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Comparing Hitler and Stalin: Certain Cultural Considerations

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Comparing Hitler and Stalin: Certain Cultural Considerations

by Phillip W. Weiss

**A master's thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Liberal Studies in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts, The City University of New York**

2014

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Liberal Studies in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Master of Arts.

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Abstract

Comparing Hitler and Stalin: Certain Cultural Considerations

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Adviser: Professor David M. Gordon

There is a great temptation to compare the Adolf Hitler and Joseph Stalin. This is true for two reasons: first, the careers of both men converged at the same point in history, thus doubling the impact both made and second, because the names Adolf Hitler and Joseph Stalin have become metaphors for ideologies and crimes that today are reviled. The question then arises: who was worse, Hitler or Stalin? This project shows that there is no viable, credible, definitive, or final answer to this question, and that prevailing attitudes about Hitler and Stalin have become so ingrained in contemporary society as to render any meaningful or useful comparison virtually impossible. Tragically, it might even be impossible to render a final totally objective judgment of their actions. This is the most disturbing element of this work.

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Introduction

Historian Richard Overy has written, “The temptation to compare Hitler and Stalin is a compelling one. They are popularly regarded as the twin demons of the twentieth century, responsible for different reasons and in different ways for more violent deaths than any other men in history” (Overy, 2004, xxxi). Overy is correct on both counts. There is a great temptation to compare the two. This is true for two reasons: first, the careers of both men converged at the same point in history, thus doubling the impact both made and second, because the names Adolf Hitler and Joseph Stalin have become metaphors for ideologies and crimes that today are reviled. The question then arises: who was worse, Hitler or Stalin?

It is my thesis that there is no viable, credible, definitive, or final answer to this question, and that prevailing attitudes about Hitler and Stalin have become so ingrained in contemporary society as to render any meaningful or useful comparison virtually impossible. Tragically, it might even be impossible to render a final totally objective judgment of their actions. This is the most disturbing element of this work.

It is argued that each dictator must be judged solely on his own record, and that neither dictator nor the ideologies they represent can be defended or attacked based on the record of the other. To support my thesis, this paper will include analysis and discussion of the relationship between mass media and its influence on shaping public opinion, discussion of the areas where the careers of Hitler and Stalin converge and diverge, the cultural influences that shaped their respective ideologies, and the findings of other historians who have attempted a

comparative analysis. This is followed by a conclusion based on the evidence presented.

Why do Americans believe, even decades after their deaths, that Hitler and Stalin were twin demons, or, in the words of psychologist Marina Stal, “merciless tyrants” (Stal, 2013, 8)? It is understandable why Hitler and Stalin would have generated so much hostility when they were alive. There was overwhelming and incontrovertible evidence that both were pursuing aggressive, expansionist, ideologically driven programs that were brutalizing people and ultimately posing a threat to the security of the United States. American opposition to Hitler was not driven by prejudice against Germans nor were Americans unreasonably biased against Stalin, whose domestic program and foreign policy, both pre- and post-World War Two, e.g., the collectivization of agriculture, the great purge, the Non-aggression pact, the invasion of Poland, Finland, and the Baltic States, the emergence of the Iron Curtain, the North Korean invasion of the south, Soviet acquisition of nuclear weapons, the emergence of “Red” China, and the 1948 Berlin blockade, provided a long list of reasons for concern (Allport, 1954, 8). That was decades ago. However, there is still deep hatred for Hitler and Stalin *today*. In a 2011 BBC documentary about Stalin, the narrator, Professor David Reynolds, calls him a “gangster” and “street thug” (SMS, video). Reynolds’ contempt for the Soviet dictator is obvious, but the intensity of his hatred seems misplaced, for its target is dead and buried in Moscow. But for Reynolds, it was as though he was still alive.

Nevertheless, regardless of how detested they are, for a time both Hitler and Stalin were respected, their careers celebrated, their respective personas admired. Hitler was admired by much of the British establishment, including Lloyd George. The US ambassador to the Soviet Union, Joseph Davies, wrote a book, *Mission to Moscow*, which extolled the virtues of the country under Stalin. After World War Two the Supreme Allied Commander and future president of the United States Dwight D. Eisenhower, in a gesture of mutual respect, joined Stalin on the podium in Red Square to celebrate victory (GtS, video, n.d.). Rochus Misch, Hitler's bodyguard and valet, who lived with Hitler for five years, knew Hitler "only as a wonderfully good boss" and said that "we couldn't have wished for better" and that "he was never authoritarian" (Lock, 9/6/13). The 1935 documentary *Triumph of the Will* contains scenes showing hundreds of thousands of Germans wildly cheering Hitler.

The reason why Hitler and Stalin, even decades after their deaths, still provoke such strong negative feelings is because their names have been kept alive by the mass media, which is responsible for shaping what the public knows, believes and remembers. Social psychologist Edward Bernays wrote:

We are governed, our minds are molded, our tastes formed, our ideas suggested largely by men we have never heard of. This is the logical result of the way our democratic society is organized. (Bernays, 2005, 37)

Our thoughts and perceptions are based on information and knowledge that we are taught. Professor Reynolds is part of that process. By devoting a full-length documentary to Stalin, he was helping to keep the memory of both Hitler and Stalin alive.

Now, what is meant by the term “mass media”? The mass media are those organizations through which information is disseminated to the public. They include newspapers, books, magazines, radio, television, and the movies. Print media has existed for centuries and for centuries was the dominant method for the dissemination of information. However, print has been eclipsed by movies and television, and today these instruments are dominant.

The appeal of movies is without rival. First, they are readily accessible in theaters, homes, online and on DVDs, and second, can be enjoyed by anyone: one does not have to be literate, educated or specially trained. Movies can be watched in small groups or in large audiences. Because movies can be watched, they are often a social event. Movies and its first cousin television are without a doubt the most democratic and most efficient form of mass communication in history. Their pervasiveness and place in contemporary culture is so well established and so self-evident that it requires no further comment here. It is extremely unlikely that by the age of three a person has not been repeatedly exposed to movies or television.

Movies have a worldwide appeal. This is because they are packaged as art, that is, something that is created specifically to influence the emotions. Movies tantalize us. Reading a book forces the reader to use their imagination; watching a movie allows the passive absorption of what is imagined (by others) seem real. Some of the most honored artists in the world today are film producers, directors and actors. Many, including some who have been dead for decades – Gable, Chaplin, Monroe, Bogart, Hepburn, Brando, Dean, Presley, Harlow, Scorsese,

Coppola, Eastwood, Redford – are household names, or at least are widely known. Playwrights have become screen writers (e.g., Harold Pinter); artists art directors (e.g., Boris Levin); photographers cinematographers (e.g., James Wong Howe), and stage actors movie stars (e.g., Gregory Peck and Marlon Brando).

Through movies and television shows, cleverly crafted in ways meant to attract, engage and keep an audience's attention, the public is bombarded with stories and images, produced by others who continuously shape our understanding and perception of history and reality. Mass communications expert Matthew McCombs writes:

Over time the issues emphasized in news reports become the issues regarded as most important among the public. The agenda of the news media becomes, to a considerable degree, the agenda of the public. In other words, the news media sets the public agenda.
(McCombs, 2004, 2)

This is even more true in the case of movies, and of television in general, because these influence the way we form our opinions on a whole range of subjects including Nazism, Hitler, Stalin, Communism and the Soviet Union. That the mere mention of the names of Hitler or Stalin still generates passionate controversy today is evidence of this conditioning process. Both men and their respective regimes are dead and gone yet their names and legacies linger on among a public increasingly ignorant of most things. That they are the subject of discussion in this paper is only further evidence of that conditioning.

Let us explore the relationship between the media and social conditioning further. By 1960 in the United States movies were being shown in some 18,000 locations throughout the nation (Neale, 323, 2012). Although attendance figures

vary, there is no question that movies were seen by millions of people *per week*. (The House Committee on Un-American Activities reported that in 1947 the figure was over 85,000,000 (HCUA, 1947, 1)). Other estimates are 90 million in 1946 to 46 million in 1953, to 44 million in 1965 (Neale, 328, n. 16, 2012).

As the figures cited above indicate, during the twenty years after the end of World War Two, attendance in movie theaters substantially declined. However, that in no way meant that movies were losing their popularity. In fact quite the contrary. The same period experienced the emergence of television which, by 1960, had become the “hot new medium,” with 90 percent of American homes equipped with sets (Wasko, 380, 2012). This furnished the movie industry a new outlet for distributing its movies and further extending its reach. Hollywood adopted various strategies for co-existing and exploiting television. By 1952, television subsidiaries were formed by Columbia (Screen Gems), Universal (United World Features), and Monogram (Interstate Television); by 1964, six Hollywood companies represented 45 percent of the domestic market for syndicated TV series (Wasko, 378, 3012). Hollywood also began broadcasting major feature films on television. Feature films provided up to 48 percent of the programming for independent stations, and by the mid-1960s television was heavily dependent on Hollywood-produced programming. Finally, studios diversified through the purchase of television networks (Wasko, 379 f, 2012). The Hollywood studio executive credited for recognizing the potential of television as an instrument for promoting and distributing movies was Walt Disney. Disney explained, “Through television I can reach my audience. I can talk to my audience.

They are the audience that want to see my pictures” (Wasko, 381, 2012).

Television thus proved to be a boom for the industry which was now virtually guaranteed instant access into almost every household in the United States.

Movie studios also *create* the audiences to whom they want to sell (Denby, 10, 2012). They can neither afford to wait for cues as to what the public wants nor can they engage in guesswork about prevailing popular trends. They have to create the market. This is achieved by prepping their audience through advertising and then producing a product that the audience will want to watch. If this succeeds, as it often does, it has such a profound effect as to even introduce new words and catch-phrases that become part of everyday language. Examples of the latter are “Go ahead, make my day” from the 1974 movie *Sudden Impact* and “Show me the money!” from the 1996 movie *Jerry Maguire*. Thus movies shape our language and through it what we think. The image of a tall, menacing-looking white police detective in *Sudden Impact* pointing a cocked and fully loaded .347 Magnum handgun at the head of a terrified black man and coldly uttering the words “Go ahead, make my day,” conveys an unmistakable set of messages pertaining to the police, the nature of crime, the treatment of lawbreakers, the law, and race.

Now, what happens inside the minds of the audience as they are watching a movie? It is that the images being displayed on the screen become transformed into something that the audience believes to be real or treats as real. What we see on the screen we believe to be true, even if we cognitively understand it to be fiction. Social philosopher Dominic M. McIver Lopes writes:

There is no intrinsic or phenomenological difference between experiences as of actual objects and events in movies and experiences as of fictional ones. The content of cinematic experience, we may say, draws no ontological distinctions. Indeed, this is part of what makes film fictions so convincing – and potentially so dangerous (McIver Lopes, 1997, 345)

McIver Lopes' findings are only partially disputed by film historian Richard Allen who writes:

Contemporary film theorists construe the film spectator as a passive observer of the image who is duped into believing that it is real. In fact, as I shall argue, the film spectator knows it is only a film and actively participates in the experience of illusion that the cinema affords. (Allen, 1995, 3)

It is the active participation alluded to by Allen that engages the spectator and blurs the line between reality and fiction, and which, in the words of Soviet film maker Dziga Vertov, helps the audience see the world from a fresh perspective (Petric, 2012, 112). For instance, the 1956 movie *The Ten Commandments* depicts a handsome, virile and heroic Moses decisively defeating his political rival and step-brother, the sinister and venal Ramses II, and leading his people out of the land of Egypt with the blessing of the Almighty. What we are seeing is fiction, and is recognized as such, yet while we are watching it we *feel* like it is true. The suggestive power of the imagery is irresistible. The scenes of a triumphant Moses, representing all that is good, and the vanquished Ramses, thoroughly humiliated and his army drowned, are imbedded in our psyche and incorporated into our view of the world. The political message, that freedom is ordained and that those who oppose it are doomed, is unmistakable. The timing of the movie's release, during the height of the Cold War, is more than coincidental. (One might add that

at the time, and for a good deal afterwards, Communist regimes claimed a similar inevitability through Marxist dialectic, first proclaimed in the *Communist Manifesto*, of the triumph of Socialism.) Likewise, through a plethora of other movies the audience learns how a saloon is supposed to look in a Western, how extraterrestrials appear, and that a romance is doomed if one partner is staring straight-ahead in the direction of the camera (Schweinitz, xiv, 2011). Film historian Jorg Schweinitz writes: “The audience has learned all this not through experience in their everyday lives outside the media (insofar as such an existence is possible) but over the course of many years of spectatorship in the intertextual space of filmic imagination” (Schweinitz, xiv, 2011).

Movies transmit streams of images reflecting the movie studio’s understanding of reality. This understanding shapes the message that the studio wants to convey, which is then transmitted to the audience in the form of stereotypes. Social psychologists Charles Stangor and Mark Schaller write:

In modern society, the form by which most stereotypes are transmitted is through the mass media – literature, television, movies, newspapers (Stangor and Schaller, 1996, 12)

The term stereotype is another word for category; to stereotype is to categorize. Stereotyping allows us to compartmentalize our thinking, that is, to group things in categories, which helps to streamline our understanding of the world and determine what is true. This includes the way we perceive people, who we categorize as “us” and “them (Fiske, 2005, 37).” Social psychologist G. W. Allport writes:

The human mind must think with the aid of categories (the term is equivalent here to generalizations). Once formed, categories are the basis for normal prejudice. We cannot possibly avoid this process. Orderly living depends on it. (Allport, 1979, 20).

Stereotyping in turn affects the way we learn and what we learn. Stangor and

Schaller write:

As mental representations of the world, stereotypes influence what information is sought out, attended to, and remembered about members of social groups, as well as influencing social behavior (Stangor and Schaller, 1996, 6)

Stereotyping is as natural as breathing, and as with breathing, as long as we live the tendency to stereotype never stops.

Watching a movie involves two parties: the source – the creator of the movie, and the recipient – the spectator. The movie itself is a surrogate for the person who created it. Both the creator of the movie and the spectator perceive the world based on stereotypes. Schweinitz writes, “[S]tereotypes exist as mental constructs in the minds of individuals ... including producers and recipients of texts” (Schweinitz, 2011, 39). In the process of watching a movie, the spectator is exposed to its stereotypical material, which is now doing the thinking for the spectator who is actively absorbing, and vicariously experiencing, all the sounds and images stereotypes being conveyed. Critical thinking plays no part in the process. For instance, in the movie *Ben Hur* the title character, Judah Ben Hur, a Jewish prince living under Roman occupation in Palestine, is portrayed as a victim of oppression and injustice. Throughout the movie Ben Hur’s Jewish

identity is repeatedly emphasized. This evokes feelings of sympathy and empathy not only for the character but for the people he metaphorically symbolizes – Jews. Since Ben Hur is a victim, all Jews are now victims, which is the image of Jews that, for whatever reason, the studio wants to convey to the audience, which was in marked contradiction of much that came before it. From this moment forth this stereotype becomes reinforced. Such stereotypes become, in Schweinitz's words, "cultural signs," which in turn become incorporated into our mainstream culture and are henceforth construed as fact (Schweinitz, 2011, xiv).

Movies alter our knowledge. Things that we see on the screen become incorporated in our personal information. This storage is an automatic process (Barsalou, 1992, 65). In a crime drama we think we learn something about the police and criminals; in a court room drama we learn something about the system of justice; in a war movie we think we learn something about war; in a romance we learn something about love; and in a movie about Hitler or Stalin we learn something about them. We vicariously experience what the characters are experiencing on the screen. That the source of the knowledge is a work of fiction is irrelevant; it is the experience of watching that counts. While watching the American soldiers storm Omaha Beach and fight the Nazis in *The Longest Day*, the audience is there too, absorbing the sights and sounds of the event and incorporating it in their memory for future reference. From that movie the audience learns that Americans are resilient, valiant and victorious, lessons that are remembered.

Movies also have a kind of archival effect. Film historian Marcus Stiglegger writes:

The great success, as well as the influence, of TV programs and films such as *Holocaust* (1978) and *Schindler's List* (1993) on public opinion about historical events – especially in Germany – strongly suggests that the worldwide audience is more open to fictionalized history than to more challenging essayistic work such as Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah* (1985). (Stiglegger, 2012, 1).

Stiglegger asks if cinema has reached the status of an historical archive for some audiences. The answer to that question is: it has.

Today the movies are a modern historical archive. This is a function of a mental process called visual imagery which allows the human mind to retain imagined images after the actual perceived image is gone (Posner and Raichle, 1994, 88). There are many major historical events, personages or eras in history for which information can be found in a full length motion picture, which are understood to be authoritative sources, even though they are works of fiction. It must also be remembered that history itself is subjective. The events of the past are open to interpretation. Hence, there is no one who can say with absolute certainty that, for instance, Oliver Stone's production of *Alexander* (2004) is entirely historically inaccurate (although the temptation is very great) or that the portrayal of Lincoln in *Abe Lincoln in Illinois* (1940) is completely incorrect. And even if the facts are stretched for dramatic purposes, the audience still learns about these characters and the period of time in which they lived. The movie itself becomes part of the history.

Why is an audience more receptive to fictionalized history, which in the strict sense of the word is not even history, than to the documentary format, which is nonfiction and presumably based in facts? The reason is because fiction appeals to the emotions. For instance, the movie *Gone with the Wind* is about the Civil War and the South in transition. The movie cleverly plays to a wide range of emotions – anger, loss, sorrow, redemption, love, hate, happiness, sadness – which transforms the story, and therefore the war, into something personal, meaningful and worth remembering. Although a work of fiction, the movie, which is still popular today, is now part of an imagined historical archive. That it embellishes facts and is entirely a work of fiction is secondary.

Motion pictures as archival sources are organized in different categories, or genres, of film. There are biographies such as *The Jolson Story* (1946), war movies such as *Thirty Seconds over Tokyo* (1944), disaster movies such as *Titanic* (1997), and histories such as *El Cid* (1961). Often, movies cross into two or more genres. Thus a war movie may double as a biography, examples being *The Gallant Hours* (1960) and *To Hell and Back* (1955). Often, the same subject is treated in several movies. For instance, one can learn at least something about the origins of Christianity by watching *Quo Vadis* (1951), *The Robe* (1953), *Ben Hur* (1959), *King of Kings* (1961), *The Greatest Story Ever Told* (1965), *The Last Temptation of Christ* (1997), and *The Passion of the Christ* (2004). The combinations of movies containing information about topics of historical interest are almost endless. That these are commercial rather than academic products is less important than how the public perceives and receives them as credible

sources of information. Regarding *Thirty Seconds over Tokyo*, a review of the movie in *Variety* on December 31, 1943, included this statement: “After Doolittle finally tells them of their mission to bomb Japan, *the war becomes a highly personalized thing* (italics added) through the actions of these crew members.”

