

WEAKNESSES IN EXTREME DICTATORSHIPS

On the basis of what we know of the Nazi and Communist systems, and certain lesser dictatorships, it is possible to indicate various specific weaknesses in them. These are factors which will in time, even without deliberate efforts to aggravate them, produce changes which in differing degrees will modify the capacities and characteristics of the dictatorship. For example, these weaknesses may produce the following results:

- restrict the freedom of action of the regime;
- induce the regime to be more considerate of the needs and wishes of the population;
- reduce the brutality and repression;
- contribute to the regime's becoming less doctrinal in its own actions;
- reduce the degree to which the regime is in effective control of the society;
- destroy the myth of the regime's omniscience;
- at the mildest, cause the system to become somewhat "liberalized" or even democratized; and
- at the extremity, cause the system to disintegrate.

The following are some of the weaknesses of extreme dictatorships, including totalitarian systems:

1. The cooperation of a multitude of different people and groups which is needed to operate the system may be restricted or withdrawn.
2. The regime's freedom of action may be limited by past policies, the requirements and effects of which still continue.
3. The system may become routine in its operation, therefore more moderate and less able to shift its activities drastically at the service of doctrinal imperatives and sudden policy shifts.
4. The allocation of personnel and resources for existing tasks will limit their availability for new ones.
5. The central command may receive from the lower echelons inaccurate or incomplete information on which to make decisions, for subordinates may be fearful of inducing displeasure from higher echelons.
6. The ideology may erode, and the myths and symbols of the system become unstable.

7. Firm adherence to the ideology may lead to decisions injurious to the system because insufficient attention is given to actual conditions and needs.
8. The system may be inefficient due to deteriorating competency and effectiveness of the bureaucracy, or to excessive controls and red tape; consequently, the system's policies and normal operations may become ineffective.
9. The system's internal conflicts of various types may detrimentally affect and even disrupt its operation.
10. Intellectuals and students may become restless in response to conditions, restrictions, doctrinalism, and repression.
11. The general public may over time become apathetic or skeptical.
12. Regional, class, cultural, or national differences may become acute.
13. The power hierarchy will always be to some degree unstable, at times highly so.
14. Sections of the political police or the military forces may possess sufficient power to exert pressures to achieve their own ends, or even to act against the established rulers.
15. In the case of a new dictatorship, time is required for it to become firmly established, which allows an especially vulnerable period.
16. The extreme concentration of decision-making and command means that too many decisions will be made by too few people to avoid errors.
17. If the regime, in order to avoid some of these problems, decides to diffuse decision-making and administration, this will lead to further erosion of central controls, and often to the creation of dispersed new power centers which may seek to expand their power at the cost of the center.

Such weaknesses of extreme dictatorships do not, of course, mean that disintegration occurs quickly, or even at all, regardless of other factors at play in the situation. Dictatorial systems are often aware of at least some of their weaknesses, and take measures to counteract them. Also, under appropriate circumstances even very inefficient and incompetent regimes often manage to survive for remarkably long periods of time, and people may, as Riesman said, "mistake blundering compulsions or even accidents of 'the system' for conspiratorial genius."¹⁰

It should be possible, however, to learn much more than we now