CHAPTER SEVEN

FROM ROUSSEAU TO HITLER

It is almost an axiom in contemporary political and historical literature that our freedom has its roots in the Enlightenment and the French Revolution. So general this belief, so complete its acceptance, that the descendants of the eighteenth-century rationalists have prempted for themselves the very name of Liberty in their designation as Liberals.

It cannot be denied that the Enlightenment and the French Revolution contributed to the freedom of the nineteenth century. But their contribution was entirely negative; they were the dynamite that blew away the debris of the old structure. In no way, however, did they contribute to the foundation of the new structure of freedom on which the nineteenth-century order was built. On the contrary: The Enlightenment, the French Revolution, and their successors down to the rationalist Liberalism of our days are in irreconcilable opposition to freedom. Fundamentally, rationalist Liberalism is totalitarian.

And every totalitarian movement during the last two hundred years of Western history has grown out of the Liberalism of its time. There is a straight line from Rousseau to Hitler—a line that takes in Robespierre, Marx, and Stalin. All of them grew out of the failure of the rationalist Liberalism of their times. They all retained the essence of their respective liberal creeds, and all used the same mechanism to convert the latent and ineffective totalitarianism of the rationalist into the open and effective totalitarianism of the revolutionary despot. Far from being the roots of freedom, the Enlightenment and the French Revolution were the seeds of the totalitarian despotism which threatens the world today. The fathers and grandfathers of Hitlerism are not mediæval feudalism or nineteenth-century romanticism but Bentham and Con-

dorcet, the orthodox economists. and the liberal constitutionalists, Darwin, Freud, and the Behaviourists.

The great discovery of the Enlightenment was that human reason is absolute. On this discovery were based not only all subsequent liberal creeds but also all subsequent totalitarian creeds from Rousseau on. It was no accident that Robespierre installed a Goddess of Reason; his symbolism was cruder than that of the later revolutionaries but not really very different. Nor was it an accident that the French Revolution chose a living person to act the role of Goddess of Reason. The whole point of the rationalist philosophy is that it attributes to actual living men the perfection of absolute reason. The symbols and slogans have changed. Where the "scientific philosopher" was supreme in 1750, it was the sociologist with his economic utilitarianism and the "pleasure-pain calculus" a hundred years later. Today it is the "scientific psychobiologist" with his determinism of race and propaganda. But we fight today basically the same totalitarian absolutism that first was formulated by the Enlighteners and Encyclopædists—the rationalists of 1750—and that first led to a revolutionary tyranny in the Terror of 1793.

It must be understood that not everything that is called liberalism is of necessity an absolutist creed. Every liberal movement, it is true, contains the seeds of a totalitarian philosophy—just as every conservative movement contains a tendency to become reactionary. On the Continent of Europe there never were any liberal movements or parties which were not totalitarian in their fundamental beliefs. In the United States the totalitarian element was strongly represented from the start—based as much upon the influence from Europe as upon the Puritan tradition. And since the last war liberalism everywhere has become absolutist. Today it is true, almost without reservation, that the liberal is an absolutist in his objective creed.

But for a hundred years before 1914 Great Britain had a liberal movement that was not absolutist, not incom-

patible with freedom and not based upon a man-made absolute reason. The United States had during the same period a liberal tradition which was as much opposed to absolutist liberalism as it was close to English liberalism. This free and antitotalitarian tradition, which was expressed in its most lucid form by Mr. Justice Holmes, was usually not the dominant liberal tradition in America. It was often completely overshadowed by the absolutist liberalism of which the Abolitionists and the radical Republicans of the Reconstruction Period are the outstanding representatives. It produced, however, in Lincoln the nineteenth century's greatest symbol of an anti-absolutist and truly liberal liberalism. It became politically effective in Populism—the most indigenous American political movement since the early days of the republic. And the New Deal, though very largely dominated by rationalism, owed its appeal and political effectiveness to its populist heritage.

The fundamental difference between the free and constructive Anglo-American liberalism of the nineteenth century, and the absolutist and destructive liberalism of the Enlightenment and of our Liberals today, is that the first is based on religion and Christianity, while the second is rationalist. The true liberalism grew out of a religious renunciation of rationalism. The English Liberal party of the nineteenth century was based partly on the tradition of the settlement of 1688. But the main element was the "Nonconformist Conscience." The first was a reaffirmation of freedom against the rationalist absolutism of both, Cromwellian theocracy and centralized monarchy. The second sprang from the great religious revivals of the eighteenth century, notably Wesley's Methodism and Low Church Evangelism. Both were appeals to Christian love, faith, and humility. And both were directed against the rationalism of their time—Methodism against the Enlightenment, the Evangelical movement against the utilitarianism of Bentham and the classical economists.

