

Hannah Arendt

# The Origins of Totalitarianism

NEW EDITION

WITH ADDED PREFACES

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## Movement

1: *Totalitarian Propaganda*

ONLY THE MOB and the elite can be attracted by the momentum of totalitarianism itself; the masses have to be won by propaganda. Under conditions of constitutional government and freedom of opinion, totalitarian movements struggling for power can use terror to a limited extent only and share with other parties the necessity of winning adherents and of appearing plausible to a public which is not yet rigorously isolated from all other sources of information.

It was recognized early and has frequently been asserted that in totalitarian countries propaganda and terror present two sides of the same coin.<sup>1</sup> This, however, is only partly true. Wherever totalitarianism possesses absolute control, it replaces propaganda with indoctrination and uses violence not so much to frighten people (this is done only in the initial stages when political opposition still exists) as to realize constantly its ideological doctrines and its practical lies. Totalitarianism will not be satisfied to assert, in the face of contrary facts, that unemployment does not exist; it will abolish unemployment benefits as part of its propaganda.<sup>2</sup> Equally important is the fact that the refusal to acknowledge unemployment realized—albeit in a rather unexpected way—the old socialist doctrine: He who does not work shall not eat. Or when, to take another instance, Stalin decided to rewrite

<sup>1</sup> See, for instance, E. Kohn-Bramstedt, *Dictatorship and Political Police: The Technique of Control by Fear*, London, 1945, p. 164 ff. The explanation is that "terror without propaganda would lose most of its psychological effect, whereas propaganda without terror does not contain its full punch" (p. 175). What is overlooked in these and similar statements, which mostly go around in circles, is the fact that not only political propaganda but the whole of modern mass publicity contains an element of threat; that terror, on the other hand, can be fully effective without propaganda, so long as it is only a question of conventional political terror of tyranny. Only when terror is intended to coerce not merely from without but, as it were, from within, when the political regime wants more than power, is terror in need of propaganda. In this sense the Nazi theorist, Eugen Hadamovsky, could say in *Propaganda und nationale Macht*, 1933: "Propaganda and violence are never contradictions. Use of violence can be part of the propaganda" (p. 22).

<sup>2</sup> "At that time, it was officially announced that unemployment was 'liquidated' in Soviet Russia. The result of the announcement was that all unemployment benefits were equally 'liquidated'" (Anton Ciliga, *The Russian Enigma*, London, 1940, p. 109).

the history of the Russian Revolution, the propaganda of his new version consisted in destroying, together with the older books and documents, their authors and readers: the publication in 1938 of a new official history of the Communist Party was the signal that the superpurge which had decimated a whole generation of Soviet intellectuals had come to an end. Similarly, the Nazis in the Eastern occupied territories at first used chiefly antisemitic propaganda to win firmer control of the population. They neither needed nor used terror to support this propaganda. When they liquidated the greater part of the Polish intelligentsia, they did it not because of its opposition, but because according to their doctrine Poles had no intellect, and when they planned to kidnap blue-eyed and blond-haired children, they did not intend to frighten the population but to save "Germanic blood."<sup>3</sup>

Since totalitarian movements exist in a world which itself is nontotalitarian, they are forced to resort to what we commonly regard as propaganda. But such propaganda always makes its appeal to an external sphere—be it the nontotalitarian strata of the population at home or the nontotalitarian countries abroad. This external sphere to which totalitarian propaganda makes its appeal may vary greatly; even after the seizure of power totalitarian propaganda may address itself to those segments of its own population whose co-ordination was not followed by sufficient indoctrination. In this respect Hitler's speeches to his generals during the war are veritable models of propaganda, characterized mainly by the monstrous lies with which the Fuehrer entertained his guests in an attempt to win them over.<sup>4</sup> The external sphere can also be represented by groups of sympathizers who

<sup>3</sup> The so-called "Operation Hay" began with a decree dated February 16, 1942, by Himmler "concerning [individuals] of German stock in Poland," stipulating that their children should be sent to families "that are willing [to accept them] without reservations, out of love for the good blood in them" (Nuremberg Document R 135, photostated by the Centre de Documentation Juive, Paris). It seems that in June, 1944, the Ninth Army actually kidnapped 40,000 to 50,000 children and subsequently transported them to Germany. A report on this matter, sent to the General Staff of the Wehrmacht in Berlin by a man called Brandenburg, mentions similar plans for the Ukraine (Document PS 031, published by Léon Poliakov in *Bréviaire de la Haine*, p. 317). Himmler himself made several references to this plan. (See *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression*, Office of the United States Chief of Counsel for the Prosecution of Axis Criminality, U.S. Government, Washington, 1946, III, 640, which contains excerpts from Himmler's speech at Cracow in March, 1942; see also the comments on Himmler's speech at Bad Schachen in 1943 in Kohn-Bramstedt, *op. cit.*, p. 244.) How the selection of these children was arrived at can be gathered from medical certificates made out by Medical Section II at Minsk on August 10, 1942: "The racial examination of Natalie Harpf, born August 14, 1922, showed a normally developed girl of predominantly East Baltic type with Nordic features."—"Examination of Arnold Cornies, born February 19, 1930, showed a normally developed boy, twelve years old, of predominantly Eastern type with Nordic features." Signed: N. Wc. (Document in the archives of the Yiddish Scientific Institute, New York, No. Occ E 3a-17.)

For the extermination of the Polish intelligentsia, which, in Hitler's opinion, could be "wiped out without qualms," see Poliakov, *op. cit.*, p. 321, and Document NO 2472.

<sup>4</sup> See *Hitlers Tischgespräche*. In the summer of 1942, he still talks about "[kicking] even the last Jew out of Europe" (p. 113) and resettling the Jews in Siberia or Africa (p. 311), or Madagascar, while in reality he had already decided on the "final solution" prior to the Russian invasion, probably in 1940, and ordered the gas ovens to

are not yet ready to accept the true aims of the movement; finally, it often happens that even party members are regarded by the Fuehrer's inner circle or the members of the elite formations as belonging to such an external sphere, and in this case they, too, are still in need of propaganda because they cannot yet be reliably dominated. In order not to overestimate the importance of the propaganda lies one should recall the much more numerous instances in which Hitler was completely sincere and brutally unequivocal in the definition of the movement's true aims, but they were simply not acknowledged by a public unprepared for such consistency.<sup>5</sup> But, basically speaking, totalitarian domination strives to restrict propaganda methods solely to its foreign policy or to the branches of the movement abroad for the purpose of supplying them with suitable material. Whenever totalitarian indoctrination at home comes into conflict with the propaganda line for consumption abroad (which happened in Russia during the war, not when Stalin had concluded his alliance with Hitler, but when the war with Hitler brought him into the camp of the democracies), the propaganda is explained at home as a "temporary tactical maneuver."<sup>6</sup> As far as possible, this distinction between ideological doctrine for the initiated in the movement, who are no longer in need of propaganda, and unadulterated propaganda for the outside world is already established in the prepower existence of the movements. The relationship between propaganda and indoctrination usually depends upon the size of the movements on one hand, and upon outside pressure on the other. The smaller the movement, the more energy it will expend in mere propaganda; the greater the pressure on totalitarian regimes from the outside world—a pressure that even behind iron curtains cannot be ignored entirely—the more actively will the totalitarian dictators

be set up in the fall of 1941 (see *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression*, II, pp. 265 ff.; III, pp. 783 ff. Document PS 1104; V, pp. 322 ff. Document PS 2605). Himmler already knew in the spring of 1941 that "the Jews [must be] exterminated to the last man by the end of the war. This is the unequivocal desire and command of the Fuehrer" (Dossier Kersten in the Centre de Documentation Juive).

<sup>5</sup> In this connection there is a very interesting report, dated July 16, 1940, on a discussion at the Fuehrer's headquarters, in the presence of Rosenberg, Lammers and Keitel, which Hitler began by stating the following "basic principles": "It was now essential not to parade our ultimate goal before the entire world; . . . Hence it must not be obvious that [the decrees for maintaining peace and order in the occupied territories] point to a final settlement. All necessary measures—executions, resettlements—can, and will be, carried out in spite of this." This is followed by a discussion which makes no reference whatever to Hitler's words and in which Hitler no longer participates. He quite obviously had not been "understood" (Document L 221 in the Centre de Documentation Juive).

