

1: *The Masses*

NOTHING is more characteristic of the totalitarian movements in general and of the quality of fame of their leaders in particular than the startling swiftness with which they are forgotten and the startling ease with which they can be replaced. What Stalin accomplished laboriously over many years through bitter factional struggles and vast concessions at least to the name of his predecessor—namely, to legitimate himself as Lenin's political heir—Stalin's successors attempted to do without concessions to the name of their predecessor, even though Stalin had thirty years' time and could manipulate a propaganda apparatus, unknown in Lenin's day, to immortalize his name. The same is true for Hitler, who during his lifetime exercised a fascination to which allegedly no one was immune,¹ and who

¹ The "magic spell" that Hitler cast over his listeners has been acknowledged many times, latterly by the publishers of *Hitlers Tischgespräche*, Bonn, 1951 (*Hitler's Table Talks*, American edition, New York, 1953; quotations from the original German edition). This fascination—"the strange magnetism that radiated from Hitler in such a compelling manner"—rested indeed "on the fanatical belief of this man in himself" (introduction by Gerhard Ritter, p. 14), on his pseudo-authoritative judgments about everything under the sun, and on the fact that his opinions—whether they dealt with the harmful effects of smoking or with Napoleon's policies—could always be fitted into an all-encompassing ideology.

Fascination is a social phenomenon, and the fascination Hitler exercised over his environment must be understood in terms of the particular company he kept. Society is always prone to accept a person offhand for what he pretends to be, so that a crackpot posing as a genius always has a certain chance to be believed. In modern society, with its characteristic lack of discerning judgment, this tendency is strengthened, so that someone who not only holds opinions but also presents them in a tone of unshakable conviction will not so easily forfeit his prestige, no matter how many times he has been demonstrably wrong. Hitler, who knew the modern chaos of opinions from first-hand experience, discovered that the helpless seesawing between various opinions and "the conviction . . . that everything is balderdash" (p. 281) could best be avoided by adhering to *one* of the many current opinions with "unbending consistency." The hair-raising arbitrariness of such fanaticism holds great fascination for society because for the duration of the social gathering it is freed from the chaos of opinions that it constantly generates. This "gift" of fascination, however, has only social relevance; it is so prominent in the *Tischgespräche* because here Hitler played the game of society and was not speaking to his own kind but to the generals of the Wehrmacht, all of whom more or less belonged to "society." To believe that Hitler's successes were based on his "powers of fascination" is altogether erroneous; with those qualities alone he would have never advanced beyond the role of a prominent figure in the salons.

after his defeat and death is today so thoroughly forgotten that he scarcely plays any further role even among the neo-Fascist and neo-Nazi groups of postwar Germany. This impermanence no doubt has something to do with the proverbial fickleness of the masses and the fame that rests on them; more likely, it can be traced to the perpetual-motion mania of totalitarian movements which can remain in power only so long as they keep moving and set everything around them in motion. Therefore, in a certain sense this very impermanence is a rather flattering testimonial to the dead leaders insofar as they succeeded in contaminating their subjects with the specifically totalitarian virus; for if there is such a thing as a totalitarian personality or mentality, this extraordinary adaptability and absence of continuity are no doubt its outstanding characteristics. Hence it might be a mistake to assume that the inconstancy and forgetfulness of the masses signify that they are cured of the totalitarian delusion, which is occasionally identified with the Hitler or Stalin cult; the opposite might well be true.

It would be a still more serious mistake to forget, because of this impermanence, that the totalitarian regimes, so long as they are in power, and the totalitarian leaders, so long as they are alive, "command and rest upon mass support" up to the end.² Hitler's rise to power was legal in terms of majority rule³ and neither he nor Stalin could have maintained the leadership of large populations, survived many interior and exterior crises, and braved the numerous dangers of relentless intra-party struggles if they had not had the confidence of the masses. Neither the Moscow trials nor the liquidation of the Röhm faction would have been possible if these masses had not supported Stalin and Hitler. The widespread belief that Hitler was simply an agent of German industrialists and that Stalin was victorious in the succession struggle after Lenin's death only through a sinister conspiracy are both legends which can be refuted by many facts but above all by the leaders' indisputable popularity.⁴ Nor can their popularity be attributed to the victory of masterful and lying propaganda over ignorance and stupidity.

² See the illuminating remarks of Carlton J. H. Hayes on "The Novelty of Totalitarianism in the History of Western Civilization," in *Symposium on the Totalitarian State*, 1939. Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia, 1940, Vol. LXXXII.

³ This was indeed "the first large revolution in history that was carried out by applying the existing formal code of law at the moment of seizing power" (Hans Frank, *Recht und Verwaltung*, 1939, p. 8).

⁴ The best study of Hitler and his career is the new Hitler biography by Alan Bullock, *Hitler, A Study in Tyranny*, London, 1952. In the English tradition of political biographies it makes meticulous use of all available source material and gives a comprehensive picture of the contemporary political background. By this publication the excellent books of Konrad Heiden—primarily *Der Fuehrer: Hitler's Rise to Power*, Boston, 1944—have been superseded in their details although they remain important for the general interpretation of events. For Stalin's career, Boris Souvarine, *Stalin: A Critical Survey of Bolshevism*, New York, 1939, is still a standard work. Isaac Deutscher, *Stalin: A Political Biography*, New York and London, 1949, is indispensable for its rich documentary material and great insight into the internal struggles of the Bolshevik party; it suffers from an interpretation which likens Stalin to—Cromwell, Napoleon, and Robespierre.

For the propaganda of totalitarian movements which precede and accompany totalitarian regimes is invariably as frank as it is mendacious, and would-be totalitarian rulers usually start their careers by boasting of their past crimes and carefully outlining their future ones. The Nazis "were convinced that evil-doing in our time has a morbid force of attraction,"⁵ Bolshevik assurances inside and outside Russia that they do not recognize ordinary moral standards have become a mainstay of Communist propaganda, and experience has proved time and again that the propaganda value of evil deeds and general contempt for moral standards is independent of mere self-interest, supposedly the most powerful psychological factor in politics.

The attraction of evil and crime for the mob mentality is nothing new. It has always been true that the mob will greet "deeds of violence with the admiring remark: it may be mean but it is very clever."⁶ The disturbing factor in the success of totalitarianism is rather the true selflessness of its adherents: it may be understandable that a Nazi or Bolshevik will not be shaken in his conviction by crimes against people who do not belong to the movement or are even hostile to it; but the amazing fact is that neither is he likely to waver when the monster begins to devour its own children and not even if he becomes a victim of persecution himself, if he is framed and condemned, if he is purged from the party and sent to a forced-labor or a concentration camp. On the contrary, to the wonder of the whole civilized world, he may even be willing to help in his own prosecution and frame his own death sentence if only his status as a member of the movement is not touched.⁷ It would be naïve to consider this stubbornness of conviction which outlives all actual experiences and cancels all immediate self-interest a simple expression of fervent idealism. Idealism, foolish or heroic, always springs from some individual decision and conviction and is subject to experience and argument.⁸ The fanaticism of totalitarian move-

⁵ Franz Borkenau, *The Totalitarian Enemy*, London, 1940, p. 231.

⁶ Quoted from the German edition of the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion," *Die Zionistischen Protokolle mit einem Vor- und Nachwort von Theodor Fritsch*, 1924, p. 29.

⁷ This, to be sure, is a specialty of the Russian brand of totalitarianism. It is interesting to note that in the early trial of foreign engineers in the Soviet Union, Communist sympathies were already used as an argument for self-accusation: "All the time the authorities insisted on my admitting having committed acts of sabotage I had never done. I refused. I was told: 'If you are in favour of the Soviet Government, as you pretend you are, prove it by your actions; the Government needs your confession.'" Reported by Anton Ciliga, *The Russian Enigma*, London, 1940, p. 153.

A theoretical justification for this behavior was given by Trotsky: "We can only be right with and by the Party, for history has provided no other way of being in the right. The English have a saying, 'My country, right or wrong.' . . . We have much better historical justification in saying whether it is right or wrong in certain individual concrete cases, it is my party" (Souvarine, *op. cit.*, p. 361).

On the other hand, the Red Army officers who did not belong to the movement had to be tried behind closed doors.

⁸ The Nazi author Andreas Pfenning explicitly rejects the notion that the SA were fighting for an "ideal" or were prompted by an "idealistic experience." Their "basic

ments, contrary to all forms of idealism, breaks down the moment the movement leaves its fanaticized followers in the lurch, killing in them any remaining conviction that might have survived the collapse of the movement itself.⁹ But within the organizational framework of the movement, so long as it holds together, the fanaticized members can be reached by neither experience nor argument; identification with the movement and total conformism seem to have destroyed the very capacity for experience, even if it be as extreme as torture or the fear of death.

The totalitarian movements aim at and succeed in organizing masses—not classes, like the old interest parties of the Continental nation-states; not citizens with opinions about, and interests in, the handling of public affairs, like the parties of Anglo-Saxon countries. While all political groups depend upon proportionate strength, the totalitarian movements depend on the sheer force of numbers to such an extent that totalitarian regimes seem impossible, even under otherwise favorable circumstances, in countries with relatively small populations.¹⁰ After the first World War, a deeply anti-democratic, prodicatorial wave of semitotalitarian and totalitarian movements swept Europe; Fascist movements spread from Italy to nearly all Central and Eastern European countries (the Czech part of Czechoslovakia was one of the notable exceptions); yet even Mussolini, who was so fond of the term "totalitarian state," did not attempt to establish a full-fledged totalitarian regime¹¹ and contented himself with dictatorship and one-party

experience came into existence in the course of the struggle." "Gemeinschaft und Staatswissenschaft," in *Zeitschrift für die gesamte Staatswissenschaft*, Band 96. Translation quoted from Ernst Fraenkel, *The Dual State*, New York and London, 1941. p. 192. From the extensive literature issued in pamphlet form by the main indoctrination center (*Hauptamt-Schulungsamt*) of the SS, it is quite evident that the word "idealism" has been studiously avoided. Not idealism was demanded of SS members, but "utter logical consistency in all questions of ideology and the ruthless pursuit of the political struggle" (Werner Best, *Die deutsche Polizei*, 1941, p. 99).

⁹ In this respect postwar Germany offers many illuminating examples. It was astonishing enough that American Negro troops were by no means received with hostility, in spite of the massive racial indoctrination undertaken by the Nazis. But equally startling was "the fact that the Waffen-SS in the last days of German resistance against the Allies did not fight 'to the last man'" and that this special Nazi combat unit "after the enormous sacrifices of the preceding years, which far exceeded the proportionate losses of the Wehrmacht, in the last few weeks acted like any unit drawn from the ranks of civilians, and bowed to the hopelessness of the situation" (Karl O. Paetel, "Die SS," in *Vierteljahreshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, January, 1954).

