These ideas became key ideological features of National Socialism. One idea supported the other. They appealed to the special interests of a humiliated people. These ideas caused a sense of distorted reality and legitimized suppression of others. The notion of belonging to a superior race, with a superior leader, served as immunization against criticism and correction, and the political organizations built on these foundations.

However, it's one thing to say that German National Socialism met the criteria for an ideology and that this ideology led to political illusions and ill-fated destruction. But it's quite another thing to say that this was a decisive factor in the fall of Nazism. We are not attempting to analyze the truly appalling events of World War II here, nor criticize Nazi ideology on moral grounds, but rather elaborate on the cause of its demise. To blame the authoritarian military discipline or the brutal treatment of prisoners for the fall of Nazism is hardly convincing.

Full mobilization of the Soviet Union and the democratic West came a bit too late in the game, primarily as a reaction to war atrocities. By 1939, circumstances could have paved the way for Germany's victory. On the other hand, Germany was ruled by an unpredictable *Führer* churning out inflammatory, intolerable decisions that were beyond repair by the political opposition or by military means. One unforeseen result was the war on two fronts. Another was the notion of "Bolshevism," which posed a threat to civilization, and the racist beliefs intended to legitimize launching an attack on the Soviet Union. These proved singularly destructive for the German forces, as Germany's inhumane treatment of Ukrainian and other Slavic nations in the East turned potential allies into bitter enemies. The notion of Aryan superiority led to the issuing of military orders to German soldiers that were impossible to carry out.

But the blame cannot be laid solely at the door of a mad leader for all the political and military mistakes that ultimately led to the German defeat and the subsequent widespread aversion not only to National Socialism, but to right-wing conservative politics in general. The German *Führer* made depraved decisions because of his belief in the ideology. When Hitler finally became impossible to correct, this demonstrated how the political system was built on the foundations of dictatorial ideology. The history of German National Socialism tells the tale of ideologies in political development, regardless of any objective interests canvassed by ideological agents.

THE RELATIVITY OF IDEOLOGIES

The foregoing ought to convince us that important European ideologies of the past share a number of traits. Being uncomplicated social models with strong

moral appeal, they often had a politically unifying and rallying effect. At the same time, they fostered oversimplification and a distorted reality. These ideologies gave many people an insight into certain social contexts, but they also provided blinders. The self-immunizing explanations, which could appear to be a defense against system-threatening criticism, have hampered genuine dialogue with and correction from other approaches and traditions. This was a key factor in a series of flawed conclusions that resulted in the loss of credibility and influence on the part of once dominant ideologies.

Ideologies not only contain legitimate interests of a personal and political nature; they also represent interpretive approaches with an inner logic, whose end results are at odds with the interests of the spokesmen for these same ideologies.

Perception after the fact is always easier. It is, however, far more difficult to decide whether contemporary cultural life and politics are also characterized by a pervasive mentality associated with an overarching ideology. Nor is it all that easy to see what kinds of challenges are destined to collide with the logic of such an ideology. This is discussed in later chapters.

Despite everything that would seem to suggest that relativization of once predominant ideologies is permissible, widespread bias exists in our day and age to label these ideologies as either good or evil, in keeping with a specific moral standard for democratic freedom. The liberal tradition is usually categorized as "good," even though the old liberalism fell short in terms of legislative frameworks and social policies. Socialism can be said to have good intentions, and can be called "righteous" as far as keeping democratic traditions is concerned, but dangerous when it led to too much power for a political party. Generally speaking, conservatism is seen as historically outmoded. To the extent that traditions need defending, they must be justified in terms of modern values. National Socialism and Fascism are altogether regarded as "evil," as deviations from a mainline historical tradition that pointed in the direction of humanitarianism and more freedom for the individual.

Based on such perceptions, it might seem reasonable and impartial to build further on the liberal tradition of individual freedom, combining this with a select socialism-inspired social policy in order to safeguard citizens' rights and ensure that no one becomes a social pariah. We have seen relatively little in conservative political debate that argues for how the formation of modern states presupposes a civil union of beliefs and tradition, of culture and cult. Similarly, little has emerged in the way of radical right-wing arguments in favor of cultural elitism or conscious selection in order to keep culture on an even keel.

