



Hannah Arendt

# The Origins of Totalitarianism

NEW EDITION  
WITH ADDED PREFACES

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by HANNAH ARENDT



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**I J K L M**

*Weder dem Vergangenen anheimfallen noch dem Zukünftigen. Es kommt darauf an, ganz gegenwärtig zu sein.* KARL JASPERS

## Preface to the First Edition

**T**WO WORLD WARS in one generation, separated by an uninterrupted chain of local wars and revolutions, followed by no peace treaty for the vanquished and no respite for the victor, have ended in the anticipation of a third World War between the two remaining world powers. This moment of anticipation is like the calm that settles after all hopes have died. We no longer hope for an eventual restoration of the old world order with all its traditions, or for the reintegration of the masses of five continents who have been thrown into a chaos produced by the violence of wars and revolutions and the growing decay of all that has still been spared. Under the most diverse conditions and disparate circumstances, we watch the development of the same phenomena—homelessness on an unprecedented scale, rootlessness to an unprecedented depth.

Never has our future been more unpredictable, never have we depended so much on political forces that cannot be trusted to follow the rules of common sense and self-interest—forces that look like sheer insanity, if judged by the standards of other centuries. It is as though mankind had divided itself between those who believe in human omnipotence (who think that everything is possible if one knows how to organize masses for it) and those for whom powerlessness has become the major experience of their lives.

On the level of historical insight and political thought there prevails an ill-defined, general agreement that the essential structure of all civilizations is at the breaking point. Although it may seem better preserved in some parts of the world than in others, it can nowhere provide the guidance to the possibilities of the century, or an adequate response to its horrors. Desperate hope and desperate fear often seem closer to the center of such events than balanced judgment and measured insight. The central events of our time are not less effectively forgotten by those committed to a belief in an unavoidable doom, than by those who have given themselves up to reckless optimism.

This book has been written against a background of both reckless optimism and reckless despair. It holds that Progress and Doom are two sides of the same medal; that both are articles of superstition, not of faith. It was

written out of the conviction that it should be possible to discover the hidden mechanics by which all traditional elements of our political and spiritual world were dissolved into a conglomeration where everything seems to have lost specific value, and has become unrecognizable for human comprehension, unusable for human purpose. To yield to the mere process of disintegration has become an irresistible temptation, not only because it has assumed the spurious grandeur of "historical necessity," but also because everything outside it has begun to appear lifeless, bloodless, meaningless, and unreal.

The conviction that everything that happens on earth must be comprehensible to man can lead to interpreting history by commonplaces. Comprehension does not mean denying the outrageous, deducing the unprecedented from precedents, or explaining phenomena by such analogies and generalities that the impact of reality and the shock of experience are no longer felt. It means, rather, examining and bearing consciously the burden which our century has placed on us—neither denying its existence nor submitting meekly to its weight. Comprehension, in short, means the unpremeditated, attentive facing up to, and resisting of, reality—whatever it may be.

In this sense, it must be possible to face and understand the outrageous fact that so small (and, in world politics, so unimportant) a phenomenon as the Jewish question and antisemitism could become the catalytic agent for first, the Nazi movement, then a world war, and finally the establishment of death factories. Or, the grotesque disparity between cause and effect which introduced the era of imperialism, when economic difficulties led, in a few decades, to a profound transformation of political conditions all over the world. Or, the curious contradiction between the totalitarian movements' avowed cynical "realism" and their conspicuous disdain of the whole texture of reality. Or, the irritating incompatibility between the actual power of modern man (greater than ever before, great to the point where he might challenge the very existence of his own universe) and the impotence of modern men to live in, and understand the sense of, a world which their own strength has established.

The totalitarian attempt at global conquest and total domination has been the destructive way out of all impasses. Its victory may coincide with the destruction of humanity; wherever it has ruled, it has begun to destroy the essence of man. Yet to turn our backs on the destructive forces of the century is of little avail.