¹⁰ The Moscow-dominated Eastern European governments rule for the sake of Moscow and act as agents of the Comintern; they are examples of the spread of the Moscow-directed totalitarian movement, not of native developments. The only exception seems to be Tito of Yugoslavia, who may have broken with Moscow because he realized that the Russian-inspired totalitarian methods would cost him a heavy percentage of Yugoslavia's population.

¹¹ Proof of the nontotalitarian nature of the Fascist dictatorship is the surprisingly small number and the comparatively mild sentences meted out to political offenders. During the particularly active years from 1926 to 1932, the special tribunals for political offenders pronounced 7 death sentences, 257 sentences of 10 or more years imprisonment, 1,360 under 10 years, and sentenced many more to exile; 12,000, more-

rule. Similar nontotalitarian dictatorships sprang up in prewar Rumania, Poland, the Baltic states, Hungary, Portugal and Franco Spain. 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

over, were arrested and found innocent, a procedure quite inconceivable under conditions of Nazi or Bolshevik terror. See E. Kohn-Bramstedt, *Dictatorship and Political Police: The Technique of Control by Fear*, London, 1945, pp. 51 ff.

¹² Nazi political theorists have always emphatically stated that "Mussolini's 'ethical state' and Hitler's 'ideological state' [*Weltanschauungsstaat*] cannot be mentioned in the same breath" (Gottfried Neesse, "Die verfassungsrechtliche Gestaltung der Ein-Partei," in *Zeitschrift für die gesamte Staatswissenschaft*, 1938, Band 98).

Goebbels on the difference between Fascism and National Socialism: "[Fascism] is . . . nothing like National Socialism. While the latter goes deep down to the roots, Fascism is only a superficial thing" (*The Goebbels Diaries 1942-1943*, ed. by Louis Lochner, New York, 1948, p. 71). "[The Duce] is not a revolutionary like the Führer or Stalin. He is so bound to his own Italian people that he lacks the broad qualities of a worldwide revolutionary and insurrectionist" (*ibid.*, p. 468).

Himmler expressed the same opinion in a speech delivered in 1943 at a Conference of Commanding Officers: "Fascism and National Socialism are two fundamentally different things, . . . there is absolutely no comparison between Fascism and National Socialism as spiritual, ideological movements." See Kohn-Bramstedt, *op. cit.*, Appendix A.

Hitler recognized in the early twenties the affinity between the Nazi and the Communist movements: "In our movement the two extremes come together: the Communists from the Left and the officers and the students from the Right. These two have always been the most active elements. . . . The Communists were the idealists of Socialism. . . ." See Heiden, *op. cit.*, p. 147. Röhm, the chief of the SA, only repeated a current opinion when he wrote in the late twenties: "Many things are between us and the Communists, but we respect the sincerity of their conviction and their willingness to bring sacrifices for their own cause, and this unites us with them" (Ernst Röhm, *Die Geschichte eines Hochverrätters*, 1933, Volksausgabe, p. 273).

During the last war, the Nazis more readily recognized the Russians as their peers than any other nation. Hitler, speaking in May, 1943, at a conference of the Reichsleiter and Gauleiter, "began with the fact that in this war bourgeoisie and revolutionary states are facing each other. It has been an easy thing for us to knock out the bourgeois states, for they were quite inferior to us in their upbringing and attitude. Countries with an ideology have an edge on bourgeois states. . . . [In the East] we met an opponent who also sponsors an ideology, even though a wrong one. . . ." (*Goebbels Diaries*, p. 355).—This estimate was based on ideological, not on military considerations. Gottfried Neesse, *Partei und Staat*, 1936, gave the official version of the movement's struggle for power when he wrote: "For us the united front of the *system* extends from the German National People's Party [*i.e.*, the extreme Right] to the Social Democrats. The Communist Party was an enemy outside of the *system*. During the first months of 1933, therefore, when the doom of the *system* was already sealed, we still had to fight a decisive battle against the Communist Party" (p. 76).

¹³ *Hitlers Tischgespräche*, p. 113. There we also find numerous examples showing that, contrary to certain postwar legends, Hitler never intended to defend "the West" against Bolshevism but always remained ready to join "the Reds" for the destruction of the West, even in the middle of the struggle against Soviet Russia. See especially pp. 95, 108, 113 ff., 158, 385.

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

The point is that in all these smaller European countries nontotalitarian dictatorships were preceded by totalitarian movements, so that it appeared that totalitarianism was too ambitious an aim, that although it had served well enough to organize the masses until the movement seized power, the absolute size of the country then forced the would-be totalitarian ruler of masses into the more familiar patterns of class or party dictatorship. The truth is that these countries simply did not control enough human material to allow for total domination and its inherent great losses in population.¹⁵ Without much hope for the conquest of more heavily populated territories, the tyrants in these small countries were forced into a certain old-fashioned moderation lest they lose whatever people they had to rule. This is also why Nazism, up to the outbreak of the war and its expansion over Europe, lagged so far behind its Russian counterpart in consistency and ruthlessness; even the German people were not numerous enough to allow for the full development of this newest form of government. Only if Germany had won the war would she have known a fully developed totalitarian rulership, and the sacrifices this would have entailed not only for the "inferior races" but for the Germans themselves can be gleaned and evaluated from the legacy of Hitler's plans.¹⁶ In any event it was only during the war, after the conquests

¹⁴ We now know that Stalin was warned repeatedly of the imminent attack of Hitler on the Soviet Union. Even when the Soviet military attaché in Berlin informed him of the day of the Nazi attack, Stalin refused to believe that Hitler would violate the treaty. (See Khrushchev's "Speech on Stalin," text released by the State Department, *New York Times*, June 5, 1956.)

¹⁵ The following information reported by Souvarine, *op. cit.*, p. 669, seems to be an outstanding illustration: "According to W. Krivitsky, whose excellent confidential source of information is the GPU: 'Instead of the 171 million inhabitants calculated for 1937, only 145 million were found; thus nearly 30 million people in the USSR are missing.'" And this, it should be kept in mind, occurred after the dekulakization of the early thirties which had cost an estimated 8 million human lives. See *Communism in Action*. U. S. Government, Washington, 1946, p. 140.

¹⁶ A large part of these plans, based on the original documents, can be found in Léon Poliakov's *Bréviaire de la Haine*, Paris, 1951, chapter 8 (American edition under the title *Harvest of Hate*, Syracuse, 1954; we quote from the original French edition), but only insofar as they referred to the extermination of non-Germanic peoples, above all those of Slavic origin. That the Nazi engine of destruction would not have stopped even before the German people is evident from a Reich health bill drafted by Hitler himself. Here he proposes to "isolate" from the rest of the population all families with cases of heart or lung ailments among them, their physical liquidation being of course the next step in this program. This as well as several other interesting projects for a victorious postwar Germany are contained in a circular letter to the district leaders (Kreisleiter) of Hesse-Nassau in the form of a report on a discussion at the Fuehrer's headquarters concerning "measures that before . . . and after victorious termination of the war" should be adopted. See the collection of documents in *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression*, Washington, 1946, *et seq.*, Vol. VII, p. 175. In the same context belongs the planned enactment of an "over-all alien legislation," by

in the East furnished large masses of people and made the extermination camps possible, that Germany was able to establish a truly totalitarian rule. (Conversely, the chances for totalitarian rule are frighteningly good in the lands of traditional Oriental despotism, in India and China, where there is almost inexhaustible material to feed the power-accumulating and man-destroying machinery of total domination, and where, moreover, the mass man's typical feeling of superfluosity—an entirely new phenomenon in Europe, the concomitant of mass unemployment and the population growth of the last 150 years—has been prevalent for centuries in the contempt for the value of human life.) Moderation or less murderous methods of rule were hardly attributable to the governments' fear of popular rebellion; depopulation in their own country was a much more serious threat. Only where great masses are superfluous or can be spared without disastrous results of depopulation is totalitarian rule, as distinguished from a totalitarian movement, at all possible.

Totalitarian movements are possible wherever there are masses who for one reason or another have acquired the appetite for political organization. Masses are not held together by a consciousness of common interest and they lack that specific class articulateness which is expressed in determined, limited, and obtainable goals. The term masses applies only where we deal with people who either because of sheer numbers, or indifference, or a combination of both, cannot be integrated into any organization based on common interest, into political parties or municipal governments or professional organizations or trade unions. Potentially, they exist in every country and form the majority of those large numbers of neutral, politically indifferent people who never join a party and hardly ever go to the polls.

It was characteristic of the rise of the Nazi movement in Germany and of the Communist movements in Europe after 1930¹⁷ that they recruited their members from this mass of apparently indifferent people whom all other parties had given up as too apathetic or too stupid for their attention. The result was that the majority of their membership consisted of

means of which the "institutional authority" of the police—namely, to ship persons innocent of any offenses to concentration camps—was to be legalized and expanded. (See Paul Werner, SS-Standartenführer, in *Deutsches Jugendrecht*, Heft 4, 1944.)

In connection with this "negative population policy," which in its aim at extermination decidedly matches the Bolshevik party purges, it is important to remember that "in this process of selection there can never be a standstill" (Himmler, "Die Schutzstaffel," in *Grundlagen, Aufbau und Wirtschaftsordnung des nationalsozialistischen Staates*, No. 7b). "The struggle of the Fuehrer and his party was a hitherto unattained selection. . . . This selection and this struggle were ostensibly accomplished on January 30, 1933. . . . The Fuehrer and his old guard knew that the real struggle had just begun" (Robert Ley, *Der Weg zur Ordensburg*, o.D. Verlag der Deutschen Arbeitsfront. "Not available for sale").

¹⁷ F. Borkenau describes the situation correctly: "The Communists had only very modest successes when they tried to win influence among the masses of the working class; their mass basis, therefore, if they had it at all, moved more and more away from the proletariat" ("Die neue Komintern," in *Der Monat*, Berlin, 1949, Heft 4).

people who never before had appeared on the political scene. This permitted the introduction of entirely new methods into political propaganda, and indifference to the arguments of political opponents; these movements not only placed themselves outside and against the party system as a whole, they found a membership that had never been reached, never been "spoiled" by the party system. Therefore they did not need to refute opposing arguments and consistently preferred methods which ended in death rather than persuasion, which spelled terror rather than conviction. They presented disagreements as invariably originating in deep natural, social, or psychological sources beyond the control of the individual and therefore beyond the power of reason. This would have been a shortcoming only if they had sincerely entered into competition with other parties; it was not if they were sure of dealing with people who had reason to be equally hostile to all parties.

