

at that, as a Police official at that time, would not have had any chance of professional advancement without being a Party member. This rash avowal led to immediate expulsion from the Socialist Unity Party (the German Communist organization), and equally immediate dismissal from his job to his being forbidden to accept another Service post. As all important undertakings are nationalized or municipalized, a man was ruined. My brother-in-law, in telling this story, wiped away a symbolic

My other brother-in-law, the fat one, told me at a meeting with miners' delegates from the uranium mines in Saxony. He had wanted to stand them a beer, but they had jokingly refused, as they were stuffed with money from their Stakhanovite earnings in the mines. He said the uranium mines were profitable gold mines for the workers employed there; their food rations were superior and, after initial difficulties, the medical arrangements for protecting them against the effects of radio-activity were exemplary. "Nobody does any work underground for longer than one year now," he exclaimed. I asked him whether he had ever seen the uranium mining districts: he said not, but he knew enough about them to tell me that all the people who complained about bad food, bad housing and bad medical precautions were "those damned vagrants who only go there to make money easily and spend it immediately on drink and loose women". I had never heard of vagrancy being so rife among the German working-class population and asked about it. People directed to the mines against their will. My brother-in-law denied that this system was still in force and asserted that now many volunteered that not everybody could be accepted. I asked him how many miners were employed; he had no idea, but stated that there were very many. I had heard of between two and three hundred thousand, but I had my doubts about the majority of them being unprincipled vagrants.

I had had enough and made my departure, after being careful to admire the gorgeous festive decorations in the house and outside the façade, which bore a surprisingly gay array of coloured posters, flags and giant photographic portraits of the Communist leaders. My sister pointed out that these decorations had all been arranged voluntarily through her efforts and those of her neighbours. I swallowed the question which was on my lips, but I thought of the caretaker of the working-class block of flats near the Alexanderplatz who had enlightened me about this "voluntary labour" in a different

concludes our Correspondent's article. The first part appeared in the issue of August 18.

Next Week's Issue

Michael Oakeshott reviews Herbert Butterfield's *History and Human Relations*

John Connell: Notes on the Way

Elizabeth Hare-Scott: The Basque Baby has grown Up

NOTES on the WAY

By MICHAEL POLANYI

Totalitarianism

THE UTTERLY novel, however immense, at first passes unnoticed. Charles Darwin relates how the Fuegian natives marvelled at the rowing boats which put ashore his landing party but paid no attention to HMS *Beagle* massively lying at anchor in front of them. The ship was so large that it escaped comprehension and made no impression.

Visited by unprecedented disaster we become engrossed in its accessories while the event itself overpowers us unseen. We react like the children in *A High Wind in Jamaica* who observe a man struck by lightning, an old woman hurled over the fields by the wind, the roof carried away over their heads and trees shattered all round, but fail to notice the hurricane. For not until our understanding has supplied us with an adequate conception of a universal catastrophe is it revealed to our imagination, and are we released from a fumbling preoccupation with its particulars to face its true reality.

Later generations may scoff at our blindness; or may even be unable to realize that we never grasped the events of our own age. To them the rise of totalitarianism may appear as a fact so compact and compelling that our present incomprehension of it may altogether elude them. But today when we are only just beginning to discern the outlines of this all embracing movement, we must not be surprised to find that most of its hitherto current interpretations are proving fragmentary or even altogether pointless.

WE REGARD parliamentary democracy as a distinct form of government which exists in Britain, France and Denmark, in the United States and the Gold Coast, and we recognize the same system in a number of local variants. If we had a similarly unified conception of totalitarianism, we would also regard Soviet Russia, Hitlerite Germany and the present regimes of countries as different as China, Albania and Czechoslovakia as several instances of one and the same system. Totalitarian movements, as diverse as Lenin's Bolshevism and German Nazism, would be seen to possess essentially the same structure.

This view is of course frequently affirmed, but current thought is carried on almost entirely on assumptions which contradict it. The most widely accepted interpretation of Bolshevism today regards it as specifically Russian: as a modern form of immemorial Russian despotism. But if Nazism is essentially the same as Bolshevism it would follow that it also is specifically Russian, which is absurd. And correspondingly, Vansittart's theory of Nazism falls to the ground if it is confronted with Bolshevism as Nazism's twin

[In order to preserve the essentially individual character of NOTES ON THE WAY we allow those who contribute them an entirely free pen. We must not be taken as being necessarily in agreement with the opinions expressed.—EDITOR, TIME AND TIDE.]

brother, whose parentage cannot conceivably be traced back to the alleged butcher-bird mentality of the German people. Moreover, neither theory covers the fanatical masses of Chinese Communists, which we see hurling themselves over minefields in Korea. Their sceptical and life-loving ancestors contrast as sharply as human nature permits with either those of the Germans or the Russians. If totalitarian movements are everywhere essentially the same, then only such historic factors may be admitted for their explanation which are common to Germany, Russia and China. They must also apply to countries like Albania and Czechoslovakia and be traceable to the roots of the Western Communist Parties and to the various Bloomsburys of the 1930s.