The trouble is that our period has so strangely intertwined the good with the bad that without the imperialists' "expansion for expansion's sake," the world might never have become one; without the bourgeoisie's political device of "power for power's sake," the extent of human strength might never have been discovered; without the fictitious world of totalitarian movements, in which with unparalleled clarity the essential uncertainties of our time have been spelled out, we might have been driven to our doom without ever becoming aware of what has been happening.

And if it is true that in the final stages of totalitarianism an absolute evil

appears (absolute because it can no longer be deduced from humanly comprehensible motives), it is also true that without it we might never have known the truly radical nature of Evil.

Antisemitism (not merely the hatred of Jews), imperialism (not merely conquest), totalitarianism (not merely dictatorship)—one after the other, one more brutally than the other, have demonstrated that human dignity needs a new guarantee which can be found only in a new political principle, in a new law on earth, whose validity this time must comprehend the whole of humanity while its power must remain strictly limited, rooted in and controlled by newly defined territorial entities.

We can no longer afford to take that which was good in the past and simply call it our heritage, to discard the bad and simply think of it as a dead load which by itself time will bury in oblivion. The subterranean stream of Western history has finally come to the surface and usurped the dignity of our tradition. This is the reality in which we live. And this is why all efforts to escape from the grimness of the present into nostalgia for a still intact past, or into the anticipated oblivion of a better future, are vain.

Hannah Arendt

Summer 1950

## Preface to Part One: Antisemitism

**A**NTISEMITISM, a secular nineteenth-century ideology—which in name, though not in argument, was unknown before the 1870's—and religious Jew-hatred, inspired by the mutually hostile antagonism of two conflicting creeds, are obviously not the same; and even the extent to which the former derives its arguments and emotional appeal from the latter is open to question. The notion of an unbroken continuity of persecutions, expulsions, and massacres from the end of the Roman Empire to the Middle Ages, the modern era, and down to our own time, frequently embellished by the idea that modern antisemitism is no more than a secularized version of popular medieval superstitions,<sup>1</sup> is no less fallacious (though of course less mischievous) than the corresponding antisemitic notion of a Jewish secret society that has ruled, or aspired to rule, the world since antiquity. Historically, the hiatus between the late Middle Ages and the modern age with respect to Jewish affairs is even more marked than the rift between Roman antiquity and the Middle Ages, or the gulf—frequently considered to be the most important turning-point of Jewish history in the Diaspora—that separated the catastrophes of the First Crusades from earlier medieval centuries. For this hiatus lasted through nearly two centuries, from the fifteenth to the end of the sixteenth, during which Jewish-Gentile relations were at an all-time low, Jewish “indifference to conditions and events in the outside world”

<sup>1</sup> The latest example of this view is Norman Cohn's *Warrant for Genocide. The myth of the Jewish world-conspiracy and the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion,"* New York, 1966. The author starts from the implied negation that there is such a thing as Jewish history at all. Jews are in his view “people who . . . lived scattered across Europe from the English Channel to the Volga, with very little in common to them all save their descent from adherents of the Jewish religion” (p. 15). Antisemites, on the contrary, can claim direct and unbroken lineage through space and time from the Middle Ages when “Jews had been seen as agents of Satan, devil-worshippers, demons in human form” (p. 41), and the only qualification to such sweeping generalizations that the learned author of *Pursuit of the Millennium* sees fit to make is that he deals only with “the deadliest kind of antisemitism, the kind that results in massacre and attempted genocide” (p. 16). The book also tries rather strenuously to prove that “the mass of the German population was never truly fanaticized against the Jews” and that their extermination “was organized and in the main carried out by the professionals of the SD and the SS,” bodies that “did not by any means represent a typical cross-section of German society” (pp. 212 ff.). How one wishes this statement could be squared with the facts! The result is that the work reads as though it were written about forty years ago by an unduly ingenious member of the *Verein zur Bekämpfung des Antisemitismus* of unhappy memory.

was at an all-time high, and Judaism became "more than ever a closed system of thought." It was at this time that Jews, without any outside interference, began to think "that the difference between Jewry and the nations was fundamentally not one of creed and faith, but one of inner nature" and that the ancient dichotomy between Jews and Gentiles was "more likely to be racial in origin rather than a matter of doctrinal dissension."<sup>2</sup> This shift in evaluating the alien character of the Jewish people, which became common among non-Jews only much later in the Age of Enlightenment, is clearly the condition *sine qua non* for the birth of antisemitism, and it is of some importance to note that it occurred in Jewish self-interpretation first and at about the time when European Christendom split up into those ethnic groups which then came politically into their own in the system of modern nation-states.