In the United States similarly the true and genuinely "liberal" liberalism traces back to a religious protest against rationalist absolutism. Its forefather, Roger Williams, attacked in the name of Christian freedom the rationalist theocracy of the New England divines who had set up their scripture-learning as absolute reason. And the Populist movement—whatever its economic causes—rested squarely upon an evangelical protest against rationalist utilitarianism and orthodox economists. It was an invocation of the dignity of man against the tyranny of absolute reason and of "inevitable economic progress."

Even this free liberalism is of only limited effectiveness politically. It cannot overcome a revolution. It cannot develop the institutions of social or political life. For even at its best it is primarily a protest against institutions. Its first function is the defence of the individual against authority; its basis is an appeal to the brotherhood of man beyond politics and society, beyond government and social function and status. The true liberalism can therefore be effective only after a functioning society has come into being. But within these limitations it is both constructive and effective.

Today, however, there is no such truly "liberal" liberalism anywhere—except in some scattered remnants in the United States and England. What we know today as "liberalism" is exclusively rationalist. But the rationalist is not only basically totalitarian. He is also unconstructive. He must fail in politics; and in his failure he threatens freedom, because his failure is the chance for the revolutionary totalitarian.

2

That objectively the rationalist's creed is incompatible with freedom is no denial of the individual rationalist's or liberal's good will or good faith. Doubtless the individual rationalist liberal believes sincerely that he, and

he alone, stands for freedom and against tyranny. There is also no doubt that he subjectively abhors totalitarian tyranny and all it represents. And in turn, he is the first victim of the despots.

But these antitotalitarian sentiments of the individual rationalist are entirely ineffective in politics. Altogether rationalism is incapable of positive political action. It can function only in opposition. It can never make the step from negative critique to constructive policy. And it always opposes the free institutions of society fully as much as the unfree and oppressive ones.

The rationalist liberal sees his function in the opposition to the injustices, superstitions and prejudices of his time. But this opposition to injustice is only a part of a general hostility to all institutions of society including free and just ones. The Enlighteners, for instance, swept away aristocratic privileges, serfdom and religious intolerance. They also destroyed provincial autonomies and local self-government; and no country on the Continent of Europe has ever fully recovered from this blow to freedom. They attacked clerical abuses, privileges, and oppression. They also degraded the churches of Europe into administrative arms of the political government. They did their best to deprive religious life of its social autonomy and moral authority. And the full force of Enlightened scorn was directed against independent courts and against the common law. The insistence of the eighteenth-century rationalist on a "rationally perfect" law code and on state-controlled courts leads straight to the omnipotent total state. It is no accident that the "free" Anglo-American liberalism of the nineteenth century was based to a large extent on these very institutions which the Enlighteners had repudiated: local self-government, free autonomous churches, the common law, and an independent judiciary.

The rationalist not only destroys and opposes existing institutions without principle of selection; he is completely

incapable of developing new institutions for the old ones which he destroys. He does not even see the need for constructive activity. For to him the good is only the absence of evil. He thinks that he has done his job if he has criticized away bad or oppressive institutions. But in political and social life nothing is effective unless it is given institutional realization. Society must be organized on the basis of functional power-relations. To subvert is only legitimate in politics if it leads to the construction of something better. But just to sweep away something—however bad—is no solution. And unless a functioning institution is put into the place of the destroyed institution, the ensuing collapse of social life will breed evils which may be even worse than the one that was originally destroyed.

The inability of the rationalist to construct and the correspondences of his political impotence show most tellingly absolutism in the Old South, not only because the evil attacked and destroyed was slavery, that greatest of all social evils, but because the failure to give the South a new society for the old it had lost was most spectacular. And the inability of the rationalists to integrate into society the Jew whose ghetto community they had dissolved is one important cause of modern anti-Semitism.

