

Further evidence of Hitler's distorted thinking can be found in this statement he made on May 3, 1942: "I see no better method of safeguarding cultural centers than to confine them to the safekeeping of the cities which contain them"¹ (Hitler, 2000, 345). Apparently Hitler was oblivious of the threat posed by aerial bombardment, a tactic that was already being employed against Germany, and would be applied with even greater force against German cities as the war progressed.

Hitler's cold and calculating nature is reflected in this statement made on May 4, 1942: "I have already said that the payment of debts contracted during the war presents no problem. In the first place, the territories which we have conquered by force of arms represent an increase in national wealth which far exceeds the cost of the war; in the second place, the integration of twenty million foreign workers at cheap rates into the German industrial system represents a saving which, again, is greatly in excess of the debts contracted by the State"² (Hitler, 2000, 346). Here Hitler is justifying his aggression on purely economic grounds. To Hitler, incurring the implacable hatred of millions of people conquered by force and exploiting millions of non-German foreign workers whose presence inside Germany could only destabilize the Reich were assets. More deluded thinking.

Yet was Hitler's fanciful thinking any more illogical than Stalin's? Stalin also believed that an expansionist policy would strengthen his regime. Apparently he had not learned from Hitler's mistakes. By unilaterally imposing Soviet control over Eastern Europe, Stalin gave the West cause to unite in a common effort to first isolate and then destroy the Soviet Union. That the Soviet Union was defeated is directly attributable to Stalin's confrontational policy with the West after the war. By underestimating the strength, resilience and determination of the West, led by the United States, which had emerged from the war as the premier super power in the world, Stalin made a colossal miscalculation, guaranteeing his regime's collapse. It was not a question of if, but only of when.

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 held in somewhat more contempt than Stalin. 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

¹ Hitler, Adolf, *Hitler's Table Talk: 1941-1944*, tr. Norman Cameron and R. H. Stevens (Enigma Books: New York), 2000, p. 345

² *Ibid.*, p. 346

people to accept or even contemplate. 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,³ that act could be rationalized on political grounds, but when they also slaughtered his entire immediate family, including the Czar's wife and five children, that was an act of mass murder motivated by hatred for their helpless prisoners.⁴ After the victims were shot and bayoneted, their corpses were cut apart, burned and dumped into the bottom of a mine shaft.⁵ This wanton act of butchery established a precedent for savagery that both Stalin and Hitler would build upon with lethal results.

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³ Pipes, Richard, *Russia Under the Bolshevik Regime* (Vintage Books: New York), 1994, p. 9n

⁴ Moorhead, Alan, *The Russian Revolution* (Harper & Row: New York), 1958, p. 284

⁵ Lincoln, W. Bruce, *Red Victory: A History of the Russian Civil War* (Simon and Schuster: New York), 1989, pp. 151-155