

Preface

Presently each day mass media are filled with news concerning new atrocities of the “Islamic Caliphate” in Iraq and the Levant, of Boko Haram in Nigeria and the Taliban in Afghanistan: murders of Christians, Shiites and Yesidi, abduction of girls and women, suicides by true believers in these Islamic creeds, destruction of cultural monuments in Assyria and Palmyra. It seems that a new type of religiously motivated violence has erupted, beginning with the destruction of the Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in Washington on 9/11 in 2001 by adherents of Al Qaeda.

But are such events really new? And does no similarity exist with the mass murders committed by Nazi and Bolshevik regimes during the first half of the twentieth century? Or with the Christian Crusaders wading in the blood of Moslems and Jews when they conquered Jerusalem in 1099? Had all these terrible events nothing to do with the fact that either metaphysical ideologies were promising true believers a paradise in after-life or non-metaphysical ideologies at least a paradise on earth? These are the questions which will be discussed and answered in this volume.

The author who grew up during the Nazi regime in Germany first took up these questions in a paper presented at Karl Brunner’s famous annual Interlaken Seminar on “Analysis and Ideology” in 1988. At this occasion he first postulated the existence of a lexicographic preference function for supreme values considered typical for totalitarian regimes, according to which the supreme values establishing the ideology had to be preferred to everything else, similar to the fact that the letter “a” is pre-ordered to any other letter like “b” or “u”. For an economist this means that no rate of substitution exists with other goods which are not comprised of the supreme values. I still recall that one of the participants in the Interlaken Seminar, Prof. Meckling from Rochester University USA, asked after my presentation: “You really believe that there exists no rate of substitution?” I answered “Yes!” “Then you are dead wrong!” he retorted. “But how do you then explain the existence of martyrs?” And, indeed, presently cases about terrorists who consider themselves to be martyrs are reported about every day. These are empirical facts

which like many others are demanding a theoretical explanation in tune with historical experience.

At the Seminar at Interlaken the well-known monetarist Allan Meltzer once asked me how I became a liberal in the European sense. I referred him to my experiences as a boy in the totalitarian Nazi regime, where I hated to be forced once or twice a week to participate in the then obligatory “service” in the Hitler Youth, and often just did not turn up. Because of this un-conformal attitude, I experienced increasing pressure. Finally in either 1944 or 1945, when I was 15 years old, our leader (the “Gefolgschaftsführer“) had the police call me whether I were an opponent of National Socialism. Of course, I answered “no!” But I am not sure what had happened to me if the war had not ended the Nazi regime. Only after its end I learned that my paternal uncle Johann Bernholz had been incarcerated for two years in heavy prison in Kassel just for listening to an enemy broadcast by BBC, a fact which had been hidden from us boys by our parents.

In the years after the war I observed what happened in countries suffering from communist regimes. And in the late 1960s as a young professor at the Technische Universitaet in Berlin I witnessed the wall in the divided city and how people tried to flee from East Germany in spite of endangering their lives. Moreover, my own experiences with the East German border guards, too, were not of a pleasant nature. Therefore, it is perhaps not surprising that I became strongly interested in totalitarianism.

My own theory of ideocracies characterized by supreme values, of totalitarianism and of terrorism evolved in several presentations and articles since 1988. In working out my ideas I certainly did not start from scratch, but began by building on the works of people like Hannah Arendt,¹ Carl J. Friedrich and Zbigniew K. Brzezinski.² I had even the privilege of meeting the latter in their Seminar when attending Harvard University as a Rockefeller Fellow in 1963. However, the traditional theory of totalitarianism, in spite of its undisputed merits, has mainly remained a static theory and was on the whole limited to non-metaphysical regimes. It was static in the sense that only concepts were developed describing the characteristics of totalitarian systems at given periods in time. I tried to overcome these shortcomings of the theories of totalitarianism in several papers since 1988, and was happy to find out that two other authors, Piekalkiewicz and Penn,³ tried to move into the same direction.

In this book I abolish the limitations mentioned and present a theory capable of explaining *which factors* may *lead*, under specified conditions, to *Totalitarian Regimes*, and *which factors* change those regimes in time, and finally *bring about their transformation* into other regimes *or cause their breakdown*. In doing so I am going to generalize the theory in a way that it covers a much broader class of cases

¹Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, New York 1968/1951.

²Carl J. Friedrich and Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, Cambridge 1965/1956.

³Piekalkiewicz, Jaroslaw and Penn, Alfred W., *Politics of Ideocracy*, Albany 1995.

of ideocratic regimes, i.e., regimes based on ideologies with supreme values, and relate them to other political systems. It is obvious that such a theory needs to describe the forces which drive nontotalitarian systems towards totalitarianism and are also capable to change or to abolish these regimes. These forces have also to be able to overcome obstacles in the way of a totalitarian development, and conditions have to be stated under which they are probable to succeed. Moreover, the consequences have to be analyzed for cases in which the relevant driving forces are not successful.

It is shown that the invention and introduction of an ideology with supreme values is a necessary condition for the development of a totalitarian regime. But also that this is not a sufficient condition, since it has to be combined with the secular power of a state to make such a regime possible. And a combination of spiritual and secular power can only occur during a crisis and if a well-organized ideological movement is created with a spiritual leader or leadership, who alone have the right to interpret the ideology. Both conditions are necessary to provide a chance to grasp secular power. Thus, e.g., the absence of a monopoly of interpretation will usually lead to sectarian developments and thus weaken or even split the movement.

I include in Chaps. 8 and 11 mathematical models of the theory of Terrorism, Totalitarianism and Mature Ideocracies based on Supreme Values to provide a logically compelling presentation of my thinking. But the corresponding sections of the book have been characterized by inserting a*, so that they can be skipped by readers not interested in them without losing the thread of the argument.

This book owes much to many people. Among them I would like to mention especially my teacher Hans Möller, next Karl Brunner as the originator of the Interlaken seminars, and the philosopher Gérard Radnitzky who encouraged me to present my ideas at several conferences organized by him. I am also indebted for their valuable support to Hans Jürgen Jaksch, Heide and Winfried Reiss. Christoph Bauer helped with many critical discussions to clarify my thoughts about ideocracies. Unforgotten is our dispute on whether the Empire of Assyria should be considered to have been a totalitarian regime or not, because it based its expansionary wars on the commands of its god Assur.⁴ But I should also not conceal that two referees of earlier papers suggested that I should not mention Christian and Islamic regimes as totalitarian and that the editor of one journal told me confidentially that he did not want to publish one of my articles since he was not a very courageous person.

⁴“The Assyrians were convinced that the rule of the world belonged to their God Assur. And that, because of this they had not only the right but even the duty to force other nations with all available means to recognize this fact of world domination. Revolting against it meant a violation of God-set legal order. ... Therefore Assyrian warfare was always very harsh, and often cruel and brutal ...” (W.v. Soden (1954): *Herrscher im alten Orient*. Berlin, Heidelberg, New York: Springer, p. 64; my translation).

I am also deeply indebted to my wife, Elisabeth Bernholz and my daughters Irina Siegrist and Juliane Bernholz who patiently endured their husband and father spending too much of his time with an—at least at that time—obscure subject.

Basel, Switzerland

Peter Bernholz

Totalitarianism, Terrorism and Supreme Values

History and Theory

Bernholz, P.

2017, XII, 160 p. 11 illus., Hardcover

ISBN: 978-3-319-56906-2