Wherever the rationalist liberal has come to power he always failed. The fate of Kerenski's liberal government in Russia, which collapsed into Bolshevism after half a year of political paralysis, is only the most obvious case. The German Social Democrats were equally incapable of political action when they came to power in 1918. They had been an extremely useful opposition under the Kaiser. There is no doubt that their leaders were sincere and honourable, that they were capable administrators, personally courageous and popular. Yet what is amazing is not that they failed but that they lasted as long as they did. For by 1922 or 1923 they had become completely bankrupt. The same is true of French Radicals, of Italian Liberals, or of Spanish Democrats. And the "reformer"

in the United States also normally ended in frustration. The history of every city government in America shows the political ineffectiveness of these well-meaning rationalists.

It is impossible to explain so extraordinary and consistent a record of failure as one of circumstances and accidents. The real reason is that rationalist liberalism is by its very nature condemned to political sterility. It lives in constant conflict with itself. It is based on two principles which exclude each other. It can only deny but it cannot act.

On the one hand the rationalist believes in an absolute reason. Yesterday it was inevitable progress or national harmony between individual self-interest and the common weal. Today it is the creed that libido, frustration, and glands explain all personal or group conflicts. On the other hand, rationalist liberalism believes that its absolutes are the result of rational deduction, are provable and rationally incontrovertible. It is the essence of rationalist liberalism that it proclaims its absolutes to be rationally evident.

Absolute reason can, however, never be rational; it can never be proved or disproved by logic. Absolute reason is by its very nature above and before rational argument. Logical deduction can and must be based upon an absolute reason but can never prove it. If truly religious, an absolute principle is superrational—a true metaphysical principle which gives a valid basis of rational logic. If man-made and man-proclaimed, absolute reason must be irrational and in insoluble conflict with rational logic and rational means.

All the basic dogmas of rationalism during the last hundred and fifty years were not only irrational but basically antirational. This was true of the philosophical rationalism of the Enlighteners who proclaimed the inherent reasonableness of man. It was true of the utilitarian rationalism of the generation of 1848 which saw in the

individual's greed the mechanism through which the "invisible hand" of nature promoted the common good. It is particularly true of the twentieth-century rationalism which sees man as psychologically and biologically determined. Every one of these principles denies not only free will. It denies human reason. And every one of these principles can be translated into political action only by force and by an absolute ruler.

But this the rationalist cannot admit. He must maintain that his principles are rational and that they can be made effective by rational means. He maintains as a dogma that his principles are rationally evident. Hence the rationalist liberal cannot attempt to translate them into political action except through rational conversion —which attempt must fail. On the one hand he cannot respect any opposition, for it can only be opposition to absolute truth. On the other hand, he cannot fight it. For error—and all opposition to his absolute truth must be error to a rationalist—can only be due to lack of information. Nothing shows this better than the saying current during the twenties and early thirties in Europe as well as in the United States that an *intelligent* person must be on the Left. And today the belief in the omnipotence of propaganda expresses openly and clearly the absolutist basis and the self-contradiction of the rationalist creed.

On the one hand, the rationalist liberal cannot compromise. He is a perfectionist creed which allows of no concession. Anyone who refuses to see the light is an unmitigated blackguard with whom political relations are impossible. On the other hand, the rationalist cannot fight or suppress enemies. He cannot admit their existence. There can be only misjudged or misinformed people who, of necessity, will see reason when the incontrovertible evidence of the rational truth is presented to them. The rationalist liberal is caught between holy wrath at conspirators and educational zeal for the misinformed. He always knows what is right, necessary, and good—and it

always is simple and easy. But he can never do it. For he can neither compromise for power nor fight for it. He is always paralysed politically: ultra-bold in theory and timid in action, strong in opposition and helpless in power, right on paper but incapable in politics.

3

It is the tragedy of the rationalist liberal that there is only one way from his position to political effectiveness: totalitarianism. His subjectively sincere belief in freedom can objectively lead only to tyranny. For there is only one way out of the political sterility of the rationalist liberal: to drop the rationalism and to become openly totalitarian, absolutist and revolutionary.

During the Enlightenment it was Rousseau who made the fatal step from rationalism and pretended rationality to openly irrational and antirational totalitarianism. There is no pretence that the "general will" is rationally ascertainable or rationally realizable. It is admittedly an irrational absolute which defies rational analysis and which is outside and beyond rational comprehension. It exists—but how, where and why no one knows. It must prevail —naturally, since it is perfect and absolute. Whoever is in possession of reason, whoever understands the supreme will of society, is entitled and, indeed, is duty bound to enforce it upon majority, minority and individual alike. Freedom lies only in the perfect realization of the *volonté générale*. There is no pretence in Rousseau of individual reason or individual freedom.

