

The Origins of Totalitarianism

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by HANNAH ARENDT

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for power—these have all introduced into international politics a new and more disturbing factor than mere aggressiveness would have been able to do.

Power, as conceived by totalitarianism, lies exclusively in the force produced through organization. Just as Stalin saw every institution, independent of its actual function, only as a "transmission belt connecting the party with the people"⁸² and honestly believed that the most precious treasures of the Soviet Union were not the riches of its soil or the productive capacity of its huge manpower, but the "cadres" of the party⁸³ (i.e., the police), so Hitler, as early as 1929, saw the "great thing" of the movement in the fact that sixty thousand men "have outwardly become almost a unit, that actually these members are uniform not only in ideas, but that even the facial expression is almost the same. Look at these laughing eyes, this fanatical enthusiasm and you will discover . . . how a hundred thousand men in a movement become a single type."⁸⁴ Whatever connection power had in the minds of Western man with earthly possessions, with wealth, treasures, and riches, has been dissolved into a kind of dematerialized mechanism whose every move generates power as friction or galvanic currents generate electricity. The totalitarian division of states into Have and Have-not countries is more than a demagogic device; those who make it are actually convinced that the power of material possessions is negligible and only stands in the way of the development of organizational power. To Stalin constant growth and development of police cadres were incomparably more important than the oil in Baku, the coal and ore in the Urals, the granaries in the Ukraine, or the potential treasures of Siberia—in short the development of Russia's full power arsenal. The same mentality led Hitler to sacrifice all Germany to the cadres of the SS; he did not consider the war lost when German cities lay in rubble and industrial capacity was destroyed, but only when he learned that the SS troops were no longer reliable.⁸⁵ To a man who believed in organizational omnipotence against all mere material factors, military or economic, and who, moreover, calculated the eventual victory of his enterprise in centuries, defeat was not military catastrophe or threatened starvation of the population, but only the destruction of the elite formations which were supposed to carry the conspiracy for world rule through a line of generations to its eventual end.

The structurelessness of the totalitarian state, its neglect of material

⁸² Deutscher, *op. cit.*, p. 256.

⁸³ B. Souvarine, *op. cit.*, p. 605, quotes Stalin as saying at the height of terror in 1937: "You must reach the understanding that of all the precious assets existing in the world, the most precious and decisive are the cadres." All reports show that in Soviet Russia the secret police must be regarded as the real elite formation of the party. Characteristic for this nature of the police is that since the early twenties NKVD agents were "not recruited on a voluntary basis," but drawn from the ranks of the party. Furthermore, "the NKVD could not be chosen as a career" (see Beck and Godin, *op. cit.*, p. 160).

⁸⁴ Quoted from Heiden, *op. cit.*, p. 311.

⁸⁵ According to reports of the last meeting, Hitler decided to commit suicide after he had learned that the SS troops could no longer be trusted. See H. R. Trevor-Roper, *The Last Days of Hitler*, 1947, pp. 116 ff.

interests, its emancipation from the profit motive, and its nonutilitarian attitudes in general have more than anything else contributed to making contemporary politics well-nigh unpredictable. The inability of the non-totalitarian world to grasp a mentality which functions independently of all calculable action in terms of men and material, and is completely indifferent to national interest and the well-being of its people, shows itself in a curious dilemma of judgment: those who rightly understand the terrible efficiency of totalitarian organization and police are likely to overestimate the material force of totalitarian countries, while those who understand the wasteful incompetence of totalitarian economics are likely to underestimate the power potential which can be created in disregard of all material factors.

II: *The Secret Police*

UP TO NOW we know only two authentic forms of totalitarian domination: the dictatorship of National Socialism after 1938, and the dictatorship of Bolshevism since 1930. These forms of domination differ basically from other kinds of dictatorial, despotic or tyrannical rule; and even though they have developed, with a certain continuity, from party dictatorships, their essentially totalitarian features are new and cannot be derived from one-party systems. The goal of one-party systems is not only to seize the government administration but, by filling all offices with party members, to achieve a complete amalgamation of state and party, so that after the seizure of power the party becomes a kind of propaganda organization for the government. This system is "total" only in a negative sense, namely, in that the ruling party will tolerate no other parties, no opposition and no freedom of political opinion. Once a party dictatorship has come to power, it leaves the original power relationship between state and party intact; the government and the army exercise the same power as before, and the "revolution" consists only in the fact that all government positions are now occupied by party members. In all these cases the power of the party rests on a monopoly guaranteed by the state and the party no longer possesses its own power center.

The revolution initiated by the totalitarian movements after they have seized power is of a considerably more radical nature. From the start, they consciously strive to maintain the essential differences between state and movement and to prevent the "revolutionary" institutions of the movement from being absorbed by the government.⁸⁶ The problem of seizing the state

⁸⁶ Hitler frequently commented on the relationship between state and party, and always emphasized that not the state, but the race, or the "united folk community," was of primary importance (cf. the afore-quoted speech, reprinted as annex to the *Tischgespräche*). In his speech at the Nuremberg Parteitag of 1935, he gave this theory its most succinct expression: "It is not the state that commands us, but we who command the state." It is self-evident that, in practice, such powers of command are possible only if the institutions of the party remain independent from those of the state.

machine without amalgamating with it is solved by permitting only those party members whose importance for the movement is secondary to rise in the state hierarchy. All real power is vested in the institutions of the movement, and outside the state and military apparatuses. It is inside the movement, which remains the center of action of the country, that all decisions are made; the official civil services are often not even informed of what is going on, and party members with the ambition to rise to the rank of ministers have in all cases paid for such "bourgeois" wishes with the loss of their influence on the movement and of the confidence of its leaders.

Totalitarianism in power uses the state as its outward façade, to represent the country in the nontotalitarian world. As such, the totalitarian state is the logical heir of the totalitarian movement from which it borrows its organizational structure. Totalitarian rulers deal with nontotalitarian governments in the same way they dealt with parliamentary parties or intra-party factions before their rise to power and, though on an enlarged international scene, are again faced with the double problem of shielding the fictitious world of the movement (or the totalitarian country) from the impact of factuality and of presenting a semblance of normality and common sense to the normal outside world.

Above the state and behind the façades of ostensible power, in a maze of multiplied offices, underlying all shifts of authority and in a chaos of inefficiency, lies the power nucleus of the country, the superefficient and super-competent services of the secret police.^{86a} The emphasis on the police as the sole organ of power, and the corresponding neglect of the seemingly greater power arsenal of the army, which is characteristic of all totalitarian regimes, can still be partially explained by the totalitarian aspiration to world rule and its conscious abolition of the distinction between a foreign country and a home country, between foreign and domestic affairs. The military forces, trained to fight a foreign aggressor, have always been a dubious instrument for civil-war purposes; even under totalitarian conditions they find it difficult to regard their own people with the eyes of a foreign conqueror.⁸⁷ More important in this respect, however, is that their value becomes dubious even in time of war. Since the totalitarian ruler conducts his policies on the assumption of an eventual world government, he treats the victims of his aggression as though they were rebels, guilty of high treason, and consequently prefers to rule occupied territories with police, and not with military forces.

