

US Media's Anti-Russian Numbers Game

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On Sept. 14th, US Representative Adam Kinzinger of Illinois was invited on CNN's "The Lead" as an expert on Russia. Without so much as a pause, he stated the following: "Donald Trump says we have to work with Russians in some of the toughest places of the world, but frankly, like in Syria, Russia has responsibility for killing almost half a million people, they are tearing apart [Ukraine and Georgia](#)."

The words "In Syria, Russia has responsibility for killing half a million people" are indefensibly false. The total war dead for the entire conflict, which began in 2011, is estimated at around 470,000, though some estimates are slightly higher or [lower](#).

For Russia to be responsible for anything near 500,000 (half a million) people, Russia would have to be to blamed for nearly every single death in the entire conflict. Though Russia has aligned with the internationally recognized Syrian Arab Republic, Russia's direct military involvement did not even begin until September 30th, 2015, over 4 years after the war began.

Even if one were to indirectly blame Russia for every death at the hands of the Syrian Arab Army, there is still no way the number could be so high. Kinzinger's assesses the Syrian conflict as if it has only one side.

Were any Syrians killed by the Al-Nusra front, which has been funded by [Saudi Arabia](#)? Were any Syrians killed by ISIS, some of whose members received training within the [United States](#)? Were any Syrians killed by the "moderate rebels" being directly supported by the United States?

According to Kinzinger, the CIA's training camps in Jordan, the constant inflow of foreign fighters, are all somehow irrelevant. In his bizarre fantasy world, the only party that is responsible for any deaths is Russia.

Despite this statement being wildly inaccurate, CNN's Jake Tapper did not even question it. He simply proceeded with the interview. One must ask, what would Tapper's response have been if a similar allegation had been made against Barack Obama or Hillary Clinton? Would a wild, extreme allegation against US leaders be simply allowed to pass?

The Numbers Game and Soviet History

Interestingly, numbers and statistics are the basis for a great deal of Anti-Russian propaganda in the United States. For example, the phrase "Stalin was worse than Hitler" was often repeated on American television during the onset of the Ukraine crisis. The phrase

served as a passive apology for the US alliance with pro-Hitler elements in the Right Sector and Azov Battalion.

Even if every allegation against Stalin is accepted as absolute fact, the statement has obvious historical flaws.

Hitler is universally known to have rounded up people on the basis of their race or ethnicity, put them on to trains, and transported them to death camps where they were exterminated in homicidal gas chambers. Even Stalin's harshest critics have never accused him of such a deed.

Those who compare the USSR's gulags to Hitler's concentration camps ignore the fact that the gulags did not have gas chambers. In fact, most gulag prisoners were released within a few years and returned to normal life. The rate of incarceration in the USSR during the height of what some historians call the "Great Terror" was much lower than the current rate of imprisonment in the [USA](#).

Furthermore, those who argue that the moving of Soviet citizens on the basis of their nationality during the Second World War amounted to "ethnic cleansing," have never alleged that any ethnic groups or nationalities were exterminated. The policy of relocating Soviet citizens on the basis of their nationality was arguably very effective in defeating the Nazi invaders, and isolating pro-Nazi insurgents in certain regions. The policy also saved many Soviet Jews from being captured by the Nazi invaders.

The allegation that "Stalin was worse than Hitler" is based on calculated death numbers. The fact that starvation took place throughout the Soviet Union during the early 1930s is said to be responsible for millions of deaths, and these numbers are said to be larger than the number of those who died in Hitler's concentration camps.

The argument falls to pieces when one recognizes that problematic economic policies are simply not the equivalent of death camps. Prior to the Russian Revolution deaths due to malnutrition occurred on a regular basis. During the early 1920s when the Soviet Union faced an economic blockade from the western countries, there was also mass starvation in the USSR. It wasn't until the collectivization of agriculture, starting in the early 1930s, that Russia and the surrounding countries developed an effective, modern farm system. Collective Farms sold their produce to the state after the middle class landowners, or "Kulaks" were eliminated from the economy. Many Kulaks violently resisted efforts to adopt a collective farm system. The Red Army was dispatched on many occasions to fight against middle class peasants who took up arms to keep the primitive, ineffective, starvation creating farm system intact. After the collectivization, as Stalin's Five Year Plans moved forward, ox-drawn plows were replaced with modern tractors across the countryside. During this period the population of the USSR gained universal housing, employment, running water, and electricity. The huts of rural villages were replaced with modern apartment buildings. In Ukraine, the famous Dneiper Dam was constructed, which at the time, was the largest hydro-electric power plant in the world. Stalin ultimately brought Russia out of its primitive agricultural system and transformed it into an industrial power. The chaotic events of the early 1930s resulted in famine and starvation, but the ultimate result was a much stronger and effective agricultural system.