The reasons for this taboo label are clearly related to the genocide that took place during World War II. We should by no means underestimate these dastardly crimes, although we cannot sum it all up in one statement. In view of the relativity of all previous prevalent ideologies, there are grounds for taking
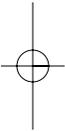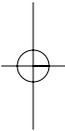
a closer look even at the spread of genocide in the last century and to ask ourselves whether this was typical only of regimes with a marked radical right-wing ideology, and whether it is reasonable to regard genocide as a direct diversion on the part of political ideologies of a certain stripe. This is not a search for arguments in favor of rehabilitating some form of Nazism, but a desire to make democracy more open to pertinent criticism, which will in turn boost its resistance in the face of inevitable challenges.

It is easy to find examples that demonstrate how all previously dominant ideologies were manipulated to legitimize social conditions which in some way or another were contributing factors to civilian mass murder—from the British concentration camps during the Boer War, to Belgian colonial policies, to the Soviet Gulag, the German Holocaust, the starvation policies under the Chinese Great Leap Forward, and the systematic executions in the former Cambodia. Literature is rife with examples, although estimates of the scope of the genocide remain, for obvious reasons, a matter of opinion.

R. J. Rummel, an American professor of political science at the University of Hawaii, is among those who tried to survey serious literature on genocide during the 20th century. After comparing the work of scientists in the field, he arrived at average figures for civilian genocide committed by governments. He concluded that the death of between 160 and 170 million non-combatants resulted from political decisions made during the 20th century. Stalin and his fellow party members are believed to be responsible for around 40 million of these deaths, Mao for 30–40 million, Hitler for about 20 million, and Chiang Kai-Shek for about 10 million.[25] Although some of these figures are in dispute—the total number of Stalin's victims was probably an overestimation by professor Rummel's referees, while the number of Mao's murders an underestimation—the scale of these tragedies simply cannot be justified.

Rummel's figures seem to suggest that left-wing ideologies have tended to be more dangerous than those on the right, with a key exception for the years of Nazi dominance. Rummel argues, however, that we will miss the mark if we attempt to explain monumental genocide on the basis of specific ideologies. The unbridled power of totalitarian regimes is the lethal element in this instance, rather than ideologies—which, after all, make room for opponents and allow them to serve as correctives. This conclusion tells us something about the characteristics of totalitarian regimes that are typically associated with mass murderers during the 20th century.[26] Totalitarian regimes of sundry ideological flavors were always more brutal than authoritarian regimes, which in turn were more bloodthirsty than democratic regimes. The annual average statistics for executions given by Professor Rummel were 0.40% for totalitarian regimes (0.52% for totalitarian communist regimes), 0.21% for authoritarian regimes and 0.01% for democratic regimes.[27]

These comparative figures indicate more than the notion that genocide is primarily associated with radical right-wing movements, which spokesmen for left-wing radicals have often taken for granted. This comparison could have been interpreted by liberal spokesmen as proof that extremism in itself is dangerous. But even when ideologies are categorized into moderate and extreme forms, this expresses how something relative is transformed into something absolute. Some will argue that even liberal ideology can be exploited to legitimize social conditions that might trigger discrimination and even murder.

Here we should stress that all ideologies can have inadvertent repercussions, and that external circumstances often determine the potential realization of a given ideology. It's one thing to show that political structures that lead to genocide can be legitimized on the basis of specific ideologies, but quite another thing to claim that certain ideologies are bound to lead to genocide. As a rule, it is the fatal combination of ideological and external circumstances that makes these genocides possible. Nor can the most notorious link between ideology and genocide—between German National Socialism and the extermination of European Jews—be explained solely on the basis of ideology. In the original 25-point program for NSDAP, one of the points stated, admittedly, that Jews could not be citizens of the Third Reich; but no mention was made as to how Jews were to be excluded. Later, a number of proposals were put forth, mostly involving banishment, until the political events at the end of 1941 gave rise to a plan for the Final Solution—*ein Endlösung*.[28]

