



JE KINDLE-NOTITIES VOOR:

The Origins Of Totalitarianism (Harvest Book Book 244)

door Hannah Arendt

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91 Highlights

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Totalitarian politics—far from being simply antisemitic or racist or imperialist or communist—use and abuse their own ideological and political elements until the basis of factual reality, from which the ideologies originally derived their strength and their propaganda value—the reality of class struggle, for instance, or the interest conflicts between Jews and their neighbors—have all but disappeared. It certainly

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The very word “expansion” has disappeared from our political vocabulary, which now uses the words “extension” or, critically, “overextension” to cover a very similar meaning. Politically more important, private investments in distant lands, originally the prime mover of imperialist developments, are today surpassed by foreign aid, economic and military, provided directly by governments. (In 1966 alone, the American government spent \$4.6 billion in economic aid and foreign credits plus \$1.3 billion a year in military aid in the decade 1956–1965, while the outflow of private capital in 1965 was \$3.69 billion and in 1966 \$3.91 billion.)¹ This means that the era of the so-called dollar imperialism, the specifically American version of pre-World War II imperialism that was politically the least dangerous, is definitely over. Private investments—“the activities of a thousand U.S. companies operating in a hundred foreign countries” and “concentrated in the most modern, the most strategic, the most rapidly growing sectors of the foreign economy”—create many political problems even if they are not protected by the power of the nation,² but foreign aid, even if given for purely humanitarian reasons, is political by nature precisely because it is not motivated by the search for profit.

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Billions of dollars have been spent in political and economic wastelands where corruption and incompetence have caused them to disappear before anything productive could be started, and this money is no longer the “superfluous” capital that could not be invested productively and profitably in the home country but the weird outgrowth of sheer abundance that the rich countries, the haves as against the have-nots,

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nots, can afford to lose. In other words, the profit motive, whose importance for imperialist policies was frequently overrated even in the past, has now completely disappeared; only very rich and very powerful countries can afford to take the huge losses involved in imperialism.

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It probably is too early, and certainly beyond the scope of my considerations, to analyze and ascertain with any degree of confidence these recent trends. What seems uncomfortably clear even now is the strength of certain, seemingly uncontrollable processes that tend to shatter all hopes for constitutional development in the new nations and to undermine the republican institutions in the old. Examples are too many to permit even cursory enumeration, but the rise of an “invisible government” by secret services, whose reach into domestic affairs, the cultural, educational, and economic sectors of our life, has only recently been revealed, is too ominous a sign to be passed under silence. There is no reason to doubt Mr. Allan W. Dulles’ statement that Intelligence in this country has enjoyed since 1947 “a more influential position in our government than Intelligence enjoys in any other government of the world,”³ nor is there any reason to believe that this influence has decreased since he made this statement in 1958. The deadly danger of “invisible government” to the institutions of the “visible government” has often been pointed out; what is perhaps less well known is the intimate traditional connection between imperialist politics and rule by “invisible government” and secret agents. It is an error to believe that the creation of a net of secret services in this country after World War II was the answer to a direct threat to its national survival by the espionage network of Soviet Russia; the war had propelled the United States to the position of the greatest world power and it was this world power, rather than national existence, that was challenged by the revolutionary power of Moscow-directed communism.⁴

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In our context, developments in the Soviet Union, especially after 1948—the year of Zhdanov’s mysterious death and the “Leningrad affair”—are of greater importance. For the first time after the Great Purge, Stalin had a great number of high and highest officials executed, and we know for certain that this was planned as the beginning of another nationwide purge. This would have been touched off by the “Doctors’ plot” had Stalin’s death not intervened. A group of mostly Jewish physicians were accused of having plotted “to wipe out the leading cadres of the USSR.”³⁰ Everything that went on in Russia between 1948 and January 1953, when the “Doctors’ plot” was being “discovered,” bore a striking and ominous similarity to the preparations of the Great Purge during the thirties: the death of Zhdanov and the Leningrad purge corresponded to Kirov’s no less mysterious death in 1934 which was immediately followed by a kind of preparatory purge “of all former oppositionists who remained in the Party.”³¹ Moreover, the very content of the absurd accusation against the physicians, that they would kill off people in leading positions all over the country, must have filled with fearful forebodings all those who were acquainted with Stalin’s method of accusing a fictitious enemy of the crime he himself was about to commit. (The best known example is of course his accusation that Tukhachevski conspired with Germany at the very moment when Stalin was contemplating an alliance with the Nazis.) Obviously, in 1952 Stalin’s entourage was much wiser to what his words actually meant than they could have been in the thirties, and the very wording of the accusation must have spread panic among all higher officials of the regime. This panic may still be the most plausible explanation of Stalin’s death, the mysterious circumstances surrounding it, and the swift closing of ranks in the higher echelons of the party, notoriously ridden by strife and intrigues, during the first months of the succession crisis. However little we know of the details of this story, we know more than enough to support my original conviction that such “wrecking operations” as the Great Purge were not isolated episodes, not excesses of the regime provoked by extraordinary circumstances, but that they were an institution of terror and to be expected at regular intervals—unless, of course, the nature of the regime itself was changed.

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The most dramatic new element in this last purge, which Stalin planned in the last years of his life, was a decisive shift in ideology, the introduction of a Jewish world conspiracy. For years, the ground for this change had been carefully laid in a number of trials in the satellite countries—the Rajk trial in Hungary, the Ana Pauker affair in Rumania, and, in 1952, the Slansky trial in Czechoslovakia. In these preparatory measures, high party officials were singled out because of their “Jewish bourgeois” origins and accused of Zionism; this accusation was gradually changed to implicate notoriously non-Zionist agencies (especially the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee), in order to indicate that all Jews were Zionists and all Zionist groups “hirelings of American imperialism.”

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There was of course nothing new in the “crime” of Zionism, but as the campaign progressed and began to center on Jews in the Soviet Union, another significant change took place: Jews now stood accused of “cosmopolitanism” rather than Zionism, and the pattern of accusations that developed out of this slogan followed ever more closely the Nazi pattern of a Jewish world conspiracy in the sense of the Elders of Zion. It now became startlingly clear how deep an impression this mainstay of Nazi ideology must have made on Stalin—the first indications of this had been in evidence ever since the Hitler-Stalin pact—partly, to be sure, because of its obvious propaganda value in Russia as in all of the satellite countries, where anti-Jewish feeling was widespread and anti-Jewish propaganda had always enjoyed great popularity, but partly also because this type of a fictitious world conspiracy provided an ideologically more suitable background for totalitarian claims to world rule than Wall Street, capitalism, and imperialism. The open, unashamed adoption of what had become to the whole world the most prominent sign of Nazism was the last compliment Stalin paid to his late colleague and rival in total domination with whom, much to his chagrin, he had not been able to come to a lasting agreement.

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In other words, neither oppression nor exploitation as such is ever the main cause for resentment; wealth without visible function is much more intolerable because nobody can understand why it should be tolerated. Antisemitism reached its climax when Jews had similarly lost their public functions and their influence, and were left with nothing but their wealth. When Hitler came to power, the German banks were already almost judenrein (and it was here that Jews had held key positions for more than a hundred years) and German Jewry as a whole, after a long steady growth in social status and numbers, was declining so rapidly that statisticians predicted its disappearance in a few decades. Statistics, it is true, do not necessarily point to real historical processes; yet it is noteworthy that to a statistician Nazi persecution and extermination could look like a senseless acceleration of a process which would probably have come about in any case. The same holds true for nearly all Western European countries. The Dreyfus Affair exploded not under the Second Empire, when French Jewry was at the height of its prosperity and influence, but under the Third Republic when Jews had all but vanished from important positions (though not from the political scene). Austrian antisemitism became violent not under the reign of Mettemich and Franz Joseph, but in the postwar Austrian Republic when it was perfectly obvious that hardly any other group had suffered the same loss of influence and prestige through the disappearance of the Hapsburg monarchy.

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What makes men obey or tolerate real power and, on the other hand, hate people who have wealth without power, is the rational instinct that power has a certain function and is of some general use. Even exploitation and oppression still make society work and establish some kind of order. Only wealth without power or aloofness without a policy are felt to be parasitical, useless, revolting, because such conditions cut all the threads which tie men together.

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A fundamental difference between modern dictatorships and all other tyrannies of the past is that terror is no longer used as a means to exterminate and frighten opponents, but as an instrument to rule masses of people who are perfectly obedient.

