

-V. Power and Genocide-

A. Counting bodies

This chapter carries a grim message: the boost to human productive, technological, and organizational powers seen in the twentieth century was value-neutral at best. The century that has seen the fastest economic growth and the richest human societies ever has also seen the greatest—and multiple—genocides. The greatest crimes of human history have been committed, and the greatest criminals of all time have lived, in the past hundred years.

The table below presents a few estimates from R.J. Rummel's *Death by Government*—a book that undertakes the grim task of attempting to roughly count up the violent death toll of the twentieth century.¹ Rummel excludes from his count of genocide the deaths of soldiers in time of war, and the “incidental” deaths of civilians in time of war (that is, deaths that occurred as a consequence of what could be classified as military operations directed against enemy armed forces or war-making power: military exercises like the British night bombing of German cities during World War II are counted as episodes of genocide). Rummel's estimates of genocide are only of the people whom governments, in time of peace or far from the battlefield, have killed.

Since Rummel is the only person to undertake a serious, comprehensive study of this century's major genocides—the only person to wade through this century's many oceans of blood—any look at governments in the century as a whole has to start from his work.

Deaths as a result of military operations in this century have been horrific enough: governments and their soldiers have killed perhaps forty million people in war. These dead are made up of a few professionals, more conscripts unlucky enough to have been drafted into the mass armies of the twentieth century, and still more civilians killed in the course of operations

¹ R.J. Rummel (), *Death by Government* (). Some of the estimates are solid; some are shaky; some are wild guesses. I think some estimates are too high, and some are too low (I suspect that Communist China and Nazi Germany should be switched on Rummel's list.). But Rummel's estimates are not without evidence, and on average I believe they are close enough to correct to serve as a very useful starting point.

that were—or that generals could claim were—directed at reducing the enemy’s war-making potential.

Civilians Killed by Governments in the Twentieth Century: Top Twenty Regimes

Location (Regime)	Deaths	Era
Soviet Union (Communist)	61,900,000	1917-1990
China (Communist)	35,200,000	1949-present
Germany (Nazi Third Reich)	20,900,000	1933-1945
China (Kuomintang)	10,400,000	1928-1949
Japan (Imperial-Fascist)	6,000,000	1936-1945
China (Communist Guerrillas)	3,500,000	1923-1948
Cambodia (Communist)	2,000,000	1975-1979
Turkey (“Young Turks”)	1,900,000	1909-1917
Vietnam (Communist)	1,700,000	1945-present
Korea (Communist)	1,700,000	1948-present
Poland (Communist)	1,600,000	1945-1948
Pakistan (Yahya Khan)	1,500,000	1971
Mexico (Porfiriato)	1,400,000	1900-1920
Yugoslavia (Communist)	1,100,000	1944-1990
Russia (Czarist)	1,100,000	1900-1917
Turkey (“Ataturk”)	900,000	1918-1923
United Kingdom (Democratic)	800,000	1900-present
Portugal (Fascist)	700,000	1926-1975
Croatia (Fascist)	700,000	1941-1945
Indonesia (Suharto)	600,000	1965-present

Deaths *not* as a result of war have been an order of magnitude *more* horrific. The top twenty regimes have killed—roughly and approximately—156,000,000 civilians in this century, from workers organizing unions in Czarist Russia to East Timorese seeking independence from Indonesia to the Jewish holocaust and the great purges and terrors of Mao and Stalin. Wars have mounted up to less than a quarter of this century’s death toll. Far from the battlefield and in time of peace, governments in this century have bloody hands: class enemies, race enemies, political enemies, economic enemies,

imagined enemies—you name it, governments have slaughtered them. And governments have slaughtered them on a previously unimagined scale.