Even before the movement seizes power, it possesses a secret police and spy service with branches in various countries. Later its agents receive more money and authority than the regular military intelligence service and are

^{86a} Otto Gauweiler, *Rechtseinrichtungen und Rechtsaufgaben der Bewegung*, 1939, notes expressly that Himmler's special position as Reichsfuehrer-SS and head of the German police rested on the fact that the police administration had achieved "a genuine unity of party and state" which was not even attempted anywhere else in the government.

⁸⁷ During the peasant revolts of the twenties in Russia, Voroshilov allegedly refused the support of the Red Army; this led to the introduction of special divisions of the GPU for punitive expeditions. See Ciliga, *op. cit.*, p. 95.

frequently the secret chiefs of embassies and consulates abroad.⁸⁸ Its main tasks consist in forming fifth columns, directing the branches of the movement, influencing the domestic policies of the respective countries, and generally preparing for the time when the totalitarian ruler—after overthrow of the government or military victory—can openly feel at home. In other words, the international branches of the secret police are the transmission belts which constantly transform the ostensibly foreign policy of the totalitarian state into the potentially domestic business of the totalitarian movement.

These functions, however, which the secret police fulfill in order to prepare the totalitarian utopia of world rule, are secondary to those required for the present realization of the totalitarian fiction in one country. The dominant role of the secret police in the domestic politics of totalitarian countries has naturally contributed much to the common misconception of totalitarianism. All despotisms rely heavily on secret services and feel more threatened by their own than by any foreign people. However, this analogy between totalitarianism and despotism holds only for the first stages of totalitarian rule, when there is still a political opposition. In this as in other respects totalitarianism takes advantage of, and gives conscious support to, nontotalitarian misconceptions, no matter how uncomplimentary they may be. Himmler, in his famous speech to the Reichswehr staff in 1937, assumed the role of an ordinary tyrant when he explained the constant expansion of the police forces by assuming the existence of a "fourth theater in case of war, internal Germany."⁸⁹ Similarly, Stalin at almost the same moment half succeeded in convincing the old Bolshevik guard, whose "confessions" he needed, of a war threat against the Soviet Union and, consequently, an emergency in which the country must remain united even behind a despot. The most striking aspect of these statements was that both were made after all political opposition had been extinguished, that the secret services were expanded when actually no opponents were left to be spied upon. When war came, Himmler neither needed nor used his SS troops in Germany itself, except for the running of concentration camps and policing of foreign slave labor; the bulk of the armed SS served at the Eastern front where they were used for "special assignments"—usually mass murder—and the enforcement of policy which frequently ran counter to the military as well as the Nazi civilian hierarchy. Like the secret police of the Soviet Union, the SS formations usually arrived after the military forces had pacified the conquered territory and had dealt with outright political opposition.

In the first stages of a totalitarian regime, however, the secret police and the party's elite formations still play a role similar to that in other forms of dictatorship and the well-known terror regimes of the past; and the excessive cruelty of their methods is unparalleled only in the history of modern

⁸⁸ In 1935, the Gestapo agents abroad received 20 million marks while the regular espionage service of the Reichswehr had to get along with a budget of 8 million. See Pierre Dehillotte, *Gestapo*, Paris, 1940, p. 11.

⁸⁹ See *Nazi Conspiracy*, IV, 616 ff.

Western countries. The first stage of ferreting out secret enemies and hunting down former opponents is usually combined with drafting the entire population into front organizations and re-educating old party members for voluntary espionage services, so that the rather dubious sympathies of the drafted sympathizers need not worry the specially trained cadres of the police. It is during this stage that a neighbor gradually becomes a more dangerous enemy to one who happens to harbor "dangerous thoughts" than are the officially appointed police agents. The end of the first stage comes with the liquidation of open and secret resistance in any organized form; it can be set at about 1935 in Germany and approximately 1930 in Soviet Russia.

Only after the extermination of real enemies has been completed and the hunt for "objective enemies" begun does terror become the actual content of totalitarian regimes. Under the pretext of building socialism in one country, or using a given territory as a laboratory for a revolutionary experiment, or realizing the *Volksgemeinschaft*, the second claim of totalitarianism, the claim to total domination, is carried out. And although theoretically total domination is possible only under the conditions of world rule, the totalitarian regimes have proved that this part of the totalitarian utopia can be realized almost to perfection, because it is temporarily independent of defeat or victory. Thus Hitler could rejoice even in the midst of military setbacks over the extermination of Jews and the establishment of death factories; no matter what the final outcome, without the war it would never have been possible "to burn the bridges" and to realize some of the goals of the totalitarian movement.⁹⁰

The elite formations of the Nazi movement and the "cadres" of the Bolshevik movement serve the goal of total domination rather than the security of the regime in power. Just as the totalitarian claim to world rule is only in appearance the same as imperialist expansion, so the claim to total domination only *seems* familiar to the student of despotism. If the chief difference between totalitarian and imperialist expansion is that the former recognizes no difference between a home and a foreign country, then the chief difference between a despotic and a totalitarian secret police is that the latter does not hunt secret thoughts and does not use the old method of secret services, the method of provocation.⁹¹

Since the totalitarian secret police begins its career after the pacification of the country, it always appears entirely superfluous to all outside observers—or, on the contrary, misleads them into thinking that there is some secret

⁹⁰ See note 62.

⁹¹ Maurice Laporte, *Histoire de l'Okhrana*, Paris, 1935, rightly called the method of provocation "the foundation stone" of the secret police (p. 19).

In Soviet Russia, provocation, far from being the secret weapon of the secret police, has been used as the widely propagandized public method of the regime to gauge the temper of public opinion. The reluctance of the population to avail itself of the periodically recurring invitations to criticize or react to "liberal" interludes in the terror regime shows that such gestures are understood as provocation on a mass scale. Provocation has indeed become the totalitarian version of public opinion polls.

resistance.⁹² The superfluity of secret services is nothing new; they have always been haunted by the need to prove their usefulness and keep their jobs after their original task had been completed. The methods used for this purpose have made the study of the history of revolutions a rather difficult enterprise. It appears, for example, that there was not a single anti-government action under the reign of Louis Napoleon which had not been inspired by the police itself.⁹³ Similarly, the role of secret agents in all revolutionary parties in Czarist Russia strongly suggests that without their "inspiring" provocative actions the course of the Russian revolutionary movement would have been far less successful.⁹⁴ Provocation, in other words, helped as much to maintain the continuity of tradition as it did to disrupt time and again the organization of the revolution.