The history of antisemitism, like the history of Jew-hatred, is part and parcel of the long and intricate story of Jewish-Gentile relations under the conditions of Jewish dispersion. Interest in this history was practically nonexistent prior to the middle of the nineteenth century, when it coincided with the rise of antisemitism and its furious reaction to emancipated and assimilated Jewry—obviously the worst possible constellation for establishing reliable historical records.<sup>3</sup> Since then, it has been the common fallacy of Jewish and non-Jewish historiography—though mostly for opposite reasons—to isolate the hostile elements in Christian and Jewish sources and to stress the series of catastrophes, expulsions, and massacres that have punctuated Jewish history just as armed and unarmed conflicts, war, famine, and pestilence have punctuated the history of Europe. Needless to add, it was Jewish historiography, with its strong polemical and apologetical bias, that undertook to trace the record of Jew-hatred in Christian history, while it was left to the antisemites to trace an intellectually not too dissimilar record from ancient Jewish authorities. When this Jewish tradition of an often violent antagonism to Christians and Gentiles came to light, "the general Jewish public was not only outraged but genuinely astonished,"<sup>4</sup> so well had its spokesmen succeeded in convincing themselves and everybody else of the non-fact that Jewish separateness was due exclusively to Gentile hostility and lack of enlightenment. Judaism, it was now maintained chiefly by Jewish

<sup>2</sup> The quotations are all drawn from Jacob Katz, *Exclusiveness and Tolerance, Jewish-Gentile Relations in Medieval and Modern Times*, New York, 1962 (Chapter 12), an entirely original study, written on the highest possible level, which indeed should have exploded "many cherished notions of contemporary Jewry," as the jacket claims, but did not because it was almost completely ignored by the general press. Katz belongs among the younger generation of Jewish historians, many of whom teach at the Jerusalem University and publish in Hebrew. Why their work is not more speedily translated and published in this country is something of a mystery. With them, the "lachrymose" presentation of Jewish history, against which Salo W. Baron protested nearly forty years ago, has indeed come to an end.

<sup>3</sup> It is interesting to note that the first modern Jewish historian, J. M. Jost, who wrote in Germany in the middle of the last century, was much less prone to the common prejudices of secular Jewish historiography than his more illustrious successors.

<sup>4</sup> Katz, *op. cit.*, p. 196.



historians, had always been superior to other religions in that it believed in human equality and tolerance. That this self-deceiving theory, accompanied by the belief that the Jewish people had always been the passive, suffering object of Christian persecutions, actually amounted to a prolongation and modernization of the old myth of chosenness and was bound to end in new and often very complicated practices of separation, destined to uphold the ancient dichotomy, is perhaps one of those ironies which seem to be in store for those who, for whatever reasons, try to embellish and manipulate political facts and historical records. For if Jews had anything in common with their non-Jewish neighbors to support their newly proclaimed equality, it was precisely a religiously predetermined, mutually hostile past that was as rich in cultural achievement on the highest level as it was abundant in fanaticism and crude superstitions on the level of the uneducated masses.