[Figure: Pyramid of skulls from Tuol Sleng]

Call those leaders whose regimes have slaughtered more than ten million of their fellow humans “members of the Ten-Million Club.” All pre-twentieth century history *may* (but may not) have seen two members of the Ten-Million Club: Chingis (Genghis) Khan, the ruler of the twelfth century Mongols, the launcher of tremendously bloody invasions of Central Asia and China, and the founder of China's ruling Yuan Dynasty (Marco Polo's travels were to the court of the Yuan Emperor Kubulai Khan;² and Hong Xiuquan, the mid-nineteenth-century Chinese intellectual whose visions convinced him that he was Jesus Christ's younger brother and who launched the Taiping Rebellion that turned south-central China into a slaughterhouse for decades in the middle of the nineteenth century.³

No single individual played a significant role in the creation and growth of the early modern Atlantic slave trade, or in the disease-and-exploitation-driven decimation of the pre-Columbian populations of the Americas. The first of these two historical episodes was on a super-genocidal scale; the second is uncertain—human action may only have been genocidal, for disease did most of the work.⁴

By contrast, the twentieth century has seen perhaps five members join the Ten Million Club: in alphabetical order, Adolf Hitler, Chiang Kaishek, Vladimir Lenin, Joseph Stalin, and Mao Zedong. Hitler, Stalin, and Mao have credentials that may well make them the charter members of the Thirty Million Club as well—perhaps even the Fifty Million Club: our knowledge of what went on inside China, the Soviet Union, and the Third Reich is very imperfect. A regime whose hands are as bloody as those of the Suharto regime in Indonesia—with the blood on its hands of perhaps 450,000 communists, suspected communists, and others who simply were in the

² Jeremiah Curtin (1996), *The Mongols: A History* (New York: Combined Books: 0938289659).

³ Jonathan D. Spence (1996), *God's Chinese Son: The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom of Hong Xiuquan* (New York: W.W. Norton: 0393038440).

⁴ Nevertheless, we can still award Hernan Cortez and Francisco Pizarro honorary membership in at least the One Million Club.

wrong place at the wrong time at its creation in 1965, and perhaps 150,000 of its own inhabitants since—such a regime barely makes the twentieth century's top twenty list as far as the massacre of civilians is concerned.

B. Origins of twentieth-century genocide

Some have traced the beginnings of the twentieth century's culture of genocide to the overturning of the traditional rules of European war that sharply distinguished combatants from non-combatants. In the Boer War at the turn of the century in South Africa the British army found itself faced with a stubborn guerrilla movement after the defeat of the Boer Republic's conventional armies. The British army responded by inventing the concentration camp as we know it: depopulating the countryside, and crowding civilians together. Disease spread through the camps and mortality was relatively high—although lower than in virtually every other twentieth century concentration camp.⁵

[Figure: Boer War-era concentration camp]

Others trace it to the rhetoric of violence that always accompanied Karl Marx's version of socialism. In Marx's writings, really-existing democratic political institutions, individual rights, and public deliberation are always masks and shams in the absence of substantive economic equality—and were to be fought as fiercely as medieval barons who slaughtered peasants for failing to pay feudal rents.⁶ This habit of rhetoric cannot help but have influenced the glasses through which Marx's followers viewed the world, and the steps they would take as they tried to seize power.

Still others trace it to the great French Revolution of the eighteenth century, to political philosophers like Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and to the idea that whatever political party represents the Nation is engaged in a life-and-death struggle with Enemies, a struggle in which scruples about means are out of

⁵ Boer War footnotes...

⁶ Marx quotes...

place.⁷

Still others say that it was there all along, but that pre-twentieth century governments and religions by and large lacked the organizational capability and certainly lacked a motive to exterminate their fellow human beings by the tens of millions. They could conduct pogroms, purges, and witch-burnings on a retail scale, and only the absence of modern technologies of communication and organization kept them from moving to the same wholesale scale of slaughter as the Khmer Rouge. It was a French Catholic prelate who, when asked how to sort out the heretics from the true believers in the newly captured city of Beziers, said: “Kill them all!—God will recognize his people.”⁸

There is some truth to all of these interpretations. For example, the practice of Robespierre’s Committee of Public Safety during the French Revolution in executing not just the leaders but also the followers and families of their political opponents (a practice that Robespierre’s political opponents turned against *him* as soon as they could), the practice of using the military to depopulate restive regions like the Vendee of western France, and the practice of using rigged courts to give a thin veneer of “legality” and due process to political murder did have their modern origin in the French Revolution.