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There is, therefore, a temptation to return to an explanation which automatically discharges the victim of responsibility: it seems quite adequate to a reality in which nothing strikes us more forcefully than the utter innocence of the individual caught in the horror machine and his utter inability to change his fate. Terror, however, is only in the last instance of its development a mere form of government. In order to establish a totalitarian regime, terror must be presented as an instrument for carrying out a specific ideology; and that ideology must have won the adherence of many, and even a majority, before terror can be stabilized. The point for the historian is that the Jews, before becoming the main victims of modern terror, were the center of Nazi ideology. And an ideology which has to persuade and mobilize people cannot choose its victim arbitrarily. In other words, if a patent forgery like the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion" is believed by so many people that it can become the text of a whole political movement, the task of the historian is no longer to discover a forgery. Certainly it is not to invent explanations which dismiss the chief political and historical fact of the matter: that the forgery is being believed. This fact is more important than the (historically speaking, secondary) circumstance that it is forgery. The

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The schematic outline of the simultaneous rise and decline of the European nation-state system and European Jewry unfolds roughly in the following stages: The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries witnessed the slow development of nation-states under the tutelage of absolute monarchs. Individual Jews everywhere rose out of deep obscurity into the sometimes glamorous, and always influential, position of court Jews who financed state affairs and handled the financial transactions of their princes. This development affected the masses who continued to live in a more or less feudal order as little as it affected the Jewish people as a whole. After the French Revolution, which abruptly changed political conditions on the whole European continent, nation-states in the modern sense emerged whose business transactions required a considerably larger amount of capital and credit than the court Jews had ever been asked to place at a prince's disposal. Only the combined wealth of the wealthier strata of Western and Central European Jewry, which they entrusted to some prominent Jewish bankers for such purposes, could suffice to meet the new enlarged governmental needs. This period brought with it the granting of privileges, which up to then had been necessary only for court Jews, to the larger wealthy class,

which had managed to settle in the more important urban and financial centers in the eighteenth century. Finally emancipation was granted in all full-fledged nation-states and withheld only in those countries where Jews, because of their numbers and the general backwardness of these regions, had not been able to organize themselves into a special separate group whose economic function was financial support of their government. Since this intimate relationship between national government and Jews had rested on the indifference of the bourgeoisie to politics in general and state finance in particular, this period came to an end with the rise of imperialism at the end of the nineteenth century when capitalist business in the form of expansion could no longer be carried out without active political help and intervention by the state. Imperialism, on the other hand, undermined the very foundations of the nation-state and introduced into the European comity of nations the competitive spirit of business concerns. In the early decades of this development, Jews lost their exclusive position in state business to imperialistically minded businessmen; they declined in importance as a group, although individual Jews kept their influence as financial advisers and as inter-European middlemen. These Jews, however—in contrast to the nineteenth-century state bankers—had even less need of the Jewish community at large, notwithstanding its wealth, than the court Jews of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and therefore they frequently cut themselves off completely from the Jewish community. The Jewish communities were no longer financially organized, and although individual Jews in high positions remained representative of Jewry as a whole in the eyes of the Gentile world, there was little if any material reality behind this. As a group, Western Jewry disintegrated together with the nation-state during the decades preceding the outbreak of the first World War. The rapid decline of Europe after the war found them already deprived of their former power, atomized into a herd of wealthy individuals. In an imperialist age, Jewish wealth had become insignificant; to a Europe with no sense of balance of power between its nations and of inter-European solidarity, the non-national, inter-European Jewish element became an object of universal hatred because of its useless wealth, and of contempt because of its lack of power.

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For a long time the absolute monarchies looked about society for a class upon which to rely as securely as the feudal monarchy had upon the nobility. In France an incessant struggle between the guilds and the monarchy, which wanted to incorporate them into the state system, had been going on since the fifteenth century. The most interesting of these experiments were doubtless the rise of mercantilism and the attempts of the absolute state to get an absolute monopoly over national business and industry. The resulting disaster, and the bankruptcy brought about by the concerted resistance of the rising bourgeoisie, are sufficiently well known.⁵

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The turning point had been in the seventeenth century when, during the Thirty Years' War, precisely because of their dispersion these small, insignificant moneylenders could guarantee the necessary provisions to the mercenary armies of the war-lords in far-away lands and with the aid of small peddlers buy victuals in entire provinces. Since these wars remained half-feudal, more or less private affairs of the princes, involving no interest of other classes and enlisting no help from the people, the Jews' gain in status was very limited and hardly visible. But the number of court Jews increased because now every feudal household needed the equivalent of the court Jew. As

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Representatives of the nation, whether Jacobins from Robespierre to Clemenceau, or representatives of Central European reactionary governments from Metternich to Bismarck, had one thing in common: they were all sincerely concerned with the “balance of power” in Europe. They tried, of course, to shift this balance to the advantage of their respective countries, but they never dreamed of seizing a monopoly over the continent or of annihilating their neighbors completely. The Jews could not only be used in the interest of this precarious balance, they even became a kind of symbol of the common interest of the European nations.

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Of all European peoples, the Jews had been the only one without a state of their own and had been, precisely for this reason, so eager and so suitable for alliances with governments and states as such, no matter what these governments or states might represent. On the other hand, the Jews had no political tradition or experience, and were as little aware of the tension between society and state as they were of the obvious risks and power-possibilities of their new role.

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The history of the relationship between Jews and governments is rich in examples of how quickly Jewish bankers switched their allegiance from one government to the next even after revolutionary changes. It took the French Rothschilds in 1848 hardly twenty-four hours to transfer their services from the government of Louis Philippe to the new short-lived French Republic and again to Napoleon III. The same process repeated itself, at a slightly slower pace, after the downfall of the Second Empire and the establishment of the Third Republic. In Germany this sudden and easy change was symbolized, after the revolution of 1918, in the financial policies of the Warburgs on one hand and the shifting political ambitions of Walter Rathenau on the other.¹⁶ More

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The political emancipation of the Jews at the turn of the eighteenth century in some countries, and its discussion in the rest of Central and Western Europe, resulted first of all in a decisive change in their attitude toward the state, which was somehow symbolized in the rise of the house of Rothschild. The new policy of these court Jews, who were the first to become full-fledged state bankers, came to light when they were no longer content to serve one particular prince or government through their international relationships with court Jews of other countries, but decided to establish themselves internationally and serve simultaneously and concurrently the governments in Germany, France, Great Britain, Italy and Austria. To a large extent, this unprecedented course was a reaction of the Rothschilds to the dangers of real emancipation, which, together with equality, threatened to nationalize the Jewries of the respective countries, and to destroy the very inter-European advantages on which the position of Jewish bankers had rested. Old Meyer Amschel Rothschild, the founder of the house, must have recognized that the inter-European status of Jews was no longer secure and that he had better try to realize this unique international position in his own family. The establishment of his five sons in the five financial capitals of Europe—Frankfurt, Paris, London, Naples and Vienna—was his ingenious way out of the embarrassing emancipation of the Jews.¹⁹ The Rothschilds had entered upon their spectacular career as the financial servants of the Kurfürst of Hessen, one of the outstanding moneylenders of his time, who taught them

business practice and provided them with many of their customers. Their great advantage was that they lived in Frankfurt, the only great urban center from which Jews had never been expelled and where they formed nearly 10 per cent of the city's population at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The Rothschilds started as court Jews without being under the jurisdiction of either a prince or the Free City, but directly under the authority of the distant Emperor in Vienna. They thus combined all the advantages of the Jewish status in the Middle Ages with those of their own times, and were much less dependent upon nobility or other local authorities than any of their fellow court Jews. The later financial activities of the house, the tremendous fortune they amassed, and their even greater symbolic fame since the early nineteenth century, are sufficiently well known.²⁰ They entered the scene of big business during the last years of the Napoleonic wars when—from 1811 to 1816—almost half the English subventions to the Continental powers went through their hands. When after the defeat of Napoleon the Continent needed great government loans everywhere for the reorganization of its state machines and the erection of financial structures on the model of the Bank of England, the Rothschilds enjoyed almost a monopoly in the handling of state loans. This lasted for three generations during which they succeeded in defeating all Jewish and non-Jewish competitors in the field. "The House of Rothschild became," as Capefigue put it,²¹ "the chief treasurer of the Holy Alliance."

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It was precisely the Rothschilds' monopoly on the issuance of government loans which made it possible and necessary to draw on Jewish capital at large, to direct a great percentage of Jewish wealth into the channels of state business, and which thereby provided the natural basis for a new inter-European cohesiveness of Central and Western European Jewry. What in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries had been an unorganized connection among individual Jews of different countries, now became the more systematic disposition of these scattered opportunities by a single firm, physically present in all important European capitals, in constant contact with all sections of the Jewish people, and in complete possession of all pertinent information and all opportunities for organization.²² The exclusive position of the house of

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Nowhere had the Jews rendered such great services to the state as in Austria, whose many nationalities were kept together only by the Dual Monarchy of the House of Hapsburg, and where the Jewish state banker, in contrast to all other European countries, survived the downfall of the monarchy. Just as at the beginning of this development in the early eighteenth century, Samuel Oppenheimer's credit had been identical with the credit of the House of Hapsburg, so "in the end Austrian credit was that of the Creditanstalt"—a Rothschild banking house.⁴⁵ Although the Danube monarchy had no homogeneous population, the most important prerequisite for evolution into a nation-state, it could not avoid the transformation of an enlightened despotism into a constitutional monarchy and the creation of modern civil services. This meant that it had to adopt certain institutions of the nation-state. For one thing, the modern class system grew along nationality lines, so that certain nationalities began to be identified with certain classes or at least professions. The German became the dominating nationality in much the same sense as the bourgeoisie became the dominating class in the nation-states. The Hungarian landed aristocracy played a role that was even more pronounced than, but essentially similar to, that played by the nobility in other countries. The state machinery itself tried its best to keep the same absolute distance from society, to rule above all nationalities, as the nation-state with respect to its classes. The result for the Jews was simply that the Jewish nationality could not merge with the others and could not become

a nationality itself, just as it had not merged with other classes in the nation-state, or become a class itself. As the Jews in nation-states had differed from all classes of society through their special relationship to the state, so they differed from all other nationalities in Austria through their special relationship to the Hapsburg monarchy. And just as everywhere else each class that came into open conflict with the state turned antisemitic, so in Austria each nationality that not only engaged in the all-pervading struggle of the nationalities but came into open conflict with the monarchy itself, started its fight with an attack upon the Jews. But there was a marked difference between these conflicts in Austria, and those in Germany and France. In Austria they were not only sharper, but at the outbreak of the first World War every single nationality, and that meant every stratum of society, was in opposition to the state, so that more than anywhere else in Western or Central Europe the population was imbued with active anti-semitism.

