

Molotov, Viacheslav Mikhailovich

(1890--1987), Soviet leader who signed the nazi-soviet pact. From 1930 to 1941 Molotov was the official head of the Soviet government. In May 1939 he was appointed Peoples' Commissar (Minister) for Foreign Affairs. In this capacity, Molotov signed his country's non-aggression pact with Nazi Germany just days before World War II broke out (the pact is also known as the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, named after the two Foreign Ministers who signed it). This alliance shocked the world because until that time, Germany and the soviet union had behaved as mortal enemies.

In May 1941 Joseph Stalin took over as official head of government. Molotov stayed on as his deputy and as Foreign Minister. After Germany turned on its short-lived ally in June 1941, Molotov took an active role in negotiations with the Allied powers. After the war Molotov, whose wife was Jewish, was the man behind the Soviet Union's support of a Jewish state in Palestine.

In 1949 Molotov began to lose power. However, after Stalin died, he once again became a Soviet leader. In 1957 Molotov took part in a failed bid to overthrow Nikita Khrushchev; he was stripped of all his senior positions and was publicly condemned. He retired in 1962.