pact with France and Great Britain, Germany will back off from Poland and seek a modus vivendi with the Western Powers. War would be avoided, but further events could prove dangerous for the USSR.*

On the other hand, if we accept Germany's proposal, that you know, and conclude a non-aggression pact with her, she will certainly invade Poland, and the intervention of France and England is then unavoidable. Western Europe would be subjected to serious upheavals and disorder. **In this case we will have a great opportunity to stay out of the conflict, and we could plan the opportune time for us to enter the war.**

The experience of the last 20 years has shown that in peacetime the Communist movement is never strong enough for the Bolshevik Party to seize power. The dictatorship of such a Party will only become possible as the result of a major war.

Our choice is clear. We must accept the German proposal and, with a refusal, politely send the Anglo-French mission home.

It is not difficult to envisage the importance which we would obtain in this way of proceeding. It is obvious, for us, that Poland will be destroyed even before England and France are able to come to her assistance. In this case Germany will cede to us a part of Poland...
Our immediate advantage will be to take Poland all the way to the gates of Warsaw, as well as Ukrainian Galicia.

Germany grants us full freedom of action in the Pribaltic/three Baltic States and recognizes our claim on Bessarabia. She is prepared to acknowledge our interests in Romania Bulgaria and Hungary.

Yugoslavia remains an open question, the solution of which depends on the position taken by Italy. If Italy remains at the sides of Germany, then the latter will require that Yugoslavia be understood as her zone of influence, and it is also by Yugoslavia that she will obtain access to the Adriatic Sea. But if Italy does not go with Germany, then the latter will depend on Italy for her access to the Adriatic Sea, and in this case Yugoslavia will pass into our sphere of influence.

This in case that Germany would emerge victorious from the war. We must, however, envisage the possibilities that will result from the defeat as well as from the victory of Germany. In case of her defeat, a Sovietization of Germany will unavoidably occur and a Communist government will be created. We should not forget that a Sovietized Germany would bring about great danger, if this Sovietization is the result of German defeat in a transient war. **England and France will still be strong enough to seize Berlin and to destroy a Soviet Germany. We would be unable to come effectually to her assistance/to the aid of our Bolshevik comrades in Germany.**

Therefore, our goal is that Germany should carry out the war as long as possible so that England and France grow weary and

become exhausted to such a degree that they are no longer in a position to put down a Sovietized Germany.

Our position is this. **Maintaining neutrality** and waiting for the right time, **the USSR will presently assist Germany economically and supply her with raw materials and provisions. It goes without saying that our assistance should not exceed a certain limit; we must not send so much as to weaken our economy or the power of our army.**

At the same time we must carry on active Communist propaganda in the Anglo-French bloc, and predominantly in France. We must expect that in that country in times of war, the Party should quit the legal means of warfare and turn underground. We know that their work will demand much money/great sacrifices, but we must agree without hesitating to these sacrifices/our French comrades will not hesitate. Their first task will be to decompose and demoralize the army and the police. If this preparatory work is fulfilled properly, the safety of Soviet Germany will be assured, and this will contribute to the Sovietization of France.

For the realization of these plans it is essential that the war continue for as long as possible, and all forces, which we have available in Western Europe and the Balkans, should be directed toward this goal.

Now let us consider the second possibility, a German victory. Some think that this would confront us with a serious danger. There is some truth in this, but it would be a mistake to regard the danger as so close at hand or as great as has been proposed.

If Germany should prove to be victorious, she will leave the war too weakened to start a war with the USSR within a decade

at least. She will have to supervise the occupation of France and England and to *prevent their restoration*/restore herself.

In addition, a victorious Germany will have vast *colonies/territories*; the exploitation of those and their adaptation to German methods will also absorb Germany during several decades.

Obviously, this Germany will be too busy elsewhere to turn against us. There is one additional thing that will strengthen our safety. In a conquered France, the French Communist Party will always be very strong. A Communist revolution will unavoidably break out, and we will be able to exploit the situation and to come to the aid of France and make her our ally. In addition, all the nations that fall under the "protection" of a victorious Germany will become our allies. This presents for us a broad field of action for the initiation of world revolution.

Comrades, I have presented my considerations to you. I repeat that it is in the interest of the USSR, the workers' homeland that a war breaks out between the Reich and the capitalist Anglo-French bloc. It is essential for us/Everything should be done so that it drags out as long as possible with the goal of weakening both sides. For this reason, it is imperative that we agree to conclude the pact proposed by Germany, and then work in such a way that this war, once it is declared, will be prolonged maximally. We must strengthen our economic/propaganda work in the belligerent countries, in order to be prepared when the war ends.

(For the original text published in *Revue de Droit International*, see [Stalin's August 1939 Speech, French version](#); and for the version published in *Novyi Mir*, see [Stalin's August 1939 Speech, Russian version](#). The essence of the speech agrees

with the arguments presented in the circular published in the *Svenska Pressen*, Helsinki, on 8 September 1939, see [Stalin's politburo explains Ribbentrop pact.](#))