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The close connection between the Rothschilds and the financial interests of the monarchy became very obvious when the government tried to extend the license under conditions which were patently to the disadvantage of the state as well as the public. Schoenerer's agitation in this matter became the actual beginning of an articulate antisemitic movement in Austria.⁴⁷ The point is that this movement, in contrast to the German Stoecker agitation, was initiated and led by a man who was sincere beyond doubt, and therefore did not stop at the use of antisemitism as a propaganda weapon, but developed quickly that Pan-German ideology which was to influence Nazism more deeply than any other German brand of antisemitism.

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In his first novel, *Alroy* (1833), Disraeli evolved a plan for a Jewish Empire in which Jews would rule as a strictly separated class. The novel shows the influence of current illusions about Jewish power-possibilities as well as the young author's ignorance of the actual power conditions of his time. Eleven years later, political experience in Parliament and intimate intercourse with prominent men taught Disraeli that "the aims of the Jews, whatever they may have been before and since, were, in his day, largely divorced from the assertion of political nationality in any form."⁵³ In a new novel, *Coningsby*, he abandoned the dream of a Jewish Empire and unfolded a fantastic scheme according to which Jewish money dominates the rise and fall of courts and empires and rules supreme in diplomacy. Never in his life did he give up this second notion of a secret and mysterious influence of the chosen men of the chosen race, with which he replaced his earlier dream of an openly constituted, mysterious ruler caste. It became the pivot of his political philosophy. In contrast to his much-admired Jewish bankers who granted loans to governments and earned commissions, Disraeli looked at the whole affair with the outsider's incomprehension that such power-possibilities could be handled day after day by people who were not ambitious for power. What he could not understand was that a Jewish banker was even less interested in politics than his non-Jewish colleagues; to Disraeli, at any rate, it was a matter of course that Jewish wealth was only a means for Jewish politics. The more he learned about the Jewish bankers' well-functioning organization in business matters and their international exchange of news and information, the more convinced he became that he was dealing with something like a secret society which, without anybody knowing it, had the world's destinies in its hands.

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In Disraeli's eyes, as in the eyes of many less well-known and reputable charlatans after him, the whole game of politics was played between secret societies. Not only the Jews, but every other group whose influence was not politically organized or which was in opposition to the whole social and political system, became for him powers behind the scenes. In 1863, he thought he witnessed "a struggle between the secret societies and the European millionaires; Rothschild hitherto has won."⁵⁴ But also "the natural equality of men and the abrogation of property are proclaimed by secret societies";⁵⁵ as late as 1870, he could still talk seriously of forces "beneath the surface" and believe sincerely that "secret societies and their international energies, the Church of Rome and her claims and methods, the eternal conflict between science and faith" were at work to determine the course of human history.⁵⁶

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Disraeli's unbelievable naïveté made him connect all these "secret" forces with the Jews. "The first Jesuits were Jews; that mysterious Russian diplomacy which so alarms Western Europe is organized and principally carried on by Jews; that mighty revolution which is at this moment preparing in Germany and which will be in fact a second and greater Reformation . . . is entirely developing under the auspices of Jews," "men of Jewish race are found at the head of every one of (communist and socialist groups). The people of God co-operates with atheists; the most skilful accumulators of property ally themselves with communists, the peculiar and chosen race touch the hands of the scum and low castes of Europe! And all this because they wish to destroy that ungrateful Christendom which owes them even its name and whose tyranny they can no longer endure."⁵⁷ In Disraeli's imagination, the world had become Jewish.

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Disraeli's persistent fondness for explaining politics in terms of secret societies was based on experiences which later convinced many lesser European intellectuals. His basic experience had been that a place in English society was much more difficult to win than a seat in Parliament. English society of his time gathered in fashionable clubs which were independent of party distinctions. The clubs, although they were extremely important in the formation of a political elite, escaped public control. To an outsider they must have looked very mysterious indeed. They were secret insofar as not everybody was admitted to them. They became mysterious only when members of other classes asked admittance and were either refused or admitted after a plethora of incalculable, unpredictable, apparently irrational difficulties. There is no doubt that no political honor could replace the triumphs that intimate association with the privileged could give. Disraeli's ambitions, significantly enough, did not suffer even at the end of his life when he experienced severe political defeats, for he remained "the most commanding figure of London society."⁵⁸

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There were no Jews either among the bribed members of Parliament or on the board of the company. Jacques Reinach and Cornélius Herz, however, vied for the honor of distributing the baksheesh among the members of the Chamber, the former working on the right wing of the bourgeois parties and the latter on the radicals (the anticlerical parties of the petty bourgeoisie).¹⁹ Reinach was the secret financial counsellor of the government

during the eighties²⁰ and therefore handled its relations with the Panama Company, while Here's role was a double one. On the one hand he served Reinach as liaison with the radical wings of Parliament, to which Reinach himself had no access; on the other this office gave him such a good insight into the extent of the corruption that he was able constantly to blackmail his boss and to involve him ever deeper in the mess.²¹

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Shortly before the crash Herz received for a single intra-parliamentary transaction an advance of no less than 600,000 francs. The advance, however, was premature. The loan was not taken up and the shareholders were simply 600,000 francs out of pocket.²² The whole ugly racket ended disastrously for Reinach. Harassed by the blackmail of Herz he finally committed suicide.²³ Shortly before his death, however, he had taken a step the consequences of which for French Jewry can scarcely be exaggerated.

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The Panama scandal, which, in Drumont's phrase, rendered the invisible visible, brought with it two revelations. First, it disclosed that the members of Parliament and civil servants had become businessmen. Secondly, it showed that the intermediaries between private enterprise (in this case, the company) and the machinery of the state were almost exclusively Jews.²⁴ What was most surprising was that all these Jews who worked in such an intimate relationship with the state machinery were newcomers. Up to the establishment of the Third Republic, the handling of the finances of the state had been pretty well monopolized by the Rothschilds. An attempt by their rivals, Péreires Brothers, to wrest part of it from their hands by establishing the Credit Mobilier had ended in a compromise. And in 1882, the Rothschild group was still powerful enough to drive into bankruptcy the Catholic Union Générale, the real purpose of which had been to ruin Jewish bankers.²⁵ Immediately after the conclusion of the peace treaty of 1871, whose financial provisions had been handled on the French side by Rothschild and on the German side by Bleichroeder, a former agent of the house, the Rothschilds embarked on an unprecedented policy: they came out openly for the monarchists and against the republic.²⁶ What was new in this was not the monarchist trend but the fact that for the first time an important Jewish financial power set itself in opposition to the current regime.

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Up to that time the Rothschilds had accommodated themselves to whatever political system was in power. It seemed, therefore, that the republic was the first form of government that really had no use for them.

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doubtful from its inception. So much, indeed, was this the case that within three years a society brought to the brink of ruin was clamoring for a dictator. And when it got one in President General MacMahon (whose only claim to distinction was his defeat at Sedan), that individual had promptly turned out to be a parliamentarian of the old school and after a few years (1879) resigned. Meanwhile, however, the various elements in society, from the opportunists to the radicals and from the coalitionists to the extreme right, had made up their minds what kind of policies they required from their representatives and what methods they ought to employ. The right policy was defense of vested interests and the right method was corruption.²⁹ After 1881, swindle (to quote Léon Say) became the only law.

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Thus, despite their known opposition to the Third Republic, it was none other than the Rothschilds who undertook the placement of the Russian loan while Arthur Meyer, though baptized and an avowed monarchist, was among those involved in the Panama scandal. This meant that the newcomers in French Jewry who formed the principal links between private commerce and the machinery of government were followed by the native-born. But if the Jews had previously constituted a strong, close-knit group, whose usefulness for the state was obvious, they were now split up into cliques, mutually antagonistic but all bent on the same purpose of helping society to batten on the state. III: Army and Clergy Against the Republic SEEMINGLY REMOVED from all such factors, seemingly immune from all corruption, stood the army, a heritage from the Second Empire.