<sup>6</sup> For Stalin's confidence that Hitler would not attack Russia, see Isaac Deutscher, *Stalin: a Political Biography*, New York and London, 1949, pp. 454 ff., and especially the footnote on p. 458: "It was only in 1948 that the Chief of the State Planning Commission, Vice-Premier N. Voznesensky, disclosed that the economic plans for the third quarter of 1941 had been based on the assumption of peace and that a new plan, suited for war, had been drafted only after the outbreak of hostilities." Deutscher's estimate has now been solidly confirmed by Khrushchev's report on Stalin's reaction to the German attack on the Soviet Union. See his "Speech on Stalin" at the Twentieth Congress as released by the State Department, *New York Times*, June 5, 1956.

engage in propaganda. The essential point is that the necessities for propaganda are always dictated by the outside world and that the movements themselves do not actually propagate but indoctrinate. Conversely, indoctrination, inevitably coupled with terror, increases with the strength of the movements or the totalitarian governments' isolation and security from outside interference.

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

Terror as the counterpart of propaganda played a greater role in Nazism than in Communism. The Nazis did not strike at prominent figures as had been done in the earlier wave of political crimes in Germany (the murder of Rathenau and Erzberger); instead, by killing small socialist functionaries or influential members of opposing parties, they attempted to prove to the population the dangers involved in mere membership. This kind of mass terror, which still operated on a comparatively small scale, increased steadily because neither the police nor the courts seriously prosecuted political offenders on the so-called Right. It was valuable as what a Nazi publicist has aptly called "power propaganda":<sup>8</sup> it made clear to the population at large that the power of the Nazis was greater than that of the authorities and that it was safer to be a member of a Nazi paramilitary organization than a loyal Republican. This impression was greatly strengthened by the specific use the Nazis made of their political crimes. They always admitted them publicly, never apologized for "excesses of the lower ranks"—such apologies were used only by Nazi sympathizers—and impressed the population as being very different from the "idle talkers" of other parties.

The similarities between this kind of terror and plain gangsterism are too

<sup>7</sup> "Education [in the concentration camps] consists of discipline, never of any kind of instruction on an ideological basis, for the prisoners have for the most part slave-like souls" (Heinrich Himmler, *Nazi Conspiracy*, IV, 616 ff.).

<sup>8</sup> Eugen Hadamovsky, *op. cit.*, is outstanding in the literature on totalitarian propaganda. Without explicitly stating it, Hadamovsky offers an intelligent and revealing pro-Nazi interpretation of Hitler's own exposition on the subject in "Propaganda and Organization," in Book II, chapter xi of *Mein Kampf* (2 vols., 1st German edition, 1925 and 1927 respectively. Unexpurgated translation, New York, 1939).—See also F. A. Six, *Die politische Propaganda der NSDAP im Kampf um die Macht*, 1936, pp. 21 ff.



obvious to be pointed out. This does not mean that Nazism was gangsterism, as has sometimes been concluded, but only that the Nazis, without admitting it, learned as much from American gangster organizations as their propaganda, admittedly, learned from American business publicity.

More specific in totalitarian propaganda, however, than direct threats and crimes against individuals is the use of indirect, veiled, and menacing hints against all who will not heed its teachings and, later, mass murder perpetrated on "guilty" and "innocent" alike. People are threatened by Communist propaganda with missing the train of history, with remaining hopelessly behind their time, with spending their lives uselessly, just as they were threatened by the Nazis with living against the eternal laws of nature and life, with an irreparable and mysterious deterioration of their blood. The strong emphasis of totalitarian propaganda on the "scientific" nature of its assertions has been compared to certain advertising techniques which also address themselves to masses. And it is true that the advertising columns of every newspaper show this "scientificity," by which a manufacturer proves with facts and figures and the help of a "research" department that his is the "best soap in the world."<sup>9</sup> It is also true that there is a certain element of violence in the imaginative exaggerations of publicity men, that behind the assertion that girls who do not use this particular brand of soap may go through life with pimples and without a husband, lies the wild dream of monopoly, the dream that one day the manufacturer of the "only soap that prevents pimples" may have the power to deprive of husbands all girls who do not use his soap. Science in the instances of both business publicity and totalitarian propaganda is obviously only a surrogate for power. The obsession of totalitarian movements with "scientific" proofs ceases once they are in power. The Nazis dismissed even those scholars who were willing to serve them, and the Bolsheviks use the reputation of their scientists for entirely unscientific purposes and force them into the role of charlatans.

But there is nothing more to the frequently overrated similarities between mass advertisement and mass propaganda. Businessmen usually do not pose as prophets and they do not constantly demonstrate the correctness of their predictions. The scientificity of totalitarian propaganda is characterized by its almost exclusive insistence on scientific prophecy as distinguished from the more old-fashioned appeal to the past. Nowhere does the ideological origin, of socialism in one instance and racism in the other, show more clearly than when their spokesmen pretend that they have discovered the hidden forces that will bring them good fortune in the chain of fatality. There is of course a great appeal to the masses in "absolutist systems which represent all the events of history as depending upon the great first causes linked by the chain of fatality, and which, as it were, suppress men from the history of the human race" (in the words of Tocqueville). But it cannot

<sup>9</sup> Hitler's analysis of "War Propaganda" (*Mein Kampf*, Book I, chapter vi) stresses the business angle of propaganda and uses the example of publicity for soap. Its importance has been generally overestimated, while his later positive ideas on "Propaganda and Organization" were neglected.

be doubted either that the Nazi leadership actually believed in, and did not merely use as propaganda, such doctrines as the following: "The more accurately we recognize and observe the laws of nature and life, . . . so much the more do we conform to the will of the Almighty. The more insight we have into the will of the Almighty, the greater will be our successes."<sup>10</sup> It is quite apparent that very few changes are needed to express Stalin's creed in two sentences which might run as follows: "The more accurately we recognize and observe the laws of history and class struggle, so much the more do we conform to dialectic materialism. The more insight we have into dialectic materialism, the greater will be our success." Stalin's notion of "correct leadership,"<sup>11</sup> at any rate, could hardly be better illustrated.

Totalitarian propaganda raised ideological scientificity and its technique of making statements in the form of predictions to a height of efficiency of method and absurdity of content because, demagogically speaking, there is hardly a better way to avoid discussion than by releasing an argument from the control of the present and by saying that only the future can reveal its merits. However, totalitarian ideologies did not invent this procedure, and were not the only ones to use it. Scientificity of mass propaganda has indeed been so universally employed in modern politics that it has been interpreted as a more general sign of that obsession with science which has characterized the Western world since the rise of mathematics and physics in the sixteenth century; thus totalitarianism appears to be only the last stage in a process during which "science [has become] an idol that will magically cure the evils of existence and transform the nature of man."<sup>12</sup> And there was, indeed, an early connection between scientificity and the rise of the masses. The "collectivism" of masses was welcomed by those who hoped for the appearance of "natural laws of historical development" which would eliminate the unpredictability of the individual's actions and behavior.<sup>13</sup> There has been cited the example of *Enfantin* who could already "see the time approaching when the 'art of moving the masses' will be so perfectly developed that the painter, the musician, and the poet will possess the power to please and to move with the same certainty as the mathematician solves a geometrical problem or the chemist analyses any substance,"

<sup>10</sup> See Martin Bormann's important memorandum on the "Relationship of National Socialism and Christianity" in *Nazi Conspiracy*, VI, 1036 ff. Similar formulations can be found time and again in the pamphlet literature issued by the SS for the "ideological indoctrination" of its cadets. "The laws of nature are subject to an unchangeable will that cannot be influenced. Hence it is necessary to recognize these laws" ("*SS-Mann und Blutsfrage*," *Schriftenreihe für die weltanschauliche Schulung der Ordnungspolizei*, 1942). All these are nothing but variations of certain phrases taken from Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, of which the following is quoted as the motto for the pamphlet just mentioned: "While man attempts to struggle against the iron logic of nature, he comes into conflict with the basic principles to which alone he owes his very existence as man."

<sup>11</sup> J. Stalin, *Leninism* (1933), Vol. II, chapter iii.

<sup>12</sup> Eric Voegelin, "The Origins of Scientism," in *Social Research*, December, 1948.