This dubious role of provocation might have been one reason why the totalitarian rulers discarded it. Provocation, moreover, is clearly necessary only on the assumption that suspicion is not sufficient for arrest and punishment. None of the totalitarian rulers, of course, ever dreamed of conditions in which he would have to resort to provocation in order to trap somebody he thought to be an enemy. More important than these technical considerations is the fact that totalitarianism defined its enemies ideologically before it seized power, so that categories of the "suspects" were not established through police information. Thus the Jews in Nazi Germany or the descendants of the former ruling classes in Soviet Russia were not really suspected of any hostile action; they had been declared "objective" enemies of the regime in accordance with its ideology.

The chief difference between the despotic and the totalitarian secret police lies in the difference between the "suspect" and the "objective enemy." The latter is defined by the policy of the government and not by his own desire to overthrow it.⁹⁵ He is never an individual whose dangerous thoughts must be

⁹² Interesting in this respect are the attempts made by Nazi civil servants in Germany to reduce the competence and the personnel of the Gestapo on the ground that Nazification of the country had been achieved, so that Himmler, who on the contrary wanted to expand the secret services at this moment (around 1934), had to exaggerate the danger coming from the "internal enemies." See *Nazi Conspiracy*, II, 259; V, 205; III, 547.

⁹³ See Gallier-Boissière, *Mysteries of the French Secret Police*, 1938, p. 234.

⁹⁴ It seems, after all, no accident that the foundation of the Okhrana in 1880 ushered in a period of unsurpassed revolutionary activities in Russia. In order to prove its usefulness, it had occasionally to organize murders, and its agents "served despite themselves the ideas of those whom they denounced. . . . If a pamphlet was distributed by a police agent or if the execution of a minister was organized by an Azev—the result was the same" (M. Laporte, *op. cit.*, p. 25). The more important executions moreover seem to have been police jobs—Stolypin and von Plehve. Decisive for the revolutionary tradition was the fact that in times of calm the police agents had to "stir up anew the energies and stimulate the zeal" of the revolutionaries (*ibid.*, p. 71).

See also Bertram D. Wolfe, *Three Who Made A Revolution: Lenin, Trotsky, Stalin*, 1948, who calls this phenomenon "Police Socialism."

⁹⁵ Hans Frank, who later became Governor General of Poland, made a typical differentiation between a person "dangerous to the State" and a person who is "hostile to the State." The former implies an objective quality which is independent of will

provoked or whose past justifies suspicion, but a "carrier of tendencies" like the carrier of a disease.⁹⁶ Practically speaking, the totalitarian ruler proceeds like a man who persistently insults another man until everybody knows that the latter is his enemy, so that he can, with some plausibility, go and kill him in self-defense. This certainly is a little crude, but it works—as everybody will know who ever watched how certain successful careerists eliminate competitors.

The introduction of the notion of "objective enemy" is much more decisive for the functioning of totalitarian regimes than the ideological definition of the respective categories. If it were only a matter of hating Jews or bourgeois, the totalitarian regimes could, after the commission of one gigantic crime, return, as it were, to the rules of normal life and government. As we know, the opposite is the case. The category of objective enemies outlives the first ideologically determined foes of the movement; new objective enemies are discovered according to changing circumstances: the Nazis, foreseeing the completion of Jewish extermination, had already taken the necessary preliminary steps for the liquidation of the Polish people, while Hitler even planned the decimation of certain categories of Germans;⁹⁷ the Bolsheviks, having started with descendants of the former ruling classes, directed their full terror against the kulaks (in the early thirties), who in turn were followed by Russians of Polish origin (between 1936 and 1938), the Tartars and the Volga Germans during the war, former prisoners of war and units of the occupational forces of the Red Army after the war, and Russian Jewry after the establishment of a Jewish state. The choice of such categories is never entirely arbitrary; since they are publicized and used for propaganda purposes of the movement abroad, they must appear plausible as possible enemies; the choice of a particular category may even be due

and behavior; the political police of the Nazis is concerned not just with actions hostile to the state but with "all attempts—no matter what their aim—which in their effects endanger the State." See *Deutsches Verwaltungsrecht*, pp. 420-430. Translation quoted from *Nazi Conspiracy*, IV, 881 ff.—In the words of Maunz, *op. cit.*, p. 44: "By eliminating dangerous persons, the security measure . . . means to ward off a state of danger to the national community, independently of any offense that may have been committed by these persons. [It is a question of] warding off an *objective danger*."

⁹⁶ R. Hoehn, a Nazi jurist and member of the SS, said in an obituary on Reinhard Heydrich, who prior to his rule of Czechoslovakia had been one of the closest collaborators with Himmler: He regarded his opponents "not as individuals but as carriers of tendencies endangering the state and therefore beyond the pale of the national community." In *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* of June 6, 1942; quoted from E. Kohn-Bramstedt, *Dictatorship and Political Police*, London, 1945.

⁹⁷ As early as 1941, during a staff meeting in Hitler's headquarters, it was proposed to impose upon the Polish population those regulations by which the Jews had been prepared for the extermination camps: change of names if these were of German origin; death sentences for sexual intercourse between Germans and Poles (*Rassenschande*); obligation to wear a P-sign in Germany similar to the Yellow Star for Jews. See *Nazi Conspiracy*, VIII, 237 ff., and Hans Frank's diary in *Trial*, *op. cit.*, XXIX, 683. Naturally, the Poles themselves soon began to worry about what would happen to them when the Nazis had finished the extermination of the Jews (*Nazi Conspiracy*, IV, 916).—For Hitler's plans regarding the German people, see note 80.

to certain propaganda needs of the movement at large—as for instance the sudden entirely unprecedented emergence of governmental antisemitism in the Soviet Union, which may be calculated to win sympathies for the Soviet Union in the European satellite countries. The show trials which require subjective confessions of guilt from "objectively" identified enemies are meant for these purposes; they can best be staged with those who have received a totalitarian indoctrination that enables them "subjectively" to understand their own "objective" harmfulness and to confess "for the sake of the cause."⁹⁸ The concept of the "objective opponent," whose identity changes according to the prevailing circumstances—so that, as soon as one category is liquidated, war may be declared on another—corresponds exactly to the factual situation reiterated time and again by totalitarian rulers: namely, that their regime is not a government in any traditional sense, but a *movement*, whose advance constantly meets with new obstacles that have to be eliminated. So far as one may speak at all of any legal thinking within the totalitarian system, the "objective opponent" is its central idea.