Through this movie the public learns about the war in the Pacific, why the US was fighting, the servicemen actually doing the fighting, and how the US intended to win.

In the late 1930s complaints were raised that Hollywood was producing in support of US involvement in the European war. Immediately prior to US entry, the American public had generally been in favor of providing material assistance to the British and in the form of Lend-Lease. However, there was little support for direct military involvement. At the time, Adolf Hitler was not universally considered a threat; in fact, in the United States he was admired by some. Even after *Kristallnacht*, in November 1938, when Nazi anti-Semitism erupted with a fury that shocked and disgusted much of the world, the United States maintained diplomatic relations (albeit on a lower level than previously) with the Nazi regime. American hero and US Army pilot Charles Lindbergh, who lived in England and France in the late 1930s and met with high-ranking military officials of Britain, France and Germany in 1938, was outspoken in opposing the US becoming involved in a European war. Not only did Lindbergh believe that the British and French were ill-prepared to fight, he also believed it would be a great mistake to fight Hitler. Lindbergh argued that Hitler’s destruction would “lay Europe open to the rape, loot and barbarism of Soviet Russia’s forces, causing the possibly fatal

wounding of Western civilization” (Lindbergh, 1978, 177). Other prominent organizations that opposed US entry into the war were the Communist Party (until June of 1941), the American Youth Congress, the Mothers’ Crusade, the Paul Revere Sentinels, the Women’s Neutrality League, and individuals such as journalist John T. Flynn and General Robert E. Wood of the America First Committee, socialist Norman Thomas, Father Charles Coughlin, and Senators Robert La Follette (R-Wisconsin), Gerald Nye (R-North Dakota), and Burton Wheeler (D-Montana) (Johnson, 1960, 174-175).

However, despite considerable popular ambivalence over whether to enter the war, Hollywood produced several major feature films which seemed to advocate both an anti-Nazi and pro-war position. These movies include *Confessions of a Nazi Spy* (1939), *Foreign Correspondent* (1940), *The Great Dictator* (1940), *The Mortal Storm* (1940), *Sergeant York* (1941), *A Yank in the RAF* (1941), and *Man Hunt* (1941). Although ostensibly a comedy, the theme of *The Great Dictator* is unmistakable: that Hitler and Mussolini pose a threat to the peace of the world and must be stopped. (As well, of course, that they were vicious fools who *could* be stopped.) *The Mortal Storm* similarly makes no effort to disguise its anti-Nazi message. In response, a Senate subcommittee on Interstate Commerce was created to investigate “Motion Picture and Radio Propaganda.” Studio executives Harry Warner and Darryl F. Zanuck, and the studios’ attorney (and former Republican Presidential candidate) Wendell Willkie, defended the industry against charges that films were being used to promote

intervention. The subcommittee's proceedings were only abandoned when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941 (Neve, 2012, 389-390).

With the entry of the US in the war, the federal government and the motion picture industry joined forces to whip up public support for the war effort. President Roosevelt created the Office of War Information, which included the Bureau of Motion Pictures. In 1942 the BMP issued a *Government Information Manual for the Motion Picture Industry*. This manual detailed how Hollywood should fight the war. According to the manual, the war was “a fight for democracy and the ‘Four Freedoms’ against the forces and values of fascism” (Neve, 2012, 390). By late 1942, Hollywood was making movies which stressed themes such as inclusiveness, self-sacrifice and cooperation. The movie studios were fully committed to winning the war. Warner Brothers took the lead in contributing to this propaganda. Many of the Warner Brothers movies are today considered classics. They include *Yankee Doodle Dandy* (1942), *Casablanca* (1943), *Edge of Darkness* (1943) and *Watch on the Rhine* (1943). These were made not just for entertainment, but to convey and promote a political message: that the US represents principles worth defending. The scenes in *Yankee Doodle Dandy* of James Cagney and the entire ensemble singing “I’m a Yankee Doodle Dandy” and “You’re a Grand Old Flag” accompanied by a bevy of American flags waving in the breeze convey an image of the United States as strong, united and rallying around the flag. Studio head Jack Warner explained that these movies were meant to help people “understand the peace and the victory” (Neve, 2012, 390). By November 1942, the Hollywood office of the BMP exercised ‘an influence over

an American mass medium never equaled before or since by a government agency” (Neve, 2012, 391). From this partnership between government and Hollywood, one fact emerges – the role played by the American motion picture industry as a conduit for propaganda.

From December 7, 1941 until the end of the war in August 1945, the United States and the Soviet Union, united by their mutual opposition to Hitler, were allies. Despite this commonality of purpose, movie studios, in an effort to avoid being accused of being Communist or fronting for Communists, tended to shy away from movies that were overtly supportive of the Soviet regime. Nevertheless, during the war several major motion pictures were released which extolled the heroism and fortitude of the Russian people in their fight against German aggression while refraining from mentioning the Soviet system. Such movies include *The North Star* (1943), *Three Russian Girls* (1943), *Why We Fight Part 5 - The Battle of Russia* (1943), *Days of Glory* (1944), *Song of Russia* (1944), and *Counter Attack* (1945). Only one, *Mission to Moscow* (1943) was relentlessly pro-Stalin, even supporting the purges. After the war, it, along with *North Star* and *Song of Russia* were used as evidence supporting charges that Hollywood was using movies to disseminate Communist propaganda (HCUA, 1947, 5-55).

At the same time the American film industry was producing works denigrating the Nazis and anything German. German characters were shown as sinister, cunning, untrustworthy, devious, arrogant, militaristic, boastful, nasty, and cowardly. They spoke English with heavy German accents. Nazism was discredited and mocked and Adolf Hitler was ridiculed and lampooned. The anti-

Nazi theme can be found in many movies including the Walt Disney cartoons *Der Fuehrer's Face* (1943), *Spirit of '43* (1943), and *Education for Death: The Making of the Nazi* (1943) as well as in a number of full length films, some of which are today also considered classics. Those include *Casablanca* (1942), *Commandos Strike at Dawn* (1942), *Desperate Journey* (1942), *Hitler – Dead or Alive* (1942), *The Devil with Hitler* (1942), *Paris Calling* (1942), *Edge of Darkness* (1943), *Hitler's Children* (1943), *Sahara* (1943), *The Cross of Lorraine* (1943), *Lifeboat* (1944), *None Shall Escape* (1944), *The Hitler Gang* (1944), and *Waterfront* (1944).

While Hollywood was busy making movies to bolster public support for the war, the German film industry was also busy making propaganda movies. Some movies sought to emulate Hollywood musicals and comedies and were purely escapist fare, suggesting a Germany that was happy and carefree. Other movies contained anti-British themes. These movies include *Titanic* (1943), *Ohm Kruger* (Uncle Kruger) (1941) with Academy Award winner Emil Jannings, *Carl Peters* (1941) and *Mein Leben fur Irland (My Life for Ireland)* (1941). Movies with anti-Semitic themes include *Jud Suss (The Jew Suss)* (1940), *Der ewige Jude (The Eternal Jew)* (1940) and *The Rothschilds* (1940). *The Rothschilds* closes with a shot of a Jewish star superimposed over all of England. *Stukas* (1941) dramatizes the deeds of the dashing pilots of the *Luftwaffe* (German Air Force).

The German motion picture industry also produced hundreds of weekly newsreels entitled *Die Deutsche Wochenschau* (the German Weekly News). These newsreels reported on the war. Each was about twenty minutes long and was accompanied by dramatic narration and bombastic music. Many contained

graphic scenes of combat, destruction and death. *Die Deutsche Wochenschau* dated February 26, 1941 shows a somber and serious Adolf Hitler, accompanied by Hermann Goering and a large contingent of German senior military officers, at a public ceremony solemnly placing a wreath at the coffin of a soldier who had died “in service to the Reich”; Hitler is also shown paying his respects to a woman (perhaps the soldier’s mother). *Die Deutsche Wochenschau* dated July 9, 1941 shows German soldiers invading the Soviet Union, destroying Soviet defenses, being welcomed as liberators, and rounding up Jews. *Die Deutsche Wochenschau* of July 21, 1941 shows graphic panoramic scenes of an entire city, purportedly Smolensk, completely gutted, allegedly by the retreating Bolsheviks, further evidence of Soviet wantonness. The newsreel for Christmas 1942 shows scenes of Germans soldiers at the front, from the Arctic to the deserts of North Africa, and German civilians at home, celebrating Christmas, including German children bringing presents to injured soldiers in a hospital. It also had scenes purporting to show captured American soldiers (“*Americanischer gefangenen*”) looking beaten, tired and dejected. *Die Deutsche Wochenschau* from June 14, 1944 shows German army and SS troops fighting the Allied armies in France, scenes of destroyed Allied tanks, aircraft, and other equipment, and Allied soldiers taken prisoner. The final newsreel in this series was produced in March 1945.

After the war, with the Nazi threat gone and the start of the Cold War and the division of Europe into Western and Soviet spheres, Hollywood turned its attention to the threat of international Communism and its chief proponent, the Soviet Union. Responding to political pressure from the House Committee on Un-

American Activities, whose members “saw the film industry as vulnerable to charges of communist subversion” (Neve, 2012, 391), Hollywood soon was producing an array of motion pictures with themes that were anti-Communist and anti-Soviet. These movies include *The Iron Curtain* (1948), *The Red Menace* (1949), *I Married a Communist* (1949), *The Big Lift* (1950), *Invasion U.S.A.* (1952), *I Was a Communist for the FBI* (1955), *The Journey* (1959), *One-Two-Three* (1961), *The Manchurian Candidate* (1962), *From Russia with Love* (1963), *Doctor Zhivago* (1966), *The Deadly Affair* (1966), *Torn Curtain* (1966), *Ice Station Zebra* (1968), *Topaz* (1969), *The Spy Who Loved Me* (1977), and *Red Scorpion* (1989).

As with the anti-Nazi movies, these portray the Soviet Union and its agents in strictly stereotypical fashion. Either they are concocting nefarious plans to subvert the West, either through espionage or by direct military action, or behaving like martinets, thus inviting ridicule. The larger theme was that the Soviet Union and its allies are sinister, utterly unscrupulous and had to be checked. *One-Two-Three* includes scenes of a divided Berlin as a backdrop for a story that highlights Cold War tensions through comedy, thus sugaring the message. *Doctor Zhivago* depicts a Russia under the yoke of Bolshevik rule and includes the chilling lines, “The personal life is dead in Russia.” and “private life is dead for a man with any manhood.” *Torn Curtain* plays up the threat posed by Soviet espionage. *Red Dawn* depicts a United States under a brutal Soviet military occupation. The *Manchurian Candidate* includes graphic scenes of Soviet agents brainwashing an American Korean war veteran into becoming a political assassin inside the United States.

While Hollywood was selling the anti-Bolshevik line to the American people, the Soviet film establishment for years produced a slew of full length features that portrayed

the Russian people and Soviet society in a most positive, upbeat, and optimistic light. These movies include *Circus* (1936), *Volga-Volga* (1938), *Kotovskiy* (1942), *The Stone Flower* (1946), *The Ballad of Siberia* (1947) and *The Cranes are Flying* (1957). *Volga-Volga*, a comedy, is said to have been Joseph Stalin's favorite movie (*The Hype*, online). When watching these movies, one would never know that Soviet Union was a massive police state.

Although Nazi Germany had been defeated and replaced by the Soviet Union as the arch-villain in movies, Nazism remained a favorite target for the American film industry. In 1960 Israel captured, kidnapped and tried accused German war criminal Adolf Eichmann, one of the key perpetrators of the Holocaust. This event marked the start of the second phase of Hollywood's Nazi bashing. In this phase the stories are more complex and the characterizations of the Germans generally more subtle and substantive than those produced during the war. Nevertheless the underlying theme remains unchanged: that Nazism is a detestable aberration that was responsible for causing misery and death and that anyone who was a Nazi was emotionally defective, intellectually hapless, wantonly sadistic, and morally corrupt. Movies that touch on these themes include *Judgment at Nuremberg* (1961), *The Longest Day* (1962), *The Great Escape* (1963), *The Pawnbroker* (1964), *The Sound of Music* (1964), *The Train* (1964), *Von Ryan's Express* (1965), *Is Paris Burning?* (1966) *The Dirty Dozen* (1968), *The Damned* (1969), *Patton* (1970), *QB VII* (1974 TV miniseries), *Seven Beauties* (1975), *The Boys From Brazil* (1978), *Holocaust* (1978 TV miniseries), *Das Boot* (1981), *Winds of War* (1983 TV miniseries), *Sophie's Choice* (1982), *Schindler's List* (1993), *Saving Private Ryan* (1994), and *The Reader* (2008). *Judgment at Nuremberg* includes this line, "If there is to be any salvation for Germany, we who know our guilt must admit it... whatever the pain and

humiliation.” *The Dirty Dozen* depicts senior German army officers as wastrels and drunkards. *QB VII* deals with the theme of Nazi physicians as recalcitrant criminals. *Das Boot*, featuring an all-German cast, depicts German naval personnel as disillusioned; in one scene Hermann Goering is called a “fat slob.” *Schindler’s List* contains graphic scenes of German guards brutalizing and terrorizing Jews. *The Reader* depicts a female former concentration camp guard who is not only complicit in the burning deaths of hundreds of Jews, but is a functional illiterate and pedophile as well – perfect prerequisites for achieving gainful employment under the Nazis. Although indicted and convicted of war crimes, the character projects a certain pathos which brings out the woman’s essential banality and the corrupting effect of the system she served.

Movies in which Hitler himself is a principal character include *Hitler* (1962), *Hitler: The Last Ten Days* (1973), *The Death of Adolf Hitler* (1973), *The Bunker* (1981), *Downfall (Der Untergang)* (2004), *Hitler – The Rise of Evil* (2003 TV series), *Valkyrie* (2008) and *Inglorious Basterds* (2009). In these movies Hitler is invariably portrayed as shrill, moody, short-tempered, easily distracted, and prone to verbal outbursts. For instance, *Downfall* contains (apparently accurate) scenes of a disheveled and wild-eyed Hitler ranting and wandering about the bunker as the Reich is in its final death throes. *Hitler – The Rise of Evil* depicts a young, scowling, pouting Hitler who abuses animals and screams his way to power. *Inglorious Basterds* includes depictions of a gloating, boastful and vain Hitler dressed in full Nazi regalia, which is pure caricature. Regarding Hitler’s behavior, Dr. Eduard Bloch, Hitler’s family physician for two years, said of him, “As a boy he was quiet,

well-mannered and neatly dress” (Bloch, 1943). (This is not in any way to diminish the magnitude of his later crimes.)

Omitted from this discussion are titles from the hundreds of documentaries that have been produced about Hitler or include Hitler, and the almost countless number of parodies of Hitler published on video-sharing websites. Based on the sheer volume of videos devoted to Hitler online, it is apparent that Adolf Hitler, although gone, is far from forgotten, his name and image kept alive in the myriad of movies and videos with a worldwide audience. It is the rare person indeed that has not heard of the name Adolf Hitler.

Hitler and the Nazi regime are so widely associated with the perpetration of war crimes that it may come as surprise to the reader that during World War Two the *Wehrmacht* commissioned a War Crimes Bureau staffed by military judges to systematically collect and analyze evidence of crimes committed by the Allies, including the United States and the Soviet Union. This evidence was to be used to prosecute Allied civilian and military personnel for allegedly violating international law. The Bureau investigated numerous complaints of alleged infractions and violations of the rules of war, and reported their findings to the German government, which, through diplomatic channels via so-called protecting powers (in which capacity the United States had served on behalf of the British prior to the US entry in the war) filed numerous official protests. To today’s reader, the idea of the regime led by Adolf Hitler alleging violations of international law by the Allies may seem the height of absurdity, but when these protests were filed Germany had not yet lost the war. The outcome was still far

from settled, and so their allegations could not be discounted or dismissed as grumblings of a bad loser. Had the war ended differently, they might have been taken seriously in some neutral quarters. Further, these protests were being transmitted by official third-parties who bore witness to their contents and seriousness. The Nuremburg War Crimes trial had not yet occurred and Germans, including Adolf Hitler, had yet to be indicted for anything. Questions of culpability were still an open book.

During the war, the German government also officially accused the Soviet Union of “having murdered and tortured Germans prisoners in bestial and indescribable fashion” (de Zayas, 1979, 88).¹ German officers believed that the Red Army did not observe the laws of war. The International Committee of the Red Cross was refused permission to visit POW camps in the Soviet Union (de Zayas, 1979, 95). After the US entered the war, Germany gave no indication that it would try US and British POWs for war crimes. However, that policy changed after December 16, 1943, when the Soviet Union initiated the first war crimes trial against three captured German soldiers accused of having murdered Soviet citizens in gas vans. The German soldiers were convicted and executed on December 19, 1943. The proceedings were attended by numerous British and American journalists (de Zayas, 1979, 99). Eighty German POWs were also executed by Free French Forces on September 2, 1944 (de Zayas, 1979, 152).

¹ De Zayas' book, *The Wehrmacht War Crimes Bureau*, is controversial and the allegations it contains have not been independently corroborated by any court of law nor were any Allied governments or Allied military forces discussed in the book ever formally accused or convicted of war crimes. Further, the Nazi regime bears full responsibility for having started the war and for the consequences of the actions taken by their adversaries in response.