<sup>13</sup> See F. A. v. Hayek, "The Counter-Revolution of Science," in *Economica*, Vol. VIII (February, May, August, 1941), p. 13.

and it has been concluded that modern propaganda was born then and there.<sup>14</sup>

Yet whatever the shortcomings of positivism, pragmatism, and behaviorism, and however great their influence on the formation of the nineteenth-century brand of common sense, it is not at all "the cancerous growth of the utilitarian segment of existence"<sup>15</sup> which characterizes the masses to whom totalitarian propaganda and scientificity appeal. The positivists' conviction, as we know it from Comte, that the future is eventually scientifically predictable, rests on the evaluation of interest as an all-pervasive force in history and the assumption that objective laws of power can be discovered. Rohan's political theory that "the kings command the peoples and the interest commands the king," that objective interest is the rule "that alone can never fail," that "rightly or wrongly understood, the interest makes governments live or die" is the traditional core of modern utilitarianism, positivist or socialist, but none of these theories assumes that it is possible "to transform the nature of man" as totalitarianism indeed tries to do. On the contrary, they all implicitly or explicitly assume that human nature is always the same, that history is the story of changing objective circumstances and the human reactions to them, and that interest, rightly understood, may lead to a change of circumstances, but not to a change of human reactions as such. "Scientism" in politics still presupposes that human welfare is its object, a concept which is utterly alien to totalitarianism.<sup>16</sup>

It is precisely because the utilitarian core of ideologies was taken for granted that the anti-utilitarian behavior of totalitarian governments, their complete indifference to mass interest, has been such a shock. This introduced into contemporary politics an element of unheard-of unpredictability. Totalitarian propaganda, however—although in the form of shifted emphasis—indicated even before totalitarianism could seize power how far the masses had drifted from mere concern with interest. Thus the suspicion of the Allies that the murder of the insane which Hitler ordered at the beginning of the war should be attributed to the desire to get rid of unnecessary mouths to feed was altogether unjustified.<sup>17</sup> Hitler was not forced by the war

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 137. The quotation is from the Saint-Simonist magazine *Producteur*, I, 399.

<sup>15</sup> Voegelin, *op. cit.*

<sup>16</sup> William Ebenstein, *The Nazi State*, New York, 1943, in discussing the "Permanent War Economy" of the Nazi state is almost the only critic who has realized that "the endless discussion . . . as to the socialist or capitalist nature of the German economy under the Nazi regime is largely artificial . . . [because it] tends to overlook the vital fact that capitalism and socialism are categories which relate to Western welfare economics" (p. 239).

<sup>17</sup> The testimony of Karl Brandt, one of the physicians charged by Hitler with carrying out the program of euthanasia, is characteristic in this context (*Medical Trial. US against Karl Brandt et al. Hearing of May 14, 1947*). Brandt vehemently protested against the suspicion that the project was initiated to eliminate superfluous food consumers; he emphasized that party members who brought up such arguments in the discussion had always been sharply rebuked. In his opinion, the measures were dictated solely by "ethical considerations." The same is, of course, true for the deporta-

to throw all ethical considerations overboard, but regarded the mass slaughter of war as an incomparable opportunity to start a murder program which, like all other points of his program, was calculated in terms of millennia.<sup>18</sup> Since virtually all of European history through many centuries had taught people to judge each political action by its *cui bono* and all political events by their particular underlying interests, they were suddenly confronted with an element of unprecedented unpredictability. Because of its demagogic qualities, totalitarian propaganda, which long before the seizure of power clearly indicated how little the masses were driven by the famous instinct of self-preservation, was not taken seriously. The success of totalitarian propaganda, however, does not rest so much on its demagoguery as on the knowledge that interest as a collective force can be felt only where stable social bodies provide the necessary transmission belts between the individual and the group; no effective propaganda based on mere interest can be carried on among masses whose chief characteristic is that they belong to no social or political body, and who therefore present a veritable chaos of individual interests. The fanaticism of members of totalitarian movements, so clearly different in quality from the greatest loyalty of members of ordinary parties, is produced by the lack of self-interest of masses who are quite prepared to sacrifice themselves. The Nazis have proved that one can lead a whole people into war with the slogan "or else we shall go down" (something which the war propaganda of 1914 would have avoided carefully), and this is not in times of misery, unemployment, or frustrated national ambitions. The same spirit showed itself during the last months of a war that was obviously lost, when Nazi propaganda consoled an already badly frightened population with the promise that the Fuehrer "in his wisdom had prepared an easy death for the German people by gassing them in case of defeat."<sup>19</sup>

Totalitarian movements use socialism and racism by emptying them of their utilitarian content, the interests of a class or nation. The form of infallible prediction in which these concepts were presented has become more important than their content.<sup>20</sup> The chief qualification of a mass leader has

tions. The files are filled with desperate memoranda written by the military complaining that the deportations of millions of Jews and Poles completely disregarded all "military and economic necessities." See Poliakov, *op. cit.*, p. 321, as well as the documentary material published there.

<sup>18</sup> The decisive decree starting all subsequent mass murders was signed by Hitler on September 1, 1939—the day the war broke out—and referred not merely to the insane (as is often erroneously assumed) but to all those who were "incurably sick." The insane were only the first to go.

<sup>19</sup> See Friedrich Percyval Reck-Malleczewen, *Tagebuch eines Verzweifelten*, Stuttgart, 1947, p. 190.

<sup>20</sup> Hitler based the superiority of ideological movements over political parties on the fact that ideologies (*Weltanschauungen*) always "proclaim their infallibility" (*Mein Kampf*, Book II, chapter v, "Weltanschauung and Organization").—The first pages of the official handbook for the Hitler Youth, *The Nazi Primer*, New York, 1938, consequently emphasize that all questions of *Weltanschauung*, formerly deemed "unrealistic" and "ununderstandable," "have become so clear, simple and definite [my italics] that every comrade can understand them and co-operate in their solution."

become unending infallibility; he can never admit an error.<sup>21</sup> The assumption of infallibility, moreover, is based not so much on superior intelligence as on the correct interpretation of the essentially reliable forces in history or nature, forces which neither defeat nor ruin can prove wrong because they are bound to assert themselves in the long run.<sup>22</sup> Mass leaders in power have one concern which overrules all utilitarian considerations: to make their predictions come true. The Nazis did not hesitate to use, at the end of the war, the concentrated force of their still intact organization to bring about as complete a destruction of Germany as possible, in order to make true their prediction that the German people would be ruined in case of defeat.

The propaganda effect of infallibility, the striking success of posing as a mere interpreting agent of predictable forces, has encouraged in totalitarian dictators the habit of announcing their political intentions in the form of prophecy. The most famous example is Hitler's announcement to the German Reichstag in January, 1939: "I want today once again to make a prophecy: In case the Jewish financiers . . . succeed once more in hurling the peoples into a world war, the result will be . . . the annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe."<sup>23</sup> Translated into nontotalitarian language, this meant: I intend to make war and I intend to kill the Jews of Europe. Similarly Stalin, in the great speech before the Central Committee of the Communist Party in 1930 in which he prepared the physical liquidation of intraparty right and left deviationists, described them as representatives of "dying classes."<sup>24</sup> This definition not only gave the argument its specific sharpness but also announced, in totalitarian style, the physical destruction of those whose "dying out" had just been prophesied. In both instances the same objective is accomplished: the liquidation is fitted into a historical process in which man only does or suffers what, according to immutable laws, is bound to happen anyway. As soon as the execution of the victims has been carried out, the "prophecy" becomes a retrospective alibi: nothing happened but what had already been predicted.<sup>25</sup> It does not matter

<sup>21</sup> The first among the "pledges of the Party member," as enumerated in the *Organisationsbuch der NSDAP*, reads: "The Führer is always right." Edition published in 1936, p. 8. But the *Dienstvorschrift für die P.O. der NSDAP*, 1932, p. 38, puts it this way: "Hitler's decision is final!" Note the remarkable difference in phraseology.

<sup>22</sup> "Their claim to be infallible, [that] neither of them has ever sincerely admitted an error" is in this respect the decisive difference between Stalin and Trotsky on one hand, and Lenin on the other. See Boris Souvarine, *Stalin: A Critical Survey of Bolshevism*, New York, 1939, p. 583.

<sup>23</sup> That Hegelian dialectics should provide a wonderful instrument for always being right, because they permit the interpretation of all defeats as the beginning of victory, is obvious. One of the most beautiful examples of this kind of sophistry occurred after 1933 when the German Communists for nearly two years refused to recognize that Hitler's victory had been a defeat for the German Communist Party.

<sup>24</sup> Quoted from Goebbels: *The Goebbels Diaries (1942-1943)*, ed. by Louis Lochner, New York, 1948, p. 148.