Closely connected with this transformation of the suspect into the objective enemy is the change of position of the secret police in the totalitarian state. The secret services have rightly been called a state within the state, and this not only in despotisms but also under constitutional or semiconstitutional governments. The mere possession of secret information has always given this branch a decisive superiority over all other branches of the civil services and constituted an open threat to members of the government.⁹⁹ The totalitarian police, on the contrary, is totally subject to the will of the Leader, who alone can decide who the next potential enemy will be and who, as Stalin did, can also single out cadres of the secret police for liquidation. Since the police are no longer permitted to use provocation, they have been deprived of the only available means of perpetuating themselves independently of the government and have become entirely dependent on the higher authorities for the safeguarding of their jobs. Like the army in a nontotalitarian state, the police in totalitarian countries merely execute political policy and have lost all the prerogatives which they held under despotic bureaucracies.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ Beck and Godin, *op. cit.*, p. 87, speak of the "objective characteristics" which invited arrest in the USSR; among them was membership in the NKVD (p. 153). Subjective insight into the objective necessity of arrest and confession could most easily be achieved with former members of the secret police. In the words of an ex-NKVD agent: "My superiors know me and my work well enough, and if the party and the NKVD now require me to confess to such things they must have good reasons for what they are doing. My duty as a loyal Soviet citizen is not to withhold the confession required of me" (*ibid.*, p. 231).

⁹⁹ Well known is the situation in France where ministers lived in constant fear of the secret "*dossiers*" of the police. For the situation in Czarist Russia, see Laporte, *op. cit.*, pp. 22-23: "Eventually the Okhrana will wield a power far superior to the power of the more regular authorities. . . . The Okhrana . . . will inform the Czar only of what it chooses to."

¹⁰⁰ "Unlike the Okhrana, which had been a state within a state, the GPU is a department of the Soviet government; . . . and its activities are much less independent" (Roger N. Baldwin, "Political Police," in *Encyclopedia of Social Sciences*).

The task of the totalitarian police is not to discover crimes, but to be on hand when the government decides to arrest a certain category of the population. Their chief political distinction is that they alone are in the confidence of the highest authority and know which political line will be enforced. This does not apply only to matters of high policy, such as the liquidation of a whole class or ethnic group (only the cadres of the GPU knew the actual goal of the Soviet government in the early thirties and only the SS formations knew that the Jews were to be exterminated in the early forties); the point about everyday life under totalitarian conditions is that only the agents of the NKVD in an industrial enterprise are informed of what Moscow wants when it orders, for instance, a speed-up in the fabrication of pipes—whether it simply wants more pipes, or to ruin the director of the factory, or to liquidate the whole management, or to abolish this particular factory, or, finally, to have this order repeated all over the nation so that a new purge can begin.

One of the reasons for the duplication of secret services whose agents are unknown to each other is that total domination needs the most extreme flexibility: to use our example, Moscow may not yet know, when it gives its order for pipes, whether it wants pipes—which are always needed—or a purge. Multiplication of secret services makes last-minute changes possible, so that one branch may be preparing to bestow the Order of Lenin on the director of the factory while another makes arrangements for his arrest. The efficiency of the police consists in the fact that such contradictory assignments can be prepared simultaneously.

Under totalitarianism, as under other regimes, the secret police has a monopoly on certain vital information. But the kind of knowledge that can be possessed only by the police has undergone an important change: the police are no longer concerned with knowing what is going on in the heads of future victims (most of the time they ignore who these victims will be), and the police have become the trustees of the greatest state secrets. This automatically means a great improvement in prestige and position, even though it is accompanied by a definite loss of real power. The secret services no longer know anything that the Leader does not know better; in terms of power, they have sunk to the level of the executioner.

From a legal point of view, even more interesting than the change from the suspect to the objective enemy is the totalitarian replacement of the suspected offense by the possible crime. The possible crime is no more subjective than the objective enemy. While the suspect is arrested because he is thought to be capable of committing a crime that more or less fits his personality (or his suspected personality),¹⁰¹ the totalitarian version of the

¹⁰¹ Typical of the concept of the suspect is the following story related by C. Pobye-donostzev in *L'Autocratie Russe: Mémoires politiques, correspondance officielle et documents inédits* . . . 1881-1894, Paris, 1927: General Cherevin of the Okhrana is asked, because the opposing party has hired a Jewish lawyer, to intervene in favor of a lady who is about to lose a lawsuit. Says the General: "The same night I ordered the arrest of this cursed Jew and held him as a so-called politically suspect person. . . . After all, could I treat in the same manner friends and a dirty Jew who may be innocent today but who was guilty yesterday or will be guilty tomorrow?"

possible crime is based on the logical anticipation of objective developments. The Moscow Trials of the old Bolshevik guard and the chiefs of the Red Army were classic examples of punishment for possible crimes. Behind the fantastic, fabricated charges one can easily detect the following logical calculation: developments in the Soviet Union might lead to a crisis, a crisis might lead to the overthrow of Stalin's dictatorship, this might weaken the country's military force and possibly bring about a situation in which the new government would have to sign a truce or even conclude an alliance with Hitler. Whereupon Stalin proceeded to declare that a plot for the overthrow of the government and a conspiracy with Hitler existed.¹⁰² Against these "objective," though entirely improbable, possibilities stood only "subjective" factors, such as the trustworthiness of the accused, their fatigue, their inability to understand what was going on, their firm conviction that without Stalin everything would be lost, their sincere hatred of Fascism—that is, a number of factual details which naturally lacked the consistency of the fictitious, logical, possible crime. Totalitarianism's central assumption that everything is possible thus leads through consistent elimination of all factual restraints to the absurd and terrible consequence that every crime the rulers can conceive of must be punished, regardless of whether or not it has been committed. The possible crime, like the objective enemy, is of course beyond the competence of the police, who can neither discover, invent, nor provoke it. Here again the secret services depend entirely upon the political authorities. Their independence as a state within the state is gone.

Only in one respect does the totalitarian secret police still resemble closely the secret services of nontotalitarian countries. The secret police has traditionally, *i.e.*, since Fouché, profited from its victims and has augmented the official state-authorized budget from certain unorthodox sources simply by assuming a position of partnership in activities it was supposed to suppress, such as gambling and prostitution.¹⁰³ These illegal methods of financing itself, ranging from friendly acceptance of bribes to outright blackmail, were a

¹⁰² The charges in the Moscow Trials "were based . . . on a grotesquely brutalized and distorting anticipation of possible developments. [Stalin's] reasoning probably developed along the following lines: they may want to overthrow me in a crisis—I shall charge them with having made the attempt. . . . A change of government may weaken Russia's fighting capacity; and if they succeed, they may be compelled to sign a truce with Hitler, and perhaps even agree to a cession of territory. . . . I shall accuse them of having entered already into a treacherous alliance with Germany and ceded Soviet territory." This is I. Deutscher's brilliant explanation of the Moscow Trials, *op. cit.*, p. 377.