The success of totalitarian movements among the masses meant the end of two illusions of democratically ruled countries in general and of European nation-states and their party system in particular. The first was that the people in its majority had taken an active part in government and that each individual was in sympathy with one's own or somebody else's party. On the contrary, the movements showed that the politically neutral and indifferent masses could easily be the majority in a democratically ruled country, that therefore a democracy could function according to rules which are actively recognized by only a minority. The second democratic illusion exploded by the totalitarian movements was that these politically indifferent masses did not matter, that they were truly neutral and constituted no more than the inarticulate backward setting for the political life of the nation. Now they made apparent what no other organ of public opinion had ever been able to show, namely, that democratic government had rested as much on the silent approbation and tolerance of the indifferent and inarticulate sections of the people as on the articulate and visible institutions and organizations of the country. Thus when the totalitarian movements invaded Parliament with their contempt for parliamentary government, they merely appeared inconsistent: actually, they succeeded in convincing the people at large that parliamentary majorities were spurious and did not necessarily correspond to the realities of the country, thereby undermining the self-respect and the confidence of governments which also believed in majority rule rather than in their constitutions.

It has frequently been pointed out that totalitarian movements use and abuse democratic freedoms in order to abolish them. This is not just devilish cleverness on the part of the leaders or childish stupidity on the part of the masses. Democratic freedoms may be based on the equality of all citizens before the law; yet they acquire their meaning and function organically only where the citizens belong to and are represented by groups or form a social and political hierarchy. The breakdown of the class system, the only social and political stratification of the European nation-states,

certainly was "one of the most dramatic events in recent German history"¹⁸ and as favorable to the rise of Nazism as the absence of social stratification in Russia's immense rural population (this "great flaccid body destitute of political education, almost inaccessible to ideas capable of ennobling action"¹⁹) was to the Bolshevik overthrow of the democratic Kerensky government. Conditions in pre-Hitler Germany are indicative of the dangers implicit in the development of the Western part of the world since, with the end of the second World War, the same dramatic event of a breakdown of the class system repeated itself in almost all European countries, while events in Russia clearly indicate the direction which the inevitable revolutionary changes in Asia may take. Practically speaking, it will make little difference whether totalitarian movements adopt the pattern of Nazism or Bolshevism, organize the masses in the name of race or class, pretend to follow the laws of life and nature or of dialectics and economics.

Indifference to public affairs, neutrality on political issues, are in themselves no sufficient cause for the rise of totalitarian movements. The competitive and acquisitive society of the bourgeoisie had produced apathy and even hostility toward public life not only, and not even primarily, in the social strata which were exploited and excluded from active participation in the rule of the country, but first of all in its own class. The long period of false modesty, when the bourgeoisie was content with being the dominating class in society without aspiring to political rule, which it gladly left to the aristocracy, was followed by the imperialist era, during which the bourgeoisie grew increasingly hostile to existing national institutions and began to claim and to organize itself for the exercise of political power. Both the early apathy and the later demand for monopolistic dictatorial direction of the nation's foreign affairs had their roots in a way and philosophy of life so insistently and exclusively centered on the individual's success or failure in ruthless competition that a citizen's duties and responsibilities could only be felt to be a needless drain on his limited time and energy. These bourgeois attitudes are very useful for those forms of dictatorship in which a "strong man" takes upon himself the troublesome responsibility for the conduct of public affairs; they are a positive hindrance to totalitarian movements which can tolerate bourgeois individualism no more than any other kind of individualism. The apathetic sections of a bourgeois-dominated society, no matter how unwilling they may be to assume the responsibilities of citizens, keep their personalities intact if only because without them they could hardly expect to survive the competitive struggle for life.

The decisive differences between nineteenth-century mob organizations and twentieth-century mass movements are difficult to perceive because the modern totalitarian leaders do not differ much in psychology and mentality from the earlier mob leaders, whose moral standards and political devices so closely resembled those of the bourgeoisie. Yet, insofar as individualism

¹⁸ William Ebenstein, *The Nazi State*, New York, 1943, p. 247.

¹⁹ As Maxim Gorky had described them. See Souvarine, *op. cit.*, p. 290.

characterized the bourgeoisie's as well as the mob's attitude to life, the totalitarian movements can rightly claim that they were the first truly antibourgeois parties; none of their nineteenth-century predecessors, neither the Society of the 10th of December which helped Louis Napoleon into power, the butcher brigades of the Dreyfus Affair, the Black Hundreds of the Russian pogroms, nor the pan-movements, ever involved their members to the point of complete loss of individual claims and ambition, or had ever realized that an organization could succeed in extinguishing individual identity permanently and not just for the moment of collective heroic action.

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.

Membership in a class, although looser and never as inevitably determined by social origin as in the orders and estates of feudal society, was generally by birth, and only extraordinary gifts or luck could change it. Social status was decisive for the individual's participation in politics, and except in cases of national emergency when he was supposed to act only as a *national*, regardless of his class or party membership, he never was directly confronted with public affairs or felt directly responsible for their conduct. The rise of a class to greater importance in the community was always accompanied by the education and training of a certain number of its members for politics as a job, for paid (or, if they could afford it, unpaid) service in the government and representation of the class in Parliament. That the majority of people remained outside all party or other political organization was not important to anyone, and no truer for one particular class than another. In other words, membership in a class, its limited group obligations and traditional attitudes toward government, prevented the growth of a citizenry that felt individually and personally responsible for the rule of the country. This apolitical character of the nation-state's populations came to light only when the class system broke down and carried with it the whole fabric of visible and invisible threads which bound the people to the body politic.

The breakdown of the class system meant automatically the breakdown of the party system, chiefly because these parties, being interest parties, could no longer represent class interests. Their continuance was of some importance to the members of former classes who hoped against hope to regain their old social status and who stuck together not because they had

common interests any longer but because they hoped to restore them. The parties, consequently, became more and more psychological and ideological in their propaganda, more and more apologetic and nostalgic in their political approach. They had lost, moreover, without being aware of it, those neutral supporters who had never been interested in politics because they felt that parties existed to take care of their interests. So that the first signs of the breakdown of the Continental party system were not the desertion of old party members, but the failure to recruit members from the younger generation, and the loss of the silent consent and support of the unorganized masses who suddenly shed their apathy and went wherever they saw an opportunity to voice their new violent opposition.

The fall of protecting class walls transformed the slumbering majorities behind all parties into one great unorganized, structureless mass of furious individuals who had nothing in common except their vague apprehension that the hopes of party members were doomed, that, consequently, the most respected, articulate and representative members of the community were fools and that all the powers that be were not so much evil as they were equally stupid and fraudulent. It was of no great consequence for the birth of this new terrifying negative solidarity that the unemployed worker hated the status quo and the powers that be in the form of the Social Democratic Party, the expropriated small property owner in the form of a centrist or rightist party, and former members of the middle and upper classes in the form of the traditional extreme right. The number of this mass of generally dissatisfied and desperate men increased rapidly in Germany and Austria after the first World War, when inflation and unemployment added to the disrupting consequences of military defeat; they existed in great proportion in all the succession states, and they have supported the extreme movements in France and Italy since the second World War.

In this atmosphere of the breakdown of class society the psychology of the European mass man developed. The fact that with monotonous but abstract uniformity the same fate had befallen a mass of individuals did not prevent their judging themselves in terms of individual failure or the world in terms of specific injustice. This self-centered bitterness, however, although repeated again and again in individual isolation, was not a common bond despite its tendency to extinguish individual differences, because it was based on no common interest, economic or social or political. Self-centeredness, therefore, went hand in hand with a decisive weakening of the instinct for self-preservation. Selflessness in the sense that oneself does not matter, the feeling of being expendable, was no longer the expression of individual idealism but a mass phenomenon. The old adage that the poor and oppressed have nothing to lose but their chains no longer applied to the mass men, for they lost much more than the chains of misery when they lost interest in their own well-being: the source of all the worries and cares which make human life troublesome and anguished was gone. Compared

with their nonmaterialism, a Christian monk looks like a man absorbed in worldly affairs. Himmler, who knew so well the mentality of those whom he organized, described not only his SS-men, but the large strata from which he recruited them, when he said they were not interested in "everyday problems" but only "in ideological questions of importance for decades and centuries, so that the man . . . knows he is working for a great task which occurs but once in 2,000 years."²⁰ The gigantic massing of individuals produced a mentality which, like Cecil Rhodes some forty years before, thought in continents and felt in centuries.

Eminent European scholars and statesmen had predicted, from the early nineteenth century onward, the rise of the mass man and the coming of a mass age. A whole literature on mass behavior and mass psychology had demonstrated and popularized the wisdom, so familiar to the ancients, of the affinity between democracy and dictatorship, between mob rule and tyranny. They had prepared certain politically conscious and overconscious sections of the Western educated world for the emergence of demagogues, for gullibility, superstition, and brutality. Yet, while all these predictions in a sense came true, they lost much of their significance in view of such unexpected and unpredicted phenomena as the radical loss of self-interest,²¹ the cynical or bored indifference in the face of death or other personal catastrophes, the passionate inclination toward the most abstract notions as guides for life, and the general contempt for even the most obvious rules of common sense.

The masses, contrary to prediction, did not result from growing equality of condition, from the spread of general education and its inevitable lowering of standards and popularization of content. (America, the classical land of equality of condition and of general education with all its shortcomings, knows less of the modern psychology of masses than perhaps any other country in the world.) It soon became apparent that highly cultured people were particularly attracted to mass movements and that, generally, highly differentiated individualism and sophistication did not prevent, indeed sometimes encouraged, the self-abandonment into the mass for which mass movements provided. Since the obvious fact that individualization and cultivation do not prevent the formation of mass attitudes was so unexpected, it has frequently been blamed upon the morbidity or nihilism of the modern intelligentsia, upon a supposedly typical intellectual self-hatred, upon the spirit's "hostility to life" and antagonism to vitality. Yet, the much-slandered intellectuals were only the most illustrative example and the most articulate spokesmen for a much more general phenomenon. Social atomization and extreme individualization preceded the mass movements

²⁰ Heinrich Himmler's speech on "Organization and Obligation of the SS and the Police," published in *National-politischer Lehrgang der Wehrmacht vom 15-23. Januar 1937*. Translation quoted from *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression*. Office of the United States Chief of Counsel for the Prosecution of Axis Criminality. U. S. Government, Washington, 1946, IV, 616 ff.