<sup>25</sup> Stalin, *op. cit.*, *loc. cit.*

<sup>26</sup> In a speech he made in September, 1942, when the extermination of the Jews was in full swing, Hitler explicitly referred to his speech of January 30, 1939 (published

whether the "laws of history" spell the "doom" of the classes and their representatives, or whether the "laws of nature . . . exterminate" all those elements—democracies, Jews, Eastern subhumans (*Untermenschen*), or the incurably sick—that are not "fit to live" anyway. Incidentally, Hitler too spoke of "dying classes" that ought to be "eliminated without much ado."<sup>26</sup>

This method, like other totalitarian propaganda methods, is foolproof only after the movements have seized power. Then all debate about the truth or falsity of a totalitarian dictator's prediction is as weird as arguing with a potential murderer about whether his future victim is dead or alive—since by killing the person in question the murderer can promptly provide proof of the correctness of his statement. The only valid argument under such conditions is promptly to rescue the person whose death is predicted. Before mass leaders seize the power to fit reality to their lies, their propaganda is marked by its extreme contempt for facts as such,<sup>27</sup> for in their opinion fact depends entirely on the power of man who can fabricate it. The assertion that the Moscow subway is the only one in the world is a lie only so long as the Bolsheviks have not the power to destroy all the others. In other words, the method of infallible prediction, more than any other totalitarian propaganda device, betrays its ultimate goal of world conquest, since only in a world completely under his control could the totalitarian ruler possibly realize all his lies and make true all his prophecies.

The language of prophetic scientificity corresponded to the needs of masses who had lost their home in the world and now were prepared to be reintegrated into eternal, all-dominating forces which by themselves would bear man, the swimmer on the waves of adversity, to the shores of safety. "We shape the life of our people and our legislation according to the verdicts of genetics,"<sup>28</sup> said the Nazis, just as the Bolsheviks assure their followers that economic forces have the power of a verdict of history. They thereby promise a victory which is independent of "temporary" defeats and failures in specific enterprises. For masses, in contrast to classes, want victory and success as such, in their most abstract form; they are not bound together by those special collective interests which they feel to be essential to their survival as a group and which they therefore may assert even in

as a booklet titled *Der Führer vor dem ersten Reichstag Grossdeutschlands*, 1939), and to the Reichstag session of September 1, 1939, when he had announced that "if Jewry should instigate an international world war to exterminate the Aryan peoples of Europe, not the Aryan peoples but Jewry will [rest of sentence drowned by applause]" (see *Der Führer zum Kriegswinterhilfswerk*, Schriften NSV, No. 14, p. 33).

<sup>26</sup> In the speech of January 30, 1939, p. 19, as quoted above.

<sup>27</sup> Konrad Heiden, *Der Fuehrer: Hitler's Rise to Power*, Boston, 1944, underlines Hitler's "phenomenal untruthfulness," "the lack of demonstrable reality in nearly all his utterances," his "indifference to facts which he does not regard as vitally important" (pp. 368, 374).—In almost identical terms, Khrushchev describes "Stalin's reluctance to consider life's realities" and his indifference to "the real state of affairs," *op. cit.* Stalin's opinion of the importance of facts is best expressed in his periodic revisions of Russian history.

<sup>28</sup> *Nazi Primer*.

the face of overwhelming odds. More important to them than the cause that may be victorious, or the particular enterprise that may be a success, is the victory of no matter what cause, and success in no matter what enterprise.

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

Mysteriousness as such became the first criterion for the choice of topics. The origin of mystery did not matter; it could lie in a reasonable, politically comprehensible desire for secrecy, as in the case of the British Secret Services or the French Deuxième Bureau; or in the conspiratory need of revolutionary groups, as in the case of anarchist and other terrorist sects; or in the structure of societies whose original secret content had long since become well known and where only the formal ritual still retained the former mystery, as in the case of the Freemasons; or in age-old superstitions which had woven legends around certain groups, as in the case of the Jesuits and the Jews. The Nazis were undoubtedly superior in the selection of such topics for mass propaganda; but the Bolsheviks have gradually learned the trick, although they rely less on traditionally accepted mysteries and prefer their own inventions—since the middle thirties, one mysterious world conspiracy has followed another in Bolshevik propaganda, starting with the plot of the Trotskyites, followed by the rule of the 300 families, to the sinister imperialist (*i.e.*, global) machinations of the British or American Secret Services.<sup>29</sup>

The effectiveness of this kind of propaganda demonstrates one of the chief characteristics of modern masses. They do not believe in anything visible, in the reality of their own experience; they do not trust their eyes and ears but only their imaginations, which may be caught by anything that is at once universal and consistent in itself. What convinces masses are not facts, and not even invented facts, but only the consistency of the system of which they are presumably part. Repetition, somewhat overrated in importance because of the common belief in the masses' inferior capacity to grasp and remember, is important only because it convinces them of consistency in time.

What the masses refuse to recognize is the fortuitousness that pervades

<sup>29</sup> It is interesting to note that the Bolsheviks during the Stalin era somehow accumulated conspiracies, that the discovery of a new one did not mean they would discard the former. The Trotskyite conspiracy started around 1930, the 300 families were added during the Popular Front period, from 1935 onward, British imperialism became an actual conspiracy during the Stalin-Hitler alliance, the "American Secret Service" followed soon after the close of the war; the last, Jewish cosmopolitanism, had an obvious and disquieting resemblance to Nazi propaganda.

reality. They are predisposed to all ideologies because they explain facts as mere examples of laws and eliminate coincidences by inventing an all-embracing omnipotence which is supposed to be at the root of every accident. Totalitarian propaganda thrives on this escape from reality into fiction, from coincidence into consistency.

The chief disability of totalitarian propaganda is that it cannot fulfill this longing of the masses for a completely consistent, comprehensible, and predictable world without seriously conflicting with common sense. If, for instance, all the "confessions" of political opponents in the Soviet Union are phrased in the same language and admit the same motives, the consistency-hungry masses will accept the fiction as supreme proof of their truthfulness; whereas common sense tells us that it is precisely their consistency which is out of this world and proves that they are a fabrication. Figuratively speaking, it is as though the masses demand a constant repetition of the miracle of the Septuagint, when, according to ancient legend, seventy isolated translators produced an identical Greek version of the Old Testament. Common sense can accept this tale only as a legend or a miracle; yet it could also be adduced as proof of the absolute faithfulness of every single word in the translated text.

In other words, while it is true that the masses are obsessed by a desire to escape from reality because in their essential homelessness they can no longer bear its accidental, incomprehensible aspects, it is also true that their longing for fiction has some connection with those capacities of the human mind whose structural consistency is superior to mere occurrence. The masses' escape from reality is a verdict against the world in which they are forced to live and in which they cannot exist, since coincidence has become its supreme master and human beings need the constant transformation of chaotic and accidental conditions into a man-made pattern of relative consistency. The revolt of the masses against "realism," common sense, and all "the plausibilities of the world" (Burke) was the result of their atomization, of their loss of social status along with which they lost the whole sector of communal relationships in whose framework common sense makes sense. In their situation of spiritual and social homelessness, a measured insight into the interdependence of the arbitrary and the planned, the accidental and the necessary, could no longer operate. Totalitarian propaganda can outrageously insult common sense only where common sense has lost its validity. Before the alternative of facing the anarchic growth and total arbitrariness of decay or bowing down before the most rigid, fantastically fictitious consistency of an ideology, the masses probably will always choose the latter and be ready to pay for it with individual sacrifices—and this not because they are stupid or wicked, but because in the general disaster this escape grants them a minimum of self-respect.

While it has been the specialty of Nazi propaganda to profit from the longing of the masses for consistency, Bolshevik methods have demonstrated, as though in a laboratory, its impact on the isolated mass man. The Soviet secret police, so eager to convince its victims of their guilt for crimes



they never committed, and in many instances were in no position to commit, completely isolates and eliminates all real factors, so that the very logic, the very consistency of "the story" contained in the prepared confession becomes overwhelming. In a situation where the dividing line between fiction and reality is blurred by the monstrosity and the inner consistency of the accusation, not only the strength of character to resist constant threats but great confidence in the existence of fellow human beings—relatives or friends or neighbors—who will never believe "the story" are required to resist the temptation to yield to the mere abstract possibility of guilt.