A good example of the Nazi version of the possible crime can be found in Hans Frank, *op. cit.*: "A complete catalogue of attempts 'dangerous to the State' can never be drawn up because it can never be foreseen what may endanger the leadership and the people some time in the future." (Translation quoted from *Nazi Conspiracy*, IV, 881.)

¹⁰³ The criminal methods of the secret police are of course no monopoly of the French tradition. In Austria, for example, the feared political police under Maria Theresa was organized by Kaunitz from the cadres of the so-called "chastity commissars" who used to live by blackmail. See Moritz Bermann, *Maria Theresia und Kaiser Joseph II*, Vienna-Leipzig, 1881. I owe this reference to Robert Pick.

prominent factor in freeing the secret services from the public authorities and strengthened their position as a state within the state. It is curious to see that the financing of police activities with income from its victims has survived all other changes. In Soviet Russia, the NKVD is almost entirely dependent upon the exploitation of slave labor which, indeed, seems to yield no other profit and to serve no other purpose but the financing of the huge secret apparatus.¹⁰⁴ Himmler first financed his SS troops, who were the cadres of the Nazi secret police, through the confiscation of Jewish property; he then concluded an agreement with Darré, the Minister of Agriculture, by which Himmler received the several hundred million marks which Darré earned annually by buying agricultural commodities cheaply abroad and selling them at fixed prices in Germany.¹⁰⁵ This source of regular income disappeared of course during the war; Albert Speer, the successor of Todt and the greatest employer of manpower in Germany after 1942, proposed a similar deal to Himmler in 1942; if Himmler agreed to release from SS authority the imported slave laborers whose work had been remarkably inefficient, the Speer organization would give him a certain percentage of the profits for the SS.¹⁰⁶ To such more or less regular sources of income, Himmler added the old blackmail methods of secret services in times of financial crisis: in their communities SS units formed groups of "Friends of the SS" who had to "volunteer" the necessary funds for the needs of the local SS men.¹⁰⁷ (It is noteworthy that in its various financial operations the Nazi secret police did not exploit its prisoners. Except in the last years of the war, when the use of human material in the concentration camps was no longer determined by Himmler alone, work in the camps "had no rational purpose except that of increasing the burden and torture of the unfortunate prisoners."¹⁰⁸)

However, these financial irregularities are the sole, and not very important, traces of the secret police tradition. They are possible because of

¹⁰⁴ That the huge police organization is paid with profits from slave labor is certain; surprising is that the police budget seems not even entirely covered by it; Kravchenko, *op. cit.*, mentions special taxes, imposed by the NKVD on convicted citizens who continue to live and work in freedom.

¹⁰⁵ See Fritz Thyssen, *I Paid Hitler*, London, 1941.

¹⁰⁶ See *Nazi Conspiracy*, I, 916-917.—The economic activity of the SS was consolidated in a central office for economic and administrative affairs. To the Treasury and Internal Revenue, the SS declared its financial assets as "party property earmarked for special purposes" (letter of May 5, 1943, quoted from M. Wolfson, *Uebersicht der Gliederung verbrecherischer Nazi-Organisationen. Omgus*, December, 1947).

¹⁰⁷ See Kohn-Bramstedt, *op. cit.*, p. 112.—The blackmail motive is clearly revealed if we consider that this kind of fund-raising was always organized by local SS units in the localities where they were stationed. See *Der Weg der SS*, issued by the SS-Hauptamt-Schulungsamt (undated), p. 14.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 124.—Certain compromises in this respect were made for those requirements pertaining to the maintenance of the camps and the personal needs of the SS. See Wolfson, *op. cit.*, letter of September 19, 1941, from Oswald Pohl, head of the WVH (*Wirtschafts- und Verwaltungs-Hauptamt*) to the Reichskommissar for price control. It seems that all these economic activities in the concentration camps developed only during the war and under the pressure of acute labor shortage.

the general contempt of totalitarian regimes for economic and financial matters, so that methods which under normal conditions would be illegal, and would distinguish the secret police from other more respectable departments of the administration, no longer indicate that we are dealing here with a department which enjoys independence, is not controlled by other authorities, lives in an atmosphere of irregularity, nonrespectability, and insecurity. The position of the totalitarian secret police, on the contrary, has been completely stabilized, and its services are wholly integrated in the administration. Not only is the organization *not* beyond the pale of the law, but, rather, it is the embodiment of the law, and its respectability is above suspicion. It no longer organizes murders on its own initiative, no longer provokes offenses against state and society, and it sternly proceeds against all forms of bribery, blackmail and irregular financial gains. The moral lecture, coupled with very tangible threats, that Himmler could permit himself to deliver to his men in the middle of the war—"We had the moral right . . . to wipe out this [Jewish] people bent on wiping us out, but we do not have the right to enrich ourselves in any manner whatsoever, be it by a fur coat, a watch, a single mark, or a cigarette"¹⁰⁹—strikes a note that one would look for in vain in the history of the secret police. If it still is concerned with "dangerous thoughts," they are hardly ones which the suspected persons know to be dangerous; the regimentation of all intellectual and artistic life demands a constant re-establishment and revision of standards which naturally is accompanied by repeated eliminations of intellectuals whose "dangerous thoughts" usually consist in certain ideas that were still entirely orthodox the day before. While, therefore, its police function in the accepted meaning of the word has become superfluous, the economic function of the secret police, sometimes thought to have replaced the first, is even more dubious. It is undeniable, to be sure, that the NKVD periodically rounds up a percentage of the Soviet population and sends them into camps which are known under the flattering misnomer of forced-labor camps;¹¹⁰ yet although it is quite possible that this is the Soviet Union's

¹⁰⁹ Himmler's speech of October, 1943, at Posen, *International Military Trials, Nuremberg, 1945-46*, Vol. 29, p. 146.

¹¹⁰ "Bek Bulat (the pen name of a former Soviet professor) has been able to study documents of the North Caucasian NKVD. From these documents it was obvious that in June, 1937, when the great purge was at its apex, the government prescribed the local NKVDs to have a certain percentage of the population arrested. . . . The percentage varied from one province to the other, reaching 5 per cent in the least loyal areas. The average for the whole of the Soviet Union was about 3 per cent." Reported by David J. Dallin in *The New Leader*, January 8, 1949.—Beck and Godin, *op. cit.*, p. 239, arrive at a slightly divergent and quite plausible assumption, according to which "arrests were planned as follows: The NKVD files covered practically the whole population, and everyone was classified in a category. Thus statistics were available in every town showing how many former Whites, members of opposing parties, etc., were living in them. All incriminating material collected . . . and gathered from prisoners' confessions was also entered in the files, and each person's card was marked to show how dangerous he was considered; this depending on the amount of suspicious or incriminating material appearing in his file. As the statistics were regu-

way of solving its unemployment problem, it is also generally known that the output in those camps is infinitely lower than that of ordinary Soviet labor and hardly suffices to pay the expenses of the police apparatus.