The first two major episodes of genocide in this century, the perhaps one million peasants killed in Russia in the last two decades of the Czarist regime and the perhaps than one million civilians dead in the last year's of President Porfirio Diaz’s rule and the years of the Revolution in Mexico, look a lot like the traditional use of violence by an aristocracy to maintain its power and wealth, only writ large as a result of better technologies of communication and organization.

But the greater power of governments to organize and carry out purges, the sharpening of ethnic conflicts, and the rising power of violent nationalism were, even together, not enough to trigger the genocides of this century. That required two political movements: Communism and Fascism. And both Communism and Fascism were movements that had *economic* ideology at their core.

⁷ French Revolution quotes...

⁸ The Papal Legate Arnould-Amalric in 1209, during the Albigensian Crusade. See Otto Friedrich (1982), *The End of the World* (New York: Froman International: 0880640626), p. 77.

C. Economics, Ideology, and Genocide

1. Communism

Communism as we have known it was born when Vladimir Lenin's fraction of the Russian left—the “Bolshevik” or majority faction of the formerly-unified Russian Social Democratic Party—seized power in a late-1917 coup from the post-Czarist provisional government led by Kerensky. A brutal Civil War followed, as White supporters of the Czar, local autocrats seeking effective independence, Lenin's Red followers, stray other forces—including a Czech army that found itself first trapped in and then effective ruler of Siberia, and Japanese regiments (the United States sent both troops to secure base areas for anti-Communist forces, and food to feed Russians in Communist-controlled areas)—fought back and forth over much of Russia for three years.⁹

[Figure: Lenin making a speech]

When the Civil War ended, Lenin's regime was in control. The Czarist generals were dead or in exile in Paris. Any liberal democratic or social democratic center had been purged by the Whites or the Reds in the course of the Civil War. And the relatively small group of socialist agitators that had gathered under Lenin before the revolution found itself with the problem of running a country and building a utopia, with the assistance of those who had declared for the Reds and against the Whites and joined Lenin during the Civil War.

The first imperative facing Lenin's regime was the necessity of eliminating capitalism. According to the Marxist theory that Lenin deeply believed, capitalism—private ownership of businesses and land, and private receipt of

⁹ For the origins of the Russian Communist Party, I still believe that the best interpretations are those of Edmund Wilson (1940), *To the Finland Station: A Study in the Writing and Acting of History* (); and Isaac Deutscher (), *Trotsky: The Prophet Armed* (); liberally sprinkled with salt and a dose of Richard Pipes (), *Russia Under the Old Regime* (). For the Civil War itself, I recommend Isaac Deutscher (), *Trotsky: The Prophet Armed* (); Richard Pipes (), *Russia Under the Old Regime* (); and Robert Tucker (), *Stalin the Revolutionary* (). Leon Trotsky's own () *The Russian Revolution* is still very much worth reading.

profits—was *the* source of inequality or exploitation.¹⁰ Marx believed in the labor theory of value: that human productive labor (but only “socially necessary” labor, only labor using techniques and tools at the leading edge of technology) imbued a commodity with a stuff called “value” by virtue of the social relationship between producer and consumer in the market economy. According to Marx, the average around which changes in supply and demand made the prices of goods fluctuate was in some sense (in what sense was not clear: this was the so-called “transformation problem” in late nineteenth-century attempts to complete Marx’s analytical system after his death)¹¹ a transformed version of the commodity’s labor “value.”