To be sure, this extreme of an artificially fabricated insanity can be achieved only in a totalitarian world. Then, however, it is part of the propaganda apparatus of the totalitarian regimes to which confessions are not indispensable for punishment. "Confessions" are as much a specialty of Bolshevik propaganda as the curious pedantry of legalizing crimes by retrospective and retroactive legislation was a specialty of Nazi propaganda. The aim in both cases is consistency.

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

From these sore spots the lies of totalitarian propaganda derive the element of truthfulness and real experience they need to bridge the gulf between reality and fiction. Only terror could rely on mere fiction, and even the terror-sustained lying fictions of totalitarian regimes have not yet become entirely arbitrary, although they are usually cruder, more impudent, and, so to speak, more original than those of the movements. (It takes power, not propaganda skill, to circulate a revised history of the Russian Revolution in which no man by the name of Trotsky was ever commander-in-chief of the Red Army.) The lies of the movements, on the other hand, are much subtler. They attach themselves to every aspect of social and political life that is hidden from the public eye. They succeed best where the official authorities have surrounded themselves with an atmosphere of secrecy. In the eyes of the masses, they then acquire the reputation of superior "realism" because they touch upon real conditions whose existence is being hidden. Revelations of scandals in high society, of corruption of politicians, every-

thing that belongs to yellow journalism, becomes in their hands a weapon of more than sensational importance.

The most efficient fiction of Nazi propaganda was the story of a Jewish world conspiracy. Concentration on antisemitic propaganda had been a common device of demagogues ever since the end of the nineteenth century, and was widespread in the Germany and Austria of the twenties. The more consistently a discussion of the Jewish question was avoided by all parties and organs of public opinion, the more convinced the mob became that Jews were the true representatives of the powers that be, and that the Jewish issue was the symbol for the hypocrisy and dishonesty of the whole system.

The actual content of postwar antisemitic propaganda was neither a monopoly of the Nazis nor particularly new and original. Lies about a Jewish world conspiracy had been current since the Dreyfus Affair and based themselves on the existing international interrelationship and interdependence of a Jewish people dispersed all over the world. Exaggerated notions of Jewish world power are even older; they can be traced back to the end of the eighteenth century, when the intimate connection between Jewish business and the nation-states had become visible. The representation of *the Jew* as the incarnation of evil is usually blamed on remnants and superstitious memories from the Middle Ages, but is actually closely connected with the more recent ambiguous role which Jews played in European society since their emancipation. One thing was undeniable: in the postwar period Jews had become more prominent than ever before.

The point about the Jews themselves is that they grew prominent and conspicuous in inverse proportion to their real influence and position of power. Every decrease in the stability and force of the nation-states was a direct blow to Jewish positions. The partially successful conquest of the state by the nation made it impossible for the government machine to maintain its position above all classes and parties, and thereby nullified the value of alliances with the Jewish sector of the population, which was supposed also to stay outside the ranks of society and to be indifferent to party politics. The growing concern with foreign policy of the imperialist-minded bourgeoisie and its growing influence on the state machinery was accompanied by the steadfast refusal of the largest segment of Jewish wealth to engage itself in industrial enterprises and to leave the tradition of capital trading. All this taken together almost ended the economic usefulness to the state of the Jews as a group, and the advantages to themselves of social separation. After the first World War, Central European Jewries became as assimilated and nationalized as French Jewry had become during the first decades of the Third Republic.

How conscious the concerned states were of the changed situation came to light when, in 1917, the German government, following a long-established tradition, tried to use its Jews for tentative peace negotiations with the Allies. Instead of addressing itself to the established leaders of German

Jewry, it went to the small and comparatively uninfluential Zionist minority which were still trusted in the old way precisely because they insisted on the existence of a Jewish people independent of citizenship, and could therefore be expected to render services which depended upon international connections and an international point of view. The step, however, turned out to have been a mistake for the German government. The Zionists did something that no Jewish banker had ever done before; they set their own conditions and told the government that they would only negotiate a peace without annexations and reparations.<sup>30</sup> The old Jewish indifference to political issues was gone; the majority could no longer be used, since it was no longer aloof from the nation, and the Zionist minority was useless because it had political ideas of its own.

The replacement of monarchical governments by republics in Central Europe completed the disintegration of Central European Jewries, just as the establishment of the Third Republic had done it in France some fifty years earlier. The Jews had already lost much of their influence when the new governments established themselves under conditions in which they lacked the power as well as the interest to protect their Jews. During the peace negotiations in Versailles, Jews were used chiefly as experts, and even antisemites admitted that the petty Jewish swindlers in the postwar era, mostly new arrivals (behind whose fraudulent activities, which distinguished them sharply from their native coreligionists, lay an attitude which oddly resembled the old indifference to the standards of their environment), had no connections with the representatives of a supposed Jewish international.<sup>31</sup>

Among a host of competing antisemitic groups and in an atmosphere rife with antisemitism, Nazi propaganda developed a method of treating this subject which was different from and superior to all others. Still, not one Nazi slogan was new—not even Hitler's shrewd picture of a class struggle caused by the Jewish businessman who exploits his workers, while at the same time his brother in the factory courtyard incites them to strike.<sup>32</sup> The only new element was that the Nazi party demanded proof of non-Jewish descent for membership and that it remained, the Feder program notwithstanding, extremely vague about the actual measures to be taken against Jews once it came to power.<sup>33</sup> The Nazis placed the Jewish issue at the center

<sup>30</sup> See Chaim Weizmann's autobiography, *Trial and Error*, New York, 1949, p. 185.

<sup>31</sup> See, for instance, Otto Bonhard, *Jüdische Geld- und Weltherrschaft?*, 1926, p. 57.

<sup>32</sup> Hitler used this picture for the first time in 1922: "Moses Kohn on the one side encourages his association to refuse the workers' demands, while his brother Isaac in the factory invites the masses . . ." to strike. (*Hitler's Speeches: 1922-1939*, ed. Baynes, London, 1942, p. 29.) It is noteworthy that no complete collection of Hitler's speeches was ever published in Nazi Germany, so that one is forced to resort to the English edition. That this was no accident can be seen from a bibliography compiled by Philipp Bouhler, *Die Reden des Führer's nach der Machtübernahme*, 1940: only the public speeches were printed verbatim in the *Völkischer Beobachter*; as for speeches to the Fuehrerkorps and other party units, they were merely "referred to" in that newspaper. They were not at any time meant for publication.

<sup>33</sup> Feder's 25 points contain only standard measures demanded by all antisemitic

of their propaganda in the sense that antisemitism was no longer a question of opinions about people different from the majority, or a concern of national politics,<sup>34</sup> but the intimate concern of every individual in his personal existence; no one could be a member whose "family tree" was not in order, and the higher the rank in the Nazi hierarchy, the farther back the family tree had to be traced.<sup>35</sup> By the same token, though less consistently, Bolshevism changed the Marxist doctrine of the inevitable final victory of the proletariat by organizing its members as "born proletarians" and making other class origins shameful and scandalous.<sup>36</sup>

Nazi propaganda was ingenious enough to transform antisemitism into a principle of self-definition, and thus to eliminate it from the fluctuations of mere opinion. It used the persuasion of mass demagoguery only as a preparatory step and never overestimated its lasting influence, whether in oratory or in print.<sup>37</sup> This gave the masses of atomized, undefinable, unstable and futile individuals a means of self-definition and identification which not only restored some of the self-respect they had formerly derived from their function in society, but also created a kind of spurious stability which made them better candidates for an organization. Through this kind of propaganda, the movement could set itself up as an artificial extension of the mass meeting and rationalize the essentially futile feelings of self-importance and hysterical

groups: expulsion of naturalized Jews, and treatment of native Jews as aliens. Nazi antisemitic oratory was always much more radical than its program.

Waldemar Gurian, "Antisemitism in Modern Germany," in *Essays on Antisemitism*, ed. by Koppel S. Pinson, New York, 1946, p. 243, stresses the lack of originality in Nazi antisemitism: "All these demands and views were not remarkable for their originality—they were self-evident in all nationalistic circles; what was remarkable was the demagogic and oratorical skill with which they were presented."

<sup>34</sup> A typical example of mere nationalistic antisemitism within the Nazi movement itself is Röhm who writes: "And here again, my opinion differs from that of the national philistine. Not: the Jew is to be blamed for everything! We are to be blamed for the fact that the Jew can rule today" (Ernst Röhm, *Die Geschichte eines Hochverrätters*, 1933, Volksausgabe, p. 284).

