

EXCURSUS II

On the Classification of Tyrannies

At its best liberalism is against tyranny in any form, "right" or "left." This is one of its abiding virtues, and I would not disparage it. The liberal media have been vocally deploring the shift from right-wing to left-wing dictatorship in Portugal, and at least some of them seem to perceive the inundation of Indochina by the Communist tide as something other than "liberation" from the "repressive regimes" of Thieu, Lon Nol, et al. (This perception is no doubt being reinforced by the hundreds of thousands of people desperately trying to escape from the "liberation"; I cannot pursue here the implications of the fact for some of the fondest illusions held about Indochina by liberal opinion in this country.)

It is very likely that in the next few years there will be similar shifts in the ideological coloration of dictatorships—in Spain perhaps, or in the eastern Mediterranean, not to mention Taiwan, South Korea, and other regimes on the liberal "enemies list." In that event I have confidence (and I do *not* mean this ironically) that the liberal media will deplore the waves of terror that will almost inevitably follow these take-overs.

It is morally odious to condone inhumanity on one side of any political divide while aggressively denouncing it on the other side. I think the record shows that liberals have been no more guilty of this than others, perhaps even less guilty. But there is a fault of perception, rather than morality, which seems to be deeply ingrained in the liberal view of the world. This fault is an inability to differentiate between the two principal types of tyranny in our time—that is, between authoritarian and totalitarian regimes. Anyone familiar with political science will realize that, in pointing to this difference, I am saying nothing new. I believe that Hannah Arendt has made this particular distinction very clear, and there have been others. But even unoriginal perceptions must be reiterated at certain times.

Neither type, incidentally, can be defined in terms of the degree of terror or "repressiveness" it employs; terror is, so to speak, an independent variable, and there are regimes that are neither authoritarian nor totalitarian that employ "repressive" measures to control opposition (South Africa is a case in point). The differentiation between the two types should be made, quite simply, in terms of the scope and degree of state power. An authoritarian state exercises its power without legally recognized opposition; a totalitarian state utilizes its power to control and penetrate every major institution in the society. This dif-

ference will appear academic to a dissenter being beaten up by the political police at a given moment. The difference is anything but academic in an assessment of the societal consequences and, very important, the probable future development of a regime.

The authoritarian regimes of the twentieth century differ from older forms of tyranny mainly in the technical apparatus for communication and control available to a modern government. The totalitarian state, by contrast, is an innovation of the twentieth century. Its main characteristic is what the Nazis very aptly called *Gleichschaltung*—the permeation and integration of every aspect of social life by the organs of the state. The authoritarian state is content to neutralize all sources of opposition; the totalitarian state seeks to absorb all of society into itself. The authoritarian state imposes strong controls over the economy; the totalitarian state runs the economy. (In this connection I will point out the unfashionable implication that, while socialism is not necessarily totalitarian, it has a built-in totalitarian tendency, precisely because it rejects any autonomy of the economic sphere over against the political structure. The objection that things would be different in a "truly socialist" society is theoretically interesting, but has little bearing on any empirically available situation.) Also the authoritarian state is generally content to let people alone in their private lives, just as long as they are not politically dangerous; the totalitarian state is not so content, but insists on "mobilizing" its population in every conceivable area of their lives. For the individual dissenter the authoritarian situation almost always allows the option of "inner emigration"; the totalitarian state, by contrast, insists on continuous and visible "participation." Thus it has been a constant aim of totalitarian regimes to abolish any zones of refuge from the demands of politics—in the family, the churches, or in cultural institutions. Everybody and everything must be politically *gleichgeschaltet*, and even the notion of private life is seen as a threat.

Totalitarianism can have quite different ideological allegiances. It may be "right" or "left." But it is very important to perceive that the *only* totalitarian states in existence today are Communist ones. Again, this has a most unfashionable but very important implication: The danger of totalitarianism today is pretty much identical with the advance of communism as a form of government. (To say this, by the way, does not prejudge the question of whether there may be Communist regimes that are *not* totalitarian. Yugoslavia is an important case in point. Unfortunately, one must stretch the point in thinking of other possible cases.)

