

TOTALITARIAN RULE

[1930s and 1940s -- the Third Reich and Stalinist Russia -- conformity of life, political police, concentration camps, and all the other horrors disseminated by these regimes]

I. An Entirely New Experience

- Totalitarian power grows beyond all standards of normal politics: it gains incalculable and sinister dimensions; under its dominion life falls into confusion and insecurity of all kinds not known previously. Human beings find themselves not only oppressed and confined in their freedom but also delivered up to the regime, mercilessly exploited by it, and finally, as it were inadvertently, criminally involved in the regime's activity.
- Everywhere it goes against the most basic law of international diplomatic relations and economic life, destroys the ordered domestic government, openly goes back on its promises, at every step violates all loyalty and faith, is mendacious, unbalanced, repressed, unprofessional -- nevertheless, totalitarian rule flourished, secured its position, manages to win over large sections of the population though they resist at first and can even place its opponents in its service.

II. Perversion of Thought and Social Life

- Persons under totalitarian rule are always in the ranks, always under pressure. They may no longer show themselves as they really are but are constrained constantly to play prescribed roles in an atmosphere of false emotionality, joylessness, mistrust; and they must take care to put their loyalty "to the test."
- Not only does the regime restrict their freedom but tries as well to overpower them. This situation holds true for the declared adherents of the regime even more than for its opponents; for the adherents must always be anxiously concerned to move along whatever general line is currently in favor.

III. An Artificial, Synthetic Society

- No corner of public life or private life offers refuge from control; one can inadvertently lay oneself open to suspicion anywhere. But what is worse is that concepts, words, and values are robbed of their traditional meanings, and moral standards become disordered. Thus, though dictatorial procedures, open force, and the deprivation of freedom are also part of totalitarian rule, its true characteristic is the creeping assault on men through the perversion of thought and social life.
- The totalitarian claim to power is not confined to the areas for which the state is responsible but is allowed to encompass all areas, and to have an exclusive voice even where the political regime can at best play an ancillary role-as, for instance, in family life, in scientific research, and in art.

IV. An Assault on the Nature of Man

- Totalitarian rule destroys the old social elements and social processes and sets new, artificial ones in motion. Groups that are considered harmful are expunged; and attempt is made to form new elites, and there is no hesitation in modifying the personality of the individual by means of drugs and surgery. In this spirit the National Socialists were eager to create all new society by means of biological breeding and selection.
- A typical example of the fundamental character of totalitarian intervention is the circumstance that the Russian Bolsheviks were not content with the creation of a new marital law but believed themselves capable of abolishing altogether this basic institution of human life. It is no less characteristic, however, that this attempt failed because it amounted to an assault on the very nature of man.

V. Indoctrination

- Indoctrination is training toward specific modes of thought and conduct that are predetermined and can therefore be calculated to fit a particular function.
- The successfully indoctrinated person is prepared with prefabricated answers to all questions directed at him, and he reacts to certain stimuli (such as "capitalists" or Jews) in clearly foreseeable ways. He sees the world exclusively from the point of view and in the light of the ideology and is therefore able in each situation to act on his own initiative in whatever way is required by the consequences of the system.

VI. The Pivot of World History

- Communism and National Socialism both grew out of the concept that the existence of a class and a people respectively was threatened, not by any constellation of political powers - - which might have been overcome through available political opportunities -- but by historical dangers, as it were the suppression of the proletariat by capitalism, the dilution of the "blood strength of the Nordic race" through Judaism. It was believed in both movements that they stood at the pivot of world history, and they considered themselves chosen to bring about, by means of political measures, the turning point that they felt to be due.
- The National Socialists explained Germany's defeat in the First World War and its consequences by the theory of the racial-biological decay of Nordic man, who was taken to be the creator and carrier of all culture. The "nordification" of the German people and the eradication of subversive Judaism were considered to create the necessary pre-conditions for the "thousand-year Reich" of the Germans and therefore for the final supremacy of the Nordic race.

VII. Complete Knowledge and the Force of Willpower

- Whoever considers himself thus the sole possessor of the complete truth must necessarily feel himself duty bound no longer to accept the still incomplete actuality of the world and social life but to re-create it according to the truth; and if there is no other way, to force mankind to be happy and accept the truth.
- Because it was claimed that Hitler fulfilled the vital law of the German people, his personal will as Führer was granted the right of unrestricted realization. Totalitarian subjectivism, the unlimited claim of a single person to dominate an entire people, found its undisguised expression in the sentence, "Hitler is Germany -- Germany is Hitler." Since the authentic will of the people manifested itself solely in the will of the Führer, Hitler could also act "against the subjective opinions of individual members of the nation and a misguided popular mood."
- On this point, then, the National Socialist concepts led to the same practical ends as did the Communist ones: the totalitarian regime imposes on the people what is allegedly the people's real will.