IN THIS light the current economic theories of totalitarianism tend also to dissolve like shadows. If Socialist sympathizers excuse totalitarianism in Russia as the harsh instrument of an urgent industrial transformation, this makes nonsense of the German totalitarianism which triumphed in an already industrialized country. The Road to Serfdom theory on the other hand, which condemns Socialist totalitarianism as the outcome of a central direction of the productive process, is defeated if it has also to explain the march of Hitler's mass movement, culminating in the destruction of the Weimar Republic, long before any central direction of the German economy was ever attempted. It is true that totalitarianism has been everywhere accompanied by a dislike of capitalism, but such sentiments formed an insignificant note in the emotional chorus of the Nuremberg Rallies.

THE UNFORTUNATE tendency of current sociological interpretations to apply only to one totalitarian regime is equally marked in the work of the Freudian School. Fromm's "authoritarian character" is supposed to be the typical response of the lower middle class to its economic insecurity and is observed by its author in Calvin, Luther and Hitler, but not in Marx, Engels or Stalin. His book *The Fear of Freedom*, published in 1942, actually describes Communism as opposed to authoritarianism. More recently Geoffrey Gorer has interpreted the Great Russian character, including that of the Russian Communists, as a reaction to the tight swaddling of arms and legs in babyhood, so that this time Hitler and his henchmen are omitted from the analysis of totalitarianism.

As a distinct entity, totalitarianism was fully envisaged perhaps for the first time in Orwell's 1984. His intuitive analysis has now been con-

firmed and amplified by Hannah Arendt in her book *The Burden of our Time* (Secker & Warburg, 30s.). Here is documentary evidence of each characteristic feature of totalitarianism, given side by side in the Bolshevik and Hitlerite system. The proof for the essential identity of the two seems conclusive. This book has come to stay as a permanent source of information and a lasting subject for reflection; I shall attempt here only to give a first personal summary of its message as I understand it.

MODERN MAN, brought up by centuries of critical thought to be master of his own fate, resents everything that is not of his own making. He resents the very fact that he is not the creator of the universe and himself. From this springs a hatred of all that is given, which, percolating into public affairs, actuates totalitarian movements. Hannah Arendt describes it as a "vague pervasive hatred of everybody and everything, without a focus for its passionate attention". A hatred above all of cultural and moral standards as transmitted by existing tradition. "When I hear the word culture I reach for my revolver" wrote Juenger for the Nazis. "*Erstens kommt das Fressen und dann kommt die Moral*" echoed Brecht from the stage on behalf of the Communists.

The mob applauded (writes Hannah Arendt) because it took the statement literally; the bourgeoisie applauded because it had been fooled by its own hypocrisy for so long that it had grown tired of the tension and found deep wisdom in the expression of the banality by which it lived; the élite applauded because the unveiling of hypocrisy was such superior and wonderful fun.

Thus the intelligentsia was allied to the mob. Its contemptuous rejection of an imperfect morality, set up an ideal of perfect bestiality. Its vitriolic quest for the unquestionably authentic left over no residue of right or wrong or even of true and false, but only of *having* or *not having*, of "who whom". Any opponents were marked down as enemies, traitors, degenerates who, foredoomed by history, were destined to extermination. By inflaming the mob's resentment of all historic, moral or cultural authority, the structure of society was pulverized and its homogenized masses made subservient to the arbitrary rule of the Bohemian.

An inherently lawless Power can tolerate no position of independent standing within its realm. Not even a game of chess must be played for its own sake. By their mere capacity to think human beings are suspect. The whole force of the State is employed to discredit the very existence of a factuality which would lend a foothold to independent thought. The education of the ruling class

is aimed at abolishing their capacity to distinguish between truth and falsehood, between reality and fiction. Their superiority consists in their ability immediately to dissolve every statement of fact into a declaration of purpose.

Thus radical scepticism results in nightmarish self-deception.

Mass-propaganda discovered that its audience was ready at all times to believe the worst no

matter how absurd, and did not particularly object to being deceived, for it held every statement to be a lie anyhow.