Neither dubious nor superfluous is the political function of the secret police, the "best organized and the most efficient" of all government departments,¹¹¹ in the power apparatus of the totalitarian regime. It constitutes the true executive branch of the government through which all orders are transmitted. Through the net of secret agents, the totalitarian ruler has created for himself a directly executive transmission belt which, in distinction to the onion-like structure of the ostensible hierarchy, is completely severed and isolated from all other institutions.¹¹² In this sense, the secret police agents are the only openly ruling class in totalitarian countries and their standards and scale of values permeate the entire texture of totalitarian society.

From this viewpoint, it may not be too surprising that certain peculiar qualities of the secret police are general qualities of totalitarian society rather than peculiarities of the totalitarian secret police. The category of the suspect thus embraces under totalitarian conditions the total population; every thought that deviates from the officially prescribed and permanently changing line is already suspect, no matter in which field of human activity it occurs. Simply because of their capacity to think, human beings are suspects by definition, and this suspicion cannot be diverted by exemplary behavior, for the human capacity to think is also a capacity to change one's mind. Since, moreover, it is impossible ever to know beyond doubt another man's heart—torture in this context is only the desperate and eternally futile attempt to achieve what cannot be achieved—suspicion can no longer be allayed if neither a community of values nor the predictabilities of self-interest exist as social (as distinguished from merely psychological) realities. Mutual suspicion, therefore, permeates all social relationships in totalitarian countries and creates an all-pervasive atmosphere even outside the special purview of the secret police.

In totalitarian regimes provocation, once only the specialty of the secret agent, becomes a method of dealing with his neighbor which everybody, willingly or unwillingly, is forced to follow. Everyone, in a way, is the *agent*

early reported to higher authorities, it was possible to arrange a purge at any moment, with full knowledge of the exact number of persons in each category."

¹¹¹ Baldwin, *op. cit.*

¹¹² The Russian secret-police cadres were as much at the "personal disposal" of Stalin as the SS Shock Troops (*Verfügungstruppen*) were at the personal disposal of Hitler. Both, even if they are called to serve with the military forces in time of war, live under their own special jurisdiction. The special "marriage laws" which served to segregate the SS from the rest of the population, were the first and most fundamental regulations which Himmler introduced when he took over the reorganization of the SS. Even prior to Himmler's marriage laws, in 1927, the SS was instructed by official decree "never [to participate] in discussions at membership meetings" (*Der Weg der SS, op. cit.*). The same conduct is reported about the members of the NKVD, who kept deliberately to themselves and above all did not associate with other sections of the party aristocracy (Beck and Godin, *op. cit.*, p. 163).

provocateur of everyone else; for obviously everybody will call himself an *agent provocateur* if ever an ordinary friendly exchange of "dangerous thoughts" (or what in the meantime have become dangerous thoughts) should come to the attention of the authorities. Collaboration of the population in denouncing political opponents and volunteer service as stool pigeons are certainly not unprecedented, but in totalitarian countries they are so well organized that the work of specialists is almost superfluous. In a system of ubiquitous spying, where everybody may be a police agent and each individual feels himself under constant surveillance; under circumstances, moreover, where careers are extremely insecure and where the most spectacular ascents and falls have become everyday occurrences, every word becomes equivocal and subject to retrospective "interpretation."

The most striking illustration of the permeation of totalitarian society with secret police methods and standards can be found in the matter of careers. The double agent in nontotalitarian regimes served the cause he was supposed to combat almost as much as, and sometimes more than, the authorities. Frequently he harbored a sort of double ambition: he wanted to rise in the ranks of the revolutionary parties as well as in the ranks of the services. In order to win promotion in both fields, he had only to adopt certain methods which in a normal society belong to the secret daydreams of the small employee who depends on seniority for advancement: through his connections with the police, he could certainly eliminate his rivals and superiors in the party, and through his connections with the revolutionaries he had at least a chance to get rid of his chief in the police.¹¹³ If we consider the career conditions in present Russian society, the similarity to such methods is striking. Not only do almost all higher officials owe their positions to purges that removed their predecessors, but promotions in all walks of life are accelerated in this way. About every ten years, a nation-wide purge makes room for the new generation, freshly graduated and hungry for jobs. The government has itself established those conditions for advancement which the police agent formerly had to create.

This regular violent turnover of the whole gigantic administrative machine, while it prevents the development of competence, has many advantages: it assures the relative youth of officials and prevents a stabilization of conditions which, at least in time of peace, are fraught with danger for totalitarian rule; by eliminating seniority and merit, it prevents the development of the loyalties that usually tie younger staff members to their elders, upon whose opinion and good will their advancement depends; it eliminates once and for all the dangers of unemployment and assures everyone of a job compatible with his education. Thus, in 1939, after the gigantic purge in the Soviet Union had come to an end, Stalin could note with great satisfaction that "the Party was able to promote to leading posts in State or Party affairs more than 500,000 young Bolsheviks."¹¹⁴ The humiliation

¹¹³ Typical is the splendid career of police agent Malinovsky, who ended as deputy of the Bolsheviks in parliament. See Bertram D. Wolfe, *op. cit.*, chapter xxxi.

¹¹⁴ Quoted from Avtorkhanov, *op. cit.*

implicit in owing a job to the unjust elimination of one's predecessor has the same demoralizing effect that the elimination of the Jews had upon the German professions: it makes every jobholder a conscious accomplice in the crimes of the government, their beneficiary whether he likes it or not, with the result that the more sensitive the humiliated individual happens to be, the more ardently he will defend the regime. In other words, this system is the logical outgrowth of the Leader principle in its full implications and the best possible guarantee for loyalty, in that it makes every new generation depend for its livelihood on the current political line of the Leader which started the job-creating purge. It also realizes the identity of public and private interests, of which defenders of the Soviet Union used to be so proud (or, in the Nazi version, the abolition of the private sphere of life), insofar as every individual of any consequence owes his whole existence to the political interest of the regime; and when this factual identity of interest is broken and the next purge has swept him out of office, the regime makes sure that he disappears from the world of the living. In a not very different way, the double agent was identified with the cause of the revolution (without which he would lose his job), and not only with the secret police; in that sphere, too, a spectacular rise could end only in an anonymous death, since it was rather unlikely that the double game could be played forever. The totalitarian government, when it set such conditions for promotion in all careers as had previously prevailed only among social outcasts, has effected one of the most far-reaching changes in social psychology. The psychology of the double agent, who was willing to pay the price of a short life for the exalted existence of a few years at the peak, has necessarily become the philosophy in personal matters of the whole post-revolutionary generation in Russia, and to a lesser but still very dangerous extent, in postwar Germany.

