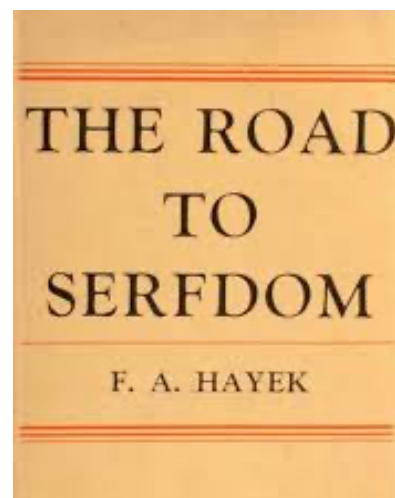


NAZIs Versus Commies

By Earl P. Holt III

I've met a surprising number of guys in the conservative movement who harbor a certain wistfulness for *German National Socialism*, no doubt because Hitler hated Jewish Bolshevism and wasn't particularly shy about his dislikes. They mistakenly assume that Nazism is not only hostile to communism, but in fact, anathema to it. While hating Jewish Bolshevism is certainly a worthy endeavor, with much to recommend it, this view embodies a flawed and romanticized view of Nazi Germany.

Even as a student in the mid-1970s, I was struck more by the **similarities** than **differences** between NAZI Germany under Hitler and Soviet Communism under Stalin. Confirmation of my amateurish impressions appeared in Nobel Laureate Friedrich Hayek's small but profoundly influential book, *The Road to Serfdom*. Rather than perceiving Nazism and Soviet communism as occupying opposite ends of the political spectrum, Hayek recognized them to be very close but inevitable manifestations of Marxist ideology, captured in Jean-Francois Revel's expression "*the totalitarian temptation.*"

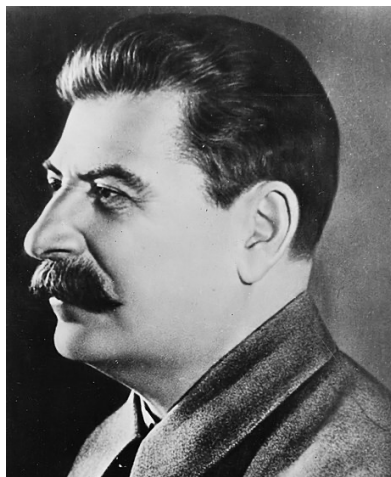


Friedrich von Hayek & His Timeless Book

Along with many other *Classical* economists, Hayek argued throughout his prolific career that there are really only two basic ways to organize a nation's political economy: central governments either permit citizens to make the bulk of their economic, social and political decisions independent of their government, or the central government is empowered to appropriate such decision-making on behalf of those it governs. Or as Hayek called them, on behalf of its "*serfs*."

No matter what labels are assigned to systems such as socialism, communism, or national socialism -- all are essentially the same *kettle of fish*. Only legitimate republics and pluralistic democracies differ fundamentally in their organizing principles and behavior. The latter necessarily include private property, free plebiscites, and an extensive list of individual rights and immunities from the power of the state.

The measure of a nation's freedom is reflected in the sum of its individual liberties. Hence, by any objective criteria, both Nazism and Soviet communism were not only totalitarian, but also astonishingly similar, with few meaningful distinctions between them. Not surprisingly, Hitler and Stalin shared a contempt for Western political institutions, which both men considered "*decadent*" and "*bourgeois*."



Birds of a Feather

POLITICAL SPEECH: There was a total subordination of the individual to the state in both the Soviet Union and NAZI Germany, and neither permitted any freedom of the press, freedom of speech, or freedom of association. These liberties were conspicuously absent in both systems, which routinely banned or executed political rivals who spoke out or organized against the monopoly party.

RIVAL POLITICAL PARTIES: In both systems, the monopoly political party dominated all aspects of every social or political institution, as well as the administration of the central government. For example, after it was damaged by fire in February of 1933, Hitler issued the ***Reichstag Fire Decree***, which suspended most civil rights recognized by the Weimar Constitution. Later that July, Hitler formally banned all competing political parties by means of the ***Law Against the Establishment of Parties***, and executed the leaders of most of them.



Reichstag Fire

By the mid-to-late 1920s, Stalin began to use his Secret Police against rivals within the Communist Party, but only after the Bolsheviks had practically eliminated all other parties and their leaders by that time. Soon thereafter, Trotsky, Zinoviev and Kamenev were denounced and expelled from the *Communist Party of the Soviet Union* (CPSU,) followed by Bukharin and many others in the “*Great Terror*” and the “*Moscow Show Trials*” to follow in the 1930s.

Lenin and Stalin were equally diligent in liquidating their political enemies and political rivals. During the “*Night of the Long Knives*” in late June of 1934, Hitler had his SS and Gestapo assassinate Ernst Rohm and other potential political rivals. Likewise, Stalin even ordered his NKVD assassins sent all the way to Mexico in order to murder Leon Trotsky, his old Menshevik rival.