However, even the irritating stereotypes of this sort of Jewish historiography rest on a more solid basis of historical fact than the outdated political and social needs of European Jewry in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. While Jewish cultural history was infinitely more diverse than it was then assumed, and while the causes of disaster varied with historical and geographical circumstances, it is true that they varied more in the non-Jewish environment than within the Jewish communities. Two very real factors were decisive for the fateful misconceptions that are still current in popular presentations of Jewish history. Nowhere and at no time after the destruction of the temple did Jews possess their own territory and their own state; they always depended for their physical existence upon the protection of non-Jewish authorities, although some means of self-protection, the right to bear arms, were granted to "the Jews in France and Germany well into the thirteenth century."<sup>5</sup> This does not mean that Jews were always deprived of power, but it is true that in any contest of violence, no matter for what reasons, Jews were not only vulnerable but helpless so that it was only natural, especially in the centuries of complete estrangement that preceded their rise to political equality, that all current outbursts of violence should be experienced by them as mere repetitions. Catastrophes, moreover, were understood in Jewish tradition in terms of martyrology, which in turn had its historical basis in the first centuries of our era, when both Jews and Christians had defied the might of the Roman Empire, as well as in medieval conditions when the alternative of submitting to baptism and thus saving themselves from persecution remained open to Jews even when the cause of violence was not religious but political and economic. This factual constellation gave rise to an optical illusion under which both Jewish and non-Jewish historians have suffered ever since. Historiography "has until now dealt more with the Christian dissociation from the Jews than with the reverse,"<sup>6</sup> thus obliterating the otherwise more important fact that Jewish dissociation from the Gentile world, and more specifically from the Christian environment, has been of greater relevance for Jewish history than the

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

reverse, for the obvious reason that the very survival of the people as an identifiable entity depended upon such voluntary separation and not, as was currently assumed, upon the hostility of Christians and non-Jews. Only in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, after emancipation and with the spread of assimilation, has antisemitism played any role in the conservation of the people, since only then did Jews aspire to being admitted to non-Jewish society.

Whereas anti-Jewish sentiments were widespread among the educated classes of Europe throughout the nineteenth century, antisemitism as an ideology remained, with very few exceptions, the prerogative of crackpots in general and the lunatic fringe in particular. Even the dubious products of Jewish apologetics, which never convinced anybody but the convinced, were towering examples of erudition and scholarship compared with what the enemies of Jews had to offer in matters of historical research.<sup>7</sup> When, after the close of the war, I began to organize the material for this book, which had been collected from documentary sources and sometimes excellent monographs over a period of more than ten years, there did not exist a single over-all presentation of its subject matter that could be said to conform to the most elementary standards of historical scholarship. And the situation has hardly changed since. This is all the more deplorable as the need for an impartial, truthful treatment of Jewish history has recently become greater than it has ever been before. Twentieth-century political developments have driven the Jewish people into the storm center of events; the Jewish question and antisemitism, relatively unimportant phenomena in terms of world politics, became the catalytic agent first for the rise of the Nazi movement and the establishment of the organizational structure of the Third Reich, in which every citizen had to prove that he was *not* a Jew, then for a world war of unparalleled ferocity, and finally for the emergence of the unprecedented crime of genocide in the midst of Occidental civilization. That this called not only for lamentation and denunciation but for comprehension seemed to me obvious. This book is an attempt at understanding what at first and even second glance appeared simply outrageous.

Comprehension, however, does not mean denying the outrageous, deducing the unprecedented from precedents, or explaining phenomena by such analogies and generalities that the impact of reality and the shock of experience are no longer felt. It means, rather, examining and bearing consciously the burden that events have placed upon us—neither denying their existence nor submitting meekly to their weight as though everything that in fact happened could not have happened otherwise. Comprehension, in short, means the unpremeditated, attentive facing up to, and resisting of, reality—whatever it may be or might have been.

For this comprehension a certain familiarity with Jewish history in nine-

<sup>7</sup> The only exception is the antisemitic historian Walter Frank, the head of the Nazi *Reichsinstitut für Geschichte des Neuen Deutschlands* and the editor of nine volumes of *Forschungen zur Judenfrage*, 1937–1944. Especially Frank's own contributions can still be consulted with profit.

teenth-century Europe and the attendant development of antisemitism is indispensable though, of course, not sufficient. The following chapters deal with only those elements in nineteenth-century history which indeed belong among the "origins of totalitarianism." A comprehensive history of antisemitism remains still to be written and is beyond the scope of this book. So long as this lacuna exists, there is enough justification even in terms of mere scholarship to publish the following chapters as an independent contribution toward a more comprehensive history, although it was originally conceived as a constituent part of the prehistory, as it were, of totalitarianism. Moreover, what is true for the history of antisemitism, that it fell into the hands of non-Jewish crackpots and Jewish apologetics, and was carefully avoided by reputable historians, is true, *mutatis mutandis*, for nearly all elements that later crystallized in the novel totalitarian phenomenon; they had hardly been noticed by either learned or public opinion because they belonged to a subterranean stream of European history where, hidden from the light of the public and the attention of enlightened men, they had been able to gather an entirely unexpected virulence.