It is true that Rousseau insisted upon the small unit of the city-state with its direct, non-representative democracy as the only perfect form of government. And he laid down an inalienable right of the individual to disagree by leaving his society. This has been taken as an indication of his desire for individual freedom. But in a world in which these conditions were as impossible of fulfilment as

in that of the middle eighteenth century, they can hardly be taken as anything but romantic flourishes in an otherwise unyieldingly realistic and unromantic totalitarianism. Otherwise Hitler's "offer" of emigration to the Jews would also be "freedom."

Rousseau's plunge into the irrational absolute made the basic concepts of the Enlightenment politically effective. Rousseau was right when he saw in the repudiation of rationalism the basic difference of his system from that of the *philosophes*. His open irrationalism enabled him to shake off the fetters which had condemned the Encyclopædists to political ineffectiveness. Where they believed in the slow and painstaking rational process of education and scientific investigation, he believed in the inner light of revelation. They tried to define man as within the laws of physics. But Rousseau saw man as a political being acting upon impulse and emotion. Where they saw the gradual rationalist improvement, he believed in the millennium that could and would be established by that most irrational of forces: the revolution. No doubt he knew more about politics and society than all the Enlighteners taken together. His view of man in society was realistic where the rationalist Enlighteners had been hopelessly and pathetically romantic.

In fact, Rousseau can be fought only if his basis is attacked: the belief in a man-made absolute reason, the belief that he himself possessed it and that whoever has absolute reason has the right and the duty to enforce it.

Because Rousseau threw overboard the rationalism of the Enlightenment, he became the great political force he has been to our day. Because he retained the Enlighteners' belief in human perfectibility, he denied human freedom and became the great totalitarian and revolutionary who lit the fuse for a universal blaze equalled only by our generation.

Rousseau's method has been followed every time a

politically sterile, because rationalist, liberalism was converted into a politically effective non-rationalist totalitarianism. The first to follow in his footsteps was Karl Marx. Just as Rousseau appeared when the Enlighteners of the early eighteenth century had shown their political ineffectiveness, so Marx began when the utilitarian rationalists of the early nineteenth century had foundered politically. In 1848 rationalist liberalism was bankrupt. It had had power thrust into its lap through the breakdown of reactionary monarchy in France, Austria, Germany and Spain; and, without exception, it proved completely incapable of doing anything with it except lose it again.

Marx converted the impotent rationalist liberalism of his time into a politically potent force by dropping its rationalism and adopting an openly irrational absolutism. He kept the absolute of the contemporary liberals, the thesis of economic determination which sees man as rational Economic Man. But he eliminated the rationalism which expected the attainment of the perfect economic society from the free and rational economic action of the individual. Instead he proclaimed an irrational principle: that of the determination of human action by the class situation of the individual. This principle denies man's capacity for rational action, thinking, and analysis. Everybody's deeds and thoughts are the result of a class situation which is beyond the individual's control and understanding. Marx kept the utilitarian historical materialism; but for the materialism of inevitable harmony he substituted that of the equally inevitable class struggle. He kept the rationalist belief in the essential perfection of man. But he confined perfection to the one proletarian class.

Marx went one step further than Rousseau. To Rousseau the revolution was necessary as it must indeed be to every totalitarian. But it was not inevitable. Rousseau left an element of doubt; Marx left none. In a truly apocalyptic vision he saw the inevitability of the revolution which

would usher in the millennium. Rationally, the Marxist belief that the future will inevitably belong to the perfect classless society *because* all the past has been one of class-societies is blatant, arrant, and mystical nonsense. Politically, the very antirationality of this article of faith was its strength. It not only gave belief; it also made possible the master-mind, the revolutionary philosopher-tyrant who, schooled in the dialectics of the inevitable, could claim absolute knowledge at every time.