²¹ Gustave Lebon, *La Psychologie des Foules*, 1895, mentions the peculiar selflessness of the masses. See chapter ii, paragraph 5.

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.

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

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. 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

²² The founders of the Nazi party referred to it occasionally even before Hitler took over as a "party of the Left." An incident which occurred after the parliamentary elections of 1932 is also interesting: "Gregor Strasser bitterly pointed out to his Leader that before the elections the National Socialists in the Reichstag might have formed a majority with the Center; now this possibility was ended, the two parties were less than half of parliament; . . . But with the Communists they still had a majority, Hitler replied; no one can govern against us" (Heiden, *op. cit.*, pp. 94 and 495, respectively).

²³ Compare Carlton J. H. Hayes, *op. cit.*, who does not differentiate between the mob and the masses, thinks that totalitarian dictators "have come from the masses rather than from the classes."

²⁴ This is the central theory of K. Heiden, whose analyses of the Nazi movement are still outstanding. "From the wreckage of dead classes arises the new class of intellectuals, and at the head march the most ruthless, those with the least to lose, hence the strongest: the armed bohemians, to whom war is home and civil war fatherland" (*op. cit.*, p. 100).

²⁵ The plot between Reichswehr General Schleicher and Röhm, the chief of the SA, consisted of a plan to bring all paramilitary formations under the military authority of the Reichswehr, which at once would have added millions to the German

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.

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

army. This, of course, would inevitably have led to a military dictatorship. In June, 1934, Hitler liquidated Röhm and Schleicher. The initial negotiations were started with the full knowledge of Hitler who used Röhm's connections with the Reichswehr to deceive German military circles about his real intentions. In April, 1932, Röhm testified in one of Hitler's lawsuits that the SA's military status had the full understanding of the Reichswehr. (For documentary evidence on the Röhm-Schleicher plan, see *Nazi Conspiracy*, V, 456 ff. See also Heiden, *op. cit.*, p. 450.) Röhm himself proudly reports his negotiations with Schleicher, which according to him were started in 1931. Schleicher had promised to put the SA under the command of Reichswehr officers in case of an emergency. (See *Die Memoiren des Stabschefs Röhm*, Saarbrücken, 1934, p. 170.) The militaristic character of the SA, shaped by Röhm and constantly fought by Hitler, continued to determine its vocabulary even after the liquidation of the Röhm faction. Contrary to the SS, the members of the SA always insisted on being the "representatives of Germany's military will," and for them the Third Reich was a "military community [supported by] two pillars: Party and Wehrmacht" (see *Handbuch der SA*, Berlin, 1939, and Victor Lutze, "Die Sturmabteilungen," in *Grundlagen, Aufbau und Wirtschaftsordnung des nationalsozialistischen Staates*, No. 7a).

²⁶ Röhm's autobiography especially is a veritable classic in this kind of literature.

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.

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.

²⁷ It is well known that the anti-Stalinist splinter groups have based their criticism of the development of the Soviet Union on this Marxist formulation, and have actually never outgrown it. The repeated "purges" of Soviet bureaucracy, which were tantamount to a liquidation of bureaucracy as a class, have never prevented them from seeing in it the dominating and ruling class of the Soviet Union. The following is the estimate of Rakovsky, writing in 1930 from his exile in Siberia: "Under our eyes has formed and is being formed a great class of directors which has its internal subdivisions and which increases through calculated co-option and direct or indirect nominations. . . . The element which unites this original class is a form, also original, of private property, to wit, the State power" (quoted from Souvarine, *op. cit.*, p. 564). This analysis is indeed quite accurate for the development of the pre-Stalinist era. For the development of the relationship between party and Soviets, which is of decisive importance for the course of the October revolution, see I. Deutscher, *The Prophet Armed: Trotsky 1879-1921*, 1954.

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.

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.

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 frus-

²⁸ In 1927, 90 per cent of the village Soviets and 75 per cent of their chairmen were non-party members; the executive committees of the counties were made up of 50 per cent party members and 50 per cent non-party members, while in the Central Committee 75 per cent of the delegates were party members. See the article on "Bolshevism" by Maurice Dodd in the *Encyclopedia of Social Sciences*.

How the party members of the Soviets, by voting "in conformity with the instructions they received from the permanent officials of the Party," destroyed the Soviet system from within is described in detail in A. Rosenberg, *A History of Bolshevism*, London, 1934, chapter vi.

trated 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.

On top of these measures came the liquidation of that bureaucracy which had helped to carry out the previous liquidation measures. It took Stalin about two years, from 1936 to 1938, to rid himself of the whole administrative and military aristocracy of the Soviet society; nearly all offices, factories, economic and cultural bodies, government, party, and military bureaus came into new hands, when "nearly half the administrative personnel, party and nonparty, had been swept out," and more than 50 per cent of all party members and "at least eight million more" were liquidated.²⁹ Again the introduction of an interior passport, on which all departures from one city to another have to be registered and authorized, completed the destruction of the party bureaucracy as a class. As for its juridical status, the bureaucracy along with the party functionaries was now on the same level with the workers; it, too, had now become a part of the vast multitude of Russian forced laborers and its status as a privileged class in Soviet society was a thing of the past. And since this general purge ended with the liquidation of the highest police officials—the same who had organized the general purge in the first place—not even the cadres of the GPU which had carried out the terror could any longer delude themselves that as a group they represented anything at all, let alone power.

None of these immense sacrifices in human life was motivated by a *raison d'état* in the old sense of the term. None of the liquidated social strata was hostile to the regime or likely to become hostile in the foreseeable future. Active organized opposition had ceased to exist by 1930 when Stalin, in his speech to the Sixteenth Party Congress, outlawed the rightist and leftist deviations inside the Party, and even these feeble oppositions had hardly been able to base themselves on any of the existing classes.³⁰

²⁹ These figures are taken from Victor Kravchenko's Book *I Chose Freedom: The Personal and Political Life of a Soviet Official*, New York, 1946, pp. 278 and 303. This is of course a highly questionable source. But since in the case of Soviet Russia we basically have nothing but questionable sources to resort to—meaning that we have to rely altogether on news stories, reports and evaluations of one kind or another—all we can do is use whatever information at least appears to have a high degree of probability. Some historians seem to think that the opposite method—namely, to use exclusively whatever material is furnished by the Russian government—is more reliable, but this is the not the case. It is precisely the official material that is nothing but propaganda.

³⁰ Stalin's Report to the Sixteenth Congress denounced the deviations as the "reflection" of the resistance of the peasant and petty bourgeois classes in the ranks of the

Dictatorial terror—distinguished from totalitarian terror insofar as it threatens only authentic opponents but not harmless citizens without political opinions—had been grim enough to suffocate all political life, open or clandestine, even before Lenin's death. Intervention from abroad, which might ally itself with one of the dissatisfied sections in the population, was no longer a danger when, by 1930, the Soviet regime had been recognized by a majority of governments and concluded commercial and other international agreements with many countries. (Nor did Stalin's government eliminate such a possibility as far as the people themselves were concerned: we know now that Hitler, if he had been an ordinary conqueror and not a rival totalitarian ruler, might have had an extraordinary chance to win for his cause at least the people of the Ukraine.)

If the liquidation of classes made no political sense, it was positively disastrous for the Soviet economy. The consequences of the artificial famine in 1933 were felt for years throughout the country; the introduction of the Stakhanov system in 1935, with its arbitrary speed-up of individual output and its complete disregard of the necessities for teamwork in industrial production, resulted in a "chaotic imbalance" of the young industry.³¹ The liquidation of the bureaucracy, that is, of the class of factory managers and engineers, finally deprived industrial enterprises of what little experience and know-how the new Russian technical intelligentsia had been able to acquire.

Equality of condition among their subjects has been one of the foremost concerns of despotisms and tyrannies since ancient times, yet such equalization is not sufficient for totalitarian rule because it leaves more or less intact certain nonpolitical communal bonds between the subjects, such as family ties and common cultural interests. If totalitarianism takes its own claim seriously, it must come to the point where it has "to finish once and for all with the neutrality of chess," that is, with the autonomous existence of any activity whatsoever. The lovers of "chess for the sake of chess," aptly compared by their liquidator with the lovers of "art for art's sake,"³² are not yet absolutely atomized elements in a mass society whose completely heterogeneous uniformity is one of the primary conditions for totalitarianism. From the point of view of totalitarian rulers, a society devoted to chess for the sake of chess is only in degree different and less dangerous than a class of farmers for the sake of farming. Himmler quite aptly defined the SS member as the new type of man who under no circumstances will ever do "a thing for its own sake."³³

Party. (See *Leninism*, 1933, Vol. II, chapter iii.) Against this attack the opposition was curiously defenseless because they too, and especially Trotsky, were "always anxious to discover a struggle of classes behind the struggles of cliques" (*Souvarine, op. cit.*, p. 440).

³¹ Kravchenko, *op. cit.*, p. 187.

³² Souvarine, *op. cit.*, p. 575.

³³ The watchword of the SS as formulated by Himmler himself begins with the words: "There is no task that exists for its own sake." See Gunter d'Alquen, "Die SS," in *Schriften der Hochschule für Politik*, 1939. The pamphlets issued by the SS solely

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. Retrospectively, they will try to prove that their acquaintance or friendship with the accused was only a pretext for spying on him and revealing him as a saboteur, a Trotskyite, a foreign spy, or a Fascist. Merit being "gauged by the number of your denunciations of close comrades,"³⁴ it is obvious that the most elementary caution demands that one avoid all intimate contacts, if possible—not in order to prevent discovery of one's secret thoughts, but rather to eliminate, in the almost certain case of future trouble, all persons who might have not only an ordinary cheap interest in your denunciation but an irresistible need to bring about your ruin simply because they are in danger of their own lives. In the last analysis, it has been through the development of this device to its farthest and most fantastic extremes that Bolshevik rulers have succeeded in creating an atomized and individualized society the like of which we have never seen before and which events or catastrophes alone would hardly have brought about.

Totalitarian movements are mass organizations of atomized, isolated individuals. Compared with all other parties and movements, their most conspicuous external characteristic is their demand for total, unrestricted, unconditional, and unalterable loyalty of the individual member. This demand is made by the leaders of totalitarian movements even before they seize power. It usually precedes the total organization of the country under their actual rule and it follows from the claim of their ideologies that their organization will encompass, in due course, the entire human race. Where, however, totalitarian rule has not been prepared by a totalitarian movement (and this, in contradistinction to Nazi Germany, was the case in Russia), the movement has to be organized afterward and the conditions for its growth have artificially to be created in order to make total loyalty—the psychological basis for total domination—at all possible. Such loyalty can be expected only from the completely isolated human being who, without any other social ties to family, friends, comrades, or even mere acquaint-

for internal consumption emphasize time and again "the absolute necessity for understanding the futility of everything that is an end in itself" (see *Der Reichsführer SS und Chef der deutschen Polizei*, undated, "only for internal use within the police").

