Soviet German War Essay, Research Paper

The Soviet-German War is the most brutal episode of the most vicious war that mankind has ever seen (Clark 1). During the “Great Patriotic War”, as Joseph Stalin coins it, the Soviet Union emerges through pure tenacity as one of the world’s great superpowers. Although Stalin and the USSR emerge victorious, the sacrifices made are enormous (Clark 446). Estimates show between 20-25 million Soviets die from 1941-1945. Only 7-8 million Germans die during this same period (Encarta). Many of these deaths are a direct result of the brilliant (sometimes insane) chess match between two of the most tyrannical leaders in history: Adolf Hitler and Joseph Stalin. Even today, some people ponder which leader fits the anti-Christ description best. The finest way to analyze the minds of these two leaders is to examine each dictator’s rise to power, their use of propaganda as a means to support their “game” of war, and the initial offensive campaigns that each dictator launches.

Born on December 21, 1877, Iosif Vissarionovich Dzhugashvili’s father is a drunkard and his mother is a washer struggling to support the family. Dzhugashvili will later be known to the world as Joseph Stalin (Encarta). Stalin’s mother, Ekaterina Georgievna, is a dedicated member of the Orthodox Church and enters him into the Seminary at Tifilis(Georgia) in 1894 for the study of priesthood in the Georgian Orthodox church. Soon after Stalin becomes part of the illegal Marxist movement (Encarta). The young Stalin quickly rises to the rank of leader of his own Marxist circle. In May of 1899, he is expelled from school just short of graduation in which later communist literature criedits to “political balance” (Encarta). By this time, Joseph Stalin has become more immersed in his role as a professional agitator of the system. While working as an accountant in Tbilisi, Stalin joins the Social-Democratic Workers’ Party. In 1900 and 1901 he leads railway strikes and demonstrations which catches the attention of the imperial police. He is captured for the first time and is exiled to Siberia in 1903; but the feisty Stalin escapes and by 1904 he is back in Georgia. Between the period of 1903 and 1913, the imperial police capture Stalin a total of seven times for revolutionary activity. He escapes numerous times to come back and wreak chaos on the Czarist government. When the RSDLP split into the Menshevik and Bolshevik factions, Stalin’s need for disruptance leads him to the Bolsheviks, the more militant of the groups(Encarta)

In late 1905, he travels as a Caucasian delegate to the secret Bolshevik conference in Finland. It is here that he meets Vladimir Lenin. Stalin quickly becomes one of Lenin’s most trusted lieutenants; his main priority going to raising money for the party. Lenin promotes Stalin to the Central Committee, which is the Bolsheviks leading body in 1912 (Encarta). During this time Iosif Vissarionovich Dzhugashvili adopts the name Joseph Stalin, which in Russian Stalin means “man of steel” (Encarta). By this time the Stalin that the world knows best begins to evolve.

In 1922, the Central Committee of the new Bolshevik government elects Stalin as Secretary General. Lenin then suffers his first major stroke. This is the most important turning point in Stalin’s rise to power. With Lenin bedridden for the last years of his life, Stalin uses his closeness to Lenin as a means of quickly rising past the normal orders of succession that Lenin put in place. In the last moments of his life, Lenin begins to realize that Stalin is an aggressive tyrant who will stop at nothing for absolute power (Encarta). Lenin’s final political “testament” displays his doubts about having Stalin as the Secretary General and even asks that Stalin is removed from office. Lenin also suggests that one of his other understudies, Trotsky, should replace him. Lenin’s testament is successfully suppressed by Stalin and is Lenin’s wishes are not made known until after his death. With Lenin dead, Stalin easily becomes the ruthless dictator that rivals Hitler.

While there has always been evidence that Stalin’s destiny is insanity, Hitler’s childhood is nowhere near indicative of what is to follow. Born on April 20, 1989, in a small village in Austria-Hungary, Adolf Hitler’s father is an Austrian customs agent who rises to considerable status. Therefore, Hitler’s childhood is relatively comfortable (Encarta). The only indication of the future Hitler is his strong will. He is a bright but moody student who loves the arts. Hitler’s erratic behavior causes him to flunk out of secondary school at the equivalent of the ninth grade level. In 1907, Hitler is rejected from the Vienna Academy of Fine Arts(Encarta). This is the beginning of Hitler’s journey from dejected youngster to brilliant, yet psychotic man. Between the 1908-1914, Hitler spent his life as a loner, moving from locations often and selling paintings for a living. At one point Hitler lives in a homeless shelter(Encarta). When World War I erupts in 1914, Hitler eagerly volunteers for service in the German army on the Western Front. On legend states that upon hearing the news of war Hitler sinks to his knees in jubilation. Most will agree that this is definitely a sign of an imbalance in his thinking process. After his unit, the Bavarian Regiment’s first battle against the British and Belgians near Pyres, 2500 of the 3000 men in Hitler’s regiment are killed, wounded, or missing(Encarta). Hitler escapes without serious injury. This becomes a similar pattern in Hitler’s war years. Either from a result of his heroism or luckiness, Hitler earns an Iron Cross First Class in 1918; which is a high medal to receive for a person who never ranks above Private First Class(Encarta). The savageness of war causes Hitler to hate races other than Germans and while recovering from a mustard gas bomb Hitler decides to devote his life to the destruction of “inferior” races (Encarta)

Hitler’s makes his talent as an orator evident to his officers. After the war, he is selected for special training to speak to returning prisoners of war. Hitler soon learns the power of persuasive speech. His oratorical successes lead him to a special position as an observer of political groups in Munich(Encarta). One of the groups he observes is the German Workers’ Party; later renamed the National Socialist German Workers’ (Nazi) Party.

Hitler becomes intrigued by the party and soon joins. This marks his entrance into politics. Through advertising in the anti-Semitism newspaper, people come to the meetings to hear Hitler speak. In the summer of 1920, Hitler is instrumental in choosing the symbol which is an infamous symbol of hatred; the swastika. By 1921, Hitler is named Fuhrer(absolute leader) of the party (Encarta). Adolf Hitler quickly uses his position to spread the party’s influence throughout Munich and Bavaria. Soon Munich is the center of right-wing opposition to the new national government (Encarta). The basis of the party is that democracy and socialism are ineffective and the only way to prosperity goes through dictatorship. Hitler’s process towards absolute power begins on November 8, 1923, when Hitler and 600 armed Nazis raid a Beer Hall in Munich the head of the Bavarian government is speaking. Hitler takes several officials hostage in an attempt to takeover the provisional government. However, the attempt to revolt fails and Hitler is sentenced to five years in jail. The resilent Hitler is released one year later.

After his release from prison in December 1924, Hitler rebuilds the National Socialist German Workers party (Nazi) and waits for the opportunity to regain national influence. That opportunity comes from the Great Depression of 1929. He promises unemployed citizens jobs and return of national prosperity to the country. With the support of his party, Hitler is elected to the position of Chancellor in 1930. He wastes no time in establishing the building blocks of the greatest autrocity the world has ever seen.