It is the maintenance of this fictitious world, which requires a relentless application of total terror. For it can be achieved only by reducing every subject of the regime to a bundle of conditioned reflexes. It necessitates also the expansion of totalitarian rule to the world. For "even a single individual can be absolutely and reliably dominated only under global totalitarian conditions".

THE TOTALITARIAN triumph is in Hannah Arendt's view a verdict against a world already atomized by a life "insistently and exclusively centred on the individual's success or failure in ruthless competition". She fails to confront, however, this thesis with the fact that Communism has risen and spread pre-eminently in semi-feudal countries like Russia, Hungary and China where competitive acquisitiveness was undeveloped, and attracted no effective support in the highly commercialized countries of the West. She comes

TIME AND TIDE 25 AUGUST 1961

nearer to an acceptable sociology of totalitarianism in pointing out that its rule was established everywhere by groups who had never accepted participation in the peaceful functions of civic life (the Bohemians) and who drew their support from hitherto politically indifferent peripheric masses.

I think the totalitarian movement represents the culmination of Western critical thought within a social milieu lacking the political restraints imposed by a liberal tradition. Western society lives today by rote unsupported by any philosophically respectable doctrines. Our bookish nihilism remains on paper in countries where democratic life was established long ago. But it eats its way unchecked into the masses more recently liberated from feudalism or absolutism. These masses are converted to a regime of violence by an intelligentsia spreading the same destructive analysis of man and society which remains relatively harmless in the milieu of older democracies.

Mr C. K. Allen has asked us to point out that since he wrote his "Notes on the Way", which we published in our issue of August 18, the Chief Constable of Oxfordshire has issued his report on plain clothes road patrols.

What Next?

By DIOGENES

EVERY NOW and again, in the morning glance through the newspapers, I am pulled up short by a particular item of news, and one such item appeared in the Press the other day. As everyone knows and will know more acutely when winter comes, there is a shortage of fuel in Britain. Coal output lags sadly behind domestic needs and forbids export. There is also a shortage of electricity and of electric cable: in some areas the Electricity Authority is even declining to connect up new houses. Such a situation demands research and there is a supply of this, if not of electricity, for the Electrical Research Association has applied its brain-power to the problem.

IF THERE is not enough electricity, there are two possible solutions of the problem. One is to produce more; the other is to consume less. The first of these the Association evidently feels to be beyond its powers, but it has had a go at the second. Why does the domestic consumer use so much electricity? One obvious reason is that he wants to feel warm. But suppose he could be induced to believe that he was warm without electricity?

They tried it out in an old people's Home. In one room where the old folk sat there were an electric fire and a thermometer. They took away the thermometer, then they removed the electric fire and put in a glow-fire which gave out no heat. Then they awaited reactions. Gradually the temperature of the room fell but no one noticed it or complained. They got it down to 58 degrees and still there was no reaction. Lower than this, I suppose, they did not venture to go. But it was enough. Electricity was not really necessary to heat the room if the old folk could be deceived into thinking they were warm by a mere glow. The solution is now, it seems, in sight.

Here we have a parable—the parable of the

Welfare State. For this is what, in so many fields, the Welfare State does.

Thus, under the Town Planning scheme, the public-houses in the new towns and in their neighbourhood are to be run by the State on the lines of the public-houses in Carlisle. Now in Carlisle the pubs are pubs no longer. They are either "economic drinking units" or "uneconomic drinking units". Country inns in the area which do not seem to be paying are defined as "uneconomic drinking units" and may be brought within the ambit of the State scheme. And so with the new towns like Hemel Hempstead. The other day a couple of Hertfordshire publicans went on a forty-eight-hour tour of the pubs of Carlisle. What they found was worse than the old people's home. In these pubs there was not only none of the warmth of an ordinary inn, but not even a glow!

We found segregation of the sexes, hardly any flowers or ash-trays, practically no snacks, no pewter tankards, a cold unpub-like atmosphere, and those ghastly references to "uneconomic drinking units."

The beer, they found, wasn't so bad, indeed it was of high quality. But there were only three brews to choose from, as against the twenty-four available in the present Hemel Hempstead. Everything was spotlessly clean, including the cellars. But as one of them said—"There is no club atmosphere. And where is the jolly landlord? We could not find him". The other said—"I'll keep my own pub if I can—and Carlisle can keep its anti-septic economic drinking units."

Omar Khayyam wrote—

*And this I know: whether the one True Light
Kindle to Love or Wrath-consume me quite,
One Flash of It within the Tavern caught
Better than in the Temple lost outright.*