Since only the final crystallizing catastrophe brought these subterranean trends into the open and to public notice, there has been a tendency to simply equate totalitarianism with its elements and origins—as though every outburst of antisemitism or racism or imperialism could be identified as "totalitarianism." This fallacy is as misleading in the search for historical truth as it is pernicious for political judgment. Totalitarian politics—far from being simply antisemitic or racist or imperialist or communist—use and abuse their own ideological and political elements until the basis of factual reality, from which the ideologies originally derived their strength and their propaganda value—the reality of class struggle, for instance, or the interest conflicts between Jews and their neighbors—have all but disappeared. It certainly would be a serious error to underestimate the role sheer racism has played and is still playing in the government of the Southern states, but it would be an even more serious fallacy to arrive at the retrospective conclusion that large areas of the United States have been under totalitarian rule for more than a century. The only direct, unadulterated consequence of nineteenth-century antisemitic movements was not Nazism but, on the contrary, Zionism, which, at least in its Western ideological form, was a kind of counterideology, the "answer" to antisemitism. This, incidentally, is not to say that Jewish self-consciousness was ever a mere creation of antisemitism; even a cursory knowledge of Jewish history, whose central concern since the Babylonian exile has always been the survival of the people against the overwhelming odds of dispersion, should be enough to dispel this latest myth in these matters, a myth that has become somewhat fashionable in intellectual circles after Sartre's "existentialist" interpretation of *the Jew* as someone who is regarded and defined as a Jew by others.

The best illustration of both the distinction and the connection between pre-totalitarian and totalitarian antisemitism is perhaps the ludicrous story of the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion." The Nazi use of the forgery as a text-

book for global conquest is certainly not part of the history of antisemitism, but only this history can explain why the improbable tale contained enough plausibility to be useful as anti-Jewish propaganda to begin with. What, on the other hand, it can not explain is why the totalitarian claim to global rule, to be exercised by members and methods of a secret society, should become an attractive political goal at all. This latter, politically (though not propagandistically) much more relevant function has its origin in imperialism in general, in its highly explosive continental version, the so-called pan-movements in particular.

This book then is limited in time and place as well as in subject matter. Its analyses concern Jewish history in Central and Western Europe from the time of the court Jews to the Dreyfus Affair insofar as it was relevant to the birth of antisemitism and influenced by it. It deals with antisemitic movements that were still pretty solidly grounded in factual realities characteristic of Jewish-Gentile relations, that is, in the part Jews played in the development of the nation-state on one side and in their role in non-Jewish society on the other. The emergence of the first antisemitic parties in the 1870's and 1880's marks the moment when the limited, factual basis of interest conflict and demonstrable experience was transcended and that road opened which ended in the "final solution." From then on, in the era of imperialism, followed by the period of totalitarian movements and governments, it is no longer possible to isolate the Jewish question or the antisemitic ideology from issues that are actually almost completely unrelated to the realities of modern Jewish history. And this is not merely and not primarily because these matters played such a prominent role in world affairs, but because antisemitism itself was now being used for ulterior purposes that, though their implementation finally claimed Jews as their chief victims, left all particular issues of both Jewish and anti-Jewish interest far behind.

The reader will find the imperialist and totalitarian versions of twentieth-century antisemitism, respectively, in the second and third volumes of this work.