<sup>35</sup> SS applicants had to trace their ancestry back to 1750. Applicants for leading positions in the party were asked only three questions: 1. What have you done for the party? 2. Are you absolutely sound, physically, mentally, morally? 3. Is your family tree in order? See *Nazi Primer*.

It is characteristic for the affinity between the two systems that the elite and police formations of the Bolsheviks—the NKVD—also demanded proof of ancestry from their members. See F. Beck and W. Godin, *Russian Purge and the Extraction of Confession*, 1951.

<sup>36</sup> Thus the totalitarian tendencies of McCarthyism in the United States showed most glaringly in the attempt not merely to persecute Communists, but to force every citizen to furnish proof of not being a Communist.

<sup>37</sup> "One should not overestimate the influence of the press . . . , it decreases in general while the influence of the organization increases" (Hadamovsky, *op. cit.*, p. 64). "The newspapers are helpless when they are supposed to fight against the aggressive force of a living organization" (*ibid.*, p. 65). "Power formations which have their origin in mere propaganda are fluctuating and can disappear quickly unless the violence of an organization supports the propaganda" (*ibid.*, p. 21).

security that it offered to the isolated individuals of an atomized society.<sup>38</sup>

The same ingenious application of slogans, coined by others and tried out before, was apparent in the Nazis' treatment of other relevant issues. When public attention was equally focused on nationalism on one hand and socialism on the other, when the two were thought to be incompatible and actually constituted the ideological watershed between the Right and the Left, the "National Socialist German Workers' Party" (Nazi) offered a synthesis supposed to lead to national unity, a semantic solution whose double trademark of "German" and "Worker" connected the nationalism of the Right with the internationalism of the Left. The very name of the Nazi movement stole the political contents of all other parties and pretended implicitly to incorporate them all. Combinations of supposedly antagonistic political doctrines (national-socialist, christian-social, etc.) had been tried, and successfully, before; but the Nazis realized their own combination in such a way that the whole struggle in Parliament between the socialists and the nationalists, between those who pretended to be workers first of all and those who were Germans first, appeared as a sham designed to hide ulterior sinister motives—for was not a member of the Nazi movement all these things at once?

It is interesting that even in their beginnings the Nazis were prudent enough never to use slogans which, like democracy, republic, dictatorship, or monarchy, indicated a specific form of government.<sup>39</sup> It is as though, in this one matter, they had always known that they would be entirely original. Every discussion about the actual form of their future government could be dismissed as empty talk about mere formalities—the state, according to Hitler, being only a "means" for the conservation of the race, as the state, according to Bolshevik propaganda, is only an instrument in the struggle of classes.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>38</sup> "The mass-meeting is the strongest form of propaganda . . . [because] each individual feels more self-confident and more powerful in the unity of a mass" (*ibid.*, p. 47). "The enthusiasm of the moment becomes a principle and a spiritual attitude through organization and systematic training and discipline" (*ibid.*, p. 21-22).

<sup>39</sup> In the isolated instances in which Hitler concerned himself with this question at all, he used to emphasize: "Incidentally, I am not the head of a state in the sense of a dictator or monarch, but I am a leader of the German people" (see *Ausgewählte Reden des Führers*, 1939, p. 114).—Hans Frank expresses himself in the same spirit: "The National Socialist Reich is not a dictatorial, let alone an arbitrary, regime. Rather, the National Socialist Reich rests on the mutual loyalty of the Führer and the people" (in *Recht und Verwaltung*, Munich, 1939, p. 15).

<sup>40</sup> Hitler repeated many times: "The state is only the means to an end. The end is: Conservation of race" (*Reden*, 1939, p. 125). He also stressed that his movement "does not rest on the state idea, but is primarily based on the closed *Volksgemeinschaft*" (see *Reden*, 1933, p. 125, and the speech before the new generation of political leaders [*Führernachwuchs*], 1937, which is printed as an addendum in *Hitlers Tischgespräche*, p. 446). This, *mutatis mutandis*, is also the core of the complicated double talk which is Stalin's so-called "state theory": "We are in favor of the State dying out, and at the same time we stand for the strengthening of the dictatorship of the proletariat which represents the most powerful and mighty authority of all forms of

In another curious and roundabout way, however, the Nazis gave a propaganda answer to the question of what their future role would be, and that was in their use of the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion" as a model for the future organization of the German masses for "world empire." The use of the Protocols was not restricted to the Nazis; hundreds of thousands of copies were sold in postwar Germany, and even their open adoption as a handbook of politics was not new.<sup>41</sup> Nevertheless, this forgery was mainly used for the purpose of denouncing the Jews and arousing the mob to the dangers of Jewish domination.<sup>42</sup> In terms of mere propaganda, the discovery of the Nazis was that the masses were not so frightened by Jewish world rule as they were interested in how it could be done, that the popularity of the Protocols was based on admiration and eagerness to learn rather than on hatred, and that it would be wise to stay as close as possible to certain of their outstanding formulas, as in the case of the famous slogan: "Right is what is good for the German people," which was copied from the Protocols' "Everything that benefits the Jewish people is morally right and sacred."<sup>43</sup>

The Protocols are a very curious and noteworthy document in many respects. Apart from their cheap Machiavellianism, their essential political characteristic is that in their crackpot manner they touch on every important political issue of the time. They are antinational in principle and picture the nation-state as a colossus with feet of clay. They discard national sovereignty

State which have existed up to the present day. The highest possible development of the power of the State with the object of preparing the conditions for the dying out of the State; that is the Marxist formula" (*op. cit., loc. cit.*).

<sup>41</sup> Alexander Stein, *Adolf Hitler, Schüler der "Weisen von Zion,"* Karlsbad, 1936, was the first to analyze by philological comparison the ideological identity of the teachings of the Nazis with that of the "Elders of Zion." See also R. M. Blank, *Adolf Hitler et les "Protocoles des Sages de Sion,"* 1938.

The first to admit indebtedness to the teachings of the Protocols was Theodor Fritsch, the "grand old man" of German postwar antisemitism. He writes in the epilogue to his edition of the *Protocols*, 1924: "Our future statesmen and diplomats will have to learn from the oriental masters of villainy even the ABC of government, and for this purpose, the 'Zionist Protocols' offer an excellent preparatory schooling."

<sup>42</sup> On the history of the Protocols, see John S. Curtiss, *An Appraisal of the Protocols of Zion*, 1942.

The fact that the Protocols were a forgery was irrelevant for propaganda purposes. The Russian publicist S. A. Nilus who published the second Russian edition in 1905 was already well aware of the doubtful character of this "document" and added the obvious: "But if it were possible to show its authenticity by documents or by the testimony of trustworthy witnesses, if it were possible to disclose the persons standing at the head of the world-wide plot . . . then . . . 'the secret iniquity' could be broken. . . ." Translation in Curtiss, *op. cit.*

Hitler did not need Nilus to use the same trick: the best proof of their authenticity is that they have been proved to be a forgery. And he also adds the argument of their "plausibility": "What many Jews may do unconsciously is here consciously made clear. And that is what counts" (*Mein Kampf*, Book I, chapter xi).

<sup>43</sup> Fritsch, *op. cit.*, "[Der Juden] oberster Grundsatz lautet: 'Alles, was dem Volke Juda nützt, ist moralisch und ist heilig.'"

and believe, as Hitler once put it, in a world empire on a national basis.<sup>44</sup> They are not satisfied with revolution in a particular country, but aim at the conquest and rule of the world. They promise the people that, regardless of superiority in numbers, territory, and state power, they will be able to achieve world conquest through organization alone. To be sure, part of their persuasive strength derives from very old elements of superstition. The notion of the uninterrupted existence of an international sect that has pursued the same revolutionary aims since antiquity is very old<sup>45</sup> and has played a role in political backstairs literature ever since the French Revolution, even though it did not occur to anyone writing at the end of the eighteenth century that the "revolutionary sect," this "peculiar nation . . . in the midst of all civilized nations," could be the Jews.<sup>46</sup>

It was the motif of a global conspiracy in the Protocols which appealed most to the masses, for it corresponded so well to the new power situation. (Hitler very early promised that the Nazi movement would "transcend the narrow limits of modern nationalism,"<sup>47</sup> and during the war attempts were

<sup>44</sup>"World Empires spring from a national basis, but they expand soon far beyond it" (*Reden*).