Stalin's Victim



Hitler's Victim



Leon Trotsky & Ernst Rohm

PLEBISCITES: Once the Bolsheviks and NAZIs came to power, there was never another free, fair or competitive plebiscite in either nation until their respective tyrannies ultimately ended. Lenin dissolved the **Constituent Assembly**, which was elected soon after the Bolshevik Revolution, and did so a mere 13 hours after it was first assembled. That's because his Bolsheviks received only 25% representation despite anticipating a significant majority.

Hitler did something similar in Germany by “*packing*” the **Reichstag**, and reconstituting its powers into a purely perfunctory and ceremonious function through the **Enabling Act of 1933**. Afterwards, the Reichstag’s members merely **rubber-stamped** everything Hitler did, and effectively legitimized his role as dictator.

INDEPENDENT JUDICIARY: Neither legal system was independent of the monopoly party, and both were mere extensions of their party's apparatus and its policies. Both Roland Freisler in Germany and Chief Prosecutor Andrey Vyshinsky in the Soviet Union dispensed with most legal principles taken for granted in the West. Not only was there a presumption of guilt in both systems, but no defendant was permitted legitimate legal counsel, nor were they given an opportunity to present evidence of their innocence.

By order of Hitler, a “**People’s Court**” was established in 1934 to prosecute “*political crimes*,” with death sentences the nearly universal outcome. Hitler appointed Roland Freisler as Presiding Judge, a man who learned his trade by attending many of the Soviet Union’s infamous *Moscow Show Trials* in order to learn how such things are done *properly*.

In both systems, the verdict was pre-ordained and the resulting trials were merely *pro forma*. Cynics claimed that “***the executions came first, and the trials came second.***” (Vyshinsky is also credited with having declared, “***Give me a man and I will find the crime.***”)



Stalin's Executioner



Hitler's Executioner

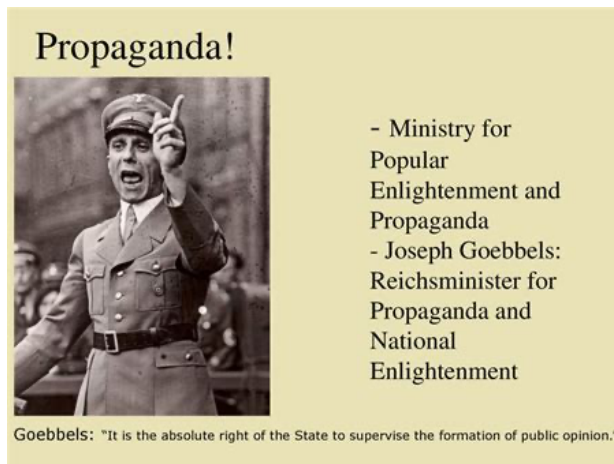
STATE-SPONSORED PROPAGANDA: Both systems established a state-sponsored organ to disseminate political propaganda in order to indoctrinate its citizens and serve the party-state in other ways.

In the USSR, **Glavlit** (the *Main Administration for Literary and Publishing Affairs*) was established in 1922 and functioned until the Soviet system was dissolved in late 1991. Its purpose was to censor any information that might prove embarrassing to the Soviet Union, or which deviated from a strict Marxist-Leninist party-line. **Glavlit's** propaganda guided **TASS** and **PRAVDA** on a daily basis.

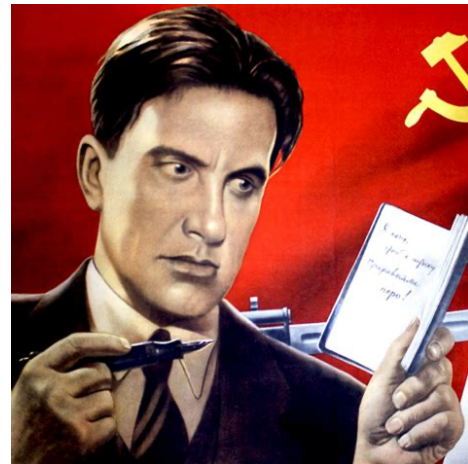
In 1933, Hitler and the NAZI Party established a **Reich Ministry of Propaganda**, and appointed Josef Goebbels to administer it. Its responsibility was to soften-up NAZI Party enemies and political adversaries, by denouncing them and accusing them of offenses against ethnic Germans.

These denunciations were a prelude to war and violence, evident in the false denunciation of Polish aggression toward Germany as a prelude to

the invasion of Poland in 1939 following the *Hitler-Stalin Pact*. Similar denunciations of homosexuals, Jews and other minorities soon followed as a prelude to filling the concentration camps.



Reich Ministry of Propaganda.



Glavlit

SECRET POLICE: Both systems were infamous for the viciousness of their secret police, which enforced loyalty to the party-state. For the Soviets, this was originally the role of the “*Cheka*,” although it acquired many names throughout its violent and bloody history, including the NKVD and the KGB.