A German report alleged the mutilation of corpses and the maltreatment of soldiers by civilians on Crete (de Zayas, 1979, 157). German investigators determined that on July 1, 1941 in the Ukraine Russians soldiers had massacred 153 captured German soldiers (de Zayas, 1979, 163). Regarding allegations of mistreatment of German POWs by the Russians during the war, de Zayas writes:

From 1941 to 1945 the Bureau compiled several thousand depositions, reports, and captured papers which, if nothing else, indicate that the killing of German prisoners of war upon capture or shortly after interrogation was not an isolated occurrence. (de Zayas, 1979, 164)

The Wehrmacht War Crimes Bureau also investigated reports of “violent propaganda” which included scurrilous and inflammatory language dehumanizing the Germans. An article in the September 9, 1942 edition of the newspaper *Red Star* included these comments:

The Germans are not human beings. Henceforth the word German means to us the most terrible curse. From now on the word German will trigger your rifle. We shall not speak any more. We shall not get excited. We shall kill. If you have not killed at least one German a day, you have wasted that day. ... Kill the German – this is what your children beseech you to do. Kill the German – this is the cry of your Russian earth. Do not waver. Do not let up. Kill.” (de Zayas, 1979, 168-169)

Other alleged incidents investigated by the Wehrmacht War Crimes Bureau include the execution of wounded German soldiers by Russian soldiers in the Crimea on January 1, 1942 (de Zayas, 1979, 180-182); the alleged existence of a so-called “Stalin Order” ordering all German prisoners of war should be shot immediately (which never happened) (de Zayas, 1979, 173-177); the alleged

murder of 596 German POWs and other personnel by Soviet soldiers in Grischino, north of Stalino, on February 18, 1943 (de Zayas, 1979, 187-191); the “murder of thousands of Ukrainian and Polish political prisoners by the NKVD” in Lvov, Poland in June 1941 (de Zayas, 1979, 214-227); the 1940 liquidation of some 14,700 Polish prisoners of war by Soviet authorities at the Katyn forest near Smolensk in the Soviet Union in 1940, discovered and investigated in the spring of 1943 (de Zayas, 1979, 228-239); the discovery in 1941 in Vinnitsa of mass graves containing the remains of thousands of Ukrainians (9,439 were counted) (de Zayas, 1979, 240-244); and attacks by Allied aircraft on German hospital ships (de Zayas, 1979, 261-268).

In a long letter to President Roosevelt dated April 23, 1943, Stalin vehemently denied Soviet responsibility for the Katyn forest massacre. Dispensing with the usual diplomatic formalities in favor of blunt language interspersed with stock Soviet clichés, and adopting a tone of self-righteous anger and indignation, Stalin disclaimed all Soviet involvement and branded as a sham efforts by the Polish government in exile, based in London and led by Wladyslaw Sikorski, to investigate the matter:

The governments of Sikorski and Hitler have involved in these “investigations” the International Red Cross which is compelled to take part under conditions of a terroristic regime with its gallows and mass extermination of a peaceful population, in this investigation farce, under the stage management of Hitler. (Butler, 2005, 124)

Stalin also accused the Polish government in exile, which was a member of the Allied coalition fighting Hitler, of conspiring with the Germans to use the Katyn

forest incident to discredit the Soviet Union:

At the time when the people of the Soviet Union are shedding their blood in the bitter struggle against Hitlerite Germany and straining every effort to rout the common foe of all liberty-loving democratic countries, the government of Mr. Sikorski, pandering to Hitler's tyranny, is dealing a treacherous blow to the Soviet Union.

All these circumstances force the Soviet Government to infer that the present government of Poland, having fallen into the path of collusion with the Hitler government, has actually discontinued relations of alliance with the USSR and assumed a hostile attitude toward the Soviet Union. (Butler, 2005, 124)

Three days later, on April 26, 1943, Roosevelt sent Stalin this reply:

I can well understand your problem but I hope in present situation you can find means to label your action as a suspension of conversation with the Polish Government in exile rather than a complete severance of diplomatic relations.

It is my view that Sikorski has not acted in any way with Hitler gang, but rather that he made a stupid mistake in taking the matter up with the International Red Cross. (Butler, 2005, 126)

The warmth of Roosevelt's reply and his attempt to calm the Soviet dictator is indicative of Roosevelt's skill as a diplomat and the goodwill he felt for Stalin.

Whether Roosevelt's goodwill was misguided is a matter for speculation.

Both Hitler and Stalin were implicated in the Katyn Forest massacre. Each one accused the other of having committed the crime. Given the reputations of the respective complainants, both of whom had a motive for heaping blame on the other, establishing culpability remained elusive. To Stalin, this matter was serious enough to risk creating a breach between the Allies in the middle of the

war and to Hitler, this matter was worth exploiting as a way of sowing disunity within the ranks of his enemies. The controversy was driven not by the desire for justice but by pure expediency. For by impugning one, the other would be strengthened. That thousands of Polish POWs were murdered no one disputed.

On April 13, 1990 the Soviet Union admitted that its secret police, the NKVD, committed the murders (*Reuters*, 4/13/90). In 1992 more evidence surfaced showing that on March 5, 1940 the murders were ordered by the Politburo chaired by Stalin (*Chicago Tribune*, 10/15/92). But one thing is certain: whether Stalin personally signed a document authorizing the murders is of less importance than the fact that they are now part of his legacy and that of the regime that for fifty years sought to cover up a war crime. It also lends some small credibility to the findings of Wehrmacht War Crimes Bureau.

Pure expediency too had motivated Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union to sign the Non-Aggression Pact on August 23, 1939. Here both Hitler and Stalin demonstrated willingness to put aside ideological differences and jeopardize world peace in order to pursue their own respective foreign policy agendas. Besides agreeing not to fight each other, Germany and the Soviet Union divided Eastern Europe into respective spheres, one for Germany and the other for the Soviet Union, giving each side carte blanche to invade and occupy those countries located in their respective spheres. Most critically, the pact made provisions for the elimination of Poland. This proviso gave Hitler the green light to invade that country and start another war which three days later escalated into World War Two. After the signing of the Non-Aggression Pact, Count Ciano,

Benito Mussolini's Foreign Minister, directly warned the German foreign ministry that an attack on Poland would lead to war with Britain and France (Sonntag and Beddie, 2003, 79). Ciano's warning was rejected. Both Hitler and Stalin share responsibility for causing the war.

One can only marvel at how Stalin and Hitler tried to sucker deceive the other, extending false feelers of friendship while concealing their real intentions. Their sordid brinkmanship is without equal in history. By treating with Hitler, Stalin was playing a high risk game with a man who had already double-crossed British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain and who was looking for an excuse to start a fight. For Hitler, treating with Stalin meant dealing with a man who was looking for a dupe through which to destroy the West. Both were up to no good and both were willing to employ any means to accomplish their aims.

If both Hitler and Stalin bear joint responsibility for having caused the war and are implicated in the commission of war crimes, then the question arises as to whether Hitler has been judged according to a double standard. Can the Nazi regime be considered criminal and the USSR not? This raises a legal principle called *tu quoque*. *Tu quoque* is a Latin term meaning "you also." It operates as follows: Party A accuses Party B of having violated a law, but Party A ostensibly violated the same law, so Party B can claim innocence, or at least mitigation, since Party A committed the same offense too. By invoking this defense, a defendant can deflect or blunt a prosecution. It can also be used by a plaintiff to rationalize their own actions. At the Nuremberg War Crimes trial some of the defendants considered using *tu quoque* as a defense. However, except

under narrow circumstances, it was not employed. Franz Von Papen, one of the defendants at Nuremberg, called *tu quoque* a bad defense (Tusa and Tusa, 1985, 251). It was also disallowed by the court on the grounds that it would result in “fishing expeditions” (Tusa and Tusa, 1985, 252). As the evidence showed, the Nazi regime bore full responsibility for their actions and had no legal basis to project blame onto their accusers or claim mitigating circumstances.

So, if that is the case, then why bring up German allegations of Allied war crimes? The purpose is to show that applying the label “war criminal” alone proves nothing. Throughout the war the Germans accused the Allies of war crimes. But their accusations itself did not confer guilt. Although it is tempting to label Hitler and Stalin names and complain about their actions, such expressions of self-righteousness only reduce Hitler and Stalin to caricatures, deflects attention away from the facts relating to their respective cases and opens up their detractors to charges of hypocrisy. That Hitler and Stalin committed bad acts is a given. That they acted on their own volition is a given. To label them as bad is therefore superfluous. Besides, not everyone who knew them thought they were bad. Hitler’s family physician, who was forced to flee from Austria, had good things to say about the Fuhrer. It is what they *did* according to the *record* that counts. Name calling and labeling merely perpetuates stereotypes.

Now it is time to examine who Hitler and Stalin were and what they actually did. Comparing Hitler and Stalin implies that they were similar enough to warrant comparison. Nevertheless, they also differed in fundamental ways. Hitler was an

Austrian from Central Europe while Stalin was Georgian from the Caucasus. Hitler served in the military while Stalin was rejected for military service. Hitler was single (except for one day) while Stalin was married twice. Hitler had no children while Stalin had two sons and a daughter. Hitler was a Nazi while Stalin was a Communist. These are material differences and ideological which set both men apart.

Hitler and Stalin also had much in common. Both were dictators, that is, they had unlimited executive authority, free from legal constraints, meaning that their orders were de facto law. Both led and were identified with radical political parties – Hitler as head of the Nazi Party; Stalin as General Secretary of the Communist Party. Prior to gaining power, both were political activists – Hitler as a street agitator and Stalin as a revolutionary agent. Both claimed to represent the interests of a specific social group – Hitler, the German *Volk* and Stalin, the proletariat. Both employed terror to achieve their political aims – Hitler through the Gestapo, and Stalin through a variety of Soviet security organizations. Both surrounded themselves with a loyal clique of followers who did their master's bidding – Hitler with a group including SS commandant Heinrich Himmler, propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels, and Reichmarshall Herman Goering (Bullock, 1992, 321), and Stalin with associates such as Politburo members Lazar Kaganovich, Soviet foreign minister Vyacheslav M. Molotov and state security commissar Lavrenti Beria (Bullock, 1992, 114, 304). Both were brought up as Christians, Hitler as Catholic and Stalin as Russian Orthodox, and later both repudiated their Christian upbringing. Hitler said, "The best thing is to let

Christianity die a natural death” (Hitler, *Table Talks*, 2000, 8, 48). Stalin wrote, “[T]he world is by its very nature *material* ... and that the world develops in accordance with the laws of movement of matter and stands in no need of a ‘universal spirit’” (Stalin, *Leninism*, 1942, 412). Both had expansionist and imperialistic ambitions (Rancour-Leferriere, 1988, 79). Finally, both were directly responsible for the deaths of millions of people – Hitler as the perpetrator of the Holocaust and initiator of the Second World War, and Stalin as author of collectivization, the purges and the gulag. As to the actual number of victims, political scientist R. J. Rummel offers these figures: 20,946,000 murdered by the Nazis during the period 1933 to 1945 (Rummel, 1992, 6), and 5,104,000 murdered by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union during the period 1939 to June 1941 alone (Rummel, 1990, 127). According to Rummel, the *total* number of people murdered by the Soviet government from 1917 to 1987 was 61,911,000 (Rummel, 1990, 1). Historian Richard Overy writes, “The regimes defined their enemies and destroyed or removed them” (Overy, 2004, 634). Not surprisingly, the two dictators on some level admired each other (Fest, 1975, 593).

Despite their similarities, which were substantial, some historians have argued that one was worse than the other. Let us examine what two historians have had to say on this matter. They are Joachim Fest and Alan Bullock. Fest believes that Hitler was worse than Stalin. He argues that Hitler had “ ... absolutely no civilizing ideas” while Stalin’s “bloody despotism draped itself with promises for the future” (Fest, 2002, 165). Fest’s statement warrants further scrutiny.

Did Hitler really have absolutely no civilizing ideas? It is at least true that Hitler had moments of insight. On August 2, 1941, Hitler said, "I don't blame the small man for turning Communist, but I blame the intellectual who did nothing but exploit other people's poverty for their own ends" (Hitler, 2000, 18) There is nothing in this statement that is inherently or explicitly uncivil or unreasonable. Further, it reveals that Hitler, the avowed enemy of Bolshevism, had sufficient understanding to appreciate why someone would become a Communist.

Now, regarding Fest's characterization of Stalin's regime as a "bloody despotism," these words evoke negative images and could lead one to reasonably conclude that Stalin was an ogre and the Soviet State an abomination. Is such a conclusion accurate? Historian Robert Conquest would say yes. In his book *The Great Terror*, which discusses Stalin's role as the initiator of the great purge of the late 1930s, Conquest writes: "Neither then nor later was his terrorism wholly rational. He practiced brutal violence, not only toward everything that opposed him but also toward that which seemed, to his capricious and despotic character, contrary to his concepts" (Conquest, 1990, 66). So, at this point, the question must be asked: who was actually worse: Hitler who, according to Fest, had no civilizing ideas or Stalin who, according to two eminent historians, was essentially a thug?

The issue becomes even cloudier when we introduce yet another source that seems to refute both Fest and Conquest. That source is Adolf Hitler. On the evening of July 11-12, 1941 Hitler, commenting on Stalin, said:

Stalin is one of the most extraordinary figures in world history. He began as a small clerk, and never stopped being a clerk. Stalin owes nothing to rhetoric. He governs from his office, thanks to a bureaucracy that obeys his every nod and gesture. (Hitler, 2007, 9)

To Hitler, Stalin was the head bureaucrat of an administrative apparatus that was completely subservient to his will. Hitler's foreign office expressed similar views. When Stalin took over the office of Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars in May 6, 1941 (the first time Stalin ever held a government post), the German ambassador to the Soviet Union, Count von der Schulenburg, wrote, "Stalin won his position of power in party and state solely by his personal authority and by the aid of men devoted to him" (Sonntag and Beddie, 2003, 336). Neither Hitler nor Schulenburg use language that explicitly or implicitly demonize Stalin.

Another contemporary of Stalin's actually held the Soviet leader in high esteem. That person was Franklin D. Roosevelt. Despite the anti-Soviet bias that pervaded the State Department and War Department during the war, Roosevelt directed that the Soviet Union be treated fairly, with no strings attached. Roosevelt himself developed a warm relationship with Stalin. He seemed to genuinely like the Communist dictator. Evidence of Roosevelt's feelings for Stalin can be found in the series of correspondence between the two men during the war. In a letter to Stalin dated April 11, 1942, Roosevelt wrote:

The American people are thrilled by the magnificent fighting of your armed forces and we want to help you in the destruction of Hitler's armies and material more than we are doing now. I send you my sincere regards. (Butler, 2005, 64-65)

In a letter to Roosevelt dated April 20, 1942, Stalin replied:

Let me thank you for the message which I received in Moscow the other day. Please accept my sincere regards and wishes of success in the fight against the enemies of the United States of America. (Butler, 2005, 65)

In a letter dated August 8, 1942, Roosevelt *asked Stalin for advice* on whether to send Wendell Willkie to the Soviet Union as part of a diplomatic mission. The letter opens with this sentence:

I should like to have your frank opinion on the following plan which I think may be useful.

and closes with this sentence:

Please tell me confidentially and frankly if you care to have him come for a very short visit. (Butler, 2005, 82-83)

Four days later Stalin replied:

The Soviet Government takes a favorable view of Mr. Wendell Willkie's visit to the USSR and I can assure you that he will be most cordially entertained. (Butler, 2005, 83)

October 5, 1942, Roosevelt wrote:

I send you my heartiest congratulations on the magnificent achievements of the Soviet Armies and my best wishes for your continued welfare. (Butler, 2005, 92)

On November 19, 1942 Roosevelt wrote:

I do not have to tell you to keep up the good work. You are doing that and I honestly feel that things everywhere look brighter. (Butler, 2005, 97)

Regarding American air assistance in the Caucasus, Roosevelt, on December 16, 1942, wrote:

Please let me know ~~inform me by dispatch~~ your desires in this matter as soon as possible, as I truly want to help all I can. (Butler, 2005, 104)

On February 4, 1943, Roosevelt wrote:

As Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the United States I congratulate you on your brilliant victory in Stalingrad. (Butler, 2005, 114)

The next day Stalin sent Roosevelt this reply:

I thank you for the congratulations in connection with the victory of the Soviet armies at Stalingrad. I express confidence that the joint fighting operations of the armed forces of the United States, of Great Britain and of the Soviet Union will soon lead to victory over our common enemy. (Butler, 2005, 115)

On February 22, 1943 Roosevelt wrote:

We hope that the success of your heroic army, which is an inspiration to all of us, will continue. (Butler, 2005, 119)

The same day Roosevelt sent Stalin another letter which said:

On behalf of the people of the United States, I want to express to the Red Army, on its twenty-fifth anniversary, our profound admiration for its magnificent achievements unsurpassed in all history. ... The Red Army and the Russian people have surely started the Hitler forces on the road to ultimate defeat and have earned the lasting admiration of the people of the United States. (Butler, 2005, 119-120)

Two days later Stalin replied:

Please accept my sincere gratitude for your friendly message on the occasion of the 25th Anniversary of the Red Army and for your high praise of its fighting successes. I share your confidence that these successes will open the path to the final defeat of our common foe who should and will be crushed by the united might of our countries and of all freedom loving peoples. (Butler, 2005, 120)

Even Stalin was capable of showing gratitude. Of course, whether Stalin's solicitations were genuine or a cynical guise meant to extract favors from the American president is another matter. Was Roosevelt being naïve? Historian Susan Butler believes Roosevelt wanted to maintain friendly relations with Stalin because he wanted to win the war and the peace that would follow (Butler, 2005, 10). Roosevelt's true motivations can only be speculated about.

Stalin professed a desire to be friends with the United States. In a letter to President Roosevelt dated January 18, 1939, Joseph Davies, US Ambassador to the Soviet Union, reported:

The leaders of the Soviet government have stated to me that there is only one government in the world that they trust and that is the United States government under your leadership. (Davies, 1941, 433).

In a letter to Roosevelt's closest advisor, Harry Hopkins, dated July 18, 1941, Davis wrote:

I found among the leading Soviets a real friendliness to the United States possibly based on the fact that there was nothing that they had that we wanted, and that we had nothing that they could take; so there was a natural basis for a policy of "live and let live" between our two peoples. (Davies, 1941, 496),

Roosevelt responded to Soviet overtures in kind and during the war the Soviet Union proved a staunch ally.

The question of Stalin's character becomes even more unsettled when we introduce Stalin's own words. Although excoriated by many historians today, Stalin believed that his policies were right. In fact, he was proud of his accomplishments. In April 1930, in a newspaper article published in *Pravda*,

Stalin was asked, “Was the party right in pursuing the policy of accelerating development to the utmost?” Stalin replied:

Yes, it was absolutely right. We had to spur on the country, which was a hundred years behind, and which was faced with mortal danger because it was behind. Only in this way was it possible to enable the country to quickly re-equip itself on the basis of modern technique and emerge onto the highroad at last.