³⁴ The practice itself has been abundantly documented. W. Krivitsky, in his book *In Stalin's Secret Services* (New York, 1939), traces it directly to Stalin.

nces, derives his sense of having a place in the world only from his belonging to a movement, his membership in the party.

Total loyalty is possible only when fidelity is emptied of all concrete content, from which changes of mind might naturally arise. The totalitarian movements, each in its own way, have done their utmost to get rid of the party programs which specified concrete content and which they inherited from earlier, nontotalitarian stages of development. No matter how radically they might have been phrased, every definite political goal which does not simply assert or circumscribe the claim to world rule, every political program which deals with issues more specific than "ideological questions of importance for centuries" is an obstruction to totalitarianism. Hitler's greatest achievement in the organization of the Nazi movement, which he gradually built up from the obscure crackpot membership of a typically nationalistic little party, was that he unburdened the movement of the party's earlier program, not by changing or officially abolishing it, but simply by refusing to talk about it or discuss its points, whose relative moderateness of content and phraseology were very soon outdated.³⁵ Stalin's task in this as in other respects was much more formidable; the socialist program of the Bolshevik party was a much more troublesome burden³⁶ than the 25 points of an amateur economist and a crackpot politician.³⁷ But Stalin achieved eventually, after having abolished the factions of the Russian party, the same result through the constant zigzag of the Communist Party lines, and the constant reinterpretation and application of Marxism which voided the doctrine of all its content because it was no longer possible to predict what course or action it would inspire. The fact that the most perfect education in Marxism and Leninism was no guide whatsoever for political behavior—that, on the contrary, one could follow the party line only if one repeated each morning what Stalin had announced the night before—naturally resulted in the same state of mind, the same concentrated obedience, undivided by any attempt to understand what one was doing, that Himmler's ingenious watchword for his SS-men expressed: "My honor is my loyalty."³⁸

Hitler stated in *Mein Kampf* (2 vols., 1st German ed., 1925 and 1927 respectively. Unexpurgated translation, New York, 1939) that it was better to have an antiquated program than to allow a discussion of program (Book II, chapter v). Soon he was to proclaim publicly: "Once we take over the government, the program will come of itself . . . The first thing must be an inconceivable wave of propaganda. That is a political action which would have little to do with the other problems of the moment." See Heiden, *op. cit.*, p. 203.

Souvarine, in our opinion wrongly, suggests that Lenin had already abolished the role of a party program: "Nothing could show more clearly the non-existence of Bolshevism as a doctrine except in Lenin's brain; every Bolshevik left to himself wandered from 'the line' of his faction . . . for these men were bound together by their temperament and by the ascendancy of Lenin rather than by ideas" (*op. cit.*, p. 85).

Gottfried Feder's Program of the Nazi Party with its famous 25 points has played a greater role in the literature about the movement than in the movement itself.

The impact of the watchword, formulated by Himmler himself, is difficult to render. Its German equivalent: "*Meine Ehre heisst Treue*," indicates an absolute devotion and obedience which transcends the meaning of mere discipline or personal

Lack of or ignoring of a party program is by itself not necessarily a sign of totalitarianism. The first to consider programs and platforms as needless scraps of paper and embarrassing promises, inconsistent with the style and impetus of a movement, was Mussolini with his Fascist philosophy of activism and inspiration through the historical moment itself.³⁹ Mere lust for power combined with contempt for "talkative" articulation of what they intend to do with it is characteristic of all mob leaders, but does not come up to the standards of totalitarianism. The true goal of Fascism was only to seize power and establish the Fascist "elite" as uncontested ruler over the country. Totalitarianism is never content to rule by external means, namely, through the state and a machinery of violence; thanks to its peculiar ideology and the role assigned to it in this apparatus of coercion, totalitarianism has discovered a means of dominating and terrorizing human beings from within. In this sense it eliminates the distance between the rulers and the ruled and achieves a condition in which power and the will to power, as we understand them, play no role, or at best, a secondary role. In substance, the totalitarian leader is nothing more nor less than the functionary of the masses he leads; he is not a power-hungry individual imposing a tyrannical and arbitrary will upon his subjects. Being a mere functionary, he can be replaced at any time, and he depends just as much on the "will" of the masses he embodies as the masses depend on him. Without him they would lack external representation and remain an amorphous horde; without the masses the leader is a nonentity. Hitler, who was fully aware of this interdependence, expressed it once in a speech addressed to the SA: "All that you are, you are through me; all that I am, I am through you alone."⁴⁰ We are only too inclined to belittle such statements or to misunderstand them in the sense that acting is defined here in terms of giving and executing orders, as has happened too often in the political tradition and history of the West.⁴¹ But this idea has always presupposed someone in command who thinks and wills, and then imposes his thought and will on a thought- and will-deprived group—be it by persuasion, authority, or violence. Hitler, however, was of the opinion that even "thinking . . . [exists] only by virtue of giving or executing orders,"⁴²

faithfulness. *Nazi Conspiracy*, whose translations of German documents and Nazi literature are indispensable source material but, unfortunately, are very uneven, renders the SS watchword: "My honor signifies faithfulness" (V, 346).

³⁹ Mussolini was probably the first party leader who consciously rejected a formal program and replaced it with inspired leadership and action alone. Behind this act lay the notion that the actuality of the moment itself was the chief element of inspiration, which would only be hampered by a party program. The philosophy of Italian Fascism has been expressed by Gentile's "actualism" rather than by Sorel's "myths." Compare also the article "Fascism" in the *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*. The Program of 1921 was formulated when the movement had been in existence two years and contained, for the most part, its nationalist philosophy.

⁴⁰ Ernst Bayer, *Die SA*, Berlin, 1938. Translation quoted from *Nazi Conspiracy*, IV, 783.

⁴¹ For the first time in Plato's *Statesman*, 305, where acting is interpreted in terms of *archein* and *prattein*—of ordering the start of an action and of executing this order.

⁴² *Hitlers Tischgespräche*, p. 198.

and thereby eliminated even theoretically the distinction between thinking and acting on one hand, and between the rulers and the ruled on the other.

Neither National Socialism nor Bolshevism has ever proclaimed a new form of government or asserted that its goals were reached with the seizure of power and the control of the state machinery. Their idea of domination was something that no state and no mere apparatus of violence can ever achieve, but only a movement that is constantly kept in motion: namely, the permanent domination of each single individual in each and every sphere of life.⁴³ The seizure of power through the means of violence is never an end in itself but only the means to an end, and the seizure of power in any given country is only a welcome transitory stage but never the end of the movement. The practical goal of the movement is to organize as many people as possible within its framework and to set and keep them in motion; a political goal that would constitute the end of the movement simply does not exist.

II: *The Temporary Alliance Between the Mob and the Elite*

WHAT IS MORE disturbing to our peace of mind than the unconditional loyalty of members of totalitarian movements, and the popular support of totalitarian regimes, is the unquestionable attraction these movements exert on the elite, and not only on the mob elements in society. It would be rash indeed to discount, because of artistic vagaries or scholarly naïveté, the terrifying roster of distinguished men whom totalitarianism can count among its sympathizers, fellow-travelers, and inscribed party members.

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

⁴³ *Mein Kampf*, Book I, chapter xi. See also, for example, Dieter Schwarz, *Angriffe auf die nationalsozialistische Weltanschauung*: Aus dem Schwarzen Korps, No. 2, 1936, who answers the obvious criticism that National Socialists after their rise to power continued to talk about "a struggle": "National Socialism as an ideology [*Weltanschauung*] will not abandon its struggle until . . . the way of life of each individual German has been shaped by its fundamental values and these are realized every day anew."

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.

In this respect, the situation after the second World War in Europe does not differ essentially from that after the first; just as in the twenties the ideologies of Fascism, Bolshevism, and Nazism were formulated and the movements led by the so-called front generation, by those who had been brought up and still remembered distinctly the times before the war, so the present general political and intellectual climate of postwar totalitarianism is being determined by a generation which knew intimately the time and life which preceded the present. This is specifically true for France, where the breakdown of the class system came after the second instead of after the first War. Like the mob men and the adventurers of the imperialist era, the leaders of totalitarian movements have in common with their intellectual sympathizers the fact that both had been outside the class and national system of respectable European society even before this system broke down.

This breakdown, when the smugness of spurious respectability gave way to anarchic despair, seemed the first great opportunity for the elite as well as the mob. This is obvious for the new mass leaders whose careers reproduce the features of earlier mob leaders: failure in professional and social life, perversion and disaster in private life. The fact that their lives prior to their political careers had been failures, naïvely held against them by the more respectable leaders of the old parties, was the strongest factor in their mass appeal. It seemed to prove that individually they embodied the mass destiny of the time and that their desire to sacrifice everything for the movement, their assurance of devotion to those who had been struck by catastrophe, their determination never to be tempted back into the security of normal life, and their contempt for respectability were quite sincere and not just inspired by passing ambitions.