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Two years later, when Bernard Lazare published his first pamphlet on the miscarriage of justice, Jaurès' paper carefully refrained from discussing its contents but charged the socialist author with being an admirer of Rothschild and probably a paid agent.⁵⁵ Similarly, as late as 1897, when the fight for Dreyfus' reinstatement had already begun, Jaurès could see nothing in it but the conflict of two bourgeois groups, the opportunists and the clerics. Finally, even after the Rennes retrial Wilhelm Liebknecht, the German Social Democrat, still believed in the guilt of Dreyfus because he could not imagine that a member of the upper classes could ever be the victim of a false verdict.⁵⁶ The skepticism of the radical and

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Scarcely had J'Accuse appeared when the Paris socialists held their first meeting and passed a resolution calling for a revision of the Dreyfus case. But only five days later some thirty-two socialist officials promptly came out with a declaration that the fate of Dreyfus, "the class enemy," was no concern of theirs. Behind this declaration stood large elements of the party in Paris. Although a split in its ranks continued throughout the Affair, the party numbered enough Dreyfusards to prevent the Ligue Antisémite from thenceforth controlling the streets. A socialist meeting even branded anti-semitism "a new form of reaction." Yet a few months later when the parliamentary elections took place, Jaurès was not returned, and shortly afterwards, when Cavaignac, the minister of war, treated the Chamber to a speech attacking Dreyfus and commending the army as indispensable, the delegates resolved, with only two dissenting votes, to placard the walls of Paris with the text of that address. Similarly, when the great Paris strike broke out in October of the same year, Munster, the German ambassador, was able reliably and confidentially to inform Berlin that "as far as the broad masses are concerned, this is in no sense a political issue. The workers are simply out for higher wages and these they are bound to get in the end. As for the Dreyfus case, they have never bothered their heads about it."⁸³

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"EXPANSION IS everything," said Cecil Rhodes, and fell into despair, for every night he saw overhead "these stars . . . these vast worlds which we can never reach. I would annex the planets if I could."² He had discovered the moving principle of the new, the imperialist era (within less than two decades, British colonial possessions increased by 4½ million square miles and 66 million inhabitants, the French nation gained 3½ million square miles and 26 million people, the Germans won a new empire of a million square miles and 13 million natives,

and Belgium through her king acquired 900,000 square miles with 8½ million population³); and yet in a flash of wisdom Rhodes recognized at the same moment its inherent insanity and its contradiction to the human condition. Naturally, neither insight nor sadness changed his policies. He had no use for the flashes of wisdom that led him so far beyond the normal capacities of an ambitious businessman with a marked tendency toward megalomania.

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Imperialism was born when the ruling class in capitalist production came up against national limitations to its economic expansion. The bourgeoisie turned to politics out of economic necessity; for if it did not want to give up the capitalist system whose inherent law is constant economic growth, it had to impose this law upon its home governments and to proclaim expansion to be an ultimate political goal of foreign policy.

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The Napoleonic failure to unite Europe under the French flag was a clear indication that conquest by a nation led either to the full awakening of the conquered people's national consciousness and to consequent rebellion against the conqueror, or to tyranny. And though tyranny, because it needs no consent, may successfully rule over foreign peoples, it can stay in power only if it destroys first of all the national institutions of its own people.

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When, in the era of imperialism, businessmen became politicians and were acclaimed as statesmen, while statesmen were taken seriously only if they talked the language of successful businessmen and "thought in continents," these private practices and devices were gradually transformed into rules and principles for the conduct of public affairs. The significant fact about this process of revaluation, which began at the end of the last century and is still in effect, is that it began with the application of bourgeois convictions to foreign affairs and only slowly was extended to domestic politics. Therefore, the nations concerned were hardly aware that the recklessness that had prevailed in private life, and against which the public body always had to defend itself and its individual citizens, was about to be elevated to the one publicly honored political principle.

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This process of never-ending accumulation of power necessary for the protection of a never-ending accumulation of capital determined the "progressive" ideology of the late nineteenth century and foreshadowed the rise of imperialism. Not the naïve delusion of a limitless growth of property, but the realization that power accumulation was the only guarantee for the stability of so-called economic laws, made progress irresistible. The eighteenth-century notion of progress, as conceived in pre-revolutionary France, intended criticism of the past to be a means of mastering the present and controlling the future; progress culminated in the emancipation of man. But this notion had little to do with the endless progress of bourgeois society, which not only did not want the liberty and autonomy of man, but was ready to sacrifice everything and everybody to supposedly superhuman laws of history. "What we call progress is [the] wind . . . [that] drives [the angel of history] irresistibly into the future to which he turns his back while the pile of ruins before him towers to the skies."³⁹ Only in Marx's dream of a classless society which, in Joyce's words, was to awaken mankind from the nightmare of history, does a last, though Utopian, trace of the eighteenth-century concept appear.

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Not that anybody began to doubt the irresistibility of the process itself, but many people began to see what had frightened Cecil Rhodes: that the human condition and the limitations of the globe were a serious obstacle to a process that was unable to stop and to stabilize, and could therefore only begin a series of destructive catastrophes once it had reached these limits.

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WHEN IMPERIALISM entered the scene of politics with the scramble for Africa in the eighties, it was promoted by businessmen, opposed fiercely by the governments in power, and welcomed by a surprisingly large section of the educated classes.⁴⁰ To the last it seemed to be God-sent, a cure for all evils, an easy panacea for all conflicts. And it is true that imperialism in a sense did not disappoint these hopes. It gave a new lease on life to political and social structures which were quite obviously threatened by new social and political forces and which, under other circumstances, without the interference of imperialist developments, would hardly have needed two world wars to disappear.

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Innocently enough, expansion appeared first as the outlet for excess capital production and offered a remedy, capital export.⁴¹ The tremendously increased wealth produced by capitalist production under a social system based on maldistribution had resulted in “oversaving”—that is, the accumulation of capital which was condemned to idleness within the existing national capacity for production and consumption. This money was actually superfluous, needed by nobody though owned by a growing class of somebodies. The ensuing crises and depressions during the decades preceding the era of imperialism⁴² had impressed upon the capitalists the thought that their whole economic system of production depended upon a supply and demand that from now on must come from “outside of capitalist society.”⁴³ Such supply and demand came from inside the nation, so long as the capitalist system did not control all its classes together with its entire productive capacity. When capitalism had pervaded the entire economic structure and all social strata had come into the orbit of its production and consumption system, capitalists clearly had to decide either to see the whole system collapse or to find new markets, that is, to penetrate new countries which were not yet subject to capitalism and therefore could provide a new noncapitalistic supply and demand.

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The first reaction to the saturated home market, lack of raw materials, and growing crises, was export of capital. The owners of superfluous wealth first tried foreign investment without expansion and without political control, which resulted in an unparalleled orgy of swindles, financial scandals, and stock-market speculation, all the more alarming since foreign investments grew much more rapidly than domestic ones.⁴⁶ Big money resulting from oversaving paved the way for little money, the product of the little fellow’s work. Domestic enterprises, in order to keep pace with high profits from foreign investment, turned likewise to fraudulent methods and attracted an increasing number of people who, in the hope of miraculous returns, threw their money out of the window. The Panama scandal in France, the Gründungsschwindel in Germany and Austria, became classic examples.

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The Socialist Party wavered between active support of the imperialist naval policy (it repeatedly voted funds for the building of a German navy after 1906) and complete neglect of all questions of foreign policy. Occasional warnings against the Lumpenproletariat, and the possible bribing of sections of the working class with crumbs from the imperialist table, did not lead to a deeper understanding of the great appeal which the imperialist programs had to the rank and file of the party. In Marxist terms the new phenomenon of an alliance between mob and capital seemed so unnatural, so obviously in conflict with the doctrine of class struggle, that the actual dangers of the imperialist attempt—to divide mankind into master races and slave races, into higher and lower breeds, into colored peoples and white men, all of which were attempts to unify the people on the basis of the mob—were completely overlooked.

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The alliance between capital and mob is to be found at the genesis of every consistently imperialist policy. In some countries, particularly in Great Britain, this new alliance between the much-too-rich and the much-too-poor was and remained confined to overseas possessions. The so-called hypocrisy of British policies was the result of the good sense of English statesmen who drew a sharp line between colonial methods and normal domestic policies, thereby avoiding with considerable success the feared boomerang effect of imperialism upon the homeland. In other countries, particularly in Germany and Austria, the alliance took effect at home in the form of pan-movements, and to a lesser extent in France, in a so-called colonial policy. The aim of these “movements” was, so to speak, to imperialize the whole nation (and not only the “superfluous” part of it), to combine domestic and foreign policy in such a way as to organize the nation for the looting of foreign territories and the permanent degradation of alien peoples.

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37 Even Taine believed firmly in the superior genius of the “Germanic nation,”³⁸ and Ernest Renan was probably the first to oppose the “Semites” to the “Aryans” in a decisive “division du genre humain,” although he held civilization to be the great superior force which destroys local originalities as well as original race differences.³⁹ All the loose race talk that is so characteristic of French writers after 1870,⁴⁰ even if they are not racists in any strict sense of the word, follows antinational, pro-Germanic lines. If the consistent antinational

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It is, therefore, not by accident that the first English statesman who repeatedly stressed his belief in races and race superiority as a determining factor of history and politics was a man who without particular interest in the colonies and the English colonists—“the colonial deadweight which we do not govern”—wanted to extend British imperial power to Asia and, indeed, forcefully strengthened the position of Great Britain in the only colony with a grave population and cultural problem. It was Benjamin Disraeli who made the Queen of England the Empress of India; he was the first English statesman who regarded India as the cornerstone of an Empire and who wanted to cut the ties which linked the English people to the nations of the Continent.⁶³ Thereby he laid one of the foundation stones for a fundamental change in British rule in India. This colony had been governed with the usual ruthlessness of conquerors—men whom Burke had called “the breakers of the law in India.” It

was now to receive a carefully planned administration which aimed at the establishment of a permanent government by administrative measures. This experiment has brought England very close to the danger against which Burke had warned, that the “breakers of the law in India” might become “the makers of law for England.”⁶⁴ For all those, to whom there was “no transaction in the history of England of which we have more just cause to be proud . . . than the establishment of the Indian Empire,” held liberty and equality to be “big names for a small thing.”⁶⁵ The policy introduced by Disraeli signified the establishment of an exclusive caste in a foreign country whose only function was rule and not colonization. For the realization of this conception which Disraeli did not live to see accomplished, racism would indeed be an indispensable tool. It foreshadowed the menacing transformation of the people from a nation into an “unmixed race of a first-rate organization” that felt itself to be “the aristocracy of nature”—to repeat in Disraeli’s own words quoted above.⁶⁶ What

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The gold rush became a full-fledged imperialist enterprise only after Cecil Rhodes had dispossessed the Jews, taken investment policies from England’s into his own hands, and had become the central figure on the Cape. Seventy-five per cent of the dividends paid to shareholders went abroad, and a large majority of them to Great Britain. Rhodes succeeded in interesting the British government in his business affairs, persuaded them that expansion and export of the instruments of violence was necessary to protect investments, and that such a policy was a holy duty of every national government. On the other hand, he introduced on the Cape itself that typically imperialist economic policy of neglecting all industrial enterprises which were not owned by absentee shareholders, so that finally not only the gold mining companies but the government itself discouraged the exploitation of abundant base metal deposits and the production of consumers’ goods.⁵⁰ With the initiation of this policy, Rhodes introduced the most potent factor in the eventual appeasement of the Boers; the neglect of all authentic industrial enterprise was the most solid guarantee for the avoidance of normal capitalist development and thus against a normal end of race society.