What exactly had the party under Stalin achieved? In a report delivered to the Central Committee of the Communist Party on January 7, 1933, Stalin answers that question:

We did not have an iron and steel industry, the foundation for the industrialization of the country. Now we have this industry.

We did not have a tractor industry. Now we have one.

We did not have an automobile industry. Now we have one.

We did not have a machine-tool industry. Now we have one.

We did not have a big and up-to-date chemical industry. Now we have one.

We did not have a real and big industry for the production of modern agricultural machinery. Now we have one.

We did not have an aircraft industry. Now we have one.

Stalin goes on to list many more impressive accomplishments (Stalin, *Leninism*, 1942, 246-252, 258-262). He then compares the results achieved in the Soviet Union with figures from the West: “While by the end of 1932 the volume of industrial output in the USSR rose to 219 percent of the 1928 output, the volume

of industrial output in the USA during the same period dropped to 56 percent, in England to 80 percent, in Germany to 55 percent, in Poland to 54 percent” (Stalin, *Leninism*, 1942, 248). Stalin rejected “all the talk of the bourgeois press about the ‘collapse’ of collectivization in the sphere of agriculture” and compared Soviet accomplishments in agriculture with the condition of agriculture in the United States. Stalin reported:

According to the figures of the United States Department of Agriculture, the value of the gross output of agriculture in the United States dropped from \$11,000,000,000 in 1929 to \$5,000,000,000 in 1932, i.e., by more than 50 percent. (Stalin, *Leninism*, 1942, 255)

Stalin also reported that in the Soviet Union unemployment had been abolished while in the West unemployment was worsening. Stalin reported:

In the United States, according to official figures, the number of employed workers in the manufacturing industries alone has dropped from 8,500,000 in 1928 to 5,500,000 in 1932; and according to the figures of the American Federation of Labor, the number of unemployed in the United States, in all industries, at the end of 1932, was 11,000,000. In Great Britain, according to official statistics, the number of unemployed has increased from 1,290,000 in 1928 to 2,800,000 in 1932. In Germany, according to official figures, the number of unemployed has increased from 1,376,000 in 1928 to 5,500,000 in 1932. This is the picture that is observed in all the capitalist countries. Moreover, official statistics, as a rule, minimize the number of unemployed; the total number of those unemployed in the capitalist countries ranges from 35,000,000 to 40,000,000. (Stalin, *Leninism*, 1942, 261)

If one was to believe Stalin, when compared to the situation in the West, the Soviet Union was well on its way to becoming a workers’ paradise.

As though to prove that his glowing reports of Soviet successes were not merely self-serving, Stalin quoted verbatim reports from the Western press both praising and criticizing the Five Year Plan. *The New York Times* (November 1932) called it a “gamble” and a “ghastly failure.” The English newspaper, the *Daily Telegraph* (November 1932), reported that “the scheme has quite clearly failed.” The Polish newspaper *Gazeta Polska* (summer 1932) reported that “The situation [in the rural districts] ... has reached an impasse.” The English newspaper, *The Financial Times* (November 1932), referred to the “breakdown of the Five Year Plan,” while the Italian magazine *Politica* reported, “Catastrophe is evident.”

Other reports, however, presented a much more positive picture. The French newspaper, *Le Temps* (January 1932) reported, “The U.S.S.R. has won the first round, having industrialized herself without the aid of foreign capital.” In the summer it later said that “in the contest with us the Bolsheviks have proved the victors.” The British magazine, *The Round Table*, reported, “The developments achieved under the Five Years Plan is astounding.” *The Financial Times* also noted that “the progress made in machine construction cannot be doubted, and the celebrations of it in the press and on the platform, glowing as they are, are not unwarranted.” The Austrian newspaper, *Die Neue Freie Presse* (beginning of 1932), added, “We may curse Bolshevism, but we must understand it.... The Five Year Plan is a new huge quantity which must be taken into account in every economic calculation.” John Gibson Garvie, the chairman of the United Dominions Trust (October 1932) said, “Russia is forging ahead while all too many of our factories and shipyards lie idle.... Russia today is a country with a soul and

an ideal I believe that the Russian objective is sound.” The American journal, *The Nation* (November 1932), opined, “The four years of the Five-Year Plan have witnessed truly remarkable developments. The face of the country is being changed literally beyond recognition. ... Russia is passing quickly from the age of wood into an age of iron, steel, concrete and motors. The English journal, *The Glasgow Forward* (September 1932), reported (unsurprisingly):

Nobody can fail to notice the enormous amount of building work that is going on....It has to be seen to be believed. Our own war time efforts ... are flea-bites to what has been done in Russia.... So dismiss from your heads the fantastic scare stories of the British press that lies so persistently, so blatantly, so contemptibly about Russia, and all the half-truths and misconceptions that are circulated by the dilettante literary academic intelligentsia that look at Russia patronizingly through superior middle-class spectacles without having the slightest understanding of what is going on.

Based on these figures and reports, Stalin concluded, not unreasonably, that the Soviet system had the advantage over the capitalist system and “that the capitalist countries are pregnant with proletarian revolution” (Stalin, *Leninism*, 1942, 236-240, 241).

Stalin also made another essential point: industrialization had to be spurred on to protect the Soviet Union from impending attack. One could argue that his fears were exaggerated. But were they? In 1921, Lenin warned that there would be another world war:

The question of imperialist wars, of the international policy of finance capital which dominates the whole world, a policy the inevitably engenders new imperialist wars, that inevitably causes an extreme intensification of national oppression, pillage, brigandry and the strangulation of weak, backward and small nationalities

by a handful of “advanced” powers – this question has been the keystone of the entire policy of all countries of the globe since 1914. It is a question of life and death for millions and millions of people. It is a question of whether 20,000,000 people (as compared with the 10,000,000 who were killed in the war of 1914-1918 and in the supplementary “minor” wars that are still going on) are to be slaughtered in the next imperialist war, which the bourgeoisie is preparing, which is growing out of capitalism before our very eyes. It is a question of whether that future war, which is inevitable (if capitalism continues to exist), 60,000,000 people are to be maimed (compared to the 30,000,000 maimed in the years 1914-1918). (Lenin, *Selected Works*, v.2, pt.2, 597-598)

Lenin’s warnings proved to be correct, even if his explanation was flawed.

Stalin believed that his policies were justified; his explanations seemed rational and plausible. According to President Roosevelt, he was an ally worthy of lasting admiration. Stalin believed, as US Ambassador Joseph Davies reported in 1938, that he was doing *what had to be done to save the cause* (Davies, 1941, 303). For Stalin, the decision to radically transform the Communist state from a backward peasant country into a modern industrial power was “a matter of life and death” (SMS, video). Opposition was out of the question; there was no time to waste. According to Professor David Reynolds, Stalin “dragged Russia into the twentieth century, but it could not have been accomplished without the utter ruthlessness that was his trademark” (SMS, video).

Yet, despite the brutality of his methods, Stalin was still capable of performing acts of friendship and showing affection. In August 1942, Churchill flew to Moscow where he had a series of meetings with Stalin regarding the conduct of the war. Offended by Stalin’s accusations of bad faith, Churchill was ready to terminate the discussions and leave when Stalin invited him to his

apartment for drinks. Churchill accepted and for six hours both men, accompanied by Molotov, ate, drank, talked and became friends. During their discussions, Stalin “laughed and joked” and even introduced Churchill to his daughter Svetlana. Churchill left the meeting with “a new confidence in Stalin.” About the meeting, Churchill later said, “I was taken into the family, we ended as friends.” Churchill also said, “Stalin was a man with whom I could do business.” In the words of Professor Reynolds, the bruiser had become a charmer, a “Mister Nice Guy” (SMS, video). When Stalin’s daughter, Svetlana Alliluyeva, was little, Stalin used to carry her in his arms, give her loud kisses and call her pet names like “little sparrow” and “little fly.” (Rancour-Leferriere, 1988, 58). Whether Stalin’s shows of affection and friendship were sincere (as they probably were in the case of his daughter) or a mere sham is a matter for speculation.

Bullock also believes that Hitler was worse. He argues that what sets Hitler apart was the Holocaust. Nothing done by Stalin – not the purges, the show trials, the Gulags, the deportations – matched Hitler’s program to exterminate the Jews. For Bullock, that placed Hitler in a different category. Bullock writes: “The inhumanity and excesses of the Stalinist repression were as unique in different ways, as those of the Nazis, but they did not cancel out the uniqueness of the Holocaust” (Bullock, 974). Bullock is correct if in fact the Holocaust was a unique event. But was it?

Before answering that question, anti-Semitism must first be discussed. The Holocaust did not occur in a vacuum; something drove it and that was Nazi anti-Semitism. Was the anti-Semitism of Adolf Hitler unique? The historical evidence suggests that it was not.

When Hitler took power in 1933, anti-Semitism was part of mainstream European thought. In fact, it was pervasive (Hildebrandt, 2009, 886). Hitler did not it. Jews were despised. In no country were they fully trusted or accepted. Civil emancipation by Napoleon did not translate into greater tolerance; the nineteenth century marked the emergence of a virulent form of racial anti-Semitism (Steiman, 1998, 114, 117-142). Jews were labeled and portrayed as radicals, plutocrats, cosmopolitans and subversives (Bing, online). French socialist Pierre-Joseph Proudhon described Jews as “fraudulent” and “parasitic” (Lewis, 1986, 111). Their patriotism was considered a sham and their loyalty questioned. Historian Bernard Lewis writes that Jews were depicted as aliens to the nation (Lewis, 1986, 68). In 1847 Otto von Bismarck, as a member of the *Landtag* (and years before he became chancellor of Germany), expressed the belief that Jews should not have access of all public offices since it would be incompatible with the Christian character of the state (Katz, 1973, 198). In 1875 in Hungary a parliamentary deputy began demanding the expulsion of Jews from the country (Ettinger, 1976, 876). From September 1879 in Germany the Christian Social Workers’ Party concentrated its efforts on anti-Jewish agitation (Ettinger, 1976, 875). (Later on Adolf Hitler would characterize the CSWP’s anti-Semitism as only “half-hearted” (Hitler, 1998, 120)). In 1891 in France a deputy proposed that Jews be expelled from the country; thirty-two deputies supported him (Ettinger, 1976, 878). In 1893, sixteen deputies were elected to the Reichstag on a specifically anti-Semitic platform (Laqueur, 2001, 29). In 1894 in France, as part of a campaign to discredit the loyalty of Jews, a French-Jewish military officer Alfred Dreyfus was found guilty of treason on fabricated evidence (Lewis, 1986, 69); this was

followed by anti-Semitic demonstrations and riots in nearly seventy towns and cities (Marrus, 1987, 60). Historian Michael Marrus writes, “Anti-Semitism was deeper and more pervasive than a mere passing fever” (Marrus, 1987, xxvii). The nineteenth century German philosopher Eugen Duhring attributed the cause of “Jewish depravity” to “Jewish blood” (Fischer, 1998, 103). In 1910 the English social philosopher and historian Houston Stewart Chamberlain, son-in-law of the German composer Richard Wagner, warned that the Jews, through “the law of blood,” could achieve mastery of Europe:

Consider with what mastery they use the law of blood to extend their power; the principal stem remains spotless, not a drop of strange blood comes in; as it stands in the Thora, “A bastard shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord; even to his tenth generation shall he not enter into the congregation of the Lord.” (Deuteronomy, xxiii, 2); in the meantime, however, thousands of side branches are cut off and employed to infect the Indo-Europeans with Jewish blood. If that were to go on for a few centuries, there would be in Europe only one single people of pure race, that of the Jews, all the rest would be a herd of pseudo-Hebraic mestizos, a people beyond all doubt degenerate physically, mentally and morally. (Chamberlain, 1910, 331)

The theme of the Jews as a separate race posing a threat to the state is also contained in the writings of the German philosopher and historian Oswald Spengler. Discussing the racial characteristics of the Jewish people, Spengler in 1926 wrote:

It is stated that even today Jews can amongst themselves distinguish very different races at the first glance, and that in the ghettos of eastern Europe the “tribes” (in the Old Testament sense) are clearly recognized. But none of this constitutes a different *nation*. According to von Erckert, the West European Jew-type is universally distributed within the

non-Jewish Caucasian peoples, whereas according to Weissenberg it does not occur at all amongst the long-headed Jews of southern Arabia, where Sabaen tomb-sculptures show a human type that might also claim to be Roman or Germanic and is the ancestor of these Jews who were converted by missionary effort at least by the birth of Christ. (Spengler, v. 2, 1926, 175-176)

Spengler goes on to discuss the historical relationship of minority groups to the state and implied that it is the duty of the state to suppress these minority groups if they pose a threat to the identity of the state:

If Christians lived in the Islamic State, Nestorians in the Persian, Jews in the Byzantine, they did not and could not as unbelievers belong to it, and consequently were thrown back upon their own jurisdictions. If by reason of their numbers or their missionary spirit they became a threat to the continuance of the identity of the state and creed-community, persecution became a national duty. (Spengler, v. 2, 1926, 177-178)

Self-preservation, not pluralism nor tolerance, is the message conveyed. The minority group is the enemy and poses a direct threat to the community by virtue of their difference which is defined by race. Persecution is not only an option. It is a duty.

Hitler was not a political philosopher, nor did he have much formal education. But he was a voracious reader with a strong interest in history. According to historian Brigitte Hamann, as a young man in Vienna Hitler got his information from books at the public library, booklets published by political parties and associations, and newspapers (Hamann, 1999, 200-201). Years later, after becoming Fuhrer, he would talk about topics he remembered from his youth. His secretary, Christa Schroeder, reported that Hitler's memory "was in perfect

order, a bona fide mental chest of drawers from which he knew how to profit optimally.” (Hamann, 1999, 201).

Further evidence of cultural influences which shaped Hitler’s thinking can be found in *Mein Kampf*, published in 1925. In this book, written while in prison, Hitler spelled out his political and racial agenda. From 1905 to 1913, ages 16 to 23, Hitler had lived in Vienna, the capital of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. At the time Vienna, with a population of two million people, was the sixth largest city in the world (Hamann, 1999, 277). Circulating around Vienna was a whole range of anti-Semitic and racial theories. Although crudely expressed and devoid of scientific value, these gained traction and attracted a large public following, that even included some Jews such as Otto Weiniger and Arthur Trebitisch (Hamann, 1999, 227-235). Talk of a “master race” and “inferior races” was everywhere. Everything was explained by way of race (Hamann, 1999, 204). One theory asserted that Jews were dangerous because they were spoiling the Aryan “noble race” through mixed marriages (Hamann, 1999, 208). Another purported that they were weak and not able to live independently, thus representing a parasitic life form, and that “every people has the right to vigorously fight the willful and deliberate deterioration of its race” (Hamann, 1999, 223)” Another insisted that anthropologically the Jews were related to “Mongols” and “Negroes”:

The curly hair points to the Negro, and the complete Chinese and Malaysian shapes of their skulls, which one so often encounters among the Jews – who then also invariably have a yellowish complexion – point to partly Mongolian blood² (Hamann, 1999, 228-229)

² This theory clearly contradicted Chamberlain’s notion of a pure Jewish race.

Another theory declared that:

it is the duty of the Nordic man, who has ripened under a colder sky, to eliminate the parasitic races just as one simply has to eliminate dangerous poisonous snakes and wild beasts of prey. (Hamann, 1999, 241-242)

Another theory, and this one is especially noteworthy in view of what subsequently transpired, warned that:

the Jews were fighting along with the Socialists, the Catholics, the Jesuits, and the Freemasons to ruin the Aryans and seize power. Thus the German people are in danger of perishing if it does not defend itself. It also needs a leader who is “born and sent by God. Yet to serve the will of such a Fuhrer means submitting oneself to the total will of the entire German people and serving that will, which has remained mute so far and become loud and clear only through this leader.” (Hamann, 1999, 232)

There is no doubt that during the seven years that Hitler lived in Vienna he was exposed to these and similar ideas. This was witnessed by people who knew him.

Of course, one could argue that exposure alone would not necessarily transform someone into a fanatical, race-baiting anti-Semite. But the mayor of Vienna, Karl Lueger (as well as many members of the Vienna city council), was a notorious anti-Semite and provided Hitler, a highly impressionable person who fancied himself an artist, with a political role model. It was Lueger who said that anti-Semitism would “perish, but not until the last Jew has perished”(Hamann, 1999, 286, 290). A Lueger associate Josef Gregori stated in the Reichsrat, “I would very much like to see all Jews ground into artificial fertilizer ... I would like that very much” and “If you go and hang 3,000 stock exchange Jews today, wheat will be cheaper tomorrow. Do that, it’s the only solution to the bread issue”

(Hamann, 1999, 287). An anti-Semitic pamphlet speculated what the provinces of the the Austro-Hungarian Empire would be like in 1920 had Vienna being renamed Luegerville and the city was “Jew-free” because the Christians had driven the “flatfeet,” “crooked-noses,” and “Yiddish gabbers” to Budapest by means of a total economic embargo (Hamann, 1999, 294).

Hitler incorporated these ideas and others into *Mein Kampf*. The struggle against the Jews would be a crusade. Hitler wrote, “By defending myself against the Jew, I am fighting for the work of the Lord” (Hitler, 1998, 65).

The idea of man as heroic avenger had already been rooted in the writings of German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer. Schopenhauer writes:

It is a rare, very significant, and even sublime trait of character through which the individual sacrifices himself by striving to make himself the arm of eternal justice, of the true nature of which he is yet ignorant. (Schopenhauer, v.1, 1968, 463-464)

To take on a cause was not only heroic, it was magnificent.

Regarding the need to maintain and protect the purity of blood Hitler wrote, “There is only one holiest human right, and this right is at the same time the holiest obligation, to wit: to see to it that the blood is preserved pure and, by preserving the best humanity, to create the possibility of a nobler development of these beings” (Hitler, 1998, 402). The connection between this statement and the theories of race that were being spread in Vienna at the time Hitler lived there is obvious. (The parallel between this notion of creating a superior race of people and the stated Communist aim to create the new “Soviet Man” is striking. The

particular ideals to be cultivated might have been different. The murderous ruthlessness with which it was pursued was not.)