<sup>45</sup>Henri Rollin, *L'Apocalypse de Notre Temps*, Paris, 1939, who considers the popularity of the Protocols to be second only to the Bible (p. 40), shows the similarity between them and the *Monita Secreta*, first published in 1612 and still sold in 1939 on the streets of Paris, which claim to reveal a Jesuit conspiracy "that justifies all villainies and all uses of violence. . . . This is a real campaign against the established order" (p. 32).

<sup>46</sup>This whole literature is well represented by the Chevalier de Malet, *Recherches politiques et historiques qui prouvent l'existence d'une secte révolutionnaire*, 1817, who quotes extensively from earlier authors. The heroes of the French Revolution are to him "mannequins" of an "agence secrète," the agents of the Freemasons. But Freemasonry is only the name which his contemporaries have given to a "revolutionary sect" which has existed at all times and whose policy always has been to attack "remaining behind the scenes, manipulating the strings of the marionettes it thought convenient to put on the scene." He starts by saying: "Probably, it will be difficult to believe in a plan which was formed in antiquity and always followed with the same constancy: . . . the authors of the Revolution are no more French than they are German, Italian, English, etc. They constitute a peculiar nation which was born and has grown in darkness, in the midst of all civilized nations, with the aim of subduing them all to its domination."

For an extensive discussion of this literature, see E. Lesueur, *La Franc-Maçonnerie Artésienne au 18e siècle*, Bibliothèque d'Histoire Révolutionnaire, 1914. How persistent these conspiracy legends are in themselves, even under normal circumstances, can be seen by the enormous anti-Freemason crackpot literature in France, which is hardly less extensive than its antisemitic counterpart. A kind of compendium of all theories which saw in the French Revolution the product of secret conspiracy societies can be found in G. Bord, *La Franc-Maçonnerie en France dès origines à 1815*, 1908.

<sup>47</sup>*Reden*.—See the transcript of a session of the SS Committee on Labor Questions at SS headquarters in Berlin on January 12, 1943, where it was suggested that the word "nation," a concept being burdened with connotations of liberalism, should be eliminated as it was inadequate for the Germanic peoples (Document 705—PS in *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression*, V, 515).

made within the SS to erase the word "nation" from the National Socialist vocabulary altogether.) Only world powers seemed still to have a chance of independent survival and only global politics a chance of lasting results. That this situation should frighten the smaller nations which are not world powers is only too understandable. The Protocols seemed to show a way out that did not depend upon objective unalterable conditions, but only on the power of organization.

Nazi propaganda, in other words, discovered in "the supranational because intensely national Jew"<sup>48</sup> the forerunner of the German master of the world and assured the masses that "the nations that have been the first to see through the Jew and have been the first to fight him are going to take his place in the domination of the world."<sup>49</sup> The delusion of an already existing Jewish world domination formed the basis for the illusion of future German world domination. This was what Himmler had in mind when he stated that "we owe the art of government to the Jews," namely, to the Protocols which "the Führer [had] learned by heart."<sup>50</sup> Thus the Protocols presented world conquest as a practical possibility, implied that the whole affair was only a question of inspired or shrewd know-how, and that nobody stood in the way of a German victory over the entire world but a patently small people, the Jews, who ruled it without possessing instruments of violence—an easy opponent, therefore, once their secret was discovered and their method emulated on a larger scale.

Nazi propaganda concentrated all these new and promising vistas in one concept which it labeled *Volksgemeinschaft*. This new community, tentatively realized in the Nazi movement in the pretotalitarian atmosphere, was based on the absolute equality of all Germans, an equality not of rights but of nature, and their absolute difference from all other people.<sup>51</sup> After the Nazis came to power, this concept gradually lost its importance and gave way to a general contempt for the German people (which the Nazis had always harbored but could not very well show publicly before) on one hand,<sup>52</sup> and a great eagerness, on the other, to enlarge their own ranks from

<sup>48</sup> *Hitler's Speeches*, ed. Baynes, p. 6.

<sup>49</sup> Goebbels, *op. cit.* p. 377. This promise, implied in all antisemitic propaganda of the Nazi type, was prepared by Hitler's "The most extreme contrast to the Aryan is the Jew" (*Mein Kampf*, Book I, chapter xi).

<sup>50</sup> Dossier Kersten, in the Centre de Documentation Juive.

<sup>51</sup> Hitler's early promise (*Reden*), "I shall never recognize that other nations have the same right as the German," became official doctrine: "The foundation of the national socialist outlook in life is the perception of the unlikeness of men" (*Nazi Primer*, p. 5).

<sup>52</sup> For instance, Hitler in 1923: "The German people consists for one third of heroes, for another third, of cowards, while the rest are traitors" (*Hitler's Speeches*, ed. Baynes, p. 76).

After the seizure of power this trend became more brutally outspoken. See, for instance, Goebbels in 1934: "Who are the people to criticize? Party members? No. The rest of the German people? They should consider themselves lucky to be still alive. It would be too much of a good thing altogether, if those who live at our mercy should be allowed to criticize." Quoted from Kohn-Bramstedt, *op. cit.*, pp. 178-179.—During the war Hitler declared: "I am nothing but a magnet constantly moving across the



"Aryans" of other nations, an idea which had played only a small role in the prepower stage of Nazi propaganda.<sup>53</sup> The *Volksgemeinschaft* was merely the propagandistic preparation for an "Aryan" racial society which in the end would have doomed all peoples, including the Germans.

To a certain extent, the *Volksgemeinschaft* was the Nazis' attempt to counter the Communist promise of a classless society. The propaganda appeal of the one over the other seems obvious if we disregard all ideological implications. While both promised to level all social and property differences, the classless society had the obvious connotation that everybody would be leveled to the status of a factory worker, while the *Volksgemeinschaft*, with its connotation of conspiracy for world conquest, held out a reasonable hope that every German could eventually become a factory owner. The even greater advantage of the *Volksgemeinschaft*, however, was that its establishment did not have to wait for some future time and did not depend upon objective conditions: it could be realized immediately in the fictitious world of the movement.

The true goal of totalitarian propaganda is not persuasion but organization—the "accumulation of power without the possession of the means of violence."<sup>54</sup> For this purpose, originality in ideological content can only be considered an unnecessary obstacle. It is no accident that the two totalitarian movements of our time, so frightfully "new" in methods of rule and ingenious in forms of organization, have never preached a new doctrine, have never invented an ideology which was not already popular.<sup>55</sup> Not the passing successes of demagogy win the masses, but the visible reality and power of a "living organization."<sup>56</sup> Hitler's brilliant gifts as a mass orator did not win him his position in the movement but rather misled his opponents into underestimating him as a simple demagogue, and Stalin was able to defeat the greater orator of the Russian Revolution.<sup>57</sup> What distin-

German nation and extracting the steel from this people. And I have often stated that the time will come when all worth-while men in Germany are going to be in my camp. And those who will not be in my camp are worthless anyway." Even then it was clear to Hitler's immediate environment what would happen to those who "are worthless anyway" (see *Der grossdeutsche Freiheitskampf. Reden Hitlers vom 1. 9. 1939—10. 3. 1940*, p. 174).—Himmler meant the same when he said: "The Führer does not think in German, but in Germanic terms" (Dossier Kersten, cf. above), except that we know from *Hitlers Tischgespräche* (p. 315 ff.) that in those days he was already making fun even of the Germanic "clamor" and thought in "Aryan terms."

<sup>53</sup> Himmler in a speech to SS leaders at Kharkov in April, 1943 (*Nazi Conspiracy*, IV, 572 ff.): "I very soon formed a Germanic SS in the various countries. . . ." An early prepower indication of this non-national policy was given by Hitler (*Reden*): "We shall certainly also receive into the new master class representatives of other nations, i.e., those who deserve it because of their participation in our fight."

<sup>54</sup> Hadamovsky, *op. cit.*

<sup>55</sup> Heiden, *op. cit.*, p. 139: Propaganda is not "the art of instilling an opinion in the masses. Actually it is the art of receiving an opinion from the masses."

<sup>56</sup> Hadamovsky, *op. cit.*, *passim*. The term is taken from Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (Book II, chapter xi), where the "living organization" of a movement is contrasted with the "dead mechanism" of a bureaucratic party.