Hannah Arendt

July 1967

## Preface to Part Two: Imperialism

**R**ARELY could the beginnings of a historical period be dated with such precision and seldom were the chances for contemporary observers to witness its definite end so good as in the case of the imperialist era. For imperialism, which grew out of colonialism and was caused by the incongruity of the nation-state system with the economic and industrial developments in the last third of the nineteenth century, started its politics of expansion for expansion's sake no sooner than around 1884, and this new version of power politics was as different from national conquests in border wars as it was from true empire-building Roman style. Its end seemed unavoidable after "the liquidation of His Majesty's Empire," over which Churchill had refused "to preside," had become an accomplished fact with the declaration of Indian independence. That the British liquidated their colonial rule voluntarily is still one of the most momentous events of twentieth-century history, and after this had happened no European nation could hold on to its overseas possessions. The only exception is Portugal, and her strange ability to continue a fight that all other European colonial powers had to give up may be due to her national backwardness even more than to Salazar's dictatorship; for it was not mere weakness or the exhaustion due to two murderous wars in one generation but also the moral scruples and political apprehensions of the fully developed nation-states that advised against extreme measures, the introduction of "administrative massacres" (A. Carhill) that might well have broken the nonviolent rebellion in India, and against a continuation of the "government of subject races" (Lord Cromer) because of the much-feared boomerang effect upon the mother countries. When finally France, thanks to the then still intact authority of De Gaulle, dared to give up Algeria, which she had always considered as much a part of France as the *département de la Seine*, a point of no return seemed to have been reached.

Whatever the merits of this hope might have been if the hot war against Nazi Germany had not been followed by the cold war between Soviet Russia and the United States, in retrospect one is tempted to look upon the last two decades as the time-span during which the two most powerful countries of the earth jockeyed for position in a competitive struggle for predominance in more or less the same regions in which European nations had ruled before. In the same vein one is tempted to look upon the new uneasy *détente*

between Russia and America as the result of the emergence of a third potential world power, China, rather than as the healthy and natural consequence of Russia's detotalitarization after Stalin's death. And if further developments should validate such tentative interpretations, it would mean in historical terms that we are back, on an enormously enlarged scale, where we started from, that is, in the imperialist era and on the collision course that led to World War I.

It has often been said that the British acquired their empire in a fit of absent-mindedness, as consequence of automatic trends, yielding to what seemed possible and what was tempting, rather than as a result of deliberate policy. If this is true, then the road to hell may just as well be paved with no intentions as with the proverbial good ones. And the objective facts that invite a return to imperialist policies are indeed so strong today that one is inclined to believe at least in the half-truth of the statement, the hollow assurances of good intentions on both sides—American "commitments" to the nonviable status quo of corruption and incompetence on one side, Russian pseudo-revolutionary talk about wars of national liberation on the other—notwithstanding. The processes of nation-building in backward areas where lack of all prerequisites for national independence is in exact proportion to a rampant, sterile chauvinism have resulted in enormous power vacuums, for which the competition between the superpowers is all the fiercer, as with the development of nuclear weapons a direct confrontation of their means of violence as a last resort to "solve" all conflicts seems to be definitely ruled out. Not only does every conflict between the small, undeveloped countries in these vast areas, be it a civil war in Vietnam or a national conflict in the Middle East, immediately attract the potential or actual intervention of the superpowers, but their very conflicts, or at least the timing of their outbreaks, are suspect of having been manipulated or directly caused by interests and maneuvers that have nothing whatsoever to do with the conflicts and interests at stake in the region itself. Nothing was so characteristic of power politics in the imperialist era than this shift from localized, limited and therefore predictable goals of national interest to the limitless pursuit of power after power that could roam and lay waste the whole globe with no certain nationally and territorially prescribed purpose and hence with no predictable direction. This backsliding has become apparent also on the ideological level, for the famous domino-theory, according to which American foreign policy feels committed to wage war in one country for the sake of the integrity of others that are not even its neighbors, is clearly but a new version of the old "Great Game" whose rules permitted and even dictated the consideration of whole nations as stepping-stones, or as pawns, in today's terminology, for the riches and the rule over a third country, which in turn became a mere stepping-stone in the unending process of power expansion and accumulation. It was this chain reaction, inherent in imperialist power politics and best represented on the human level by the figure of the secret agent, of which Kipling said (in *Kim*), "When every one is dead the Great Game is finished. Not be-

fore"; and the only reason his prophecy did not come true was the constitutional restraint of the nation-state, while today our only hope that it will not come true in the future is based on the constitutional restraints of the American republic plus the technological restraints of the nuclear age.