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Imperialism therefore was willing to abandon the so-called laws of capitalist production and their egalitarian tendencies, so long as profits from specific investments were safe. This led eventually to the abolition of the law of mere profitableness and South Africa became the first example of a phenomenon that occurs whenever the mob becomes the dominant factor in the alliance between mob and capital.

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The breakdown of the European party system occurred in a spectacular way with Hitler’s rise to power. It is now often conveniently forgotten that at the moment of the outbreak of the second World War, the majority of European countries had already adopted some form of dictatorship and discarded the party system, and that this revolutionary change in government had been effected in most countries without revolutionary upheaval. Revolutionary action more often than not was a theatrical concession to the desires of violently discontented masses rather than an actual battle for power. After all, it did not make much difference if a few thousand almost unarmed people staged a march on Rome and took over the government in Italy, or whether in Poland (in 1934) a so-called “partyless bloc,” with a program of support for a semifascist government and a membership drawn from the nobility and the poorest peasantry, workers and businessmen, Catholics and orthodox Jews, legally won two-thirds of the seats in Parliament.¹⁰⁶ In

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Inflation destroyed the whole class of small property owners beyond hope for recovery or new formation, something which no monetary crisis had ever done so radically before. Unemployment, when it came, reached fabulous proportions, was no longer restricted to the working class but seized with insignificant exceptions whole nations. Civil wars which ushered in and spread over the twenty years of uneasy peace were not only bloodier and more cruel than all their predecessors; they were followed by migrations of groups who, unlike their happier predecessors in the religious wars, were welcomed nowhere and could be assimilated nowhere. Once they had left their homeland they remained homeless, once they had left their state they became stateless; once they had been deprived of their human rights they were rightless, the scum of the earth. Nothing which was being done, no matter how stupid, no matter how many people knew and foretold the consequences, could be undone or prevented. Every event had the finality of a last judgment, a judgment that was passed neither by God nor by the devil, but looked rather like the expression of some unredeemably stupid fatality.

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The Minority Treaties said in plain language what until then had been only implied in the working system of nation-states, namely, that only nationals could be citizens, only people of the same national origin could enjoy the full protection of legal institutions, that persons of different nationality needed some law of exception until or unless they were completely assimilated and divorced from their origin. The interpretative speeches on the League treaties by statesmen of countries without minority obligations spoke an even plainer language: they took it for granted that the law of a country could not be responsible for persons insisting on a different nationality.¹⁷ They thereby admitted—and were quickly given the opportunity to prove it practically with the rise of stateless people—that the transformation of the state from an instrument of the law into an instrument of the nation had been completed; the nation had conquered the state, national interest had priority over law long before Hitler could pronounce “right is what is good for the German people.” Here again the language of the mob was only the language of public opinion cleansed of hypocrisy and restraint.

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So that when the precarious balance between nation and state, between national interest and legal institutions broke down, the disintegration of this form of government and of organization of peoples came about with terrifying swiftness. Its disintegration, curiously enough, started at precisely the moment when the right to national self-determination was recognized for all of Europe and when its essential conviction, the supremacy of the will of the nation over all legal and “abstract” institutions, was universally accepted.

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The framers of the Minority Treaties did not foresee the possibility of wholesale population transfers or the problem of people who had become “undeportable” because there was no country on earth in which they enjoyed the right to residence. The minorities could still be regarded as an exceptional phenomenon, peculiar to certain territories that deviated from the norm. This argument was always tempting because it left the system itself untouched; it has in a way survived the second World War whose peacemakers, convinced of the impracticability of minority treaties, began to “repatriate” nationalities as much as possible in an effort to

unscramble “the belt of mixed populations.”¹⁹ And this attempted large-scale repatriation was not the direct result of the catastrophic experiences following in the wake of the Minority Treaties; rather, it was hoped that such a step would finally solve a problem which, in the preceding decades, had assumed ever larger proportions and for which an internationally recognized and accepted procedure simply did not exist—the problem of the stateless people.

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Even the terminology applied to the stateless has deteriorated. The term “stateless” at least acknowledged the fact that these persons had lost the protection of their government and required international agreements for safeguarding their legal status. The postwar term “displaced persons” was invented during the war for the express purpose of liquidating statelessness once and for all by ignoring its existence. Nonrecognition of statelessness always means repatriation, i.e., deportation to a country of origin, which either refuses to recognize the prospective repatriate as a citizen, or, on the contrary, urgently wants him back for punishment. Since non-totalitarian countries, in spite of their bad intentions inspired by the climate of war, generally have shied away from mass repatriations, the number of stateless people—twelve years after the end of the war—is larger than ever. The decision of the statesmen to solve the problem of statelessness by ignoring it is further revealed by the lack of any reliable statistics on the subject. This much is known, however: while there are one million “recognized” stateless, there are more than ten million so-called “de facto” stateless; and whereas the relatively innocuous problem of the “de jure” stateless occasionally comes up at international conferences, the core of statelessness, which is identical with the refugee question, is simply not mentioned.

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The second great shock that the European world suffered through the arrival of the refugees²⁸ was the realization that it was impossible to get rid of them or transform them into nationals of the country of refuge. From the beginning everybody had agreed that there were only two ways to solve the problem: repatriation or naturalization.²⁹ When the example of the first Russian and Armenian waves proved that neither way gave any tangible results, the countries of refuge simply refused to recognize statelessness in all later arrivals, thereby making the situation of the refugees even more intolerable.³⁰ From the point of view of the governments concerned it was understandable enough that they should keep reminding the League of Nations “that [its] Refugee work must be liquidated with the utmost rapidity”;³¹ they had many reasons to fear that those who had been ejected from the old trinity of state-people-territory, which still formed the basis of European organization and political civilization, formed only the beginning of an increasing movement, were only the first trickle from an ever-growing reservoir.

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The notion that statelessness is primarily a Jewish problem⁴⁶ was a pretext used by all governments who tried to settle the problem by ignoring it. None of the statesmen was aware that Hitler’s solution of the Jewish problem, first to reduce the German Jews to a nonrecognized minority in Germany, then to drive them as stateless people across the borders, and finally to gather them back from everywhere in order to ship them to extermination camps, was an eloquent demonstration to the rest of the world how really to “liquidate” all problems concerning minorities and stateless. After the war it turned out that the Jewish question, which was considered the only

insoluble one, was indeed solved—namely, by means of a colonized and then conquered territory—but this solved neither the problem of the minorities nor the stateless. On the contrary, like virtually all other events of our century, the solution of the Jewish question merely produced a new category of refugees, the Arabs, thereby increasing the number of the stateless and rightless by another 700,000 to 800,000 people. And what happened in Palestine within the smallest territory and in terms of hundreds of thousands was then repeated in India on a large scale involving many millions of people. Since the Peace Treaties of 1919 and 1920 the refugees and the stateless have attached themselves like a curse to all the newly established states on earth which were created in the image of the nation-state.