Thus in Marx’s system, all sources of income other than the direct payment to the production-line worker of the value of his production (minus a deduction for the depreciation of capital goods, but not for interest or risk) were immoral and illegitimate acts of exploitation: not just the return to investment, the return to risk-bearing, and the rewards of productive entrepreneurship, but also the wages paid to those who distributed and marketed the product, those who controlled and accounted for distribution, and those whose acts of mercantile entrepreneurship carried goods across space or across time from where they were cheap or where they were dear.

Thus to avoid falling back into the trap of capitalist exploitation, it was not enough to nationalize all property so that no member of the *bourgeoisie* received surplus-value extracted from the productive toilers in the form of interest or profit on capital. You also had to eliminate the market entirely—because all intermediary profits from market exchange also had their ultimate origin in surplus-value exploited from the toiling masses.

But how do you run industry and economic life in the absence of business owners—of people whose incomes and social standing depend directly on the prosperity of individual enterprises, and who thus have the incentives and the power to try to make and keep individual pieces of the economy productive and functioning?

Lenin’s answer was that you organize the economy like an army: top down, planned, hierarchical, with under-managers promoted or fired depending on how well they attained the missions that the high economic command had

¹⁰ For the origins of this belief that wage labor and production for the market *must* be eliminated in any just see Karl Marx (1848), *Wage Labor and Capital* ().

¹¹ See Eugen von Bohm-Bawerk (), *Karl Marx and the Completion of His Analysis* ().

assigned them. Lenin had been impressed by what he saw of the German centrally-directed war economy of World War I. Lenin tried to copy it.

It is unclear whether Marx would have approved or disapproved of Lenin's solution. But if Marx would have disapproved, it would then be the case that Marx had painted himself into a corner: exploitation is bad, reliance on the market system leads to exploitation, therefore production must be organized without using a market—and that seems to imply hierarchy (Lenin tells you what to do) if there is to be any coordination of the division of labor at all.

The pressure toward authoritarian centralization was reinforced by the second imperative facing Lenin's regime was to industrialize Russia. Frightened that the powers of the industrial core might decide to overthrow their regime, and desperately aware of their economic weakness, it seemed to Lenin and his followers that military discipline in the service of industrialization was essential.

The third imperative was to survive. As the British historian Eric Hobsbawm has written of Lenin's regime, "as Lenin recognized... all it had going for it was the fact that it was... the established government of the country. It had nothing else. Even so, what actually governed the country was an undergrowth of smaller and larger bureaucrats..." And for a government to survive when there are no powerful social classes or interest groups that have ideological allegiances or substantive reasons to back it requires great ruthlessness.¹²

Great ruthlessness was exercised not only against society outside the Communist Party but against the activists of the Communist Party itself. A "command economy" turned out to require a "command polity" as well. The Communist Party won the Russian Civil War as a one-party dictatorship with a powerful and aggressive secret police, committed to using mass terror to suppress counter-revolutionaries, and banning even internal democracy and discussion of policies and politics. As the German Marxist Rosa Luxemburg had warned, the process begins by ruling in the name of the people, then by substituting the judgment of the Party for the wishes of the people, then by substituting the decisions of the Central Committee for the judgment of the Party, and then by substituting the whim of the Dictator for

¹² Eric Hobsbawm (1994), *The Age of Extremes* (New York: Vintage: 0679730052).

the decisions of the Central Committee.¹³

And the dictator who won the struggle for power after Lenin's death—Josef Stalin—was a paranoid psychopath to boot. Stalin made Lenin's terror look mild and reasonable.

[Figure: Soviet collectivization]

Peasants were shot, died of famine, and were exiled to Siberian prison labor camps in the millions during the 1930s. Factory workers were shot or exiled to Siberian labor camps for failing to meet production targets assigned from above. Intellectuals were shot or exiled to Siberian labor camps for being insufficiently pro-Stalin, or for being in favor of the policies that Stalin had advocated *last year* and being too slow to switch.