The postwar elite, on the other hand, was only slightly younger than the generation which had let itself be used and abused by imperialism for the sake of glorious careers outside of respectability, as gamblers and spies and adventurers, as knights in shining armor and dragon-killers. They shared with Lawrence of Arabia the yearning for "losing their selves" and the violent disgust with all existing standards, with every power that be. If they still remembered the "golden age of security," they also remembered how they had hated it and how real their enthusiasm had been at the outbreak of the first World War. Not only Hitler and not only the failures thanked God on their knees when mobilization swept Europe in 1914.⁴⁴ They did not even have to reproach themselves with having been an easy prey for chauvinist propaganda or lying explanations about the purely defensive

⁴⁴ See Hitler's description of his reaction to the outbreak of the first World War in *Mein Kampf*, Book I, chapter v.

character of the war. The elite went to war with an exultant hope that everything they knew, the whole culture and texture of life, might go down in its "storms of steel" (Ernst Jünger). In the carefully chosen words of Thomas Mann, war was "chastisement" and "purification"; "war in itself, rather than victories, inspired the poet." Or in the words of a student of the time, "what counts is always the readiness to make a sacrifice, not the object for which the sacrifice is made"; or in the words of a young worker, "it doesn't matter whether one lives a few years longer or not. One would like to have something to show for one's life."⁴⁵ And long before one of Nazism's intellectual sympathizers announced, "When I hear the word culture, I draw my revolver," poets had proclaimed their disgust with "rubbish culture" and called poetically on "ye Barbarians, Scythians, Negroes, Indians, to trample it down."⁴⁶

Simply to brand as outbursts of nihilism this violent dissatisfaction with the prewar age and subsequent attempts at restoring it (from Nietzsche and Sorel to Pareto, from Rimbaud and T. E. Lawrence to Jünger, Brecht, and Malraux, from Bakunin and Nechayev to Alexander Blok) is to overlook how justified disgust can be in a society wholly permeated with the ideological outlook and moral standards of the bourgeoisie. Yet it is also true that the "front generation," in marked contrast to their own chosen spiritual fathers, were completely absorbed by their desire to see the ruin of this whole world of fake security, fake culture, and fake life. This desire was so great that it outweighed in impact and articulateness all earlier attempts at a "transformation of values," such as Nietzsche had attempted, or a reorganization of political life as indicated in Sorel's writings, or a revival of human authenticity in Bakunin, or a passionate love of life in the purity of exotic adventures in Rimbaud. Destruction without mitigation, chaos and ruin as such assumed the dignity of supreme values.⁴⁷

The genuineness of these feelings can be seen in the fact that very few of this generation were cured of their war enthusiasm by actual experience of its horrors. The survivors of the trenches did not become pacifists. They cherished an experience which, they thought, might serve to separate them

⁴⁵ See the collection of material on the "inner chronicle of the first World War" by Hanna Hafkesbrink, *Unknown Germany*, New Haven, 1948, pp. 43, 45, 81, respectively. The great value of this collection for the imponderables of historical atmosphere makes the lack of similar studies for France, England, and Italy all the more deplorable.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* pp. 20-21.

⁴⁷ This started with a feeling of complete alienation from normal life. Wrote Rudolf Binding, for instance "More and more we are to be counted among the dead, among the estranged—because the greatness of the occurrence estranges and separates us—rather than among the banished whose return is possible" (*ibid.*, p. 160). A curious reminiscence of the front generation's elite claim can still be found in Himmler's account of how he finally hit upon his "form of selection" for the reorganization of the SS "... the most severe selection procedure is brought about by war, the struggle for life and death. In this procedure the value of blood is shown through achievement. War, however, is an exceptional circumstance, and a way had to be found to make selections in peace time" (*op. cit.*).

definitely from the hated surroundings of respectability. They clung to their memories of four years of life in the trenches as though they constituted an objective criterion for the establishment of a new elite. Nor did they yield to the temptation to idealize this past; on the contrary, the worshipers of war were the first to concede that war in the era of machines could not possibly breed virtues like chivalry, courage, honor, and manliness,⁴⁸ that it imposed on men nothing but the experience of bare destruction together with the humiliation of being only small cogs in the majestic wheel of slaughter.

This generation remembered the war as the great prelude to the breakdown of classes and their transformation into masses. War, with its constant murderous arbitrariness, became the symbol for death, the "great equalizer"⁴⁹ and therefore the true father of a new world order. The passion for equality and justice, the longing to transcend narrow and meaningless class lines, to abandon stupid privileges and prejudices, seemed to find in war a way out of the old condescending attitudes of pity for the oppressed and disinherited. In times of growing misery and individual helplessness, it seems as difficult to resist pity when it grows into an all-devouring passion as it is not to resent its very boundlessness, which seems to kill human dignity with a more deadly certainty than misery itself.

In the early years of his career, when a restoration of the European status quo was still the most serious threat to the ambitions of the mob,⁵⁰ Hitler appealed almost exclusively to these sentiments of the front generation. The peculiar selflessness of the mass man appeared here as yearning for anonymity, for being just a number and functioning only as a cog, for every transformation, in brief, which would wipe out the spurious identifications with specific types or predetermined functions within society. War had been experienced as that "mightiest of all mass actions" which obliterated individual differences so that even suffering, which traditionally had marked off individuals through unique unexchangeable destinies, could now be interpreted as "an instrument of historical progress."⁵¹ Nor did national distinctions limit the masses into which the postwar elite wished to be immersed. The first World War, somewhat paradoxically, had almost extinguished genuine national feelings in Europe where, between the wars, it was far more important to have belonged to the generation of the trenches, no matter on which side, than to be a German or a Frenchman.⁵² The Nazis based their

⁴⁸ See, for instance, Ernst Jünger, *The Storm of Steel*, London, 1929.

⁴⁹ Hafkesbrink, *op. cit.*, p. 156.

⁵⁰ Heiden, *op. cit.*, shows how consistently Hitler sided with catastrophe in the early days of the movement, how he feared a possible recovery of Germany. "Half a dozen times [i.e., during the Ruhrputsch], in different terms, he declared to his storm troops that Germany was going under. 'Our job is to insure the success of our movement'" (p. 167)—a success which at that moment depended upon the collapse of the fight in the Ruhr.

⁵¹ Hafkesbrink, *op. cit.*, pp. 156-157.

⁵² This feeling was already widespread during the war when Rudolf Binding wrote: "[This war] is not to be compared with a campaign. For there one leader pits his

whole propaganda on this indistinct comradeship, this "community of fate," and won over a great number of veteran organizations in all European countries, thereby proving how meaningless national slogans had become even in the ranks of the so-called Right, which used them for their connotation of violence rather than for their specific national content.

No single element in this general intellectual climate in postwar Europe was very new. Bakunin had already confessed, "I do not want to be *I*, I want to be *We*,"⁵³ and Nechayev had preached the evangel of the "doomed man" with "no personal interests, no affairs, no sentiments, attachments, property, not even a name of his own."⁵⁴ The antihumanist, antiliberal, anti-individualist, and anticultural instincts of the front generation, their brilliant and witty praise of violence, power, and cruelty, was preceded by the awkward and pompous "scientific" proofs of the imperialist elite that a struggle of all against all is the law of the universe, that expansion is a psychological necessity before it is a political device, and that man has to behave by such universal laws.⁵⁵ What was new in the writings of the front generation was their high literary standard and great depth of passion. The postwar writers no longer needed the scientific demonstrations of genetics, and they made little if any use of the collected works of Gobineau or Houston Stewart Chamberlain, which belonged already to the cultural household of the philistines. They read not Darwin but the Marquis de Sade.⁵⁶ If they believed at all in universal laws, they certainly did not particularly care to conform to them. To them, violence, power, cruelty, were the supreme capacities of men who had definitely lost their place in the universe and were much too proud to long for a power theory that would safely bring them back and re-

will against that of another. But in this War both adversaries lie on the ground, and only the War has its will" (*ibid.*, p. 67).

⁵³ Bakunin in a letter written on February 7, 1870. See Max Nomad, *Apostles of Revolution*, Boston, 1939, p. 180.

⁵⁴ The "Catechism of the Revolutionist" was either written by Bakunin himself or by his disciple Nechayev. For the question of authorship and a translation of the complete text, see Nomad, *op. cit.*, p. 227 ff. In any event, the "system of complete disregard for any tenets of simple decency and fairness in [the revolutionist's] attitude towards other human beings . . . went down in Russian revolutionary history under the name of 'Nechayevshchina'" (*ibid.*, p. 224).

⁵⁵ Outstanding among these political theorists of imperialism is Ernest Seillière, *Mysticisme et Domination: Essais de Critique Impérialiste*, 1913. See also Cargill Sprietsma, *We Imperialists: Notes on Ernest Seillière's Philosophy of Imperialism*, New York, 1931; G. Monod in *La Revue Historique*, January, 1912; and Louis Estève, *Une nouvelle Psychologie de l'Impérialisme: Ernest Seillière*, 1913.

⁵⁶ In France, since 1930, the Marquis de Sade has become one of the favored authors of the literary avant-garde. Jean Paulhan, in his Introduction to a new edition of Sade's *Les Infortunes de la Vertu*, Paris, 1946, remarks: "When I see so many writers today consciously trying to deny artifice and the literary game for the sake of the inexpressible [*un événement indicible*] . . . , anxiously looking for the sublime in the infamous, for the great in the subversive . . . , I ask myself . . . if our modern literature, in those parts which appear to us most vital—or at any rate most aggressive—has not turned entirely toward the past, and if it was not precisely Sade who determined it." See also Georges Bataille, "Le Secret de Sade," in *La Critique*, Tome III, Nos. 15-16, 17, 1947.

integrate them into the world. They were satisfied with blind partisanship in anything that respectable society had banned, regardless of theory or content, and they elevated cruelty to a major virtue because it contradicted society's humanitarian and liberal hypocrisy.

If we compare this generation with the nineteenth-century ideologists, with whose theories they sometimes seem to have so much in common, their chief distinction is their greater authenticity and passion. They had been more deeply touched by misery, they were more concerned with the perplexities and more deadly hurt by hypocrisy than all the apostles of good will and brotherhood had been. And they could no longer escape into exotic lands, could no longer afford to be dragon-slayers among strange and exciting people. There was no escape from the daily routine of misery, meekness, frustration, and resentment embellished by a fake culture of educated talk; no conformity to the customs of fairy-tale lands could possibly save them from the rising nausea that this combination continuously inspired.

This inability to escape into the wide world, this feeling of being caught again and again in the trappings of society—so different from the conditions which had formed the imperialist character—added a constant strain and the yearning for violence to the older passion for anonymity and losing oneself. Without the possibility of a radical change of role and character, such as the identification with the Arab national movement or the rites of an Indian village, the self-willed immersion in the suprahuman forces of destruction seemed to be a salvation from the automatic identification with pre-established functions in society and their utter banality, and at the same time to help destroy the functioning itself. These people felt attracted to the pronounced activism of totalitarian movements, to their curious and only seemingly contradictory insistence on both the primacy of sheer action and the overwhelming force of sheer necessity. This mixture corresponded precisely to the war experience of the "front generation," to the experience of constant activity within the framework of overwhelming fatality.

Activism, moreover, seemed to provide new answers to the old and troublesome question, "Who am I?" which always appears with redoubled persistence in times of crisis. If society insisted, "You are what you appear to be," postwar activism replied: "You are what you have done"—for instance, the man who for the first time had crossed the Atlantic in an airplane (as in Brecht's *Der Flug der Lindberghs*)—an answer which after the second World War was repeated and slightly varied by Sartre's "You are your life" (in *Huis Clos*). The pertinence of these answers lies less in their validity as redefinitions of personal identity than in their usefulness for an eventual escape from social identification, from the multiplicity of interchangeable roles and functions which society had imposed. The point was to do something, heroic or criminal, which was unpredictable and undetermined by anybody else.

