

provides an adequate counterbalance to restrict the political ambitions of potential autocrats and insure the civil liberties of societies so governed. Authoritarianism is quick to accept whatever governmental powers a free society is willing to abandon.

The United States outwardly has remained a staunch advocate of individual political responsibility. However, like so many historical predecessors, the citizenry inwardly has been overly and increasingly generous in bestowing gifts of centralized power and investing ever-strengthening authority in public office. The wisdom of such generosity is subject to debate in a society that has placed its faith in popular consensus. But, obviously, human freedom suffers when men abandon the personal responsibility of government and allow themselves to be governed by imposed authority.

It is argued by popular consensus that the complexities of modern society have so completely outgrown the individual's capacity to understand them that strong centralized government by skillful politicians is now needed to administer social justice and deal effectively with human problems. Proceeding logically from this premise, centralized government has experienced little difficulty in effecting periodic increases of al-

ready vast authority under pretense of necessity to cope with contrived emergencies. But, any systematic destruction of human freedom, no matter how quietly and peacefully it is accomplished, ultimately is no less tyrannical simply because the tyranny developed by degrees within the political framework of a society that under all circumstances has imagined itself to be free.

Gradual Encroachment

Evolutionary constitutional oligarchies apparently founded on sound principles of freedom are far more insidious than authoritarian governments that come to power by violence. For unlike violent usurpations, gradual processes of governmental growth allow the citizenry to retain a false sense of well-being stemming from the belief that they are actively participating in government through public elections and thereby exercising adequate restraint on governmental excesses. Ironically, it is the societies that most ardently extol personal freedom and are the most resilient adversaries of crude forms of political usurpation that are most easily deluded and subjugated by subtle concentrations of governmental power.

When an autocrat comes to power through usurpation, he es-

tablishes a government and arbitrarily decides how much authority he will exercise. However, his governmental policies continue only as long as he retains absolute power of enforcement. Fortunately, political power implemented by force is seldom of long duration, for the tremendous counterbalancing force of human dignity insures that those subjugated will eventually depose the tyrant and with him all authority associated with his regime.

No such dramatic course is open to victims of constitutional tyranny for constitutional process takes no direct interest in the personalities involved in governmental authority. Rather, the constitutional system, and its periodic corruption, concentrates vast powers in political office and hopefully challenges the voting public to fill the authoritarian power structure with wisely chosen politicians. One candidate might declare his intention to use the vested authority of political office with somewhat more discretion than another.

This provides the voting public with motivation in the delusion that by supporting such a candidate they are casting a ballot for human freedom. But whatever the outcome of a given election, the constituted political power inherent to the contested office is in

no way diminished by any temporary lack of use, and in due course, such authority not only is fully utilized but extended by more ambitious office seekers.

Despotism can never subjugate a people who responsibly undertake to govern themselves; and conversely, nothing can save a society from despotism if, in the name of self-government, the people willingly impose elective authoritarianism on themselves. When one considers the incredible extent to which the powers of elective and appointive public offices have grown, and are continuing to grow with the full consent of the American people, we are indeed fortunate that a more calamitous despotism has not yet engulfed the Republic.

A Degenerate Form of Freedom

Everyone is well aware of the size, scope, and increasing authority that political government has gained at the expense of individual liberty. Few seem overly concerned. Most prefer to trust the adage that better governors ultimately produce more desirable societies and logically assume that bigger government simply requires a more competent political oligarchy. The electorate has come to feel that individual responsibility begins and ends with voting for candidates that seem best