<sup>57</sup> It would be a serious error to interpret totalitarian leaders in terms of Max

guishes the totalitarian leaders and dictators is rather the simple-minded, single-minded purposefulness with which they choose those elements from existing ideologies which are best fitted to become the fundamentals of another, entirely fictitious world. The fiction of the Protocols was as adequate as the fiction of a Trotskyite conspiracy, for both contained an element of plausibility—the nonpublic influence of the Jews in the past; the struggle for power between Trotsky and Stalin—which not even the fictitious world of totalitarianism can safely do without. Their art consists in using, and at the same time transcending, the elements of reality, of verifiable experiences, in the chosen fiction, and in generalizing them into regions which then are definitely removed from all possible control by individual experience. With such generalizations, totalitarian propaganda establishes a world fit to compete with the real one, whose main handicap is that it is not logical, consistent, and organized. The consistency of the fiction and strictness of the organization make it possible for the generalization eventually to survive the explosion of more specific lies—the power of the Jews after their helpless slaughter, the sinister global conspiracy of Trotskyites after their liquidation in Soviet Russia and the murder of Trotsky.

The stubbornness with which totalitarian dictators have clung to their original lies in the face of absurdity is more than superstitious gratitude to what turned the trick, and, at least in the case of Stalin, cannot be explained by the psychology of the liar whose very success may make him his own last victim. Once these propaganda slogans are integrated into a "living organization," they cannot be safely eliminated without wrecking the whole structure. The assumption of a Jewish world conspiracy was transformed by totalitarian propaganda from an objective, arguable matter into the chief element of the Nazi reality; the point was that the Nazis *acted* as though the world were dominated by the Jews and needed a counterconspiracy to defend itself. Racism for them was no longer a debatable theory of dubious scientific value, but was being realized every day in the functioning hierarchy of a political organization in whose framework it would have been very "unrealistic" to question it. Similarly, Bolshevism no longer needs to win an argument about class struggle, internationalism, and unconditional dependence of the welfare of the proletariat on the welfare of the Soviet Union; the functioning organization of the Comintern is more convincing than any argument or mere ideology can ever be.

Weber's category of the "charismatic leadership." See Hans Gerth, "The Nazi Party," in *American Journal of Sociology*, 1940, Vol. XLV. (A similar misunderstanding is also the shortcoming of Heiden's biography, *op. cit.*) Gerth describes Hitler as the charismatic leader of a bureaucratic party. This alone, in his opinion, can account for the fact that "however flagrantly actions may have contradicted words, nothing could disrupt the firmly disciplinary organization." (This contradiction, by the way, is much more characteristic of Stalin who "took care always to say the opposite of what he did, and to do the opposite of what he said." Souvarine, *op. cit.*, p. 431.)

For the source of this misunderstanding see Alfred von Martin, "Zur Soziologie der Gegenwart," in *Zeitschrift für Kulturgeschichte*, Band 27, and Arnold Koettgen, "Die Gesetzmässigkeit der Verwaltung im Führerstaat," in *Reichsverwaltungsblatt*, 1936, both of whom characterize the Nazi state as a bureaucracy with charismatic leadership.

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

The advantages of a propaganda that constantly "adds the power of organization"<sup>58</sup> to the feeble and unreliable voice of argument, and thereby realizes, so to speak, on the spur of the moment, whatever it says, are obvious beyond demonstration. Foolproof against arguments based on a reality which the movements promised to change, against a counterpropaganda disqualified by the mere fact that it belongs to or defends a world which the shiftless masses cannot and will not accept, it can be disproved only by another, a stronger or better, reality.

It is in the moment of defeat that the inherent weakness of totalitarian propaganda becomes visible. Without the force of the movement, its members cease at once to believe in the dogma for which yesterday they still were ready to sacrifice their lives. The moment the movement, that is, the fictitious world which sheltered them, is destroyed, the masses revert to their old status of isolated individuals who either happily accept a new function in a changed world or sink back into their old desperate superfluosity. The members of totalitarian movements, utterly fanatical as long as the movement exists, will not follow the example of religious fanatics and die the death of martyrs (even though they were only too willing to die the death of robots).<sup>59</sup> Rather they will quietly give up the movement as a bad bet and look around for another promising fiction or wait until the former fiction regains enough strength to establish another mass movement.

The experience of the Allies who vainly tried to locate one self-confessed and convinced Nazi among the German people, 90 per cent of whom probably had been sincere sympathizers at one time or another, is not to be taken simply as a sign of human weakness or gross opportunism. Nazism as an ideology had been so fully "realized" that its content ceased to exist

<sup>58</sup> Hadamovsky, *op. cit.*, p. 21. For totalitarian purposes it is a mistake to propagate their ideology through teaching or persuasion. In the words of Robert Ley, it can be neither "taught" nor "learned," but only "exercised" and "practiced" (see *Der Weg zur Ordensburg*, undated).

<sup>59</sup> R. Hoehn, one of the outstanding Nazi political theorists, interpreted this lack of a doctrine or even a common set of ideals and beliefs in the movement in his *Reichsgemeinschaft und Volksgemeinschaft*, Hamburg, 1935: "From the point of view of a folk community, every community of values is destructive" (p. 83).

as an independent set of doctrines, lost its intellectual existence, so to speak; destruction of the reality therefore left almost nothing behind, least of all the fanaticism of believers.

## II: *Totalitarian Organization*

THE FORMS OF totalitarian organization, as distinguished from their ideological content and propaganda slogans, are completely new.<sup>60</sup> They are designed to translate the propaganda lies of the movement, woven around a central fiction—the conspiracy of the Jews, or the Trotskyites, or 300 families, etc.—into a functioning reality, to build up, even under nontotalitarian circumstances, a society whose members act and react according to the rules of a fictitious world. In contrast with seemingly similar parties and movements of Fascist or Socialist, nationalist or Communist orientation, all of which back up their propaganda with terrorism as soon as they have reached a certain stage of extremism (which mostly depends on the stage of desperation of their members), the totalitarian movement is really in earnest about its propaganda, and this earnestness is expressed much more frighteningly in the organization of its followers than in the physical liquidation of its opponents. Organization and propaganda (rather than terror and propaganda) are two sides of the same coin.<sup>61</sup>

The most strikingly new organizational device of the movements in their prepower stage is the creation of front organizations, the distinction drawn between party members and sympathizers. Compared to this invention, other typically totalitarian features, such as the appointment of functionaries from above and the eventual monopolization of appointments by one man are secondary in importance. The so-called "leader principle" is in itself not totalitarian; it has borrowed certain features from authoritarianism and military dictatorship which have greatly contributed toward obscuring and belittling the essentially totalitarian phenomenon. If the functionaries appointed from above possessed real authority and responsibility, we would have to do with a hierarchical structure in which authority and power are delegated and governed by laws. Much the same is true for the organization of an army and the military dictatorship established after its model; here, absolute power of command from the top down and absolute obedience from the bottom up correspond to the situation of extreme danger in combat, which is precisely why they are not totalitarian. A hierarchically organized chain of command means that the commander's power is dependent on the whole hierarchic system in which he operates. Every hierarchy, no matter

<sup>60</sup> Hitler, discussing the relationship between *Weltanschauung* and organization, admits as a matter of course that the Nazis took over from other groups and parties the "racial idea" (*die völkische Idee*) and acted as though they were its only representatives because they were the first to base a fighting organization on it and to formulate it for practical purposes. *Op. cit.*, Book II, chapter v.

<sup>61</sup> See Hitler, "Propaganda and Organization," in *op. cit.*, Book II, chapter xi.

Recognized on publication as the definitive account of its subject and ten years later hailed as a classic by *The Times Literary Supplement*, this remarkable book has been foremost wherever the characteristics and problems of the twentieth century are discussed. Dr. Arendt's study begins with an account of the rise of antisemitism in Central and Western European Jewish history in the nineteenth century and continues with an examination of European colonial imperialism from 1884 to the outbreak of World War I. The final section deals with the institutions, organizations, and operations of totalitarian movements and governments, focusing on the two genuine forms of totalitarian dominion in history—Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia. Dr. Arendt discusses the transformation of classes into masses, the role of propaganda in dealing with the nontotalitarian world, and the use of terror, the very essence of this form of government. And in a brilliant concluding chapter she analyzes the nature of isolation and loneliness as preconditions for total domination.

The present edition includes all of the material in the 1966 "New Edition," together with the prefaces to the 1968 Harvest editions of *Antisemitism* and *Imperialism*.

"This has probably been the most influential single book on the theme of totalitarianism. . . . Linking the Nazi and Stalinist phenomena as essentially identical and as transcending all traditional concepts of 'left' and 'right,' Miss Arendt was instrumental both in preparing the way for a whole series of studies of totalitarianism and in challenging the adequacy of 'common-sense' approaches to the malignancy of political pathology."

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