This is not to deny that the unexpected revival of imperialist policies and methods takes place under vastly changed conditions and circumstances. The initiative for overseas expansion has shifted westward from England and Western Europe to America, and the initiative for continental expansion in close geographic continuity no longer comes from Central and Eastern Europe but is exclusively located in Russia. Imperialist policies, more than any other single factor, have brought about the decline of Europe, and the prophecies of statesmen and historians that the two giants flanking the European nations on the east and on the west would ultimately emerge as the heirs of her power seem to have come true. No one justifies expansion any longer by "the white man's burden" on one side and an "enlarged tribal consciousness" to unite people of similar ethnic origin on the other; instead we hear of "commitments" to client states, of the responsibilities of power, and of solidarity with revolutionary national liberation movements. The very word "expansion" has disappeared from our political vocabulary, which now uses the words "extension" or, critically, "overextension" to cover a very similar meaning. Politically more important, private investments in distant lands, originally the prime mover of imperialist developments, are today surpassed by foreign aid, economic and military, provided directly by governments. (In 1966 alone, the American government spent \$4.6 billion in economic aid and foreign credits plus \$1.3 billion a year in military aid in the decade 1956-1965, while the outflow of private capital in 1965 was \$3.69 billion and in 1966 \$3.91 billion.)<sup>1</sup> This means that the era of the so-called dollar imperialism, the specifically American version of pre-World War II imperialism that was politically the least dangerous, is definitely over. Private investments—"the activities of a thousand U.S. companies operating in a hundred foreign countries" and "concentrated in the most modern, the most strategic, the most rapidly growing sectors of the foreign economy"—create many political problems even if they are not protected by the power of the nation,<sup>2</sup> but foreign aid, even if given for purely humanitarian reasons, is political by nature precisely because it is not motivated by the search for profit. Billions of dollars have been spent in political and economic wastelands where corruption and incompetence have caused them to disappear before anything productive could be started, and this money is no longer the "superfluous" capital that could not be invested productively and profitably in the home country but the weird outgrowth of sheer abundance that the rich countries, the haves as against the have-nots, can afford to lose. In other words, the profit motive, whose

<sup>1</sup> The figures are quoted from Leo Model, "The Politics of Private Foreign Investment" and Kenneth M. Kauffman and Helena Stalson, "U.S. Assistance to less developed Countries, 1956-65" respectively, both in *Foreign Affairs*, July, 1967.

<sup>2</sup> L. Model's article quoted above (p. 641) gives a very valuable and pertinent analysis of these problems.

importance for imperialist policies was frequently overrated even in the past, has now completely disappeared; only very rich and very powerful countries can afford to take the huge losses involved in imperialism.

It probably is too early, and certainly beyond the scope of my considerations, to analyze and ascertain with any degree of confidence these recent trends. What seems uncomfortably clear even now is the strength of certain, seemingly uncontrollable processes that tend to shatter all hopes for constitutional development in the new nations and to undermine the republican institutions in the old. Examples are too many to permit even cursory enumeration, but the rise of an "invisible government" by secret services, whose reach into domestic affairs, the cultural, educational, and economic sectors of our life, has only recently been revealed, is too ominous a sign to be passed under silence. There is no reason to doubt Mr. Allan W. Dulles' statement that Intelligence in this country has enjoyed since 1947 "a more influential position in our government than Intelligence enjoys in any other government of the world,"<sup>3</sup> nor is there any reason to believe that this influence has decreased since he made this statement in 1958. The deadly danger of "invisible government" to the institutions of the "visible government" has often been pointed out; what is perhaps less well known is the intimate traditional connection between imperialist politics and rule by "invisible government" and secret agents. It is an error to believe that the creation of a net of secret services in this country after World War II was the answer to a direct threat to its national survival by the espionage network of Soviet Russia; the war had propelled the United States to the position of the greatest world power and it was this world power, rather than national existence, that was challenged by the revolutionary power of Moscow-directed communism.<sup>4</sup>