The pronounced activism of the totalitarian movements, their preference for terrorism over all other forms of political activity, attracted the intellectual elite and the mob alike, precisely because this terrorism was so ut-

terly different from that of the earlier revolutionary societies. It was no longer a matter of calculated policy which saw in terrorist acts the only means to eliminate certain outstanding personalities who, because of their policies or position, had become the symbol of oppression. What proved so attractive was that terrorism had become a kind of philosophy through which to express frustration, resentment, and blind hatred, a kind of political expressionism which used bombs to express oneself, which watched delightedly the publicity given to resounding deeds and was absolutely willing to pay the price of life for having succeeded in forcing the recognition of one's existence on the normal strata of society. It was still the same spirit and the same game which made Goebbels, long before the eventual defeat of Nazi Germany, announce with obvious delight that the Nazis, in case of defeat, would know how to slam the door behind them and not to be forgotten for centuries.

Yet it is here if anywhere that a valid criterion may be found for distinguishing the elite from the mob in the pretotalitarian atmosphere. What the mob wanted, and what Goebbels expressed with great precision, was access to history even at the price of destruction. Goebbels' sincere conviction that "the greatest happiness that a contemporary can experience today" is either to be a genius or to serve one,⁵⁷ was typical of the mob but neither of the masses nor the sympathizing elite. The latter, on the contrary, took anonymity seriously to the point of seriously denying the existence of genius; all the art theories of the twenties tried desperately to prove that the excellent is the product of skill, craftsmanship, logic, and the realization of the potentialities of the material.⁵⁸ The mob, and not the elite, was charmed by the "radiant power of fame" (Stefan Zweig) and accepted enthusiastically the genius idolatry of the late bourgeois world. In this the mob of the twentieth century followed faithfully the pattern of earlier parvenus who also had discovered the fact that bourgeois society would rather open its doors to the fascinating "abnormal," the genius, the homosexual, or the Jew, than to simple merit. The elite's contempt for the genius and its yearning for anonymity was still witness of a spirit which neither the masses nor the mob were in a position to understand, and which, in the words of Robespierre, strove to assert the grandeur of man against the pettiness of the great.

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

⁵⁷ Goebbels, *op. cit.*, p. 139.

⁵⁸ The art theories of the Bauhaus were characteristic in this respect. See also Bertolt Brecht's remarks on the theater, *Gesammelte Werke*, London, 1938.

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.

The temporary alliance between the elite and the mob rested largely on this genuine delight with which the former watched the latter destroy respectability. This could be achieved when the German steel barons were forced to deal with and to receive socially Hitler the housepainter and self-admitted former derelict, as it could be with the crude and vulgar forgeries perpetrated by the totalitarian movements in all fields of intellectual life, insofar as they gathered all the subterranean, nonrespectable elements of European history into one consistent picture. From this viewpoint it was rather gratifying to see that Bolshevism and Nazism began even to eliminate those sources of their own ideologies which had already won some recognition in academic or other official quarters. Not Marx's dialectical materialism, but the conspiracy of 300 families; not the pompous scientificity of Gobineau and Chamberlain, but the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion"; not the traceable influence of the Catholic Church and the role played by anticlericalism in Latin countries, but the backstairs literature about the Jesuits and the Freemasons became the inspiration for the rewriters of history. The object of the most varied and variable constructions was always to reveal official history as a joke, to demonstrate a sphere of secret influences of which the visible, traceable, and known historical reality was only the outward façade erected explicitly to fool the people.

To this aversion of the intellectual elite for official historiography, to its conviction that history, which was a forgery anyway, might as well be the playground of crackpots, must be added the terrible, demoralizing fascination in the possibility that gigantic lies and monstrous falsehoods can eventually be established as unquestioned facts, that man may be free to change his own past at will, and that the difference between truth and falsehood may cease to be objective and become a mere matter of power and cleverness, of pressure and infinite repetition. Not Stalin's and Hitler's skill in the art of lying but the fact that they were able to organize the masses into a collective unit to back up their lies with impressive magnificence, exerted the fascination. Simple forgeries from the viewpoint of scholarship appeared to receive the sanction of history itself when the whole marching reality of the movements stood behind them and pretended to draw from them the necessary inspiration for action.

The attraction which the totalitarian movements exert on the elite, so long as and wherever they have not seized power, has been perplexing because the patently vulgar and arbitrary, positive doctrines of totalitarianism are more conspicuous to the outsider and mere observer than the general mood which pervades the pretotalitarian atmosphere. These doctrines were so much at variance with generally accepted intellectual, cultural, and moral standards that one could conclude that only an inherent fundamental shortcoming of character in the intellectual, "*la trahison des clercs*" (J. Benda), or a perverse self-hatred of the spirit, accounted for the delight with which the elite accepted the "ideas" of the mob. What the spokesmen of humanism and liberalism usually overlook, in their bitter disappointment and their unfamiliarity with the more general experiences of the time, is that an atmosphere in which all traditional values and propositions had evaporated (after the nineteenth-century ideologies had refuted each other and exhausted their vital appeal) in a sense made it easier to accept patently absurd propositions than the old truths which had become pious banalities, precisely because nobody could be expected to take the absurdities seriously. Vulgarity with its cynical dismissal of respected standards and accepted theories carried with it a frank admission of the worst and a disregard for all pretenses which were easily mistaken for courage and a new style of life. In the growing prevalence of mob attitudes and convictions—which were actually the attitudes and convictions of the bourgeoisie cleansed of hypocrisy—those who traditionally hated the bourgeoisie and had voluntarily left respectable society saw only the lack of hypocrisy and respectability, not the content itself.⁵⁹

Since the bourgeoisie claimed to be the guardian of Western traditions and confounded all moral issues by parading publicly virtues which it not only did not possess in private and business life, but actually held in contempt, it seemed revolutionary to admit cruelty, disregard of human values, and general amorality, because this at least destroyed the duplicity upon which the existing society seemed to rest. What a temptation to flaunt extreme attitudes in the hypocritical twilight of double moral standards, to wear publicly the mask of cruelty if everybody was patently inconsiderate and pretended to be gentle, to parade wickedness in a world, not of wickedness, but of meanness! The intellectual elite of the twenties who knew little of the earlier connections between mob and bourgeoisie was certain that the old game of *épater le bourgeois* could be played to perfection if one started to shock society with an ironically exaggerated picture of its own behavior.

At that time, nobody anticipated that the true victims of this irony would

⁵⁹ The following passage by Röhm is typical of the feeling of almost the whole younger generation and not only of an elite: "Hypocrisy and Pharisaism rule. They are the most conspicuous characteristics of society today. . . . Nothing could be more lying than the so-called morals of society." These boys "don't find their way in the philistine world of bourgeois double morals and don't know any longer how to distinguish between truth and error" (*Die Geschichte eines Hochverrätters*, pp. 267 and 269). The homosexuality of these circles was also at least partially an expression of their protest against society.

be the elite rather than the bourgeoisie. The avant-garde did not know they were running their heads not against walls but against open doors, that a unanimous success would belie their claim to being a revolutionary minority, and would prove that they were about to express a new mass spirit or the spirit of the time. Particularly significant in this respect was the reception given Brecht's *Dreigroschenoper* in pre-Hitler Germany. The play presented gangsters as respectable businessmen and respectable businessmen as gangsters. The irony was somewhat lost when respectable businessmen in the audience considered this a deep insight into the ways of the world and when the mob welcomed it as an artistic sanction of gangsterism. The theme song in the play, "*Erst kommt das Fressen, dann kommt die Moral*," was greeted with frantic applause by exactly everybody, though for different reasons. The mob applauded because it took the statement literally; the bourgeoisie applauded because it had been fooled by its own hypocrisy for so long that it had grown tired of the tension and found deep wisdom in the expression of the banality by which it lived; the elite applauded because the unveiling of hypocrisy was such superior and wonderful fun. The effect of the work was exactly the opposite of what Brecht had sought by it. The bourgeoisie could no longer be shocked; it welcomed the exposure of its hidden philosophy, whose popularity proved they had been right all along, so that the only political result of Brecht's "revolution" was to encourage everyone to discard the uncomfortable mask of hypocrisy and to accept openly the standards of the mob.

A reaction similar in its ambiguity was aroused some ten years later in France by Céline's *Bagatelles pour un Massacre*, in which he proposed to massacre all the Jews. André Gide was publicly delighted in the pages of the *Nouvelle Revue Française*, not of course because he wanted to kill the Jews of France, but because he rejoiced in the blunt admission of such a desire and in the fascinating contradiction between Céline's bluntness and the hypocritical politeness which surrounded the Jewish question in all respectable quarters. How irresistible the desire for the unmasking of hypocrisy was among the elite can be gauged by the fact that such delight could not even be spoiled by Hitler's very real persecution of the Jews, which at the time of Céline's writing was already in full swing. Yet aversion against the philosemitism of the liberals had much more to do with this reaction than hatred of Jews. A similar frame of mind explains the remarkable fact that Hitler's and Stalin's widely publicized opinions about art and their persecution of modern artists have never been able to destroy the attraction which the totalitarian movements had for avant-garde artists; this shows the elite's lack of a sense of reality, together with its perverted selflessness, both of which resemble only too closely the fictitious world and the absence of self-interest among the masses. It was the great opportunity of the totalitarian movements, and the reason why a temporary alliance between the intellectual elite and the mob could come about, that in an elementary and undifferentiated way their problems had become the same and foreshadowed the problems and mentality of the masses.

Closely related to the attraction which the mob's lack of hypocrisy and the masses' lack of self-interest exerted on the elite was the equally irresistible appeal of the totalitarian movements' spurious claim to have abolished the separation between private and public life and to have restored a mysterious irrational wholeness in man. Since Balzac revealed the private lives of the public figures of French society and since Ibsen's dramatization of the "Pillars of Society" had conquered the Continental theater, the issue of double morality was one of the main topics for tragedies, comedies, and novels. Double morality as practiced by the bourgeoisie became the outstanding sign of that *esprit de sérieux*, which is always pompous and never sincere. This division between private and public or social life had nothing to do with the justified separation between the personal and public spheres, but was rather the psychological reflection of the nineteenth-century struggle between *bourgeois* and *citoyen*, between the man who judged and used all public institutions by the yardstick of his private interests and the responsible citizen who was concerned with public affairs as the affairs of all. In this connection, the liberals' political philosophy, according to which the mere sum of individual interests adds up to the miracle of the common good, appeared to be only a rationalization of the recklessness with which private interests were pressed regardless of the common good.