It is politically very unimportant that Marx claimed to be "scientific"—just as it is unimportant that Machiavelli was a member of the Roman Catholic Church in good standing. Marx would still have had the same political appeal if he had never written one line of *Das Kapital.* He was effective not because he is the most brilliant historian of capitalist development, nor because he is the most boring, pedantic, and inconsistent theoretician of capitalist economics. He took a world and a society which was already convinced of an absolutist thesis regarding the nature of man, and he made it possible for this thesis to become politically effective.

Rousseau became a tremendous political force because the revolution did happen. Marx—though much inferior to Rousseau as a politician, a psychologist, and a philosopher—became a force of equal strength even though the revolution did not happen; it was sufficient that, unlike Rousseau's, Marx's revolution was inevitable.

Marxism still has its revolutionary appeal in basically pre-industrial countries: in Mexico, Spain, or in raw-material-producing colonies. That the Marxist revolution occurred in Russia, the least industrialized country of Europe, was no accident. For only in an early industrial or pre-industrial society does Marxism make sense. Only in its very first stages does the industrial system exhibit the split of society into a handful of monopolistic entrepreneurs on the one side and an amorphous, dispossessed, proletarian mass on the other, which Marx had proclaimed

as inevitable. As soon as industrialization proceeds beyond the initial stage, it develops an employed, yet professional, middle class of engineers, salesmen, chemists, accountants, and so forth. This class not only refutes all Marxist assumptions and repudiates the entire Marxist creed. It becomes the functionally most important class in the industrial system. Wherever this class has been developed to any extent, Marxism ceases to be an effective political force.

In the Western countries Marxism could have come to power only in Marx's own time; that is, while these countries were still in a very early stage of industrial development. Marx himself expressed this in his prophecy that his revolution would come before 1900. That it failed to come was due to two antitotalitarian forces which Marx did not see. There was first the strong antitotalitarian tradition of England. The heritage of the successful conservative counter-revolution against Enlightenment and French Revolution was still alive and vigorous in Victorian England. Both Conservatives and Liberals based themselves on it. England repudiated Marxism because of its totalitarianism. And though the conservative tradition was absent on the Continent, England's prestige as the social and political leader was so great as to prevent the victory of a creed which England ignored. The second and even more effective antitotalitarian force in the second half of the nineteenth century was America. Her free society, her free immigration, her free land, her equal opportunities acted—physically and spiritually—as the safety valve of European society which prevented an explosion. It was above all the Civil War which restored Europe's faith in freedom after the severe shock of 1848.

But while Marxism failed as a revolutionary creed in the industrial countries, it made a lasting impact on political beliefs on the Continent of Europe. It prepared the great masses for totalitarianism. It made them ready to accept the logic of man-made, absolutist, apocalyptic visions. For this alone Marxism deserves to be called the father of

Hitlerism. It also bequeathed to the totalitarianism of our time the mould and the structure of ideas and political thought. What Marx did with the broken-down rationalist liberalism of his time—the liberalism of the classical economists and of the utilitarians—Hitler has been doing with the broken-down rationalism of our time—that of the natural scientists and psychologists.

Mr. Jacques Barzun of Columbia University has shown in a book of brilliant insight, *Marx, Darwin and Wagner,* how the *economic* determinism of the early nineteenth-century absolutists had become *biological* determinism by the end of the century. What he has not shown—as, indeed, lies outside the field he has staked out for himself—is the development of biological determinism into a rationalist creed and its supplementation by a psychological determinism. The roots of Nazism lie in the biological determinism which began with Darwin. And the meaning and the political structure of Hitlerism can be understood only in the light of the philosophical and political development of this new—and so far last—set of man-made absolutes.

It is not the theory of evolution or the theory of neuroses which interests us in this connection. It is rather the philosophy developed from them which expresses itself in such popular sayings as "Man is what his glands make him," or "Man is what his childhood frustrations make him." No doubt, both sayings are literally true. They are just as true as the statements that man is what his economic interests, education, digestion, social status, religion, or physical strength and conformation make him. Every single one of these statements is incontrovertible; yet any one by itself is meaningless. But in the sixty years between the *Origin of the Species* and the Great War of 1914–18 the explanation of man as biological-psychological man was gradually adopted as the basis of European rationalist liberalism. The Eugenists on the one hand, the Behaviourists on the other—to mention only the extremists—

developed the claim that man is perfectible, either biologically or psychologically.

