

Picture one of America's most beautiful cities, say San Francisco or maybe New York. You're strolling home from work on a Friday evening when without warning enemy cruise missiles streak from the sky and strike an iconic downtown hotel like the Fairmont or Waldorf Astoria. With a monstrous thump, ornate doors and windows are blown apart, and the streets become a chaos of flames, broken masonry, and dazed pedestrians. If such a thing happened in our country, the U.S. would be placed on an immediate war footing, demanding that our allies line up behind us. In fact, we wouldn't even have to demand it; there would be an outpouring of sympathy and support from around the globe.

Now shift your gaze to Ukraine, specifically to Odesa, Ukraine's city of faded elegance on the shores of the Black Sea. A place of old world charm, its boulevards lined with a wild mix of belle époque, gothic revival, socialist realism, and more. One of Odesa's quintessential buildings is the Bristol Hotel, a five story, pale pink palace, erected in the late 1800s, with the frills and froth of a baroque birthday cake. It has the resonance of the Plaza or the Ritz-Carlton, and like them played host to literary nobility like Pushkin, Theodore Dreiser and others. Of course in 1917 the Soviets closed it down but later reopened it as the predictably



revolutionary "Red Hotel". These days it's been the go-to meeting place for VIPs, spooks, UN nabobs, oligarchs and the like. Or at least it was until the barbarians in Moscow decided to blow it up yesterday.

Odesa's mayor, a checkered character sometimes accused of being too close to Russian business interests, rose to the occasion in an online video last night. Speaking coldly to the Russian people in their language he said "If you only knew how much Odesa hates you, not just hates you but despises you. You're fighting little kids, Orthodox churches... your rockets even fly into cemeteries... you are just creatures without kith or kin, morality and values, and without a future. You know us Odesans very poorly. You will not break us, you will just make us more angry."