Based on Rummel's reasoning, it is not ideologies of a certain stripe that are dangerous—provided they tolerate opposition. Rather, it is power with no corrective counterforce that sooner or later leads to abuse of power and to murder. One of Rummel's books is entitled, quite simply, *Power Kills*.[29]

Thus, the best institutional guarantee against genocide should be pluralistic democracies, which grant the opposition the right to voice its opinion, where power shifts are possible on the basis of public debate and elections. Even though this is hardly a satisfactory recipe for a functional democracy, and even though democracy cannot guarantee that the best side will always win, this should nevertheless prove to be a good defense in hindering the worst elements from assuming absolute power.

NOTES

1. Hans J. Eysenck and Glenn D. Wilson, *The Psychological Basis of Ideology* (Lancaster: MTB, 1978), 210–222.

2. Harold Laski., *The Rise of European Liberalism* (New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publications, 1997).

3. Steven Lukes, *Individualism.* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1973).

4. The expressions "old liberalism" and "new liberalism" in this context correspond roughly to the terms "classical liberalism" and "modern liberalism" as used by David Conway, *Classical Liberalism* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995). Conway claims that in the US, "classical liberalism" has often been called "conservatism." The latter does not, however, apply to all conservative theoreticians in America; for example, it does not apply to Irving Kristol, *Reflections of a Neo-Conservative* (New York: Basic Books, 1983).

5. Geoffrey Roberts, *The Soviet Union and the Second World War. Russian-German Relations and the Road to War, 1933–1941* (Basington: Macmillan, 1995).—Cf. also "Communism, Fascism and National Socialism," in *The formation of the Soviet Union: communism and nationalism 1917–1923*, ed. Richard Pipes (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1964).

6. Cf. chpt. 4, "The Fallacy of Liberalism," in Eric Hobsbawn, *The Age of Extremes. The Short Twentieth Century 1914–1991* (London: Michael Joseph, 1994).

7. Anthony Arblaster, *The Rise and fall of western Liberalism.* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984).

8. Russel Kirk, *The Conservative Mind: From Burke to Eliot* (Chicago: Regnery Books, 1986)—Clinton Rossiter, *Conservatism in America* (New York: Vintage, 1955)—Irving Kristol, *Reflections of a Neo-Conservative* (New York: Basic Books, 1983)—Jenzy Z. Muller, ed., *Conservatism. An Anthology of Social and Political Thought from David Hume to the Present* (Princeton University Press, 1997)—Bruce Frohnen, *Law, Virtue and the Promise of Conservatism. The Legacy of Burke and Tocqueville* (University of Kansas. 1993).

9. T. S. Eliot, *Notes toward the Definition of Culture* (London: Faber & Faber, 1948).

10. Jürgen Habermas, *The New Conservatism: Cultural Criticism and the Historian Debate* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989). Cf. also Robert A. Nisbet, *The Sociological Tradition* (New York: Basic Books, 1966), Amitai Etzioni, *The Spirit of Community: Rights, Responsibilities and the Communitarian Agenda* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1993) and Anthony Giddens, *Beyond Left and Right: the Future of Radical Politics* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994).

11. In 1957, *Ifop,* the official French polling institute, carried out a study of attitudes among young people between the ages of 15 and 29. In reply to the question: "Is your generation becoming quite different from that of your parents?" 16% answered "yes" and 76% "no." A similar poll taken in 1968 produced a 92% "yes" rate, with only 5% responding "no."

12. On October 16, 1978, the French weekly *Novel Observateur* made public an opinion poll from SOFRES that uncovered more revolutionary attitudes among 13–20-year-olds in 1978. These findings ran directly counter to all interpretations that pointed to a younger generation more radical than that of their elders: 13% of both older and younger people felt that French society should be radically changed; 19% of the young people and 26% of the older ones wanted meaningful reforms; 34% of the younger and 46% of the older wanted reform in certain areas; 16% of the younger and 7% of the older wanted to keep society unchanged; the rest replied "don't know."