On the need for Germans to acquire their own special land, Hitler wrote, “We Nationalist Socialists must hold unflinchingly to our aim in foreign policy, namely, to secure for the German people the land and soil to which they are entitled on this earth” (Hitler, 1998, 652). This idea was drawn from the theories propounded by the Austrian Pan-German movement, which was also vehemently anti-Semitic. Its leader, Georg Schonerer, wrote, “We consider anyone a renegade of his people who knowingly supports the Jews and their agents and comrades” (Hamann, 1999, 243). Schonerer also warned of the need to prepare for the ensuing war between Germans and Jews: “If we don’t expel the Jews, we Germans will be expelled” (Hamann, 1999, 243). (Schonerer had people refer to him as the sole and absolute “Führer,” a practice which Hitler later adopted.) (Hamann, 1999, 244, 252).

Hitler wrote *Mein Kampf* to warn people of the supposed Jewish threat. He wrote, “For once this book has become the common property of a people, the Jewish menace may be considered as broken” (Hitler, 1998, 308). The connection between Hitler’s political agenda and the anti-Semitic ideas that were circulating in Vienna is self-evident. Adopting the swastika as a symbol had first been an idea inspired by Guido von List; the idea of a “Thousand-Year Reich” was a concept based on the theories of Hanns Horbiger, who taught that the course of world history always runs in 2,100 year-long cycles (Hamann, 1999, 209-215, 225-226). Hitler was not an original thinker, but he knew who to turn to for his ideas.

That Hitler chose to exploit the prevailing anti-Semitism for his own purposes was an act of demagoguery, but given the cultural milieu in which he lived and the intensity, scope, and depth of anti-Semitic feeling at the time, this should not be surprising. He also very much believed in it.

German anti-Semites were not alone in their perturbations over the Jews. Lenin was distressed by them too. While Lenin did not advocate an official policy of persecution or outright extermination, he believed that Jewish national aspirations were inconsistent with the goals of the proletarian revolution, and preferred that Jews not push the matter and make it an issue. Although he was willing to allow the Poles and other national groups autonomy within the larger Soviet state, he was not willing to extend such a privilege to the Jews, who Lenin considered a caste. For Lenin, the solution of the Jewish problem was emancipation and assimilation (Wolfe, 1964, 579). Stalin agreed, and went even further by claiming that Jews were already vanishing. In 1917 he wrote, "In brief, the Jewish nation is coming to end, and therefore there is nobody to demand national autonomy for. The Jews are being assimilated" (Stalin, *National Question*, 1942, 40).

Whether Stalin was anti-Semitic is a matter for conjecture. Bullock asserts that he was and after 1948 used Zionism as pretext to initiate an anti-Semitic campaign, which was centered on the so-called Doctors' Plot (Bullock, 1991, 956-957). Apparently Stalin believed that certain Jewish organizations inside the Soviet Union with ties to the United States were being used as fronts by Jews with pro-Israel and pro-Zionist leanings who thus posed a threat to the security of

the USSR. (His own use of Communist parties around the world must have naturally inclined him to this.) Historians Jonathan Brent and Vladimir P. Naumov write:

With the founding of the state of Israel and outbreaks throughout the Soviet Union of what Stalin perceived to be dangerous pro-Israel, Zionist fervor in the Soviet Jewish population, it was alleged that Jews could not be trusted to be loyal to the USSR, and constituted a potential fifth column in case of a war with the United States. (Brent and Naumov, 2003, 94).

Stalin was not alone in his preoccupation with Jewish subversion. In the United States both the House of Representatives and the Senate had in 1941 conducted hearings on allegations of Communist infiltration in the movie industry and the government (HCUA, 1947, *passim*; SPSI, 1953, *passim*). Many of those investigated were Jews. Ironically, while Jews in the Soviet Union were being accused of anti-Soviet leanings, Jewish-Americans in the US were accused of fronting for the Soviet Union.

However, other evidence suggests that the subject of Stalin and anti-Semitism is far more complex. Both Stalin's daughter-in-law and his daughter Svetlana's first husband were Jewish, as was one of his closest associates, Lazar Kaganovich. Stalin had three grandchildren who were half Jewish. (In 1999, one of his grandchildren, Yevgeny Djughashvili, sued a Russian newspaper for libel over a report that his grandfather had ordered killings of Soviet citizens.) (Faulconbridge, 8/31/09). Under Stalin, no laws or regulations were enacted specifically targeting Jews. On January 12, 1931, in a reply to an

inquiry from the Jewish News Agency, Stalin issued a statement categorically denouncing anti-Semitism:

National and racial chauvinism is a vestige of the misanthropic customs characteristic of the period of cannibalism. Anti-semitism, as an extreme form of racial chauvinism, is the most dangerous vestige of cannibalism.

Anti-semitism is of advantage to the exploiters as a lightning conductor that deflects the blows aimed by the working people at capitalism. Anti-semitism is dangerous for the working people as being a false path that leads them off the right road and lands them in the jungle. Hence Communists, as consistent internationalists, cannot but be irreconcilable, sworn enemies of anti-semitism.

In the U.S.S.R. anti-semitism is punishable with the utmost severity of the law as a phenomenon deeply hostile to the Soviet system. Under U.S.S.R. law active anti-semites are liable to the death penalty. (Stalin, *Works*, v.13, 30).

Article 123 of the 1936 Constitution of the USSR, introduced under Stalin (Stalin, *Selected Writings*, 1942, 379-405), prohibited discrimination based on nationality or race:

Equality of rights of citizens of the U.S.S.R., irrespective of their nationality or race, in all spheres of economic, state, cultural, social and political life, is an indefeasible law. Any direct or indirect restriction of the rights of, or, conversely, any establishment of direct or indirect privileges for, citizens on account of their race or nationality, as well as any advocacy of racial or national exclusiveness or hatred and contempt, is punishable by law.

Some of Stalin's highest ranking security officials were Jewish. They included Genrikh Yagoda, chief of Soviet Secret Police, Matvei Berman, Naftaly Frenkel, Leonid Reichman, and Lev Inzhir (Plocker, 11/28/13). Stalin would also

later support the creation of the state of Israel (Auster, 10/9/03; Bullock, 1991, 957).

As to whether Stalin privately was anti-Semitic, evidence suggests that in his youth he was (Radzinsky, 1996, 25-27). He also apparently made anti-Semitic statements as an adult. The evidence is anecdotal. Referring to a preponderance of Jews in the Menshevik faction at the London Congress of 1907, Stalin wrote:

Apropos of that, one of the Bolsheviks jestingly remarked (I think it was Comrade Alexinsky) that the Mensheviks were a Jewish faction while the Bolsheviks were truly Russian, and hence it would not be amiss for us Bolsheviks to instigate a Pogrom in the Party. (Trotsky, 1967, 152)

The Social Revolutionary Karganov claimed that in 1911, Stalin, in the course of an argument, resorted “to coarse Georgian expressions against the Jews” (Trotsky, 1967, 172). According to Trotsky, Stalin’s attitude to the appearance of “caricatures and doggerels of anti-Semitic character in the Party press,” was one of “friendly neutrality” (Trotsky, 1967, 399). The so-called Doctors’ Plot in the early 1950s which targeted a preponderance of Jews is also cited as evidence of Stalin’s anti-Semitic leanings, but here too the question of Stalin’s actual motivations is unclear. Most of the victims had Jewish-sounding surnames, but the campaign was never officially designated as being aimed at Jewish citizens. Further, nobody knows for certain what was driving Stalin to act. Historian Robert Service writes:

Whether Stalin really intended the universal deportation of Jews in the early 1950s remains unknown, though this is widely treated as a fact; and no conclusive proof has come to light. (Service, 2005, 577).

(Paradoxically, while the loyalty of Jews to the Soviet Union was being questioned by Stalin, in the United States two American Jews, Ethel and Julius Rosenberg, were convicted and executed for conspiring to commit espionage for the Soviet Union (Radosh and Milton, 1983, *passim*). According to historians Roy and Zhores Medvedev, “Stalin’s anti-Semitism was fundamentally ‘political,’ although this can be no more than a supposition” (Medvedev, 2004, 275). Whether the evidence, all of which is based on innuendo, is sufficient to establish that Stalin was an anti-Semite is debatable.

It could be argued that the policy of assimilation as advocated by Lenin and Stalin was evidence of anti-Semitic intent. For Jews assimilation would mean losing their cultural identity. But Stalin was not interested in preserving or promoting ethnic diversity; in fact the opposite: his goal was the creation of a dictatorship of the proletariat in which ethnic and national differences would be reduced and ameliorated if not altogether eliminated. Addressing the subject of national self-determination, Stalin wrote:

In fighting for the right of nations to self-determination, the aims of the Social-Democrats is to put an end to the policy of national oppression, to render it impossible, and thereby to remove the grounds of hostility between nations, to take the edge off that hostility and reduce it to a minimum (Stalin, *National Question*, 1942, 23)

According to Article 1, Chapter 1, clause 1 of the Russian Constitution of 1918, The Russian Soviet Republic was officially organized on the basis of a free union of free nations, as a federation of Soviet national republics. The operative word is “soviet.” It was a soviet state in which all power was vested in the soviets

(councils). Nationalist aspirations had no place in the Stalinist scheme, and were deemed a serious obstacle to the achievement of Bolshevik objectives. This is not to suggest that Stalin disavowed the concept of nations as a legitimate form of social organization. But he differentiated between what he termed “bourgeois nations” that were imperialistic and driven by capitalism, and “socialist nations” in which capitalism has been eliminated, “exempt from irreconcilable class contradictions that corrode the bourgeois nations, and are far more representative of the whole people than any bourgeois nation” (Stalin, *Works*, v.11, 354-356). As for the national aspirations of the Jews, which were expressed through the Jewish Bund – first, Stalin, like Lenin, did not believe that the Jews were a nation and therefore considered their demands for national autonomy a sham, and second, he believed, again like Lenin, that such aspirations, groundless or not, posed a threat to the working class movement. Stalin wrote: “The disorganization of the working-class movement, the demoralization of the ranks of Social-Democracy – that is where the federalism of the Bund is leading” (Stalin, *National Question*, 1942, 51). Stalin also warned of the need for the Party to deal with this problem. Whether Stalin’s opposition to the Jewish Bund was anti-Semitic or not ideological is debatable, but what is certain is that any group that demonstrated a tendency to deviate away from the party line on the question of nationalities was bound to invite Stalin’s ire.

Hitler was not the originator of modern anti-Semitism. He was also not the first political figure to target an entire people for destruction. It is true that in

terms of its scope the Holocaust is remarkable. It continued over a period of years and affected millions of people in many countries. The Lodz Ghetto, the Warsaw Ghetto, *Kristallnacht*, Dachau, Bergen-Belsen, and Auschwitz attest to its sheer magnitude and horror (Adelson and Lapidés, 1989, *passim*; Dobroszycki, 1984, *passim*; Mazor, 1993, *passim*; Rotem, 1994, *passim*; Burleigh, 2000, 325-334, 587-589, 775-776; Hoess, 1959, *passim*; Levi, 2006, *passim*; Steinbacher, 2005, *passim*). Yet the Holocaust was neither a unique historical occurrence, nor was it a concept that originated with Hitler.

Throughout history, whole populations have been targeted for destruction. In the United States the Native American population was virtually wiped out, and while General Philip Sheridan did not exactly say “The only good Indian is a dead Indian,” his intention was nonetheless clear (Oster, 2004, 13-15, 47, 307-309; Brown, 2001, 1-12). In southern Africa the British forcibly subjugated the Zulus, and then did the same to the Afrikaners, putting many in concentration camps (Welsh, 1999, 262-267, 334-335). In the Congo, Belgian king Leopold II treated the region as his personal fiefdom, resulting in the annihilation of whole populations (Hochschild, 1998, *passim*). During World War One the Ottoman Turks slaughtered Armenians in a genocidal campaign (Akcam, 2006, *passim*; Dadrian, 1995, *passim*). Language alluding to extermination can even be found in the Bible. The following are excerpts from the Book of Genesis: “So the Lord said, ‘I will wipe from the face of the earth the human race I have created—and with them the animals, the birds and the creatures that move along the ground—for I regret that I have made them.’” (*The Holy Bible*, Genesis 6:7) The Lord then reiterates his

intentions: “So God said to Noah, ‘I am going to put an end to all people, for the earth is filled with violence because of them. I am surely going to destroy both them and the earth’” (*The Holy Bible*, Genesis 6:13). (God’s genocidal intent would later be restricted to such people as the Amalekites.) Hitler was not acting in a cultural vacuum.

Neither was Stalin. He too was influenced by the social and historical forces of his time – the emergence of Marxism, the Revolution of 1905, the First World War, the rise of Lenin, Trotsky and the Bolshevik Party, and the February and October 1917 revolutions (Bullock, 1971, *passim*; Wolfe, 1964, *passim*). Nor did concepts such as one-party rule, political terror, and political fanaticism originate with him. From the September 1, 1918 edition of the Bolshevik newspaper, *Krasnaya Gazeta*:

We will turn our hearts into steel, which we will temper in the fire of suffering and the blood of fighters for freedom. We will make our hearts cruel, hard, and immovable, so that no mercy will enter them, and so that they will not quiver at the sight of a sea of enemy blood. We will let loose the floodgates of that sea. Without mercy, without sparing, we will kill our enemies in scores of hundreds. Let them be thousands; let them drown themselves in their own blood. For the blood of Lenin and Uritsky, Zinovief and Volodarski, let there be floods of the blood of the bourgeois – more blood, as much as possible (World Future Fund, online)

In 1906 Lenin wrote:

We would be deceiving both ourselves and the people if we concealed from the masses the necessity of a desperate, bloody war of extermination, as the immediate task of the coming revolutionary action. (World Future Fund, online)

Marxist ideology held that in a socialist state aggressive leadership was both necessary and inevitable. In the Communist Manifesto Marx writes, “The proletariat of each country must, of course, first of all settle matters with its own bourgeoisie” (Marx, 1998, 49).” Marx’s ominous words would later be put into action by Stalin.

Yet, unlike Hitler, who had gained power through legal means before declaring himself Fuhrer and therefore could assert at least a partial claim to political legitimacy, Stalin’s right to rule was a far less settled matter. The Communist Party had gained power through a coup and its effectiveness as a political force depended not on mass support but on maintaining a rigid organizational cohesiveness from the top down, and imposing and enforcing ideological discipline. Those in control set the party line and brooked no opposition. Such opposition was perceived as a direct threat to those in power. In the Soviet Union the man who controlled the party and set the party line was Joseph Stalin. His word was law. To oppose him was tantamount to inviting physical annihilation (Khrushchev, 1970, 564). This was the case because Stalin controlled the party apparatus that included the security police, whose services he employed to ensure compliance with party directives.

Although Article 127 of the 1936 Soviet Constitution required that an arrest be made pursuant to a court order, a person could be “detained” without the sanction of the court or prosecutor, that is, solely on the discretion of the police, in “all cases where public order and security is threatened.” The Soviet judicial system also permitted detentions pursuant to an open warrant. Often legal

formalities were dispensed with. As a result, there were many arrests and prisons quickly became overcrowded, resulting in conditions that were deplorable and inhumane. For instance, in some Siberian towns, when the overflow was too great, prisoners were herded into pits dug in the ground and roofed over. In Kharkov in 1937 a prison built for around 800 held around 12,000. In Novosibirsk, about 270 men were crammed into a forty-square-meter cell (Conquest, *The Great Terror*, 1990, 264).

Stalin himself admitted that the situation got out of hand, especially in the countryside during the initial period of collectivization. He claimed that the police targeted the wrong people:

As long as the offensive was directed against the kulaks in a united front with the middle peasant, all went well. But when certain of our comrades, intoxicated by success, began imperceptibly to slip from the path of offensive against the kulak to the path of fighting the middle peasant; when, in the pursuit of high percentages of collectivization, they began to employ coercion against the middle peasant, depriving him, of the franchise, “dekulakizing” and expropriating him, the offensive began to assume distorted form, the united front with the middle peasant began to be undermined, and, naturally, the kulak received the opportunity to try to get on his feet again. (Stalin, *Leninism*, 1942, 175-176)

As far as Stalin was concerned, the policy was sound; only its implementation was flawed. Nevertheless its consequences were devastating, especially in the Ukraine, where the resulting chaos in the countryside led to a famine that reportedly killed millions of people (*CUF*, 1987, *passim*).

Now, why did Stalin launch an “offensive” against the kulaks? Here is his explanation: “We are conducting an offensive against the capitalist elements in

the countryside in alliance with the middle peasants, for only such an offensive can bring us victory” (Stalin, *Leninism*, 1942, 185). Stalin was a Marxist who understood social relations in terms of class struggle, not compromise or building consensus. For him, to target a class or an ethnic group for punitive action was not a capricious act; it was part of a larger historical process. Historian Robert Payne writes, “In his struggle for power Stalin showed that he would employ any weapon, even the most unscrupulous, in order to achieve his aims” (Payne, 1965, 318). Payne is correct. Payne also writes, “Stalin, by introducing the cult of the dead Lenin, was reinforcing his own role as the deified successor” (Payne, 1965, 345). Payne again is correct. Stalin saw himself as a disciple of Lenin. Indeed he revered Lenin. In a eulogy published in 1924 in commemoration of Lenin’s career and contributions to the cause of revolution, Stalin said, “Lenin was born for revolution. He was, in truth, the genius of revolutionary outbreaks and the greatest master of the art of revolutionary leadership” (Stalin, *Works*, v.6, 63). That Stalin, a Communist, was driven by a religious-like fervor is confirmed by biographer Isaiah Deutscher who writes, “In his own mind he saw himself not as a modern Pharoah but as a new Moses leading the chosen nation in the desert” (Deutscher, 1949, 326-327).

As Lenin’s disciple, Stalin wanted to achieve victory of the working class, and to achieve victory meant acting in accordance with the exhortations of his most venerated mentor. It was Lenin, supreme leader of the revolution, the man who successfully led the Bolsheviks to victory, the man most revered by Stalin, the man who symbolized everything that Stalin valued and who gave

meaning to Stalin's life, who ordered that the kulaks be exterminated. *It was not Stalin's idea.* In August 1918 Lenin, employing highly inflammatory language, wrote:

The kulaks are the most brutal, callous and savage exploiters

These bloodsuckers have grown rich on the want suffered by the people in the war; they have raked in thousands and hundreds of thousands of rubles by screwing up the prices of grain and other products. These spiders have grown fat at the expense of the peasants who have been ruined by the war, at the expense of the hungry workers. These leeches sucked the blood of the toilers and grew richer as the workers in the cities and factories starved. These vampires have been gathering and are gathering the landed estates into their hands; they keep on enslaving the poor peasants.