For the Nazis, it was the **SS** and **Gestapo**: many of those arrested and spirited off to concentration camps originally fell under the authority of the Gestapo.

FIREARM OWNERSHIP: In both systems, there was a prohibition against the private ownership of firearms, demonstrating that repressive regimes — which rule without the consent of the governed — always fear the private ownership of firearms by their citizens.

In the first half of the 1930s, the NAZI Party instituted a massive, nationwide seizure of weapons in the possession of anyone who happened to be a political enemy. As Hitler candidly stated, ***"The most foolish mistake we could make would be to allow the subject races to possess arms."*** This was followed by the ***"Waffengesetz"*** of 1938, which effectively banned all Jewish ownership of firearms as a prelude to the mass deportation of Jews to concentration camps.

After the Bolshevik Revolution, the private possession of firearms by Soviet citizens was illegal. Retired military and retired police could apply to purchase a weapon, but permits were very rarely approved, and only after a long and elaborate application process. According to one Russian author, this was done (paraphrase) ***"to prevent the peasants from shooting Chekists."***

EXPANSIONISM: Both systems adopted a state policy of expanding its territorial boundaries at the expense of vulnerable neighbors. The two even found common cause in the ***Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact***, their joint invasion and conquest of Poland in September of 1939. Thus, Nazi Germany invaded and conquered France, Czechoslovakia, Norway, Poland, and annexed Austria. It also attempted to invade Britain, but was repulsed during the Battle of Britain.

The Soviet Union annexed and enslaved dozens of smaller countries in the course of its brutal history. In addition to the Baltic States, it absorbed a half-dozen Islamic States, and many smaller Eastern European nations. After the Yalta Conference, the USSR was handed Eastern Europe by communist traitors in the ***U.S. State Department***. Afterward, the USSR governed its ***"Eastern Bloc"*** subjects with an iron fist, invading Hungary in 1956, Czechoslovakia in 1968, and threatened to invade Poland in 1980, much as it had done in 1939.

CULT OF PERSONALITY: Nazi Germany and Stalin's USSR were no different than any other Marxist dictatorship in establishing what is often

called a “*cult of personality*.” Stalin’s *cult of personality* became a prominent feature of Soviet culture after an extravagant celebration of his 50th birthday in December 1929. For the remainder of his dictatorship, **TASS** and **PRAVDA** referred to Stalin as “*all-powerful*,” in addition to “*all-knowing*,” and “*the Father of Nations*.”

Stalin was routinely depicted in giant portraits, murals and statues, which were ubiquitous and always in the romanticized “*socialist realism*” style popular among communists. When Khrushchev denounced the excesses of the Stalinist Era before the 20th Party Congress in 1956, he specifically singled-out Stalin’s *cult of personality*.



Stalin & Hitler Depicted in “*Socialist Realism*” Style

Hitler received much the same treatment from Joseph Goebbels and his **Reich Ministry of Propaganda**. Hitler was invariably depicted as a genius and infallible, and imbued with boundless energy and super-

human insight. In June of 1940, Stalin's translator was in Berlin and witnessed a prolonged ovation that Hitler received upon entering an opera house. That man, Valentin Berezhkov, recalled in his memoirs:

"As I am watching all that, I am thinking to myself. . .how much there is in common between this and our congresses and conferences when Stalin makes his entry into the hall. The same thunderous, never-ending standing ovation. Almost the same hysterical shouts of 'Glory to Stalin!' 'Glory to our leader!'"

CONCLUSION

These similarities are not some sort of coincidence which happened to make *German National Socialism* and *Soviet Communism* appear similar: these two systems shared a significant number of characteristics because those are defining characteristics that universally accompany **ALL** socialist dictatorships.

When Khrushchev denounced Stalinism at the 20th Party Congress of the USSR — initiating the era of “*de-Stalinization*” — he specifically singled-out Stalin's *cult of personality* as being “*foreign to the spirit of Marxism-Leninism.*”

He could not have been more mistaken. The cult of personality can be evidenced everywhere a Marxist or socialist dictatorship is established, whether Hitler's Germany, Stalin's USSR, Castro's Cuba, Mao's China, Ho Chi Minh's North Vietnam, or any of North Korea's dictatorships since the 1950s.

Nor were Africa's Marxist dictators any different, whether Idi Amin in Uganda, Bokassa in the Central African Empire, or Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe. All encouraged a similar *cult of personality* that imbued

them with god-like wisdom, just as Stalin's and Hitler's propagandists had done decades before.

While there may be a few subtle characteristics not shared by German *National Socialism* and *Soviet Communism*, these are most likely attributable to the very different personalities of Adolph Hitler and Josef Stalin.

On the other hand, the two had so many features in common that their similarities overwhelm any differences. For this reason, it is inaccurate to look at these two systems as representing opposite ends of the political spectrum, and far more accurate to view them as slight variations on Marxism's totalitarian template.