By 1900 the belief in psycho-biological determinism had begun to be popular and was replacing the worn-out economic determinism. The great popularizer of the new creed was G. B. Shaw. *Candida* anticipates all of Adler and Jung; *Back to Methuselah,* a good deal of Hitler. In the political and social sphere the change became perceptible at about the same time—in the fear of the "Yellow Peril"; in the flare-up of anti-Semitism in France, Austria and Russia; in the development of advertising, public-relations men, and propaganda newspapers.

Where the Enlighteners had tried to educate, where the utilitarians had tried to establish free trade and a stock exchange, the new rationalists tried to organize on a racial or "folk" basis and to manage by propaganda and other methods of modern psychology. Like their predecessor rationalists, they had an absolute concept of the nature of man. They saw him as a creature of genes, chromosomes, and glands; and as formed and moulded by measurable psychological experiences. Hence they also believed in human perfection, or at least perfectibility. They proclaimed the absolute reason of those who understand and master human breeding and human psychological analysis. All those irrationals—more irrational perhaps and certainly more antirational than any of the preceding man-made absolutes since the Enlightenment—were held to be "scientifically" proven, attainable by rational means, and therefore "objective truth."

The first World War shattered this new rationalism even before it had had time to develop into a fully-fledged political force. The War could not be comprised or understood by means of the "rationality" of the psycho-biologist or, indeed, by any liberal rationalism. The War was real, most real, as was the post-war decade following it. In this crisis of the new rationalism. Nazism made the decisive

step toward a full and politically effective totalitarianism which could explain the realities. It took both the biological determinism and the psychological explanation of man and set them up as irrational absolutes. At the same time it proclaimed those who understood "race" and "propaganda" to be perfect and to be entitled to absolute, uncontestable political leadership and control.

The one great difference between Hitler's conversion of rationalist liberalism into totalitarianism and the work of his predecessors, Rousseau and Marx, lies in the open elevation of the one Master over organized society. It is, of course, true that the great mass of individuals are de-individualized in Nazism to the point where their identity is lost; but that was also true of Rousseauan or Marxist totalitarianism. But in Hitler's system one man is elevated above all his fellow men and above all society: the Leader. Actually, such an individual despot was inevitable in the theories of both Rousseau and Marx, as the developments of the French and Russian revolutions clearly showed. But only the Nazi revolution admitted this. The Nazis made the necessity of the perfect leader into a political asset of the first magnitude. Whereas Rousseau had only preached the revolution and Marx had predicted it, the leadership principle enabled Hitler to make it. Politically, his totalitarianism is the most effective and the deadliest one. It is the one in which the philosophical and political conclusions from the absolutist assumption of human perfection and perfectibility are drawn most extensively and most rigorously.

The basis for Hitlerism—as for the preceding totalitarianisms—had been supplied ready-made by the rationalist liberals. The method had been used twice before with great success. What Hitler added was a moral cynicism which would have been impossible in the times of Marx and Rousseau but which proved possible and even popular at a time when psychology had taught that there is no moral core in man. For the explosive force of Nazism

which the Führer Prinzip supplied, Hitler has to thank the psycho-analysts and personality psychologists.

To sum up: When the Enlightenment was threatened with collapse, Rousseau replaced its rationally attainable perfection with the irrational and even mystic "general will." When the post-Napoleonic rationalist liberalism of the utilitarians, and orthodox economists had collapsed in the abortive revolutions of 1848, Marx replaced their rationalist absolutes with the irrational perfection of the proletariat and the inevitability of the classless society. And when the rationalist psycho-biological determinism of modern science, of Darwin, Freud and the Behaviourists collapsed under the impact of World War and depression, Hitler proclaimed the principles of the biologists and psychologists in the irrationalism of race and propaganda.

None of the totalitarians changed the basis. Rousseau kept all the beliefs of the Enlightenment regarding the nature of man and society. Marx took from the orthodox economists the assertion that man is basically an economic animal. Hitler asserts with the biologists and psychologists that man is basically glands, heredity, and nervous impressions. None of the revolutionaries had to add anything to the fundamental beliefs of the rationalism of their days. All they had to do was to change the absolute truth and reason from a rationalist into an irrationalist pseudo-religious principle.