Whatever the causes for American ascendancy to world power, the deliberate pursuit of a foreign policy leading to it or any claim to global rule are not among them. And the same is probably true for the country's recent and still tentative steps in the direction of imperialist power politics for which its form of government is less fitted than that of any other country. The enormous gap between the Western countries and the rest of the world, not only and not primarily in riches but in education, technical know-how, and general competence, has plagued international relations ever since the beginnings of genuine world politics. And this gulf, far from decreasing in recent decades under the pressure of the rapidly developing communication

<sup>3</sup> This is what Mr. Dulles said in a speech at Yale University in 1957, according to David Wise and Thomas B. Ross, *The Invisible Government*, New York, 1964, p. 2.

<sup>4</sup> According to Mr. Dulles, the government had to "fight fire with fire," and then with a disarming frankness by which the former head of the CIA distinguished himself from his colleagues in other countries, he went on to explain what this meant. The CIA, by implication, had to model itself upon the Soviet State Security Service, which "is more than a secret police organization, more than an intelligence and counter-intelligence organization. It is an instrument for *subversion, manipulation and violence, for secret intervention in the affairs of other countries.*" (Italics added.) See Allen W. Dulles, *The Craft of Intelligence*, New York, 1963, p. 155.



systems and the resulting shrinkage of distance on the earth, has constantly grown and is now assuming truly alarming proportions. "Population growth rates in less developed countries were double those in the more advanced countries,"\* and while this factor alone would make it imperative for them to turn to those with surplus food and surplus technological and political knowledge, it is also this same factor which defeats all help. Obviously, the larger the population the less help per capita it will receive, and the truth of the matter is that after two decades of massive help programs all the countries that had not been able to help themselves to begin with—like Japan—are poorer, further away from either economic or political stability than ever. As for the chances of imperialism, this situation improves them frightfully for the simple reason that sheer numbers have never mattered less; white rule in South Africa where the tyrannical minority is outnumbered almost ten to one probably was never more secure than today. It is this objective situation that turns all foreign aid into an instrument of foreign domination and puts all countries that need this help for their decreasing chances of physical survival before the alternative of accepting some form of "government of subject races" or sinking rapidly into anarchic decay.

This book deals only with the strictly European colonial imperialism whose end came with the liquidation of British rule in India. It tells the story of the disintegration of the nation-state that proved to contain nearly all the elements necessary for the subsequent rise of totalitarian movements and governments. Before the imperialist era, there was no such thing as world politics, and without it, the totalitarian claim to global rule would not have made sense. During this period, the nation-state system proved incapable of either devising new rules for the handling of foreign affairs that had become global affairs or enforcing a Pax Romana on the rest of the world. Its political narrowness and shortsightedness ended in the disaster of totalitarianism, whose unprecedented horrors have overshadowed the ominous events and the even more ominous mentality of the preceding period. Scholarly inquiry has almost exclusively concentrated on Hitler's Germany and Stalin's Russia at the expense of their less harmful predecessors. Imperialist rule, except for the purpose of name-calling, seems half-forgotten, and the chief reason why this is deplorable is that its relevance for contemporary events has become rather obvious in recent years. Thus, the controversy about the United States' undeclared war in Vietnam has been conducted from both sides in terms of analogies with Munich or other examples drawn from the thirties when indeed totalitarian rule was the only clear and present, all-too present, danger, but the threats of today's policies in deeds and words bear a much more portentous resemblance to the deeds and verbal justifications that preceded the outbreak of World War I, when a spark in a peripheral region of minor interest to all concerned could start a world-wide conflagration.

To stress the unhappy relevance of this half-forgotten period for contem-

\* See the very instructive article by Orville L. Freeman, "Malthus, Marx and the North American Breadbasket," in *Foreign Affairs*, July, 1967.