Ruthless war must be waged on these kulaks! Death to them! Hatred and contempt for the parties which defend them – the Right Socialist Revolutionaries, the Mensheviks and the present-day Left Social Revolutionaries! The workers must crush with an iron hand the revolts of the kulaks who are forming an alliance with foreign capitalists against the toilers of their own country. (Lenin, *Selected Works*, v.8, 130-131)

Lenin called for aggressive action against the kulaks. His faithful follower, Stalin, quoting Lenin verbatim and employing the exact same language would later answer the call (Stalin, *Leninism, Selected Writings*, 191). According to Lenin, of the fifteen million peasant households in Russia, about two million were kulak, that is, rich peasants. Thus, going after them would be a big job. Hence, when Stalin ordered the collectivization of the farms, it took on aspects of a military operation. Historian Robert Conquest writes, "In the early 1930s, the collectivization campaign had turned Ukraine, more than anywhere else, into a

battlefield between the Party and the population, and Party solidarity was the decisive criterion” (Conquest, 1968, 229). Anyone who opposed the party was considered a traitor. It was warfare, class warfare, the proletariat versus the bourgeoisie. Whether Stalin had cause to conduct this campaign is debatable; whether he deserves to be labeled a monster is debatable too; that he believed that he was doing what was right is beyond doubt.

Perhaps the most notorious example of Stalin’s unbridled use of power occurred during the so-called great purge of 1936-1939. In 1934, Serge Kirov, the head of the Communist organization in Leningrad and a potential rival to Stalin was murdered (Conquest, 1989, 7-9). The exact circumstances surrounding the murder were never established. Trotsky believed that Kirov’s death was a political assassination and that Stalin was responsible (Conquest, 1989, 71). Nevertheless, Stalin used Kirov’s murder as a pretext for launching a purge against “terrorists” and “Troskyites” and in effect to “clean house” and further consolidate his power. This meant having to “exterminate” the communist opposition (Rogovin, 1998, 143). Bolsheviks who had opposed Stalin in the past were arrested, tried, convicted; the NKVD (*Narodnyy Komissariat Vnutrennikh Del* – the People’s Commissariat for Internal Affairs, i.e., Stalin’s security organization) was directed to carry out death sentences (Conquest, 1989, 37). At least one million persons died as a result of the excesses perpetrated by Stalin and his security police. Even the military did not escape. In 1937, Stalin personally accused six major political leaders, including Leon Trotsky (who was in exile), and seven senior military generals of being part of “a military-political conspiracy against the

Soviet regime, instigated and financed by the German fascists” and directly accused ten of them of being German spies (Rogovin, 1998, 432-433). Trotsky condemned the accusations as “absurd” and “shameful,” and the subsequent executions of the accused as “murder” (Rogovin, 1998, 445).

According to Khrushchev, such accusations were trumped up. Many others spent ten to fifteen years in prison for nothing (Khrushchev, 1970, 348).

At times, Stalinist rhetoric devolved into sheer hysteria. During the third Moscow show trial against Nikolai Bukharin (“the favorite of the party”) and the “bloc of Rightists and Trotskyites,” Soviet prosecutor and Stalin mouthpiece Andrei Vyshinsky warned that “the Trotskyite hypocrites must be liquidated.” He called the defendants “underground spies,” and “a fifth column, a Ku Klux Klan.” Vyshinsky further declared that “the mask of treason has been torn from their faces” and that “the masses demand only one thing – to stamp out this accursed vermin” (MST, video). These inflammatory words were not mere hyperbole or theatrics; they were followed by action. To be accused of treason meant death.

Estimates of the number of people who died during the great purge vary. According to declassified Soviet archives, during 1937 and 1938 the police detained 1,548,366 people, of whom 681,692 were shot (Pipes, 2003, 67). Robert Conquest believes that the number of persons who died in the camps totaled about 3 million (Conquest, 1990, 485). Historian Michael Ellman claims that the number of deaths for those years ranged from 950,000 to 1.2 million (Ellman, 2002, 1162). Stalin personally ordered the execution of approximately

40,000 persons, 90 percent of whom were confirmed to have been shot (Ellman, 2007, 676).

The statistics attest to the brutal nature of the Stalin regime. Yet, before deciding whether to close the book on Stalin and conclude that he was a fiend, we must first consider certain additional facts. First, Lenin warned that the Soviet republic was surrounded by enemies, both external and internal. This was not an idea that originated with Stalin. Second, when Lenin issued that warning, in 1918, it was not mere hyperbole: the threat was real; the Soviet regime was actually under attack, by enemies both domestic and foreign. Stalin was alive at the time. Third, as already shown, Lenin had warned of the threat to party unity posed by left and right deviationists and Mensheviks. Party factionalism was an idea not fabricated by Stalin. Fourth, Lenin ordered that the Soviet Union defend itself against spies. The May 31, 1919 edition of *Pravda* published this directive signed by Lenin: “Death to spies! All class conscious workers and peasants must rise up in defense of the Soviet power and must fight the spies and Whiteguard traitors.” (The White Guards were fighters who opposed the Bolsheviks). This was *Lenin’s* directive, not *Stalin’s*. Fifth, to prevent the party from becoming corrupted by petty-bourgeois and petty-bourgeois-anarchist elements, Lenin demanded that the party be purged. Lenin also ordered that it “be purged of rascals, bureaucrats, dishonest or wavering Communists, and of Mensheviks who have repainted their ‘façade’ but who have remained Mensheviks at heart.” The need to purge the party, to keep it ideologically pure, was thus also an idea

not originated by Stalin. Sixth, on September 24, 1927, Leon Trotsky made his so-called Clemenceau statement in which he said that in the event of an emergency he would strive to achieve a change in government. Trotsky's statement concluded with these words:

If I were threatened by an enemy and my eyes were blindfolded or my hand tied to my shoulder, I would say that the chief danger was – not the enemy, but the handicaps restricting my movements. It is a lie that the danger or even war itself excludes the self-acting of the party, which discusses and decides all questions and which directs and checks all its organs from top to bottom. If as a result of our mistakes the enemy did appear within 80 kilometers of Moscow, then the self-action of the party would have to be ten times greater than under any other conditions. But the task right now is not to permit such a situation, but to prevent it. This can be realized only by a living party, self-acting and completely alive. The first thing that follows from this is that there must be a change in the party régime (Trotsky, 1927, 24-26)

This statement gave Stalin a credible pretext to treat Trotsky and others as traitors. These facts in no way mitigate the havoc, hardship and suffering caused by the purge, or of Stalin's responsibility as chief perpetrator, but are presented to place Stalin's actions in an historical context.

But if Stalin seems cold-blooded, he was operating in a political culture which placed no value on mercy. To show mercy was ideologically incorrect. It meant giving the enemies of the people a chance, and in class warfare, the "final struggle" as Lenin expressed it, that was unthinkable. Lenin framed the nature of the struggle in the starkest language:

Doubt is out of the question. The kulaks are rabid foes of the Soviet government. Either the kulaks massacre vast numbers of workers or the workers ruthlessly

suppress the uprisings of the predatory kulak minority of the people against the government of the toilers. There can be no middle course. Peace is out of the question; even if they quarreled, the kulak can easily come to terms with the landlord, the tsar and the priest, but with the working class, *never*. (Lenin, *Selected Works*, 28).

To Lenin, concepts such as liberty and the rights of man were a bourgeois sham, ridiculed by Marx himself (Lenin, 1951, 232). Historian Waldemar Gurian writes, “As its history and distinctive character prove, the Bolshevik state is an absolutist state guided solely by considerations of political expediency, and its determination to maintain its authority” (Gurian, 1932, 115). Expediency, not morality, driven by historical imperatives was the motivating principle behind Bolshevik actions, and Stalin, as a Bolshevik and follower of Lenin, acted accordingly.

Hitler too used coercive measures to settle political differences and consolidate his power. There are three instances when he resorted to such a tactic. The first was after the Reichstag fire incident. On Feb, 27, 1933 an arsonist destroyed the Reichstag. Hitler used this as a pretext to warn Reich President Paul von Hindenburg of a Communist takeover. At Hitler’s request, the president signed the so-called Reichstag Fire Decree that suspended civil liberties. Armed with this decree, Hitler went after his political enemies. Over 3,000 persons were arrested, including opposing Communists and Social Democrats. With the left opposition under arrest and in disarray and parliamentary government all but destroyed, a truncated Reichstag granted Hitler the authority to rule by decree. Soon after, Hitler became dictator (FRFEA, online).

The second episode occurred during an event subsequently known as “The Nights of the Long Knives.” Beginning on June 30, 1934, over a two-day period SS and Gestapo agents throughout Germany arrested and murdered, on Hitler’s order, hundreds of people who Hitler perceived were obstacles to achieving absolute power. These opponents included Hitler’s political rival for party leadership Gregor Strasser, former Chancellor General Kurt Von Schleicher, and Ernst Rohm, commander of the 3-million-man Sturm Abteilung or SA, the Nazi Party’s private paramilitary army. The role of the SA was to intimidate and crush political opponents. Under pressure to bring the SA under control or lose the support of the Army, Hitler decided to eliminate Rohm, who had fought alongside Hitler on the streets. The number of murdered in the purge is not known, although it is estimated that it may have exceeded one-thousand. Regarding Hitler’s role in the assassinations, historian Paul R. Maracin says: “In this whole episode we see a mass murderer at work.” (TNLK, video).

Ten years later, Hitler again resorted to political terror, this time in the aftermath of a failed assassination attempt against him by a group of army officers who were plotting to stage a coup, known as “Operation Valkyrie” (Fest, 1975, 709). On July 20, 1944, during one of Hitler’s military conferences, one of the conspirators, an army colonel, placed a bomb next to Hitler. The bomb exploded, killing four, but Hitler survived with minimal injuries. The plot failed and Hitler vowed retribution. In a speech broadcast to the German nation Hitler warned, “This time we shall settle accounts with them in a manner to which we

National Socialists are accustomed” (Shirer, 1960, 1069). Hitler ordered that the perpetrators be expelled from the military, denied the right to court-martial, which meant no due process, and face the People’s Court. Hitler demanded, “They must hang at once without the slightest mercy” (TPKAH, video; Fest, 1975, 711).

In response to Hitler’s directive, the Gestapo arrested 7,000 persons, including the families of the principal conspirators. Pursuant to Hitler’s order, those implicated in the plot were put on trial before the People’s Court under the jurisdiction of Nazi judge Roland Freisler, who Hitler called “our Vyshinsky” (Fest, 1975, 711). In the court, the accused were publicly excoriated and humiliated before being sentenced to death. They were then executed with great cruelty. This reportedly were filmed and shown to Hitler. The numbers believed executed vary. Alan Bullock puts the figure at 200 (Bullock, 1971, 844). According to William L. Shirer the total was 4,980. Hitler later said that at last he understood why Stalin had purged the Red Army years before (Bullock, 1971, 846; Fest, 1994, *passim*).

Stalin personally ordered mass deportations for reasons of security (Ellman, 2002, 676). Stalin believed that “bourgeois influences” used nationalist agitation as a cover in order to penetrate state organizations (Stalin, *Leninism*, 1942, 168-169). Nationalism, Stalin asserted, constituted a deviation from the policy of the Communist Party on the national question, was contrary to the teachings of Marx and Lenin, and therefore had to be fought (Stalin, *National Question*, 1942, 203-216).

Ethnic groups who had demonstrated anti-socialist tendencies, i.e., resistance to Bolshevik rule, and therefore deemed untrustworthy were subjected to forced relocation. This program was accelerated during World War II as German forces occupied vast areas of the western Soviet Union. It is estimated that between 1941 and 1949 nearly 3.3 million persons were deported to Siberia and the Central Asian republics (Boobbyer, 2000, 129-130). Ethnic groups deported included Poles (in 1939–1941 and 1944–1945), Romanians (1941 and 1944–1953), Lithuanians, Latvians, Estonians (1941 and 1945–1949), Volga Germans (1941–1945), Ingrian Finns (1929–1931 and 1935–1939), Finnish people in Karelia (1940–1941, 1944), Crimean Tatars, Crimean Greeks (1944), Caucasus Greeks (1949-50), Kalmyks, Balkars, Karachays, Meskhetian Turks, Karapapaks, Far East Koreans (1937), Chechens and Ingushs (1944) (Pohl, 1999, 9 ff, 139-141). The number of deaths resulting from these forced transfers is unknown. One estimate puts the figure at 500,000 deaths, another at 43 percent of the total number resettled. These population shifts permanently altered the demographic landscape of the Soviet Union. Thus by 1989, Latvians comprised only 52 percent of their own country; in Estonia the figure was 62 percent. Later, after Stalin's death, Nikita Khrushchev condemned these forced deportations as a violation of Leninist principles, but only when de-Stalinization was already in effect (Khrushchev, 1970, 596).

Stalin was neither the first to order mass deportations nor the last. After World War One, Turkey had expelled over 1,000,000 Greeks (de Zayas, 1989, 12). In October 1945, Eduard Benes, Prime Minister of Czechoslovakia, declared his

government's intention to "rid" the state of its 3,000,000 Sudeten Germans (de Zayas, 1989, 33). In the 1830s the United States had ordered the forced relocation of thousands of Native Americans from Georgia and Florida to a region that later became Oklahoma (Wilkins, 1986, *passim*). During World War Two the United States ordered the forced internment of thousands of Japanese-Americans (Weiss, 2011, *passim*). In the aftermath of the war, approximately 15,000,000 Germans were expelled from Poland and other regions of Eastern Europe (de Zayas, 1989, 89). At the Potsdam Conference, the United States and Great Britain, albeit with reservations, agreed to these postwar expulsions (de Zayas, 1989, 88). Churchill repeatedly approved in principle of this transfer (de Zayas, 1989, 92).

Hitler also ordered forced relocations of entire populations, but for different reasons. Whereas Stalin sought to isolate those elements he believed posed a threat to the security of the state, Hitler was driven by other concerns: the need for more labor to continue the war effort and the need to make good on his vow to rid the world of Jews. Estimates of the number of foreign civilian workers brought into Germany during the war vary. According to one, 7.6 million foreign civilian laborers and POWs were working in the German economy by mid-August 1944. According to another, the figure was 10 to 15 million. Only a small fraction of the foreign labor force worked voluntarily. Working conditions varied, depending on the worker's country of origin and ethnic background. For those at the bottom of the Nazi racial hierarchy – Poles, Russians, and especially Jews – working conditions were abominable. Thousands of Poles and Russians died of

malnutrition, disease and violence; Jews were targeted for extermination (Spoerer and Fleischhacker, 2002, 171).

Concomitant with the forced labor program was Hitler's main program: the plan to exterminate the Jews. Its implementation became known as the Holocaust. In every country occupied by Germany, Jews, at the instigation of the German occupiers, were rounded up by force and shipped to specially designated locations where those deemed unfit to work were systematically murdered, mostly by gassing. The transporting of the Jews was coordinated by a department in the SS, IV B 4, headed by Adolf Eichmann (Eichmann, 1983, 64 ff). Jews not transported were killed near their homes by special police units known euphemistically as *Einsatzgruppen*, a German word meaning "one task units," the intended action being the chasing down, rounding up and killing of Jews (Lipstadt, 1993, 9, 55, ff).

It is estimated that almost 6 million Jews were murdered during the Holocaust (Eichmann, 1983, 110; Laqueur, 2001, 145; Schoenberger, 2004, 234). The intensity of the suffering inflicted and the scope of the damage incurred are incalculable. Throughout German-occupied Europe entire Jewish communities were obliterated, and Jewish demographics in Europe permanently altered. Jewish houses of worship were defiled and destroyed, Jewish artwork was looted, Jewish property was expropriated, and Jews were kicked, beaten, robbed and raped. Infants and pregnant women were murdered. Although other groups were targeted by Hitler, it was the Jews alone who were earmarked euphemistically for *Sonderbehandlung*, a German word meaning "special handling" and a Nazi code

word for death (Eichmann, 1993, 108; Lipstadt, 1993, 154-155; van Pelt, 2002, 209, 217, 331, 332). In 1960 Adolf Eichmann confirmed that the term “Final Solution” (*Endlösung* in German) meant the physical extermination of the Jews (Eichmann, 1983, 124).

In the process of comparing Hitler and Stalin, a parallel emerges. Both men employed a specific nemesis, for Hitler it was “the Jew” and for Stalin, “anti-Soviet element,” in particular Trotskyism. The importance of the nemesis as a tool for maintaining power cannot be overstated. It provided the dictator with a convenient rationale for imposing the harshest repressive measures. The nemesis was used as a foil with which to deflect any potential opposition away from the dictator and thereby bolster the regime’s credibility. Hence, for Stalin, the label “Trotskyite” meant anyone who was threatening to split the party and act as a front for counter-revolutionary elements, and for Hitler the term “Jew” meant a foreign racial element whose presence was threatening the “natural order” of the world (Stalin, *Works*, v.10, 192-193; Hitler, *Table Talks*, 237-238). In both cases, to maintain the integrity of the regime the threat had to be eliminated, which meant taking radical action.

Although the violence perpetrated by Hitler and Stalin was remarkable in terms of its scope and sheer brutality, their actions were not without historical precedent. From the eradication of Carthage in 146 B.C. (Bagnall, 2002, 72-75) to the destruction of the Aztec Empire in the sixteenth century (Wood, 2000, 15-105), there has been some propensity for human beings to perpetrate massive acts of genocidal violence in the name of some idea, be it ideological, religious or

commercial, or a combination of all three, and all of which predate Hitler and Stalin.

However, what made Hitler and Stalin unique was the manner by which their violence was organized. Terror was converted into an industrial process which took rational thinking beings by the millions and transformed them into nameless objects to be exploited and discarded. The process occurred in concentration camps and gulags, factories where the dehumanization process took place, operated by a bureaucracy whose power was absolute and lethal (Conquest, *The Great Terror*, 1990, 264-282). In that respect, both Hitler and Stalin can claim full credit both as innovators and enablers.