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When the Rights of Man were proclaimed for the first time, they were regarded as being independent of history and the privileges which history had accorded certain strata of society. The new independence constituted the newly discovered dignity of man. From the beginning, this new dignity was of a rather ambiguous nature. Historical rights were replaced by natural rights, “nature” took the place of history, and it was tacitly assumed that nature was less alien than history to the essence of man. The very language of the Declaration of Independence as well as of the *Déclaration des Droits de l’Homme*—“inalienable,” “given with birth,” “self-evident truths”—implies the belief in a kind of human “nature” which would be subject to the same laws of growth as that of the individual and from which rights and laws could be deduced. Today we are perhaps better qualified to judge exactly what this human “nature” amounts to; in any event it has shown us potentialities that were neither recognized nor even suspected by Western philosophy and religion, which for more than three thousand years have defined and redefined this “nature.” But it is not only the, as it were, human aspect of nature that has become questionable to us. Ever since man learned to master it to such an extent that the destruction of all organic life on earth with man-made instruments has become conceivable and technically possible, he has been alienated from nature. Ever since a deeper knowledge of natural processes instilled serious doubts about the existence of natural laws at all, nature itself has assumed a sinister aspect. How should one be able to deduce laws and rights from a universe which apparently knows neither the one nor the other category? Man

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These facts and reflections offer what seems an ironical, bitter, and belated confirmation of the famous arguments with which Edmund Burke opposed the French Revolution’s Declaration of the Rights of Man. They appear to buttress his assertion that human rights were an “abstraction,” that it was much wiser to rely on an “entailed inheritance” of rights which one transmits to one’s children like life itself, and to claim one’s rights to be the “rights of an Englishman” rather than the inalienable rights of man.⁵¹ According to Burke, the rights which we enjoy spring “from within the nation,” so that neither natural law, nor divine command, nor any concept of mankind such as Robespierre’s “human race,” “the sovereign of the earth,” are needed as a source of law.⁵²

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The Nazis, who had an unfailing instinct for such differences, used to comment contemptuously on the shortcomings of their Fascist allies while their genuine admiration for the Bolshevik regime in Russia (and the Communist Party in Germany) was matched and checked only by their contempt for Eastern European races.¹²

The only man for whom Hitler had “unqualified respect” was “Stalin the genius,”¹³ and while in the case of Stalin and the Russian regime we do not have (and presumably never will have) the rich documentary material that is available for Germany, we nevertheless know since Khrushchev’s speech before the Twentieth Party Congress that Stalin trusted only one man and that was Hitler.¹⁴

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The relationship between the bourgeois-dominated class society and the masses which emerged from its breakdown is not the same as the relationship between the bourgeoisie and the mob which was a by-product of capitalist production. The masses share with the mob only one characteristic, namely, that both stand outside all social ramifications and normal political representation. The masses do not inherit, as the mob does—albeit in a perverted form—the standards and attitudes of the dominating class, but reflect and somehow pervert the standards and attitudes toward public affairs of all classes. The standards of the mass man were determined not only and not even primarily by the specific class to which he had once belonged, but rather by all-pervasive influences and convictions which were tacitly and inarticulately shared by all classes of society alike.

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Social atomization and extreme individualization preceded the mass movements which, much more easily and earlier than they did the sociable, nonindividualistic members of the traditional parties, attracted the completely unorganized, the typical “nonjoiners” who for individualistic reasons always had refused to recognize social links or obligations.

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The truth is that the masses grew out of the fragments of a highly atomized society whose competitive structure and concomitant loneliness of the individual had been held in check only through membership in a class. The chief characteristic of the mass man is not brutality and backwardness, but his isolation and lack of normal social relationships. Coming from the class-ridden society of the nation-state, whose cracks had been cemented with nationalistic sentiment, it is only natural that these masses, in the first helplessness of their new experience, have tended toward an especially violent nationalism, to which mass leaders have yielded against their own instincts and purposes for purely demagogic reasons.²²

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Neither tribal nationalism nor rebellious nihilism is characteristic of or ideologically appropriate to the masses as they were to the mob. But the most gifted mass leaders of our time have still risen from the mob rather than from the masses.²³ Hitler’s biography reads like a textbook example in this respect, and the point about Stalin is that he comes from the conspiratory apparatus of the Bolshevik party with its specific mixture of outcasts and revolutionaries.

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Hitler’s early party, almost exclusively composed of misfits, failures, and adventurers, indeed represented the “armed bohemians”²⁴ who were only the reverse side of bourgeois society and whom, consequently, the

German bourgeoisie should have been able to use successfully for its own purposes. Actually, the bourgeoisie was as much taken in by the Nazis as was the Röhm-Schleicher faction in the Reichswehr, which also thought that Hitler, whom they had used as a stool-pigeon, or the SA, which they had used for militaristic propaganda and paramilitary training, would act as their agents and help in the establishment of a military dictatorship.²⁵ Both considered the Nazi movement in their own terms, in terms of the political philosophy of the mob,²⁶ and overlooked the independent, spontaneous support given the new mob leaders by masses as well as the mob leaders' genuine talents for creating new forms of organization. The mob as leader of these masses was no longer the agent of the bourgeoisie or of anyone else except the masses.

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That totalitarian movements depended less on the structurelessness of a mass society than on the specific conditions of an atomized and individualized mass, can best be seen in a comparison of Nazism and Bolshevism which began in their respective countries under very different circumstances. To change Lenin's revolutionary dictatorship into full totalitarian rule, Stalin had first to create artificially that atomized society which had been prepared for the Nazis in Germany by historical circumstances. The October Revolution's amazingly easy victory occurred in a country where a despotic and centralized bureaucracy governed a structureless mass population which neither the remnants of the rural feudal orders nor the weak, nascent urban capitalist classes had organized. When Lenin said that nowhere in the world would it have been so easy to win power and so difficult to keep it, he was aware not only of the weakness of the Russian working class, but of anarchic social conditions in general, which favored sudden changes. Without the instincts of a mass leader—he was no orator and had a passion for public admission and analysis of his own errors, which is against the rules of even ordinary demagoguery—Lenin seized at once upon all the possible differentiations, social, national, professional, that might bring some structure into the population, and he seemed convinced that in such stratification lay the salvation of the revolution. He legalized the anarchic expropriation of the landowners by the rural masses and established thereby for the first and probably last time in Russia that emancipated peasant class which, since the French Revolution, had been the firmest supporter of the Western nation-states. He tried to strengthen the working class by encouraging independent trade unions. He tolerated the timid appearance of a new middle class which resulted from the NEP policy after the end of the civil war. He introduced further distinguishing features by organizing, and sometimes inventing, as many nationalities as possible, furthering national consciousness and awareness of historical and cultural differences even among the most primitive tribes in the Soviet Union. It seems clear that in these purely practical political matters Lenin followed his great instincts for statesmanship rather than his Marxist convictions; his policy, at any rate, proves that he was more frightened by the absence of social and other structure than by the possible development of centrifugal tendencies in the newly emancipated nationalities or even by the growth of a new bourgeoisie out of the newly established middle and peasant classes. There is no doubt that Lenin suffered his greatest defeat when, with the outbreak of the civil war, the supreme power that he originally planned to concentrate in the Soviets definitely passed into the hands of the party bureaucracy; but even this development, tragic as it was for the course of the revolution, would not necessarily have led to totalitarianism. A one-party dictatorship added only one more class to the already developing social stratification of the country, i.e., bureaucracy, which, according to socialist critics of the revolution, "possessed the State as private property" (Marx).²⁷ At the moment of Lenin's death the roads were still open. The formation of workers, peasants, and middle classes need not necessarily have led to the class struggle which had been characteristic of European capitalism. Agriculture could still be developed on a collective, co-operative, or private basis, and the national economy was still free to follow a socialist, state-capitalist, or a free-enterprise pattern. None of these alternatives would have automatically destroyed the new structure of the country.

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All these new classes and nationalities were in Stalin's way when he began to prepare the country for totalitarian government. In order to fabricate an atomized and structureless mass, he had first to liquidate the remnants of power in the Soviets which, as the chief organ of national representation, still played a certain role and prevented absolute rule by the party hierarchy. Therefore he first undermined the national Soviets through the introduction of Bolshevik cells from which alone the higher functionaries to the central committees were appointed.²⁸ By 1930, the last traces of former communal institutions had disappeared and had been replaced by a firmly centralized party bureaucracy whose tendencies toward Russification were not too different from those of the Czarist regime, except that the new bureaucrats were no longer afraid of literacy.

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The Bolshevik government then proceeded to the liquidation of classes and started, for ideological and propaganda reasons, with the property-owning classes, the new middle class in the cities, and the peasants in the country. Because of the combination of numbers and property, the peasants up to then had been potentially the most powerful class in the Union; their liquidation, consequently, was more thorough and more cruel than that of any other group and was carried through by artificial famine and deportation under the pretext of expropriation of the kulaks and collectivization. The liquidation of the middle and peasant classes was completed in the early thirties; those who were not among the many millions of dead or the millions of deported slave laborers had learned "who is master here," had realized that their lives and the lives of their families depended not upon their fellow-citizens but exclusively on the whims of the government which they faced in complete loneliness without any help whatsoever from the group to which they happened to belong. The exact moment when collectivization produced a new peasantry bound by common interests, which owing to its numerical and economic key position in the country's economy again presented a potential danger to totalitarian rule, cannot be determined either from statistics or documentary sources. But for those who know how to read totalitarian "source material" this moment had come two years before Stalin died, when he proposed to dissolve the collectives and transform them into larger units. He did not live to carry out this plan; this time the sacrifices would have been still greater and the chaotic consequences for the total economy still more catastrophic than the liquidation of the first peasant class, but there is no reason to doubt that he might have succeeded; there is no class that cannot be wiped out if a sufficient number of its members are murdered.

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The next class to be liquidated as a group were the workers. As a class they were much weaker and offered much less resistance than the peasants because their spontaneous expropriation of factory owners during the revolution, unlike the peasants' expropriation of landowners, had been frustrated at once by the government which confiscated the factories as state property under the pretext that the state belonged to the proletariat in any event. The Stakhanov system, adopted in the early thirties, broke up all solidarity and class consciousness among the workers, first by the ferocious competition and second by the temporary solidification of a Stakhanovite aristocracy whose social distance from the ordinary worker naturally was felt more acutely than the distance between the workers and the management. This process was completed in 1938 with the introduction of the labor book which transformed the whole Russian worker class officially into a gigantic forced-labor force.