This is the society, permeated by standards and living by methods which once had been the monopoly of the secret police, in which the totalitarian secret police functions. Only in the initial stages, when a struggle for power is still going on, are its victims those who can be suspected of opposition. It then embarks upon its totalitarian career with the persecution of the objective enemy, which may be the Jews or the Poles (as in the case of the Nazis) or so-called "counter-revolutionaries"—an accusation which "in Soviet Russia . . . is established . . . before any question as to [the] behavior [of the accused] has arisen at all"—who may be people who at any time owned a shop or a house or "had parents or grandparents who owned such things,"¹¹⁵ or who happened to belong to one of the Red Army occupational forces, or were Russians of Polish origin. Only in its last and fully totalitarian stage are the concepts of the objective enemy and the logically possible crime abandoned, the victims chosen completely at random and, even without being accused, declared unfit to live. This new category of "undesirables" may consist, as in the case of the Nazis, of the mentally ill or persons with lung and heart disease, or in the Soviet Union, of

¹¹⁵ *The Dark Side of the Moon*, New York, 1947.

people who happen to have been taken up in that percentage, varying from one province to another, which is ordered to be deported.

This consistent arbitrariness negates human freedom more efficiently than any tyranny ever could. One had at least to be an enemy of tyranny in order to be punished by it. Freedom of opinion was not abolished for those who were brave enough to risk their necks. Theoretically, the choice of opposition remains in totalitarian regimes too; but such freedom is almost invalidated if committing a voluntary act only assures a "punishment" that everyone else may have to bear anyway. Freedom in this system has not only dwindled down to its last and apparently still indestructible guarantee, the possibility of suicide, but has lost its distinctive mark because the consequences of its exercise are shared with completely innocent people. If Hitler had had the time to realize his dream of a General German Health Bill, the man suffering from a lung disease would have been subject to the same fate as a Communist in the early and a Jew in the later years of the Nazi regime. Similarly, the opponent of the regime in Russia, suffering the same fate as millions of people who are chosen for concentration camps to make up certain quotas, only relieves the police of the burden of arbitrary choice. The innocent and the guilty are equally undesirable.

The change in the concept of crime and criminals determines the new and terrible methods of the totalitarian secret police. Criminals are punished, undesirables disappear from the face of the earth; the only trace which they leave behind is the memory of those who knew and loved them, and one of the most difficult tasks of the secret police is to make sure that even such traces will disappear together with the condemned man.

The Okhrana, the Czarist predecessor of the GPU, is reported to have invented a filing system in which every suspect was noted on a large card in the center of which his name was surrounded by a red circle; his political friends were designated by smaller red circles and his nonpolitical acquaintances by green ones; brown circles indicated persons in contact with friends of the suspect but not known to him personally; cross-relationships between the suspect's friends, political and nonpolitical, and the friends of his friends were indicated by lines between the respective circles.¹¹⁶ Obviously the limitations of this method are set only by the size of the filing cards, and, theoretically, a gigantic single sheet could show the relations and cross-relationships of the entire population. And this is the utopian goal of the totalitarian secret police. It has given up the traditional old police dream which the lie detector is still supposed to realize, and no longer tries to find out who is who, or who thinks what. (The lie detector is perhaps the most graphic example of the fascination that this dream apparently exerts over the mentality of all policemen; for obviously the complicated measuring equipment can hardly establish anything except the cold-blooded or nervous temperament of its victims. Actually, the feeble-minded reasoning underlying the use of this mechanism can only be explained by the irrational wish that some form of mind reading were possible after all.) This old dream

¹¹⁶ See Laporte, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

was terrible enough and since time immemorial has invariably led to torture and the most abominable cruelties. There was only one thing in its favor: it asked for the impossible. The modern dream of the totalitarian police, with its modern techniques, is incomparably more terrible. Now the police dreams that one look at the gigantic map on the office wall should suffice at any given moment to establish who is related to whom and in what degree of intimacy; and, theoretically, this dream is not unrealizable although its technical execution is bound to be somewhat difficult. If this map really did exist, not even memory would stand in the way of the totalitarian claim to domination; such a map might make it possible to obliterate people without any traces, as if they had never existed at all.

If the reports of arrested NKVD agents can be trusted, the Russian secret police has come uncomfortably close to this ideal of totalitarian rule. The police has secret dossiers about each inhabitant of the vast country, carefully listing the many relationships that exist between people, from chance acquaintances to genuine friendship to family relations; for it is only to discover these relationships that the defendants, whose "crimes" have anyway been established "objectively" prior to their arrest, are questioned so closely. Finally, as for the gift of memory so dangerous to totalitarian rule, foreign observers feel that "if it is true that elephants never forget, Russians seem to us to be the very opposite of elephants. . . . Soviet Russian psychology seems to make forgetfulness really possible."¹¹⁷

How important to the total-domination apparatus this complete disappearance of its victims is can be seen in those instances where, for one reason or another, the regime was confronted with the memory of survivors. During the war, one SS commandant made the terrible mistake of informing a French woman of her husband's death in a German concentration camp; this slip caused a small avalanche of orders and instructions to all camp commandants, warning them that under no circumstances was information ever to be given to the outside world.¹¹⁸ The point is that, as far as the French widow was concerned, her husband had supposedly ceased to live at the moment of his arrest, or rather had ceased ever to have lived. Similarly, the Soviet police officers, accustomed to this system since their birth, could only stare in amazement at those people in occupied Poland who tried desperately to find out what had happened to their friends and relatives under arrest.¹¹⁹

In totalitarian countries all places of detention ruled by the police are made to be veritable holes of oblivion into which people stumble by accident and without leaving behind them such ordinary traces of former existence as a body and a grave. Compared with this newest invention for doing away with people, the old-fashioned method of murder, political or criminal, is inefficient indeed. The murderer leaves behind him a corpse, and although he tries to efface the traces of his own identity, he has no power to erase the

¹¹⁷ Beck and Godin, *op. cit.*, pp. 234 and 127.

¹¹⁸ See *Nazi Conspiracy*, VII, 84 ff.

¹¹⁹ *The Dark Side of the Moon*.

identity of his victim from the memory of the surviving world. The operation of the secret police, on the contrary, miraculously sees to it that the victim never existed at all.

The connection between secret police and secret societies is obvious. The establishment of the former always needed and used the argument of dangers arising from the existence of the latter. The totalitarian secret police is the first in history which neither needs nor uses these old-fashioned pretexts of all tyrants. The anonymity of its victims, who cannot be called enemies of the regime and whose identity is unknown to the persecutors until the arbitrary decision of the government eliminates them from the world of the living and exterminates their memory from the world of the dead, is beyond all secrecy, beyond the strictest silence, beyond the greatest mastery of double life that the discipline of conspiratory societies used to impose upon their members.