Yet, deciding which dictator was worse is an exercise that defies a definitive answer. The record of brutality compiled by both regimes alone militates against any meaningful attempt to compare the two. Hitler's rhetoric and public posturing was much more emotionally charged, more outlandish, and far more hysterical in content than anything Stalin ever said, at least publicly, and so on that basis alone Hitler comes off as being more vociferous. No matter how egregious the Stalinist excesses, Stalin's political posturing, compared to Hitler's, is flat. While Soviet rhetoric is crammed with all kinds of vitriolic against the perceived enemies of the working class, there is no Soviet equivalent of a Nazi policy statement declaring any group as biologically inferior. But such a differentiation is dispositive in deciding which program was worse; rhetoric notwithstanding, both pursued policies which yielded results that were catastrophic. Which catastrophe was worse, the Nazi or the Soviet's, is a

question that cannot be answered with finality or objectivity. The subject is too emotionally charged.

Both Hitler and Stalin pursued policies that led to war, destruction and death on an unprecedented scale. However, historian Stephen Wheatcroft asserts that “the Stalinist regime may have caused the premature death of more people than Hitler’s regime,” but that it did not “purposefully” kill more people (Wheatcroft, 1996, 1323). Wheatcroft’s assertion is debatable. Under Stalin people were purposefully killed. In the totalitarian environment, it was either cooperation or liquidation, there was no middle ground. Thus, those who did not cooperate were targeted for punitive action, facilitated by a judicial system in which summary executions were legal. The Stalinist purges support that conclusion.

Although capable of extraordinarily acts of brutality, Hitler’s political violence, as differentiated from his racial violence, which was tied into a broader policy of genocide, was incremental. Hitler did not have to deal with party factionalism; he was the Nazi party. Once opposition was eliminated and his power secured, Hitler continued pursuing his other programs. But for Stalin, politics and policy were inseparable. Hence, the need for constant vigilance to preserve his dominance in a one-party state became an ongoing preoccupation which colored the nature of his entire regime. Everywhere and in everything Stalin saw “enemies,” “two-facers” and “spies” (Khrushchev, 1970, 585). He distrusted his own people; Hitler did not. For Hitler, the German people were his racial comrades (Fest, 1975, 710). For Stalin, even group loyalty smacked of nationalism and was reactionary and therefore a threat.

Stalin believed that radical methods were justified. On that point he did not mince words. Everything he did – the deportations, the purges, the show trials – was motivated by the need to “break the resistance of the adversaries of that class [i.e., the proletariat].” (Stalin, *Leninism*, 1942, 115). Stalin asserted that rule of the proletariat was “unrestricted by law” and “based upon force” (Stalinism, *Leninism*, 115). For Stalin, talk of “universal” equality, “pure” democracy, “complete” democracy was “bourgeois verbiage” (Stalinism, *Leninism*, 1942, 115). Regarding the purges, Stalin asserted that purging the party was necessary to eliminate “the foulness of bureaucracy” and thereby sharpen it and improve its effectiveness as the “guiding force” for “all the organizations of the working class” (Stalin, *Leninism*, 1942, 90). This required constant vigilance. Thus, anyone could be labeled an adversary of the proletariat, bureaucratic slacker or a “Trotskyite” and be arrested and executed, which is what happened – by the millions – all in the name of an ideology which demanded absolute political conformity. By expressing a political opinion that differed from Stalin’s, a person could be arrested and summarily executed, purely on ideological grounds.

Yet these facts alone cannot serve as the basis for drawing comparisons. Political scientist Frederic Nicholson writes, “Stalinism was not a new phenomenon but rather a reconfirmation of its Bolshevik-Marxist heritage” (Nicholson, 1983, 45). Nicholson also describes Stalin as “brutal,” “a diabolical power hungry intriguer,” and someone with a “lack of doctrine and pragmatic orientation” (Nicholson, 1983, 45, 60, 61). Stalin was brutal. The record supports that conclusion. Being power hungry implies being obsessed and therefore being

out of control, which suggests the presence of a mental disorder. This is speculative. That Stalin was an intriguer is established by the facts. He engaged in secret behind-the-scene political maneuvering to gain and keep power. Nevertheless, as to his principles and goals, from that he never wavered. Thus, Nicholson's comments provide some basis for forming an opinion as to Stalin's character, but for the most part are inconclusive.

While Stalin was considered cruel and repressive to some (Khrushchev, 1970, 566), in Germany Hitler was genuinely loved. Unlike Stalin, who was feared by his own entourage and even by ordinary conscripts in the army (Service, 332, 337, 344), Hitler's seizure of power threw the majority of Germans "into a peculiarly hysterical state compounded of enthusiasm, incredulity and devotion" (Fest, 1975, 374). The German people welcomed Hitler with joy. For the first time since the days of the Kaiser, a majority of the German people could identify with their government (Fest, 1975, 443). Hitler did not create a national revolution, he led a national revolution. Hitler represented many German values (IMAH, video).

Hitler and the German people resonated with each other. Hitler described this relationship as such: "I feel for you and you feel for me." Germans worshipped Hitler as the savior, the redeemer from unbearable poverty and suffering (HiC, film – online). Former German Chancellor Franz von Papen talked about the "genius of the chancellor [Hitler]" (Fest, 1975, 444). British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden found Hitler to be controlled and friendly (Fest, 1975, 443). Hitler was received as a hero and savior in Austria and the Sudetenland (Fest, 1975, 549, 567). Throughout the war, volunteers from almost every nation in

Europe and elsewhere served in Hitler's armies (Estes, 2003, *passim*). The allied armies in 1945 were not greeted by throngs of Germans giving thanks for their liberation (as many Ukrainians greeted the invading German army) and in the period immediately after the war the German people were forced to come to terms with the consequences of their "collective guilt" (TFTTR, video). Even after the July 20, 1944 assassination attempt, Hitler continued to command wide popular devotion (Fest, 1975, 714).

In contrast to the genuine adoration of German people for Hitler were the pleas of the Soviet nationals detained in the West, many of whom had been prisoners of war and forced laborers, who desperately resisted repatriation to the Soviet Union. Although some had collaborated with the Nazis and thus were traitors, most feared return to the Soviet Union because they were members of oppressed classes who had been targeted by the regime (Elliot, 1982, 257-258). For many of them, return was tantamount to being sentenced to death (Wyman, 1998, 81). After the war, the number of Soviet nationals outside of the USSR was about five and one-half-million persons (Elliot, 1982, 257). For Hitler, every German was part of the *Volk*; for Stalin every Soviet citizen exposed to Western influence was a potential enemy.

Conclusion

In conclusion, based on the evidence, one fact emerges: under both Hitler and Stalin all legal safeguards meant to protect an individual from the arbitrary application of power by government were ignored, circumvented or abolished,

leaving every person vulnerable to the kinds of abuses associated with state-sponsored terror. By this measure, the moral turpitude of the Hitler and Stalin regimes, when measured against the principles contained in the Bill of Rights, can be rated dead even. Whether their victims died in a Nazi concentration camp somewhere in Poland or in a Soviet detention center in eastern Siberia, the cause of death could be directly attributed to those in power who capriciously set policy, issued orders, and demanded results. And it was the results that counted.

To label Hitler and Stalin as “mental cases” would be glib. Attempts have been made to conduct retrospective psychological studies of to detect the presence of psychopathology that could account for their behavior. These studies are based on information derived without benefit of direct examination of the subject. Dr. Norbert Bromberg found that Hitler had a narcissistic personality with an underlying borderline personality structure (Bromberg, 1983, 22-23). Dr. G. M. Gilbert, the prison psychologist for the defendants at the International Military Tribunal in Nuremberg, called Hitler a paranoid psychopath (Gilbert, 1979, 283). Clinical Research Coordinator Marina Stal concluded that Stalin had a paranoid personality disorder (Stal, 2013, 4). Historian David Reynolds asserts that Stalin had a mind that was “savage, vindictive, often paranoid” (SMS, video). As the above mentioned claims are offered without any clinical examination of the subjects, their conclusions must be treated as highly speculative. There is no concrete evidence from any reliable clinical source proving that either Hitler or Stalin was psychologically abnormal. Dr. Theodor Morell, Hitler’s personal

physician, recorded that Hitler exhibited no phobias, obsessions, hallucinations, illusions or paranoid trends and that Hitler was neurologically healthy (Morell, 1983, 35-37). According to historians Roy and Zhores Medvedev, Stalin suffered from recurrent muscle pain in his hands and feet; in 1927 he was given a thorough physical check-up which otherwise yielded normal results (Medvedev, 2004, 13).

That Hitler and Stalin operated according to a set of values that differed from mainstream democratic values is a given; that both pursued political programs that victimized millions of people is a given too; but to then conclude that their actions is evidence of mental illness is clinically unsupportable and violates notions of cultural relativism (which holds that there are no universal standards to measure cultures (Donnelly, 1984, 400)), and can be construed as an abuse of medical science in pursuit of a political agenda, in this case to discredit Nazism and Communism. This is not to suggest that retrospective psychological studies are not without value; rather, for the reasons already discussed, their conclusions cannot be considered as definitive nor can they be used as the basis for making comparisons. Ultimately, when comparing Hitler and Stalin, we must rely on individual judgment.

In judging both men, we must take into consideration not only the times and cultural influences that shaped them, but also those that shape all of us. We all have been subjected to a lifetime of social conditioning that has shaped our thoughts. Mass media, such as movies and television (immensely important in the lives of most people) has played an enormous. This social conditioning

renders us incapable of considering any question with absolute objectivity.

Because of biases which are ingrained in our minds, cognitive awareness of bias does not dispel bias. For whatever reason, be it political or social, this memory of Hitler and Stalin has been, and continues to be, shaped by the dozens of movies dealing with them and their respective political systems. Due to all of this: when comparing Hitler and Stalin and considering their place in history, the influence of bias cannot be avoided. Therefore, the question of who was worse, Hitler or Stalin, cannot be studied with full objectivity. The best we can do is to compile evidence as fairly and as comprehensively as possible and reduce the influence of bias to a minimum.

With that understanding, what does the evidence say about Hitler and Stalin? First, each believed that he was justified in ordering the deaths of others as a matter of political necessity. What would seem cruel to many was to them not only reasonable but necessary. That was a function of the political culture in which they operated. And when setting the rules, they were guided by principles they had learned from others. Second, as leaders of totalitarian systems, they believed that society was a collective and that the individual was subordinate to the good of the group as determined by the leader. To oppose the leader was to threaten the cohesion of the group, which in a society that rejected democratic values and demanded conformity was itself considered immoral. Third, both relied heavily on rationalizations to justify their actions, thereby obscuring the inner workings of their minds and hiding what were perhaps their true motivations. Fourth, they were products of their times. Men make their times but

the times also make men. They were the products of history – free choice – yes – but also shaped by powerful historical forces.

The Ukrainian famine of 1932-33 and the collectivization of agriculture in the Ukraine, alluded to in this paper, was not examined in more detail because it has been sometimes claimed that the horrendous loss of life was due at least in part to faulty policy decisions, and not exclusively to repressive measures targeting the local population (although the latter did play an important part). Millions died as a result of Stalin's agricultural policy; the exact total is unknown, and estimates range from between 4 million to 10 million (*Holodomor*, online; Wheatcroft, 1320, Rummel, 104). Some historians claim these deaths constituted genocide (Ellman, 2007).

Also not examined in more detail was the Nazi program that targeted children for murder. That differentiated Hitler from Stalin. Hitler wanted to eliminate an entire "race." This naturally meant killing children, too. Now, under Stalin, the children of those accused of crimes were officially branded relatives of enemies of the people. And that was a heavy burden indeed. Of course, many children died during collectivization. Then, and those who enforced collectivization knew this would happen, and was happening – and they did nothing about it. But Stalin did not deliberately target children for extermination. That was a policy unique to the Nazis, who rationalized their actions on racial grounds. This doomed the Jews for destruction.

Jews in Nazi occupied Europe thought that if they were compliant with Nazi directives, they could "ride out the storm". Historian Michael Burleigh writes,

"Many Jews no doubt felt that they had seen all this before" (Burleigh, 2000, 286). This line of thinking seemed logical at the time. They were, after all, living in Europe, where, it was believed, barbarism on the scope proposed by Hitler had become a thing of the past. This added to the sense of disbelief that their lives were actually in danger. Burleigh writes, "Given the difficulties people in liberal democracies had in comprehending that one could single out and persecute a group of people simply by virtue of membership of that group, it is unsurprising that Jewish people could not grasp the enormity of what was happening" (Burleigh, 2000, 286). Historian Jost Dulffler writes, "Only a few realized that there was no longer any place for Jews in Germany" (Dulffler, 1996, 141). In fact, it soon became apparent that there was no longer any place for Jews anywhere in Europe, certainly not while Hitler was still in power.

At first the Jews were stunned. Shocked by the sheer ferocity of the Nazi onslaught, there was virtually nothing they could do to defend themselves. Isolated, vulnerable, and comprising only a small minority of the total population in Europe (In Germany, Jews comprised less than one percent of the population), for many Jews, their only defense was to deny what Hitler's actions implied. To admit the truth, that they were doomed, was a prospect too painful to contemplate. Some fled, that is, if they were fortunate enough to know someone willing to take them in. But for most, they were trapped. Where could they go? Powerful nations had succumbed to Hitler's fury. Other nations remained neutral and did not want to get involved, and other nations, with regimes similarly

ill-disposed toward Jews, were prepared to follow Hitler's lead in his campaign to make Europe *Judenfrei*.

Stalin too was hostile to the Jews, who he believed "posed a mortal danger to his regime" (Payne, 1965, 666). However, his hostility was driven by politics, not race, which was a fundamental difference between him and Hitler. While it is true that some of Stalin's actions had serious anti-Semitic overtones, such as the so-called Doctors' Plot and his consideration of a plan to purge all the Jews (and other ethnic groups as well) from the Soviet Union and transport them to the remote northern regions of Siberia where they could die of cold and starvation (Payne, 1965, 666-667), there is no evidence that Stalin targeted Jews exclusively based on race. That would have meant having to persecute the wives and relatives of many of his closest cronies, several of whom were married to Jewish women or were related to Jews (Payne, 1965, 666). Not that such familial consideration alone would have had a moderating effect on Stalin. But it shows that despite his personal disdain for Jews, he allowed his own inner circle to associate with them.

One other point when comparing Hitler and Stalin: Although both dictators left a legacy of death and destruction unprecedented in the annals of history, it seems that Hitler is regarded with greater hatred. This is the case because nobody wants a Third Reich to happen again. The idea of such a nihilistic regime re-emerging is simply too outrageous and offensive for most people to accept. The same, however, cannot be said for the Soviet Union. Despite the coarseness and brutality of the Soviet system, founded on an ideology that today is

discredited and rejected by most of the world, it still represents for some a noble attempt to achieve a just society. Yet, that attempt was driven by a utopian vision of the world that was not only a fantasy but was used as the pretext for committing some of the vilest crimes in history. When the Bolsheviks executed Czar Nicholas II on July 17, 1918, on Lenin's order, that act could be rationalized on political grounds (Pipes, 1994, 9n). But when they also slaughtered his wife and five children, that was an act of mass murder motivated by hatred for their helpless prisoners (Moorhead, 1984, 284). After the victims were shot and bayoneted, their corpses were mutilated, burned and dumped into the bottom of a mine shaft (Lincoln, 1989, 151-155). This wanton act of butchery established a precedent for savagery that both Stalin and Hitler would build upon with lethal results.

It is true that other despots (Mao Tse-tung, Pol Pot and Idi Amin, just to name a few) have been implicated in acts of mass murder on a scale or at a rate that approximated that of the Nazis and Bolsheviks, but it was Hitler and Stalin who set the standard of depravity against which the brutality of other dictators have been measured. What made the murderous schemes of Hitler and Stalin all the more sinister and chilling is that both believed that what they were doing was not only necessary and inevitable but served a positive good. For them, obliterating entire peoples or classes was a perfectly valid way, indeed, the only valid way, to ensure success of their programs, no matter how grotesque their methods or plans. That Stalin was, for a while, an ally of the United States during

the war does not negate the fact that for two years prior he was Hitler's willing ally, and aided and abetted the latter in executing his aggressive designs. By providing Hitler cover from the East, Stalin enabled Hitler to invade Poland and then concentrate his forces against the West, with devastating results. It was only after Hitler betrayed Stalin and unleashed his fury against the Soviet Union that the Soviet leader belatedly came to his senses regarding the threat posed by his former ally. But by then the damage was done, the Soviet Union was being methodically battered, burned, and decimated by hordes of Nazis and their allies, all of which forced Stalin to ally himself with the very same countries that he had hoped Hitler would destroy. The critical role played by the Soviet Union in defeating Hitler is legendary. But for the Soviet Union, victory came at a huge price: twenty million people killed. Yet this carnage might have been avoided if Stalin had adopted a realistic attitude toward Hitler (Conquest, 1990, 453).

The wanton deceitfulness shown by Hitler and Stalin toward each other add further import to the question of who was worse, Hitler or Stalin. Both have records that are so violent as to render any attempt at comparison academic. Yet, what both of them did was far from academic – it was real and it happened. That both amassed huge numbers of victims is a fact. The numbers speak for themselves and require no further elaboration. But more germane is another fact: that every victim of Nazi or Soviet persecution was an actual human being, who was once alive, had goals, wishes, and desires, and was part of a family and a community, and did not deserve to die. Nonetheless their lives were snuffed out for reasons that are well-documented but entirely unsatisfactory. The deaths

caused by Hitler or Stalin were not only tragic and criminal but an affront to humanity. Whether one was shot by Bolsheviks because he was a kulak or gassed by Nazis because he was a Jew, the result was the same. For the victims, the statistics did not matter.