Communist activists, bureaucrats, and secret policemen fared no better. More than five million government officials and party members were killed or exiled in the Great Purge of the 1930s as well. All of Stalin's one-time peers as Lenin's lieutenants were gone by the late 1930s—save for Leon Trotsky, in exile in Mexico, who survived until one of Stalin's thugs put an icepick through his head in 1940.¹⁴

Of the 1800 delegates to the Communist Party Congress of 1934, less than half were alive by 1939.

We really do not know how many people died at the hands of the Communist regime in Russia. We know more about how many cows and sheep died in the 1930s than about how many of Stalin's opponents, imagined enemies, and bystanders were killed.¹⁵ R.J. Rummel estimates 62 million dead.

The story of Mao in China is similar to the story of Stalin in Russia: the same ruthless commitment to use any means necessary to remake society

¹³ Rosa Luxemburg footnote. As Lenin would have pointed out, Rosa Luxemburg's "squeamishness" got her shot by the Social Democrats' right-wing military allies in Berlin in the immediate aftermath of World War I.

¹⁴ See Robert Tucker (), *Stalin in Power: The Revolution from Above* (); Isaac Deutscher () *Trotsky: The Prophet Unarmed* (), and () *Trotsky: The Prophet Outcast* ().

¹⁵ See Basil Kerblay (1983), *Modern Soviet Society* (New York:), p. 26.

and preserve Communist Party rule, the same desire to override all other social forces and centralize economic and social life into a near-military hierarchy, the same delusions of grandeur and paranoia at the top. Mao's lieutenants were perhaps better than Stalin's at attempting to ease him out of power and into symbolic retirement: Liu Shaochi and Deng Xiaoping thought that they had achieved this in the aftermath of the catastrophic economic policies of the 1950s that led to a great famine that killed tens of millions. But Mao's lieutenants' willingness to try to control their paranoid leader triggered the upheaval of the Cultural Revolution, Mao's counterstroke in which he rallied the young and the ideologically pure against the hierarchy of the Communist Party, and may in the end have simply increased the death toll.¹⁶

Figure: The Gate of Heavenly Peace with Mao's picture on it; during the Cultural Revolution]

2. Fascism

The third of the leaders of the most murderous regimes of the twentieth century, Adolf Hitler of Nazi Germany, probably did not match up to his peers Stalin and Mao in length of his tyranny, but surely was their master in evil. He gained a voice in German politics by exploiting nationalist resentment against those who had beaten Germany in World War I and the economic distress of the Great Depression. He took power by outmaneuvering the right-wing politicians who had taken him into the cabinet to boost their popular support.

[Figure: Hitler reviewing his troops]

He quickly turned Germany into a centralized-totalitarian-dictatorship in which, in theory at least, all social and economic institutions were "co-ordinated" with the Nazi Party. "What need have we to socialize industry or agriculture? We socialize human beings!"¹⁷ Up until the start of World War II the terror was, by twentieth century standards, relatively small: murder,

¹⁶ Pierre Ryckmans [Simon Leys]; Roderick MacFarquhar.

¹⁷ Norman Davies (), *Europe: A History* ().

imprisonment, and harassment of Jews, opposition political activists, homosexuals, and some of the disabled and mentally ill. After the beginning of World War II, the machine of extermination was put in motion on a large scale. Some were worked to death in slave labor camps at the disposal of German businesses like Krupp and I.G. Farben. Some were shot by mobile extermination teams. Many were shot by the army well behind the fighting lines. Some were left to die in concentration camps. Many others were killed assembly-line fashion in extermination camps.¹⁸

Stalin and Mao could point to *reasons*—insane and mistaken reasons, true, but reasons nevertheless—why their actions and killings made sense in terms of ends that we all share of general prosperity and human development, and why they had chosen the path that the poet W.H. Auden wrote of as “the acceptance of guilt in the *necessary* murder.”¹⁹ The Cultural Revolution in China was needed to keep China a socialist country that could someday become a free and equal utopia, to keep it from degenerating into a bureaucratic despotism like the Soviet Union. The mass slaughter of the peasants of the Ukraine was necessary because an agriculture based on private farming and small plots rather than collective farming and industrialized agriculture could never produce the increases in productivity needed to feed the growing cities of the industrializing Soviet Union. These justifications were wrong—insanely wrong—but economic development and the avoidance of bureaucratic despotism *are* good things.