The totalitarian movements which, during their rise to power, imitate certain organizational features of secret societies and yet establish themselves in broad daylight, create a true secret society only after their ascendancy to rule. The secret society of totalitarian regimes is the secret police; the only strictly guarded secret in a totalitarian country, the only esoteric knowledge that exists, concerns the operations of the police and the conditions in the concentration camps.¹²⁰ Of course the population at large and the party members specifically know all the general facts—that concentration camps exist, that people disappear, that innocent persons are arrested; at the same time, every person in a totalitarian country knows also that it is the greatest crime ever to talk about these "secrets." Inasmuch as man depends for his knowledge upon the affirmation and comprehension of his fellow-men, this generally shared but individually guarded, this never-communicated information loses its quality of reality and assumes the nature of a mere nightmare. Only those who are in possession of the strictly esoteric knowledge concerning the eventual new categories of undesirables and the operational methods of the cadres are in a position to communicate with each other about what actually constitutes the reality for all. They alone are in a position to believe in what they know to be true. This is their secret, and in order to guard this secret they are established as a secret organization. They remain members even if this secret organization arrests them, forces them to make confessions, and finally liquidates them. So long as they guard the secret they belong to the elite, and as a rule they do not betray it even when they are in the prisons and concentration camps.¹²¹

We already have noted that one of the many paradoxes that offend the

¹²⁰ "There was little in the SS that was not secret. The greatest secret was the practices in the concentration camps. Not even members of the Gestapo were admitted . . . to the camps without a special permit" (Eugen Kogon, *Der SS-Staat*, Munich, 1946, p. 297).

¹²¹ Beck and Godin, *op. cit.*, p. 169, report how the arrested NKVD officials "took the greatest care never to reveal any NKVD secrets."

common sense of the nontotalitarian world is the seemingly irrational use which totalitarianism makes of conspiratory methods. The totalitarian movements, apparently persecuted by the police, very sparingly use methods of conspiracy for the overthrow of the government in their struggle for power, whereas totalitarianism in power, after it has been recognized by all governments and seemingly outgrown its revolutionary stage, develops a true secret police as the nucleus of its government and power. It seems that official recognition is felt to be a greater menace to the conspiracy content of the totalitarian movement, a menace of interior disintegration, than the half-hearted police measures of nontotalitarian regimes.

The truth of the matter is that totalitarian leaders, though they are convinced that they must follow consistently the fiction and the rules of the fictitious world which were laid down during their struggle for power, discover only gradually the full implications of this fictitious world and its rules. Their faith in human omnipotence, their conviction that everything can be done through organization, carries them into experiments which human imaginations may have outlined but human activity certainly never realized. Their hideous discoveries in the realm of the possible are inspired by an ideological scientificity which has proved to be less controlled by reason and less willing to recognize factuality than the wildest fantasies of prescientific and prephilosophical speculation. They establish the secret society which now no longer operates in broad daylight, the society of the secret police or the political soldier or the ideologically trained fighter, in order to be able to carry out the indecent experimental inquiry into what is possible.

The totalitarian conspiracy against the nontotalitarian world, on the other hand, its claim to world domination, remains as open and unguarded under conditions of totalitarian rule as in the totalitarian movements. It is practically impressed upon the co-ordinated population of "sympathizers" in the form of a supposed conspiracy of the whole world against their own country. The totalitarian dichotomy is propagated by making it a duty for every national abroad to report home as though he were a secret agent, and by treating every foreigner as a spy for his home government.¹²² It is for the practical realization of this dichotomy rather than because of specific secrets, military and other, that iron curtains separate the inhabitants of a totalitarian country from the rest of the world. Their real secret, the concentration camps, those laboratories in the experiment of total domination, is shielded by the totalitarian regimes from the eyes of their own people as well as from all others.

For a considerable length of time the normality of the normal world is the most efficient protection against disclosure of totalitarian mass crimes. "Normal men don't know that everything is possible,"¹²³ refuse to believe

¹²² Typical is the following dialogue reported in *Dark Side of the Moon*: "To an admission that one had ever been outside Poland the next question invariably was: 'And for whom were you spying? . . . One man . . . asked: 'But you too have foreign visitors. Do you suppose they are all spies?' The answer was: 'What do you think? Do you imagine we are so naive as not to be perfectly aware of it?'"

¹²³ David Rousset, *The Other Kingdom*, New York, 1947.

their eyes and ears in the face of the monstrous, just as the mass men did not trust theirs in the face of a normal reality in which no place was left for them.¹²⁴ The reason why the totalitarian regimes can get so far toward realizing a fictitious, topsy-turvy world is that the outside nontotalitarian world, which always comprises a great part of the population of the totalitarian country itself, indulges also in wishful thinking and shirks reality in the face of real insanity just as much as the masses do in the face of the normal world. This common-sense disinclination to believe the monstrous is constantly strengthened by the totalitarian ruler himself, who makes sure that no reliable statistics, no controllable facts and figures are ever published, so that there are only subjective, uncontrollable, and unreliable reports about the places of the living dead.

Because of this policy, the results of the totalitarian experiment are only partially known. Although we have enough reports from concentration camps to assess the possibilities of total domination and to catch a glimpse into the abyss of the "possible," we do not know the extent of character transformation under a totalitarian regime. We know even less how many of the normal people around us would be willing to accept the totalitarian way of life—that is, to pay the price of a considerably shorter life for the assured fulfillment of all their career dreams. It is easy to realize the extent to which totalitarian propaganda and even some totalitarian institutions answer the needs of the new homeless masses, but it is almost impossible to know how many of them, if they are further exposed to a constant threat of unemployment, will gladly acquiesce to a "population policy" that consists of regular elimination of surplus people, and how many, once they have fully grasped their growing incapacity to bear the burdens of modern life, will gladly conform to a system that, together with spontaneity, eliminates responsibility.

In other words, while we know the operation and the specific function of the totalitarian secret police, we do not know how well or to what an extent the "secret" of this secret society corresponds to the secret desires and the secret complicities of the masses in our time.

III: Total Domination

THE CONCENTRATION and extermination camps of totalitarian regimes serve as the laboratories in which the fundamental belief of totalitarianism that everything is possible is being verified. Compared with this, all other experiments are secondary in importance—including those in the field of

¹²⁴ The Nazis were well aware of the protective wall of incredulity which surrounded their enterprise. A secret report to Rosenberg about the massacre of 5,000 Jews in 1943 states explicitly: "Imagine only that these occurrences would become known to the other side and exploited by them. Most likely such propaganda would have no effect only because people who hear and read about it simply would not be ready to believe it" (*Nazi Conspiracy*, I, 1001).