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Mass atomization in Soviet society was achieved by the skillful use of repeated purges which invariably precede actual group liquidation. In order to destroy all social and family ties, the purges are conducted in such a way as to threaten with the same fate the defendant and all his ordinary relations, from mere acquaintances up to his closest friends and relatives. The consequence of the simple and ingenious device of "guilt by association" is that as soon as a man is accused, his former friends are transformed immediately into his bitterest enemies; in order to save their own skins, they volunteer information and rush in with denunciations to corroborate the nonexistent evidence against him; this obviously is the only way to prove their own trustworthiness.

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This attraction for the elite is as important a clue to the understanding of totalitarian movements (though hardly of totalitarian regimes) as their more obvious connection with the mob. It indicates the specific atmosphere, the general climate in which the rise of totalitarianism takes place. It should be remembered that the leaders of totalitarian movements and their sympathizers are, so to speak, older than the masses which they organize so that chronologically speaking the masses do not have to wait helplessly for the rise of their own leaders in the midst of a decaying class society, of which they are the most outstanding product. Those who voluntarily left society before the wreckage of classes had come about, along with the mob, which was an earlier by-product of the rule of the bourgeoisie, stand ready to welcome them. The present totalitarian rulers and the leaders of totalitarian movements still bear the characteristic traits of the mob, whose psychology and political philosophy are fairly well known; what will happen once the authentic mass man takes over, we do not know yet, although it may be a fair guess that he will have more in common with the meticulous, calculated correctness of Himmler than with the hysterical fanaticism of Hitler, will more resemble the stubborn dullness of Molotov than the sensual vindictive cruelty of Stalin.

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This difference between the elite and the mob notwithstanding, there is no doubt that the elite was pleased whenever the underworld frightened respectable society into accepting it on an equal footing. The members of the elite did not object at all to paying a price, the destruction of civilization, for the fun of seeing how those who had been excluded unjustly in the past forced their way into it. They were not particularly outraged at the monstrous forgeries in historiography of which all totalitarian regimes are guilty and which announce themselves clearly enough in totalitarian propaganda. They had convinced themselves that traditional historiography was a forgery in any case, since it had excluded the underprivileged and oppressed from the memory of mankind. Those who were rejected by their own time were usually forgotten by history, and insult added to injury had troubled all sensitive consciences ever since faith in a hereafter where the last would be the first had disappeared. Injustices in the past as well as the present became intolerable when there was no longer any hope that the scales of justice eventually would be set right. Marx's great attempt to rewrite world history in terms of class struggles fascinated even those who did not believe in the correctness of his thesis, because of his original intention to find a device by which to force the destinies of those excluded from official history into the memory of posterity.

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The disturbing alliance between the mob and the elite, and the curious coincidence of their aspirations, had their origin in the fact that these strata had been the first to be eliminated from the structure of the nation-state and the framework of class society. They found each other so easily, if only temporarily, because they both sensed that they represented the fate of the time, that they were followed by unending masses, that sooner or later the majority of European peoples might be with them—as they thought, ready to make their revolution.

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But, basically speaking, totalitarian domination strives to restrict propaganda methods solely to its foreign policy or to the branches of the movement abroad for the purpose of supplying them with suitable material. Whenever totalitarian indoctrination at home comes into conflict with the propaganda line for consumption abroad (which happened in Russia during the war, not when Stalin had concluded his alliance with Hitler, but when the war with Hitler brought him into the camp of the democracies), the propaganda is explained at home as a “temporary tactical maneuver.”

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Propaganda is indeed part and parcel of “psychological warfare”; but terror is more. Terror continues to be used by totalitarian regimes even when its psychological aims are achieved: its real horror is that it reigns over a completely subdued population. Where the rule of terror is brought to perfection, as in concentration camps, propaganda disappears entirely; it was even expressly prohibited in Nazi Germany.⁷ Propaganda, in other words, is one, and possibly the most important, instrument of totalitarianism for dealing with the nontotalitarian world; terror, on the contrary, is the very essence of its form of government. Its existence depends as little on psychological or other subjective factors as the existence of laws in a constitutionally governed country depends upon the number of people who transgress them.

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Scientificity of mass propaganda has indeed been so universally employed in modern politics that it has been interpreted as a more general sign of that obsession with science which has characterized the Western world since the rise of mathematics and physics in the sixteenth century; thus totalitarianism appears to be only the last stage in a process during which “science [has become] an idol that will magically cure the evils of existence and transform the nature of man.”¹² And there was, indeed, an early connection between scientificity and the rise of the masses. The “collectivism” of masses was welcomed by those who hoped for the appearance of “natural laws of historical development” which would eliminate the unpredictability of the individual’s actions and behavior.¹³ There has been cited the example of Enfantin who could already “see the time approaching when the ‘art of moving the masses’ will be so perfectly developed that the painter, the musician, and the poet will possess the power to please and to move with the same certainty as the mathematician solves a geometrical problem or the chemist analyses any substance,” and it has been concluded that modern propaganda was born then and there.¹⁴ Yet

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Totalitarian propaganda perfects the techniques of mass propaganda, but it neither invents them nor originates their themes. These were prepared for them by fifty years of the rise of imperialism and disintegration of the nation-state, when the mob entered the scene of European politics. Like the earlier mob leaders, the spokesmen for totalitarian movements possessed an unerring instinct for anything that ordinary party propaganda or public opinion did not care or dare to touch. Everything hidden, everything passed over in silence, became of major significance, regardless of its own intrinsic importance. The mob really believed that truth was whatever respectable society had hypocritically passed over, or covered up with corruption.

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Before they seize power and establish a world according to their doctrines, totalitarian movements conjure up a lying world of consistency which is more adequate to the needs of the human mind than reality itself; in which, through sheer imagination, uprooted masses can feel at home and are spared the never-ending shocks which real life and real experiences deal to human beings and their expectations. The force possessed by totalitarian propaganda—before the movements have the power to drop iron curtains to prevent anyone's disturbing, by the slightest reality, the gruesome quiet of an entirely imaginary world—lies in its ability to shut the masses off from the real world. The only signs which the real world still offers to the understanding of the unintegrated and disintegrating masses—whom every new stroke of ill luck makes more gullible—are, so to speak, its lacunae, the questions it does not care to discuss publicly, or the rumors it does not dare to contradict because they hit, although in an exaggerated and deformed way, some sore spot.

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The fundamental reason for the superiority of totalitarian propaganda over the propaganda of other parties and movements is that its content, for the members of the movement at any rate, is no longer an objective issue about which people may have opinions, but has become as real and untouchable an element in their lives as the rules of arithmetic. The organization of the entire texture of life according to an ideology can be fully carried out only under a totalitarian regime. In Nazi Germany, questioning the validity of racism and antisemitism when nothing mattered but race origin, when a career depended upon an "Aryan" physiognomy (Himmler used to select the applicants for the SS from photographs) and the amount of food upon the number of one's Jewish grandparents, was like questioning the existence of the world.

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The totalitarian movements have been called "secret societies established in broad daylight."⁹⁰ Indeed, little as we know of the sociological structure and the more recent history of secret societies, the structure of the movements, unprecedented if compared with parties and factions, reminds one of nothing so much as of certain outstanding traits of secret societies."⁹¹ Secret societies also form hierarchies according to degrees of "initiation," regulate the life of their members according to a secret and fictitious assumption which makes everything look as though it were something else, adopt a strategy of consistent lying to deceive the noninitiated external masses, demand unquestioning obedience from their members who are held together by allegiance to a frequently unknown and always mysterious leader, who himself is surrounded, or supposed to be surrounded, by

a small group of initiated who in turn are surrounded by the half-initiated who form a “buffer area” against the hostile profane world.⁹² With secret societies, the totalitarian movements also share the dichotomous division of the world between “sworn blood brothers” and an indistinct inarticulate mass of sworn enemies.”⁹³ This distinction, based on absolute hostility to the surrounding world, is very different from the ordinary parties’ tendency to divide people into those who belong and those who don’t. Parties and open societies in general will consider only those who expressly oppose them to be their enemies, while it has always been the principle of secret societies that “whosoever is not expressly included is excluded.”⁹⁴ This esoteric principle seems to be entirely inappropriate for mass organizations; yet the Nazis gave their members at least the psychological equivalent for the initiation ritual of secret societies when, instead of simply excluding Jews, from membership, they demanded proof of non-Jewish descent from their members and set up a complicated machine to shed light on the dark ancestry of some 80 million Germans. It was of course a comedy, and even an expensive one, when 80 million Germans set out to look for Jewish grandfathers; yet everybody came out of the examination with the feeling that he belonged to a group of included which stood against an imaginary multitude of ineligible. The same principle is confirmed in the Bolshevik movement through repeated party purges which inspire in everybody who is not excluded a reaffirmation of his inclusion. Perhaps the most striking similarity between the secret societies and the totalitarian movements lies in the role of the ritual. The marches around the Red Square in Moscow are in this respect no less characteristic than the pompous formalities of the Nuremberg party days. In the center of the Nazi ritual was the so-called “blood banner,” and in the center of the Bolshevik ritual stands the mummified corpse of Lenin, both of which introduce a strong element of idolatry into the ceremony. Such idolatry hardly is proof—as is sometimes asserted—of pseudoreligious or heretical tendencies. The “idols” are mere organizational devices, familiar from the ritual of secret societies, which also used to frighten their members into secretiveness by means of frightful, awe-inspiring symbols. It is obvious that people are more securely held together through the common experience of a secret ritual than by the common sharing of the secret itself. That the secret of totalitarian movements is exposed in broad daylight does not necessarily change the nature of the experience.⁹⁵ These