Rousseau proclaimed that the "general will" would assert itself precisely because it could not be rationally ascertained. Marx promised that the future would belong to the classless society precisely because all the past had been a history of class war. Hitler claims the millennium for the pure Nordic race precisely because the past had been dominated by the "mongrel races." To these irrational absolutes totalitarianism owes its appeal to a people disillusioned by rationalism. To them it owes its revolutionary force and the fanaticism which it inspires. And

to them it also owes its absolute denial of all freedom and the inevitable emergence of a dictator who claims perfection.

It follows from this analysis that the rationalist liberal cannot fight totalitarianism effectively. He is always in the position of that first great rationalist liberal: Socrates. Like that greatest and wisest of pre-Christian thinkers he believes that the good can be ascertained infallibly by man. Like Socrates he also believes that it can be taught rationally and that to understand the good is to be good. In other words, the rationalist liberal always knows what is good; he sets up an absolute against which there can be no opposition. By denying the possibility of evil—for man can err only through lack of information, but he can never sin—he denies responsibility without which there can be no meaningful choice, that is, no freedom. But, like Socrates, he can never translate this belief into political action since he believes his absolutism to be rational. He assumes that it is effective by its mere existence without any organization of power or any realization in institutions. On the liberal basis the one and only thing that is possible is a critique of the past.

Totalitarianism comes when liberalism has failed. And it comes as a direct result of this failure. There is no doubt that the individual rationalist hates the totalitarianism of his time deeply and sincerely; no doubt that he wants to fight it. But he cannot really attack it. For the totalitarians do only what the rationalist should have done on the basis of their philosophical beliefs. If Socrates really believed the oracle that he was the wisest man in all Greece—and he certainly acted on the assumption that he was the only wise man in Greece—he would have had the moral duty to set himself up as a tyrant. He could not do it because he believed his wisdom to be rational and to be effective without political means. Thereby he not only resigned himself to political impotence; he also paved

the way for the real totalitarians. The Thirty Tyrants accepted the Socratian basis without the Socratian rationalism. They were thus able to proclaim that everything they did was good because they themselves were good.

It is certain that Socrates would have bitterly disapproved of them. It is at least highly probably that the Thirty Tyrants would have been forced to kill him had he not been killed earlier by the alliance of traditionalist reactionaries and relativist anarchists, which is so typical for the eve of a revolution. Yet, in spite of his subjective opposition to the totalitarian tyrants, Socrates would have been entirely powerless against them. They executed politically only what he had taught philosophically: the supremacy of those who had attained wisdom. However wrong the accusations against Socrates, the masses were right on one point: he fathered the totalitarian would-be tyrants precisely because he was a rationalist liberal.

Translated into present-day terms, this means that we cannot expect any effective political or philosophical resistance against the fascist totalitarianism of our days from the rationalist liberal. There is no question that the English, German, or French socialist or the American radical is sincerely and honestly opposed to Hitlerism; his personal integrity is not at all in doubt. Nor does it mean that he will not be very effective as a soldier, for in the trenches it is his individual conviction alone that counts. The conclusion from our analysis is only that rational liberalism, however sincerely opposed to totalitarian fascism, cannot be expected to evolve a free alternative to totalitarian slavery. It cannot offer a solution for a free industrial society; it cannot overcome totalitarianism as a principle even though it may defeat the totalitarian dictators in the field.

It is significant that in the United States the liberals of yesterday—the semi-socialist planners—have come to be known as the "totalitarian liberals." Their only answer to

Hitler's belief that propaganda determines the beliefs of the individual is to substitute "good propaganda"—that is, their own propaganda—for Hitler's "bad propaganda." But the rationalist liberal cannot admit that the conviction that propaganda creates and determines ideas, loyalties, and beliefs is in itself a denial of freedom. He refuses to see that the pseudo-religion of propaganda conceives of man as determined by, and enslaved to, the dulcet voice of the radio. And he fails to understand that it does not really matter whether propaganda is "good" or "bad" as long as it is assumed that propaganda makes the man. For the rationalist liberal shares Hitler's conviction that man is psychologically determined.

The revolutionary totalitarianism of today cannot be overcome either by the revolutionary totalitarianism of yesterday—Marxism—or by the totalitarianism of the rationalist liberals with their belief in biological, psychological, or economic determinism. Actually, both the Marxist and the rationalist liberal add to the strength of the revolutionary totalitarianism, however sincerely they oppose it. Their opposition is politically completely ineffective. But their latent absolutism makes the masses ready for the politically effective absolutism of the revolutionary totalitarian.