

AUTHORITARIANISM AND THE INDIVIDUAL. By Harold Metz and C. A. H. Thompson, Washington. *The Brookings Institution*. 1950. 364 pp. \$3.50.

Manifestly, all governing organisms are authoritarian in varying degrees. Authority is implicit in their reason for being. The authoritarianism, however, with which this work deals, is of the extreme variety—that all-pervading societal control which totalitarian states exercise over their constituents.

The authors, staff members of The Brookings Institution, have compiled a comprehensive, historical survey of six controlled societies with respect to the relation of the individual to the sovereign or ruling hierarchy. It is a treatise whose factual substance is amply buttressed by citations of the authors' source material.

The book begins its journey in the feudal age. Subjugated and trammelled by restrictive, deeply rooted customs, the villain and even the so-called freeman are depicted in all their dreary existence. The law and the power to enforce it against these miserable creatures was vested in the lord of the manor, the Guilds and the Church.

The absolute monarchies of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries meant only a change of masters for the lowly individual. The glorification of national power and the advent of mercantilism served only to further enmesh the hapless subject in a maze of governmental control. Even the most intimate aspects of his everyday activity were rigidly regulated by countless statutes and decrees.

The unholy trinity of Russian communism and its late but unlamented counterparts, nazism and fascism, come in for thorough exploration. As in the case of other societies and regimes, each of these would-be utopias is dissected to disclose the nature and extent of the permissible political, intellectual, social, religious and economic expression extant therein. "Labor in the Soviet Union," concludes Messrs. Metz and Thomson, "is in the position of a woman raped in the name of her self-fulfillment." It would appear that they might justifiably have extended their simile to include the *entire* populace—minus The Party, of course—in not the Stalinist paradise, but Hitlerian Germany and fascist Italy as well.

It may surprise and somewhat shock many Americans to learn that not a few societies of a definitely communistic character existed in the United States during the past one hundred and fifty years. Some flourished for as long a period as eighty years. Those that comprised members bound together primarily by a common religious philosophy seemed to have fared better than the others. In all these, however, membership and the correlative surrender of individual rights were voluntary. These controlled communities eventually disintegrated chiefly because of the irresistible appeal of less regimented life in the outside world.

Here, then, is a most informative report of what happens to liberty when left to the tender mercies of a governmental ruling clique of any kind. It is indeed timely what with the ideological conflict currently raging throughout the world and an apparently increasing tendency to tolerate, if not encourage, paternalism in government.

— EDWIN H. FRIEDMAN.