Critics of Stalin claim that he collectivized too rapidly, causing chaos in the countryside which led to a famine. Trotsky's writings allege that Stalin "zigzagged" between the slogans

of “peasant enrich yourself” and “abolish the Kulaks as a class.” Ukrainian Nationalists point out that the Orthodox Church was persecuted in the process, in response to allegations of supporting the Kulaks. Others allege that the Red Army committed atrocities throughout the process of collectivization. Even if all of these allegations are true, they do not make “Stalin worse than Hitler.” To equate “forced collectivization” of agriculture resulting in chaos with death camps and gas chambers is not historical honesty.

The only basis for making this claim so is to compare numbers of deaths in the early 1930s famine with the numbers who perished in Nazi concentration camps. Even this faulty logic has its flaws. There is no universally recognized manner in which the number of deaths that took place during the famines is calculated. Anti-Stalin historians present a variety of figures that are many millions apart, based on many different methods of determining how many people died. Some figures presented by Anti-Stalin historians go as far to include children who were not born because parents did [procreate](#). The equating of Stalin with Hitler is not logical, especially when one takes into account the huge economic achievements that also took place during the 1930s. The life expectancy of the Soviet people nearly doubled. The end result of the collectivization was the creation of an agricultural system that was far more efficient than any that had ever existed in Ukraine, Russia, or any of the surrounding countries. In order to create a new agricultural system, and take solid measures to end starvation, Soviet leaders felt it was necessary expropriate middle class peasants.

When details are presented, even accepting the anti-Stalin assumptions and narrative, this often repeated phrase is revealed to be quite a sweeping generalization. Much like Kinzinger’s fantastic and fictional statistic regarding Syria, the phrase “Stalin was worse than Hitler” has obvious factual weaknesses.

What About Clinton’s Man Made Famine?

Furthermore, if problematic economic policies are the equivalent of genocide, as western media alleges, why is Bill Clinton not considered responsible for a genocide of Russians during the 1990s? From 1992 to 2006, Russia’s population decreased by 6.6 million people, roughly 10 percent. Why did the population decline so rapidly? The policies being pushed on Russia by the unpopular President, Boris Yeltsin, who was backed and funded by the Clinton administration, had catastrophic economic results. According to widely respected author Naomi Klein, during the Yeltsin years “more than 80 percent of Russian farms had gone bankrupt and roughly seventy thousand state factories had closed creating an epidemic of unemployment.”

Meanwhile, drug addiction increased by 900%, HIV infection went from a mere 50,000 to millions, and the suicide rate doubled. Under Clinton’s direction, Boris Yeltsin privatized state run industries, eliminated social services and pensions, and made life unlivable for millions of Russians. According to Naomi Klein, only 6% of the Russian population supported these policies, but the Clinton administration financed Yeltsin’s political party and worked to secure his election and re-election as President. The term “Economic Genocide” was used by Russian Vice-President Alexander V. Rutskoi and US economist Andre Gunder Frank to describe what the Yeltsin administration carried out, at the behest of the United States.

While Russian history books available in the United States are filled with extreme allegations against Stalin, barely any talk about the “Man-Made Famine” of the 1990s. Estimates about how many people died due to the Yeltsin-Clinton policies are not presented. No talk of a “man made famine” caused by Yeltsin and Clinton is raised in western media.

The next time American audiences hear a statistic raised by an anti-Russian politician or pundit, it should be treated with suspicion. The Pentagon's anti-Russian propaganda numbers game is largely based on extreme assumptions. Frivolous allegations are repeated without any thought or challenge, as the US public is psyched up into a hostile, anti-Russian mood.

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