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GtS – *Glory to Stalin*. youtube.com, n.d. – online

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IMAH – *Inside the Mind of Adolf Hitler*. Dir. David Stewart. Perf. Michael Praed (narrator). Discovery Channel, 2005. youtube.com – online

MST – “Footage from the infamous Moscow show trial.” youtube.com. nd. – online

SMS – *1941, Stalin, the Man of Steel*. BBC. youtube.com - online

TFTTR – *The Fall of the Third Reich*. youtube.com, n.d. – onlinedocumentary

TNLK – *The Night of the Long Knives*. Dir. Lance Miccio and Grant Slawson. Perf. Greg Stebner (narrator). Prod.: Lou Reda Productions, 2005. youtube.com – online

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Carl Peters. Dir. Herbert Selpin. Perf. Hanns Albers, Karl Dannermann, Fritz Odemar, and Erika von Thellmann. Bavaria Films, 1941

Casablanca. Dir. Michael Curtiz. Perf. Humphrey Bogart, Ingrid Bergman, Claude Rains, and Dooley Wilson. Warner Brothers, 1942

Commandos Strike at Dawn. Dir. John Farrow. Perf. Paul Muni, Anna Lee, Lillian Gish, and Cedric Hardwicke. Columbia Pictures, 1942

Confessions of a Nazi Spy. Dir. Anatole Litvak. Perf. Edward G. Robinson, Francis Lederer, George Sanders, and Paul Lukas. Warner Brothers, 1939

Counter Attack. Dir. Zoltan Korda. Perf. Paul Muni, Marguerite Chapman, Larry Parks, and George Macready. Columbia Pictures, 1945

Das Boot (The Boat). Dir. Wolfgang Petersen. Perf. Jurgen Prochnow, Herbert Grönemeyer, Hubertus Bengsch, and Klaus Wennemann. Columbia Pictures, 1981

Days of Glory. Dir. Jacques Tournier. Perf. Gregory Peck, Tamara Toumanova, Alan Reed, and Maria Palmer. RKO Pictures, 1944

Der Ewige Jude (The Eternal Jew). Dir. Fritz Hippler; Perf. Curt Bois, Charlie Chaplin, Albert Einstein, and Peter Lorre. Deutsche Filmherstellungs-und-Verwertungs-GmbH, Berlin (DFG), 1940

Der Fuehrer's Face. Dir. Jack Kinney. Perf. Billy Bletcher, Clarence Nash (voices). RKO Pictures, Walt Disney Productions, 1942

Desperate Journey. Dir. Raoul Walsh. Perf. Errol Flynn, Ronald Reagan, Nancy Coleman, and Raymond Massey. Warner Brothers, 1942

Die Deutsche Wochenschau. Perf. Harry Giese (narrator). Universum Film (UFA), 1940-1945

Die Rothschilds (The Rothschilds). Dir. Erich Waschneck. Perf. Erich Ponto, Carl Kuhlmann, Albert Lippert, and Ludwig Linkmann. Universum Film (UFA), 1940

Doctor Zhivago. Dir. David Lean. Perf. Omar Sharif, Julie Christie, Geraldine Chaplin, and Rod Steiger. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1966

Downfall (Der Untergang). Dir. Oliver Hirschbiegel. Perf. Bruno Ganz, Alexandra Maria Lara, Ulrich Matthes, and Corinna Harfouch. Constantin Film, 2004

Edge of Darkness. Dir. Lewis Milestone. Perf. Errol Flynn, Ann Sheridan, Walter Huston, and Nancy Coleman. Warner Brothers, 1943

Education for Death: The Making of the Nazi. Dir. Clyde Geronimo. Perf. Adolf Hitler and Art Smith (voices). RKO Pictures, Walt Disney Productions, 1943

El Cid. Dir. Anthony Mann. Perf. Charlton Heston, Sophia Loren, Raf Vallone, and Genevieve Page. Allied Artists, 1961

Foreign Correspondent. Dir., Alfred Hitchcock. Perf. Joel McCrea, Laraine Day, Herbert Marshall, and George Sanders. United Artists, 1940

From Russia with Love. Dir. Terence Young. Perf. Sean Connery, Pedro Armendáriz, Lotte Lenya, and Robert Shaw. United Artists, 1963

Gone With the Wind. Dir. Victor Fleming. Perf. Clark Gable, Vivien Leigh, Leslie Howard, Olivia de Havilland. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1939

Hitler. Dir. Stuart Heisler. Perf. Richard Basehart, Cordula Trantow, Maria Emo, and Martin Kosleck. Allied Artists, 1962

Hitler – Dead or Alive. Dir. Nick Grinde. Perf. Ward Bond, Dorothy Tree, Warren Hymer, and Paul Fix. Ben Judell Productions, 1942

Hitler: The Last Ten Days. Dir. Ennio De Concini. Perf. Alec Guinness, Simon Ward, Adolfo Celi, and Diane Cilento. Paramount Pictures, 1973

Hitler – The Rise of Evil. Dir. Christian Duguay. Perf. Robert Carlyle, Stockard Channing, Peter O'Toole, and Peter Stormare. Alliance Atlantis, 2003

Hitler's Children. Dir. Edward Dmytryk. Perf. Tim Holt, Bonita Granville, Kent Smith, and Otto Kruger. RKO Radio Pictures, 1943

Holocaust. Dir. Marvin J. Chomsky. Perf. Michael Moriarty, Meryl Streep, James Woods, and Fritz Weaver. National Broadcasting Company, 1978

I Married a Communist. Dir. Robert Stevenson. Perf. Laraine Day, Robert Ryan, John Agar, and William Talman. RKO Pictures, 1949

I Was a Communist for the FBI. Dir. Gordon Douglas. Perf. Frank Lovejoy, Dorothy Hart, Philip Carey, and James Millican. Warner Brothers, 1951

Ice Station Zebra. Dir. John Sturges. Perf. Rock Hudson, Ernest Borgnine, Jim Brown, and Patrick McGoohan. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1968

Inglorious Basterds. Dir. Quentin Tarantino. Perf. Brad Pitt, Christoph Waltz, Michael Fassbender, and Eli Roth. The Weinstein Company, 2009

Invasion U.S.A. Dir. Alfred E. Green. Perf. Gerald Mohr, Peggie Castle, Phyllis Coates, and Dan O'Herlihy. Columbia Pictures, 1952

Is Paris Burning? Dir. Rene Clement. Perf. Kirk Douglas, Glenn Ford, Gert Fröbe, and Yves Montand. Paramount Pictures, 1966

Jerry Maguire. Dir. Cameron Crowe. Perf. Tom Cruise, Cuba Gooding Jr., Renee Zellweger, and Kelly Preston. TriStar Pictures, 1996

Jud Suss (Jew Suss). Dir. Veit Harlan. Perf. Ferdinand Marian, Werner Krauss, Hilde von Stolz, and Kristina Söderbaum. Terra Film, 1940

Judgment at Nuremberg. Dir. Stanley Kramer. Perf. Spencer Tracy, Burt Lancaster, Maximilian Schell, and Judy Garland. United Artists, 1961

King of Kings. Dir. Nicholas Ray. Perf. Jeffrey Hunter, Siobhan McKenna, Robert Ryan, and Hurd Hatfield. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1961

Lifeboat. Dir. Alfred Hitchcock. Perf. Tallulah Bankhead, William Bendix, Walter Slezak, and Mary Anderson. Twentieth Century-Fox, 1944

Man Hunt. Dir. Fritz Lang. Perf. Walter Pidgeon, Joan Bennett, George Sanders, and John Carradine. Twentieth Century-Fox. 1941

Mein Leben fur Irland. Dir. Max W. Kimmich. Perf. Anna Dammann, René Deltgen, Paul Wegener, and Werner Hinz. Tobis Filmkunst, 1941

Mission to Moscow. Dir. Michael Curtiz. Perf. Walter Huston, Ann Harding, Oskar Homolka, and George Tobias. Warner Brothers, 1943

None Shall Escape. Dir. Andre De Toth. Perf. Marsha Hunt, Alexander Knox, Henry Travers, and Erik Rolf. Columbia Pictures, 1944

Ohm Kruger (Uncle Kruger). Dir. Hans Steinhoff. Perf. Emil Jannings, Lucie Höflich, Werner Hinz, and Ernst Schröder. Tobis Filmkunst, 1941

One, Two, Three. Dir. Billy Wilder. Perf. James Cagney, Arlene Francis, Horst Buchholz, and Pamela Tiffin. United Artists, 1961

Paris Calling. Dir. Edward L. Marin. Perf. Elisabeth Bergner, Randolph Scott, Basil Rathbone, and Gale Sondergaard. Universal Pictures, 1942

Patton. Dir. Franklin J. Schaffner. Perf. George C. Scott, Karl Malden, Michael Bates, and Karl Michael Vogler. Twentieth Century-Fox, 1970

QB VII, Dir. Tom Gries. Perf. Ben Gazzara, Anthony Hopkins, Leslie Caron, and Dan O'Herlihy. American Broadcasting Company, 1974

Quo Vadis. Dir. Mervyn LeRoy. Perf. Robert Taylor, Deborah Kerr, Leo Genn, and Peter Ustinov. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1951

Red Scorpion. Dir. Joseph Zito. Perf. Dolph Lundgren, M. Emmet Walsh, Al White, and T. P. McKenna. Shapiro-Glickenhau Entertainment, 1989

Sahara, Dir. Zoltan Korda. Perf. Humphrey Bogart, Bruce Bennett, Lloyd Bridges, and J. Carroll Naish. Columbia Pictures, 1943

Saving Private Ryan. Dir. Steven Spielberg. Perf. Tom Hanks, Edward Burns, Matt Damon, and Tom Sizemore. Dreamworks Pictures, 1994

Schindler's List. Dir. Steven Spielberg. Perf. Liam Neeson, Ben Kingsley, Ralph Fiennes, Caroline Goodall. Universal Pictures, 1993

Sergeant York. Dir. Howard Hawks. Perf. Gary Cooper, Walter Brennan, Joan Leslie, and George Tobias. Warner Brothers, 1941

Seven Beauties. Dir. Lina Wertmuller. Perf. Giancarlo Giannini, Fernando Rey, Shirley Stoler, and Elena Fiore. Cinema 5 Distributing, 1975

Shoah. Dir. Claude Lanzmann; New Yorker Films, 1985

Song of Russia. Dir. Gregory Ratoff. Perf. Robert Taylor, Susan Peters, John Hodiak, and Vladimir Sokoloff. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1944

Sophie's Choice. Dir. Alan J. Pakula. Perf. Meryl Streep, Rita Karin, Kevin Kline, and Peter MacNicol. Universal Pictures, 1982

Stalin. Dir. Ivan Passer. Perf. Robert Duvall, Julia Ormond, Maximilian Schell, and Joanna Roth. HBO, 1992

Stukas. Dir. Karl Ritter. Perf. Karl Raddatz, Heinz Bork, Ernst von Klipstein, and Albert Hehn. Universum Films (UFA), 1941

Sudden Impact. Dir. Clint Eastwood. Perf. Clint Eastwood, Sandra Locke, Pat Hingle, and Bradford Dillman. Warner Brothers, 1983

The Big Lift. Dir. George Seaton. Perf. Montgomery Clift, Paul Douglas, Cornell Borchers, Bruni Löbel, and O.E. Hasse. Twentieth Century-Fox, 1950

***The Boys from Brazil.* Dir. Franklin J. Schaffner. Perf. Gregory Peck, Laurence Olivier, James Mason, and Uta Hagen. Twentieth Century-Fox, 1978**

***The Bunker.* Dir. George Schaefer. Perf. Anthony Hopkins, Richard Jordan, Susan Blakely, and David King. Société Française de Production (SFP), 1981**

***The Cross of Lorraine.* Dir. Tay Garnett. Perf. Jean-Pierre Aumont, Gene Kelly, Sir Cedric Hardwicke, and Richard Whorf. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1943**

***The Damned.* Dir. Luchino Visconti. Perf. Dirk Bogarde, Ingrid Thulin, Helmut Griem, and Helmut Berger. Warner Brothers, 1969**

***The Deadly Affair.* Dir. Sidney Lumet. Perf. James Mason, Harry Andrews, Simone Signoret, and Maximilian Schell. Columbia Pictures, 1966**

***The Death of Adolf Hitler.* Dir. Rex Firkin. Perf. Frank Finlay, Raymond Adamson, Robert Cawdron, and Oscar Quitak. London Weekend Television, 1973**

***The Devil with Hitler.* Dir. Gordon Douglas. Perf. Alan Mowbray, Bobby Watson, George E. Stone, and Joe Devlin. Hal Roach Studios, 1942**

***The Dirty Dozen.* Dir. Robert Aldrich. Perf. Lee Marvin, Ernest Borgnine, Charles Bronson, and Jim Brown. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1967**

***The Gallant Hours.* Dir. Robert Montgomery. Perf. James Cagney, Dennis Weaver, Ward Costello, and Vaughn Taylor. United Artists, 1960**

***The Great Dictator.* Dir. Charles Chaplin. Perf. Charlie Chaplin, Paulette Goddard, Jack Oakie, and Reginald Gardiner. United Artists, 1940**

***The Great Escape.* Dir. John Sturges. Perf. Steve McQueen, James Garner, Richard Attenborough, and James Donald. United Artists, 1963**

***The Greatest Story Ever Told.* Dir. George Stevens. Perf. Max von Sydow, Charlton Heston, Dorothy McGuire, and Jose Ferrer. United Artists, 1965**

***The Hitler Gang.* Dir. John Farrow. Perf. Bobby Watson, Roman Bohnen, Martin Kosleck and Victor Varconi. Paramount Pictures, 1944**

***The Iron Curtain.* Dir. William Wellman. Perf. Dana Andrews, Gene Tierney, June Havoc, and Berry Kroeger. Twentieth Century-Fox, 1948**

***The Jolson Story.* Dir. Alfred E. Green. Perf. Larry Parks, Evelyn Keyes, William Demarest, and Bill Goodwin. Columbia Pictures, 1946**

***The Journey.* Dir. Anatole Litvak. Perf. Deborah Kerr, Yul Brynner, Jason Robards, and Anne Jackson. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1959**

***The Last Temptation of Christ.* Dir. Martin Scorsese. Perf. Willem Defoe, Harvey Keitel, Barbara Hershey, and Harry Dean Stanton. Universal Pictures, 1988**

***The Longest Day.* Dir. Ken Annakin. Perf. John Wayne, Henry Fonda, Robert Mitchum, and Sean Connery. Twentieth Century-Fox, 1962**

***The Manchurian Candidate.* Dir. John Frankenheimer. Perf. Frank Sinatra, Laurence Harvey, Angela Lansbury, and James Gregory. United Artists, 1962**

***The Mortal Storm.* Frank Borzage. Perf. Margaret Sullavan, James Stewart, Robert Young, and Frank Morgan. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1940**

***The North Star.* Dir. Lewis Milestone. Perf. Anne Baxter, Dana Andrews, Walter Huston, and Walter Brennan. Samuel Goldwyn Productions, 1943**

***The Passion of the Christ.* Dir. Mel Gibson. Perf. Jim Caviezel, Monica Bellucci, Maia Morgenstern, and Sergio Rubini. Newmarket Films, 2004**

***The Pawnbroker.* Dir. Sidney Lumet. Perf. Rod Steiger, Geraldine Fitzgerald, Brock Peters, and Jaime Sanchez. United Artists, 1964**

***The Reader.* Dir. Stephen Daldry. Perf. Kate Winslet, Ralph Fiennes, David Kross, Lena Olin, and Bruno Ganz. The Weinstein Company, 2008**

***The Red Menace,* Dir. R. G. Springsteen. Perf. Robert Rockwell, Hannelore Axman, Betty Lou Gerson, and Barbra Fuller. Republic Films, 1949**

***The Robe.* Dir. Henry Koster. Perf. Richard Burton, Jean Simmons, Victor Mature, and Michael Rennie. Twentieth Century-Fox, 1953**

***The Sound of Music.* Dir. Robert Wise. Perf. Julie Andrews, Christopher Plummer, Eleanor Parker, and Richard Haydn. Twentieth Century-Fox, 1965**

***The Spirit of '43.* Dir. Jack King; Perf. Clarence Nash (voice). RKO Pictures and Walt Disney Productions, 1943**

***The Spy Who Loved Me.* Dir. Lewis Gilbert. Perf. Roger Moore, Barbara Bach, Curt Jürgens, and Richard Kiel. United Artists, 1977**

***The Ten Commandments.* Dir. Cecil B. DeMille. Perf. Charlton Heston, Yul Brynner, Anne Baxter, and Edward G. Robinson. Paramount Pictures, 1956**

- The Train.*** Dir. John Frankenheimer. Perf. Burt Lancaster, Paul Scofield, Jeanne Moreau, and Michel Simon. United Artists, 1964
- Thirty Seconds over Tokyo.*** Dir. Mervyn LeRoy. Perf. Spencer Tracy, Van Johnson, Robert Walker, and Don DeFore. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1944
- Three Russian Girls.*** Dir. Henry S. Kesler and Fedor Ozep. Perf. Anna Sten, Kent Smith, Mimi Forsythe, and Alexander Granach. United Artists, 1943
- Titanic.*** Dir. James Cameron. Perf. Kate Winslet, Leonardo DiCaprio, Billy Zane, and Kathy Bates. Twentieth Century Fox and Paramount Pictures, 1997
- Titanic.*** Dir. Werner Klingler. Sybille Schmitz, Hans Nielsen, Kirsten Heiberg, and E. F. Fürbringer. UFA, 1943
- To Hell and Back.*** Dir. Jesse Hibbs. Perf. Audie Murphy, Marshall Thompson, Charles Drake, and Jack Kelly. Universal International Pictures, 1955
- Topaz.*** Dir. Alfred Hitchcock. Perf. John Forsythe, Frederick Stafford, Deny Robin, and John Vernon. Universal Pictures, 1969
- Torn Curtain.*** Dir. Alfred Hitchcock. Perf. Paul Newman, Julie Andrews, Lila Kedrova, and David Opatoshu. Universal Pictures, 1966
- Triumph of the Will.*** Dir. Leni Reifenstahl. Perf. Adolf Hitler, Heinrich Himmler, Rudolf Hess, and Victor Lutze, Universum Film AG, 1935
- Valkyrie.*** Dir. Bryan Singer. Perf. Tom Cruise, Kenneth Branagh, Bill Nighy, and Tom Wilkinson. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 2008
- Von Ryan's Express.*** Dir. Mark Robson. Perf. Frank Sinatra, Adolfo Celi, Brad Dexter, and Wolfgang Preiss. Twentieth Century-Fox, 1965
- Waterfront.*** Dir. Steve Sekely. Perf. John Carradine, J. Carrol Naish, Maris Wrixon, and Edwin Maxwell. Producers Releasing Corporation, 1944
- Why We Fight Part 5 - The Battle of Russia.*** Dir. Frank Capra and Anatole Litvak. War Activities Committee of the Motion Pictures Industry, 1943
- Winds of War.*** Dir. Dan Curtis. Perf. Robert Mitchum, Ali MacGraw, Jan-Michael Vincent, and John Houseman. American Broadcasting Company, 1983
- Yankee Doodle Dandy.*** Dir. Michael Curtiz. Perf. James Cagney, Joan Leslie, Walter Huston, and Richard Whorf. Warner Brothers, 1942