But Hitler? Killing in concentration camps, extermination camps, and through forced labor, killing six million Jews, two million of scattered nationalities from western Europe, and twelve million or so from eastern Europe *in addition to the battle-related deaths of World War II*? Why? To diminish the likelihood that the German “race” would be further polluted through intermarriage, and to provide more “living space” for German farmers.²⁰

Stalin and Mao still have their defenders: people who admit with one hand that “there is no doubt that under some other leader [than Stalin]... the sufferings of the peoples of the [Union of Soviet Socialist Republics] would have been less, the number of victims smaller”; yet with the other go on to

¹⁸ William L. Shirer (), *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* (); other Hitler sources.

¹⁹ W.H. Auden (), “Spain,” in ...

²⁰ Adolf Hitler (), *Mein Kampf* (); Ernest Nolte (), *Three Faces of Fascism* [Fascism in Its Epoch] ().

write that:

any policy of rapid modernization in the U.S.S.R... was bound to be ruthless and, because imposed against the bulk of the people and imposing serious sacrifices on them, to some extent coercive... closer to a military operation than to an economic enterprise. On the other hand... the breakneck industrialization of the first Five-Year Plans (1929-41) generated support by the very "blood, toil, tears, and sweat" it imposed on the people.... sacrifice itself can motivate.²¹

Hitler, however, does not have his defenders, has no one to claim that he used perhaps excessive means to good ends. His ultimate goals—the Aryan racial purity of the German people, and sufficient “living space” at the disposal of the German nation to allow it to dominate the world—are far, far outside the admissible bounds.²²

3. Economic Ideology and Political Murder:

What does this bloody political and secret police history have to do with *economic* history, with the story of how people produced, distributed, and consumed the commodities needed and desired for their material well-being?

First, the possibility that the secret police will knock at your door and drag you off for torture and death is a serious threat to your material well-being. The seventeenth-century political philosopher Thomas Hobbes wrote that people are motivated by sticks and carrots: “the fear of violent death, and the desire for commodious living.”²³ In a century where the chance that a randomly-selected person will be shot or starved to death by the government approached five percent, the fact of large scale political murder becomes a very important aspect of everyday life and material well being.

²¹ Eric Hobsbawm (1994), *The Age of Extremes* (New York: Vintage: 0679730052), p. 380. “Rapid industrialization must be coercive...” footnote. Michael Parenti. John A. Hall.

²² Well, we wish they were outside the bounds of thought.

²³ Thomas Hobbes (), *Leviathan*.

Second, the twentieth century is unique in that its wars, purges, massacres, and executions were part of struggles over *economics*. Before the twentieth century people killed each other over theology: eternal paradise or damnation. Before the twentieth century people killed each other over power: who gets to be top dog, and to command the material resources of society.

These motives are, to some extent, comprehensible.

But only in the twentieth century have people killed each other on a large scale in disputes over the economic organization of society.

Communism saw itself as a utopian mode of social and economic organization, engaged in a death struggle with the other modes of “Capitalism” and “Feudalism.” Opponents of regimes *had* to die because their very existence was “objectively” reinforcing the strength of the opposing modes of organization, and preventing the achievement of universal prosperity and utopia.