Secret societies in general, and the conspiratory apparatus of revolutionary parties in particular, have always been characterized by absence of factions, suppression of dissident opinions, and absolute centralization of command. All these measures have the obvious utilitarian purpose of protecting the members against persecution and the society against treason; the total obedience asked of each member and the absolute power in the hands of the chief were only inevitable by-products of practical necessities. The trouble, however, is that conspirators have an understandable tendency to think that the most efficient methods in politics in general are those of conspiratory societies and that if one can apply them in broad daylight and support them with a whole nation’s instruments of violence, the possibilities for power accumulation become absolutely limitless.⁹⁷ The conspiratory sector of a revolutionary party can, as long as the party itself is still intact, be likened to the role of the army within an intact political body: although its own rules of conduct differ radically from those of the civilian body, it serves, remains subject to, and is controlled by it. Just as the danger of a military dictatorship arises when the army no longer serves but wants to dominate the body politic, so the danger of totalitarianism arises when the conspiratory sector of a revolutionary party emancipates itself from the control of the party and aspires to leadership. This is what happened to the Communist parties under the Stalin regime. Stalin’s methods were always typical of a man who came from the conspiratory sector of the party: his devotion to detail, his emphasis on the personal side of politics, his ruthlessness in the use and liquidation of comrades and friends. His

chief support in the succession struggle after Lenin's death came from the secret police⁹⁸ which at that time had already become one of the most important and powerful sections of the party.⁹⁹ It was only natural that the Cheka's sympathies should be with the representative of the conspiratory section, with the man who already looked upon it as a kind of secret society and therefore was likely to preserve and to expand its privileges.

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Totalitarian movements have proved time and again that they can command the same total loyalty in life and death which had been the prerogative of secret and conspiratory societies.¹⁰² The complete absence of resistance in a thoroughly trained and armed troop like the SA in the face of the murder of a beloved leader (Röhm) and hundreds of close comrades was a curious spectacle.

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The multiplication of offices was extremely useful for the constant shifting of power; the longer, moreover, a totalitarian regime stays in power, the greater becomes the number of offices and the possibility of jobs exclusively dependent upon the movement, since no office is abolished when its authority is liquidated. The Nazi regime started this multiplication with an initial co-ordination of all existing associations, societies, and institutions. The interesting thing in this nation-wide manipulation was that co-ordination did not signify incorporation into the already existing respective party organizations. The result was that up to the end of the regime, there were not one, but two National Socialist student organizations, two Nazi women's organizations, two Nazi organizations for university professors, lawyers, physicians, and so forth.³⁸ It was by no means sure, however, that in all cases the original party organization would be more powerful than its coordinated counterpart.³⁹ Nor could anybody predict with any assurance which party organ would rise in the ranks of the internal party hierarchy.⁴⁰

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A classical instance of this planned shapelessness occurred in the organization of scientific antisemitism. In 1933, an institute for study of the Jewish question (Institut zur Erforschung der Judenfrage) was founded in Munich which, since the Jewish question presumably had determined the whole of German history, quickly enlarged into a research institute for modern German history. Headed by the well-known historian Walter Frank, it transformed the traditional universities into seats of ostensible learning or façades. In 1940, another institute for the study of the Jewish question was founded in Frankfurt, headed by Alfred Rosenberg, whose standing as a party member was considerably higher. The Munich institute consequently was relegated to a shadowy existence; the Frankfurt, not the Munich institution was supposed to receive the treasures from looted European Jewish collections and become the seat of a comprehensive library on Judaism. Yet, when these collections actually arrived in Germany a few years later, their most precious parts went not to Frankfurt, but to Berlin, where they were received by Himmler's special Gestapo department for the liquidation (not merely the study) of the Jewish question, which was headed by Eichmann. None of the older institutions was ever abolished, so that in 1944 the situation was this: behind the façade of the universities' history departments stood threateningly the more real power of the Munich institute, behind which rose Rosenberg's institute in Frankfurt, and only behind these three façades, hidden and protected by them, lay the real center of authority, the Reichssicherheitshauptamt, a special division of the Gestapo.

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One of the important differences between a totalitarian movement and a totalitarian state is that the totalitarian dictator can and must practice the totalitarian art of lying more consistently and on a larger scale than the leader of a movement. This is partly the automatic consequence of swelling the ranks of fellow-travelers, and is partly due to the fact that unpleasant statements by a statesman are not as easily revoked as those of a demagogic party leader. For this purpose, Hitler chose to fall back, without any detours, on the old-fashioned nationalism which he had denounced many times before his ascent to power; by posing as a violent nationalist, claiming that National Socialism was not an “export commodity,” he appeased Germans and non-Germans alike and implied that Nazi ambitions would be satisfied when the traditional demands of a nationalist German foreign policy—return of territories ceded in the Versailles treaties, Anschluss of Austria, annexation of the German-speaking parts of Bohemia—were fulfilled. Stalin likewise reckoned with both Russian public opinion and the non-Russian world when he invented his theory of “socialism in one country” and threw the onus of world revolution on Trotsky.⁷¹ Systematic lying to the whole world can be safely carried out only under the conditions of totalitarian rule, where the fictitious quality of everyday reality makes propaganda largely superfluous. In their prepower stage the movements can never afford to hide their true goals to the same degree—after all, they are meant to inspire mass organizations. But, given the possibility to exterminate Jews like bedbugs, namely, by poison gas, it is no longer necessary to propagate that Jews are bedbugs;⁷² given the power to teach a whole nation the history of the Russian Revolution without mentioning the name of Trotsky, there is no further need for propaganda against Trotsky.

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Stalin constant growth and development of police cadres were incomparably more important than the oil in Baku, the coal and ore in the Urals, the granaries in the Ukraine, or the potential treasures of Siberia—in short the development of Russia’s full power arsenal. The same mentality led Hitler to sacrifice all Germany to the cadres of the SS; he did not consider the war lost when German cities lay in rubble and industrial capacity was destroyed, but only when he learned that the SS troops were no longer reliable.⁸⁵ To a man who believed in organizational omnipotence against all mere material factors, military or economic, and who, moreover, calculated the eventual victory of his enterprise in centuries, defeat was not military catastrophe or threatened starvation of the population, but only the destruction of the elite formations which were supposed to carry the conspiracy for world rule through a line of generations to its eventual end.

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The structurelessness of the totalitarian state, its neglect of material interests, its emancipation from the profit motive, and its nonutilitarian attitudes in general have more than anything else contributed to making contemporary politics well-nigh unpredictable.

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The inability of the non-totalitarian world to grasp a mentality which functions independently of all calculable action in terms of men and material, and is completely indifferent to national interest and the well-being of its people, shows itself in a curious dilemma of judgment: those who rightly understand the terrible efficiency of

totalitarian organization and police are likely to overestimate the material force of totalitarian countries, while those who understand the wasteful incompetence of totalitarian economics are likely to underestimate the power potential which can be created in disregard of all material factors.

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Since the totalitarian secret police begins its career after the pacification of the country, it always appears entirely superfluous to all outside observers—or, on the contrary, misleads them into thinking that there is some secret resistance.⁹² The superfluousness of secret services is nothing new; they have always been haunted by the need to prove their usefulness and keep their jobs after their original task had been completed.

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Total domination, which strives to organize the infinite plurality and differentiation of human beings as if all of humanity were just one individual, is possible only if each and every person can be reduced to a never-changing identity of reactions, so that each of these bundles of reactions can be exchanged at random for any other. The problem is to fabricate something that does not exist, namely, a kind of human species resembling other animal species whose only “freedom” would consist in “preserving the species.”¹²⁵ Totalitarian domination attempts to achieve this goal both through ideological indoctrination of the elite formations and through absolute terror in the camps; and the atrocities for which the elite formations are ruthlessly used become, as it were, the practical application of the ideological indoctrination—the testing ground in which the latter must prove itself—while the appalling spectacle of the camps themselves is supposed to furnish the “theoretical” verification of the ideology.

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What prepares men for totalitarian domination in the non-totalitarian world is the fact that loneliness, once a borderline experience usually suffered in certain marginal social conditions like old age, has become an everyday experience of the evergrowing masses of our century. The merciless process into which totalitarianism drives and organizes the masses looks like a suicidal escape from this reality. The “ice-cold reasoning” and the “mighty tentacle” of dialectics which “seizes you as in a vise” appears like a last support in a world where nobody is reliable and nothing can be relied upon. It is the inner coercion whose only content is the strict avoidance of contradictions that seems to confirm a man’s identity outside all relationships with others. It fits him into the iron band of terror even when he is alone, and totalitarian domination tries never to leave him alone except in the extreme situation of solitary confinement. By destroying all space between men and pressing men against each other, even the productive potentialities of isolation are annihilated; by teaching and glorifying the logical reasoning of loneliness where man knows that he will be utterly lost if ever he lets go of the first premise from which the whole process is being started, even the slim chances that loneliness may be transformed into solitude and logic into thought are obliterated. If this practice is compared with that of tyranny, it seems as if a way had been found to set the desert itself in motion, to let loose a sand storm that could cover all parts of the inhabited earth.