There is finally one other observation to be made, and it is the most important one: As far as our experience to date goes, *the totalitarian situation is irreversible*. In contrast to the fairly large number of

successful coups against authoritarian regimes, *there is not a single instance of successful revolution against a totalitarian state*. Nor is there any mystery about this, once one has grasped the pervasiveness of totalitarian controls. It is, of course, not possible altogether to dismiss as illusion the view that totalitarian states will, in time, soften and transform themselves into entities more palatable to human sensibilities. History to date gives little comfort, though, to this view.

Thus, if Portugal should indeed be in process now of becoming something like a "people's republic," this is not just a shift from one form of dictatorship to another. The shift is not in the quantity of "repression" but in its quality. What we are facing in the world today is the slow, glacierlike expansion of the Gulag Archipelago. To be sure (and there is some hope in this), even this has changed somewhat since its Stalinist heyday. In much of the world, then, people have some reason to hope for a slavery with a human face.

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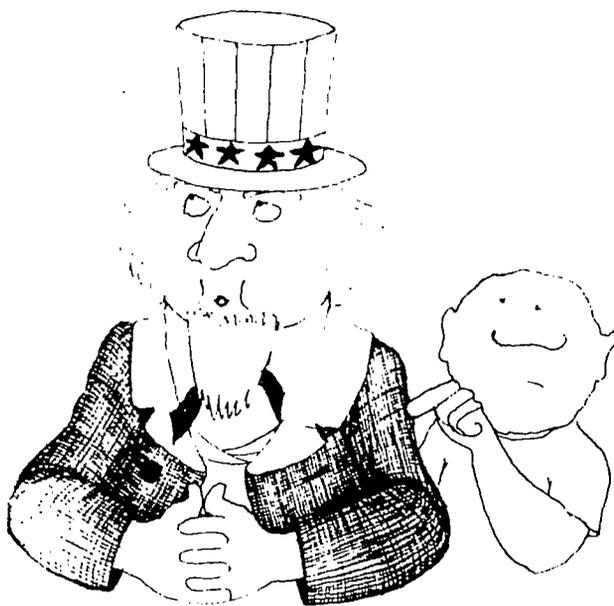
EXCURSUS III

Xenophobic America

The flags of the United Nations that once waved in Manhattan's sooty breeze above the Rockefeller Center skating rink have been replaced by the banners of America's fifty states and various overseas territories. The ostensible reason for the switch was the bicentennial celebration, but perhaps there were other motivations. Certainly the cleaning bill was considerably reduced, and finding flagpole space for each emerging nation as it emerges is no longer a problem. Other possibilities are that the change reflects general disillusionment with the United Nations or perhaps the small but real ripple of xenophobia that is spreading over the country.

Familiar Third World arguments against the peril of subjugation to foreign capital now pop out of the mouths of the natives of the ubiquitously denounced capital of international finance. Few Americans relish the idea of the Shah and Sheiks of Araby taking over General Motors and the Bank of America; but, talking with businessmen in recent years, I also have discerned a feeling of distaste and uneasiness about Japan and Europe investing in America in the same way America has been investing overseas. Admittedly, this is a minor phenomenon, mitigated by an interest in job-productive industry.

Xenophobia, at this time, is more important as an element in the renewed interest in illegal aliens, who—it is often claimed—are stealing millions of jobs from American citizens. Although immigration policy is a legitimate object of concern, it is an issue that easily lends itself to demagoguery. Nobody really knows how many illegal aliens are in the country or how many occupy positions that otherwise would have been occupied by citizens. It is a problem that will never be wholly resolved—which is not an argument against trying to resolve it, for the same may be stated about any item in the criminal code.



James Stripling

But there is a moral problem. Illegal immigrants unquestionably have broken the law, but otherwise they may be decent and even commendable people. On a television news program Bronx Congressman Mario Biaggi blusteringly argued on behalf of stricter measures against illegal immigrants, and then admitted he sorely regretted not having had the experience of meeting some. Public service is easier when the public servant does not have to face the victim of his policies.

On March 17 the *New York Times* reported that representatives of Roman Catholic dioceses in the Northeast had convoked a symposium on the subject of illegal immigrants. They agreed on urging amnesty for those now in the country and further action and legislation to prevent future buildups. They also urged the Church to sponsor an educational campaign to counteract the illegal alien's negative image.

Hard times build constituencies for easy solutions. Last month, at a service station in New Jer-