Nazism was, in its origins, National *Socialism*: the National Socialist German Workers’ Party. Those Nazis who took the “socialism” as implying a serious desire on the part of a Nazi government to level the distribution of income died in the 1934 purge, a year and a half after Hitler took power. But anti-capitalist rhetoric remained—a stock-in-trade of Nazi propaganda was always the contrast between good hard-working German technicians and bad blood-sucking Jewish financiers. And the Nazi justification for taking power was rooted both in the desire to reverse the shame of Germany’s defeat in World War I (and the unequal treaty settlement imposed by the victors) and in the desperate poverty of the Great Depression, which demonstrated the political bankruptcy of the liberal Weimar Republic.

The economic ideologies of the Communists and the Nazis did not play a significant role in boosting or maintaining their power. The Communist Party chief of a Ukrainian village is and remains boss whether the cattle are owned by individual farmers or by the village collective. Lenin and his successors had little trouble maintaining political control during the 1920s, the decade of the “New Economic Policy” that saw the party allow the revival of private enterprise. And the flaws in trying to run economic life through nationwide central planning were obvious early in the regime. The Nazi government's power depended on its use of the police and of terror.

The expropriation of Jewish enterprises, the gathering of much industry into the hands of second-in-command Hermann Goering, and the attempt to impose central planning for military purposes did not aid the Nazi regime: its success at mobilizing national economic resources for World War II was less than that of Stalin's Russia, Churchill's Britain, or Roosevelt's America.

But these economic ideologies played an enormous role in creating and energizing the movements, and in directing their actions while they were in power.

Fidel Castro rules in Havana whether or not farmers are allowed to sell their crops in roadside stands. Deng Xiaoping's control over China was not impaired by his decision to be pragmatic: to announce that a good cat was one that catches mice—not one that was the ideologically-correct color. Power, personal status, and eternal salvation had little to do with the Soviet collectivization of agriculture, the Cuban suppression of small-scale markets, or the disaster of Mao's Great Leap Forward. These were in large part and certainly appeared on the surface to be attempts to guide and shift the *economy* in order to meet the requirements that some ideology claimed were necessary.

Other twentieth century disasters had equally strong roots in economic ideas. It is hard to see World War II in the absence of Adolf Hitler's *idée fixe* that the Germans needed a better land-labor ratio—more “living space”, more *lebensraum*—if they were to be a strong nation. Underlying Hitler's conquest of Czechoslovakia and Poland, and his attack on the Soviet Union is the ghost of Malthus: the strongly-held belief that national numbers and national power depend ultimately on the possession of land for farms.

It is impossible to understand Hitler's actions during World War II without recognizing that Hitler deeply believed in his insane combination of Malthus and Darwin: that ultimately the numbers of the German people were limited by the land that they could occupy, and that without more land and more numbers the Germans would not long survive as a people. They would be swamped by the Slavs, by the Americans—and by the Jews.

On a less genocidal—though still a genocidal—level, economic ideologies were the mainspring underlying many other of the cruel catastrophes of the twentieth century. Beliefs that overseas colonies provided powerful

economic advantages fueled great power rivalries before World War I.²⁴ Beliefs that somehow Germany's prosperity and growth was in danger if it did not somehow obtain colonies and colonial markets underlay the German decision to construct its pre-World War I High Seas Fleet, and the consequent lining-up of Britain on the anti-German side of the Pre-World War I alliances.

Imperial Japan drew from its own and to a much lesser extent the German militarist traditions, but also from its understanding of the economics of imperialism. The Japanese twentieth-century wave of conquest drew inspiration from *economic* theories that a country could not maintain full employment and rapid growth without the "vent for surplus" production and investment provided by a colonial empire.

By 1936 Japan had a colonial empire consisting of many Pacific islands, Taiwan, Korea, and Manchuria. Then the army decided to add much of China to the colonial empire; the far eastern phase of World War II began; and perhaps five million Chinese civilians died.

[Figure: Shanghai Massacre]

So a very important part of twentieth century history is the fact that the causes of the bloodshed were in large part *economic ideologies*: beliefs about how the world worked, and how the economy should be organized.

²⁴ In spite of Norman Angell's strong and well argued dissent in *The Great Illusion*.