Against the class spirit of the Continental parties, which had always admitted they represented certain interests, and against the "opportunism" resulting from their conception of themselves as only parts of a total, the totalitarian movements asserted their "superiority" in that they carried a *Weltanschauung* by which they would take possession of man as a whole.⁶⁰ In this claim to totality the mob leaders of the movements again formulated and only reversed the bourgeoisie's own political philosophy. The bourgeois class, having made its way through social pressure and, frequently, through an economic blackmail of political institutions, always believed that the public and visible organs of power were directed by their own secret, non-public interests and influence. In this sense, the bourgeoisie's political philosophy was always "totalitarian"; it always assumed an identity of politics, economics and society, in which political institutions served only as the façade for private interests. The bourgeoisie's double standard, its differentiation between public and private life, were a concession to the nation-state which had desperately tried to keep the two spheres apart.

What appealed to the elite was radicalism as such. Marx's hopeful predictions that the state would wither away and a classless society emerge were no longer radical, no longer Messianic enough. If Berdyaev is right in stating that "Russian revolutionaries . . . had always been totalitarian," then the attraction which Soviet Russia exerted almost equally on Nazi and Communist intellectual fellow-travelers lay precisely in the fact that in Russia

⁶⁰ The role of the *Weltanschauung* in the formation of the Nazi movement has been stressed many times by Hitler himself. In *Mein Kampf*, it is interesting to note that he pretends to have understood the necessity of basing a party on a *Weltanschauung* through the superiority of the Marxist parties. Book II, chapter I: "*Weltanschauung* and Party."

"the revolution was a religion and a philosophy, not merely a conflict concerned with the social and political side of life."⁶¹ The truth was that the transformation of classes into masses and the breakdown of the prestige and authority of political institutions had brought to Western European countries conditions which resembled those prevalent in Russia, so that it was no accident that their revolutionaries also began to take on the typically Russian revolutionary fanaticism which looked forward, not to change in social or political conditions, but to the radical destruction of every existing creed, value, and institution. The mob merely took advantage of this new mood and brought about a short-lived alliance of revolutionaries and criminals, which also had been present in many revolutionary sects in Czarist Russia but conspicuously absent from the European scene.

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.

It turned out that they were both mistaken. The mob, the underworld of the bourgeois class, hoped that the helpless masses would help them into power, would support them when they attempted to forward their private interests, that they would be able simply to replace the older strata of bourgeois society and to instill into it the more enterprising spirit of the underworld. Yet totalitarianism in power learned quickly that enterprising spirit was not restricted to the mob strata of the population and that, in any event, such initiative could only be a threat to the total domination of man. Absence of scruple, on the other hand, was not restricted to the mob either and, in any event, could be taught in a relatively short time. For the ruthless machines of domination and extermination, the masses of co-ordinated philistines provided much better material and were capable of even greater crimes than so-called professional criminals, provided only that these crimes were well organized and assumed the appearance of routine jobs.

It is not fortuitous, then, that the few protests against the Nazis' mass atrocities against the Jews and Eastern European peoples were voiced not by the military men nor by any other part of the co-ordinated masses of respectable philistines, but precisely by those early comrades of Hitler who were typical representatives of the mob.⁶² Nor was Himmler, the most power-

⁶¹ Nicolai Berdyaev, *The Origin of Russian Communism*, 1937, pp. 124-125.

⁶² There is, for instance, the curious intervention of Wilhelm Kube, General Commissar in Minsk and one of the oldest members of the Party, who in 1941, i.e., at the beginning of the mass murder, wrote to his chief: "I certainly am tough and willing to co-operate in the solution of the Jewish question, but people who have been brought up in our own culture are, after all, different from the local bestial hordes. Are we to assign the task of slaughtering them to the Lithuanians and Letts who are dis-

ful man in Germany after 1936, one of those "armed bohemians" (Heiden) whose features were distressingly similar to those of the intellectual elite. Himmler was himself "more normal," that is, more of a philistine, than any of the original leaders of the Nazi movement.⁶³ He was not a bohemian like Goebbels, or a sex criminal like Streicher, or a crackpot like Rosenberg, or a fanatic like Hitler, or an adventurer like Göring. He proved his supreme ability for organizing the masses into total domination by assuming that most people are neither bohemians, fanatics, adventurers, sex maniacs, crackpots, nor social failures, but first and foremost job holders and good family men.

The philistine's retirement into private life, his single-minded devotion to matters of family and career was the last, and already degenerated, product of the bourgeoisie's belief in the primacy of private interest. The philistine is the bourgeois isolated from his own class, the atomized individual who is produced by the breakdown of the bourgeois class itself. The mass man whom Himmler organized for the greatest mass crimes ever committed in history bore the features of the philistine rather than of the mob man, and was the bourgeois who in the midst of the ruins of his world worried about nothing so much as his private security, was ready to sacrifice everything—belief, honor, dignity—on the slightest provocation. Nothing proved easier to destroy than the privacy and private morality of people who thought of nothing but safeguarding their private lives. After a few years of power and

criminated against even by the indigenous population? I could not do it. I ask you to give me clear-cut instructions to take care of the matter in the most humane way for the sake of the prestige of our Reich and our Party." This letter is published in Max Weinreich, *Hitler's Professors*, New York, 1946, pp. 153-154. Kube's intervention was quickly overruled, yet an almost identical attempt to save the lives of Danish Jews, made by W. Best, the Reich's plenipotentiary in Denmark, and a well-known Nazi, was more successful. See *Nazi Conspiracy*, V, 2.

Similarly Alfred Rosenberg, who had preached the inferiority of the Slav peoples, obviously never realized that his theories might one day mean their liquidation. Charged with the administration of the Ukraine, he wrote outraged reports about conditions there during the fall of 1942 after he had tried earlier to get direct intervention from Hitler himself. See *Nazi Conspiracy*, III, 83 ff., and IV, 62.

There are of course some exceptions to this rule. The man who saved Paris from destruction was General von Choltitz who, however, still "feared that he would be deprived of his command as he had not executed his orders" even though he knew that the "war had been lost for several years." That he would have had the courage to resist the order "to turn Paris into a mass of ruins" without the energetic support of a Nazi of old standing, Otto Abetz the Ambassador to France, appears dubious according to his own testimony during the trial of Abetz in Paris. See *New York Times*, July 21, 1949.

⁶³ An Englishman, Stephen H. Roberts, *The House that Hitler Built*, London, 1939, describes Himmler as "a man of exquisite courtesy and still interested in the simple things of life. He has none of the pose of those Nazis who act as demigods. . . . No man looks less like his job than this police dictator of Germany, and I am convinced that nobody I met in Germany is more normal. . . ." (pp. 89-90)—This reminds one in a curious way of the remark of Stalin's mother who according to Bolshevik propaganda said of him: "An exemplary son. I wish everybody were like him" (Souvarine, *op. cit.*, p. 656).

systematic co-ordination, the Nazis could rightly announce: "The only person who is still a private individual in Germany is somebody who is asleep."⁶⁴

In all fairness to those among the elite, on the other hand, who at one time or another have let themselves be seduced by totalitarian movements, and who sometimes, because of their intellectual abilities, are even accused of having inspired totalitarianism, it must be stated that what these desperate men of the twentieth century did or did not do had no influence on totalitarianism whatsoever, although it did play some part in earlier, successful, attempts of the movements to force the outside world to take their doctrines seriously. Wherever totalitarian movements seized power, this whole group of sympathizers was shaken off even before the regimes proceeded toward their greatest crimes. Intellectual, spiritual, and artistic initiative is as dangerous to totalitarianism as the gangster initiative of the mob, and both are more dangerous than mere political opposition. The consistent persecution of every higher form of intellectual activity by the new mass leaders springs from more than their natural resentment against everything they cannot understand. Total domination does not allow for free initiative in any field of life, for any activity that is not entirely predictable. Totalitarianism in power invariably replaces all first-rate talents, regardless of their sympathies, with those crackpots and fools whose lack of intelligence and creativity is still the best guarantee of their loyalty.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ The remark was made by Robert Ley. See Kohn-Bramstedt, *op. cit.*, p. 178.

⁶⁵ Bolshevik policy, in this respect surprisingly consistent, is well known and hardly needs further comment. Picasso, to take the most famous instance, is not liked in Russia even though he has become a Communist. It is possible that André Gide's sudden reversal of attitude after seeing the Bolshevik reality in Soviet Russia (*Retour de l'URSS*) in 1936, definitely convinced Stalin of the uselessness of creative artists even as fellow-travelers. Nazi policy was distinguished from Bolshevik measures only insofar as it did not yet kill its first-rate talents.

It would be worthwhile to study in detail the careers of those comparatively few German scholars who went beyond mere co-operation and volunteered their services because they were convinced Nazis. (Weinreich, *op. cit.*, the only available study, and misleading because he does not distinguish between professors who adopted the Nazi creed and those who owed their careers exclusively to the regime, omits the earlier careers of the concerned scholars and thus indiscriminately puts well-known men of great achievement into the same category as crackpots.) Most interesting is the example of the jurist Carl Schmitt, whose very ingenious theories about the end of democracy and legal government still make arresting reading; as early as the middle thirties, he was replaced by the Nazis' own brand of political and legal theorists, such as Hans Frank, the later governor of Poland, Gottfried Neesse, and Reinhard Hoehn. The last to fall into disgrace was the historian Walter Frank, who had been a convinced antisemite and member of the Nazi party before it came to power, and who, in 1933, became director of the newly founded Reichsinstitut für Geschichte des Neuen Deutschlands with its famous Forschungsabteilung Judenfrage, and editor of the nine-volume *Forschungen zur Judenfrage* (1937-1944). In the early forties, Frank had to cede his position and influence to the notorious Alfred Rosenberg, whose *Der Mythos des 20. Jahrhunderts* certainly shows no aspiration whatsoever to "scholarship." Frank clearly was mistrusted for no other reason than that he was not a charlatan.

What neither the elite nor the mob that "embraced" National Socialism with such

fervor could understand was that "one cannot embrace this Order . . . by accident. Above and beyond the willingness to serve stands the unrelenting necessity of selection that knows neither extenuating circumstances nor clemency" (*Der Weg der SS*, issued by the SS Hauptamt-Schulungsamt, n.d., p. 4). In other words, concerning the selection of those who would belong to them the Nazis intended to make their own decisions, regardless of the "accident" of any opinions. The same appears to be true for the selection of Bolsheviks for the secret police. F. Beck and W. Godin report in *Russian Purge and the Extraction of Confession*, 1951, p. 160, that the members of the NKVD are claimed from the ranks of party members without having the slightest opportunity to volunteer for this "career."