

These notes are organized by the sections of the book. Where there are numbers in parentheses, those are page numbers where the quotes of information can be found.

- Repudiation of transparency and accountability
 - Attacking leader is like attacking the country. “Enemies of the people”. But only some are the people, and the leader embodies that group. He bears nation’s sorrow and dreams. He stimulates feelings of humiliation and anxiety and offers himself as salve
 - No distinction between individual agendas and needs of nation
 - National victimhood. Appeal to negative emotions and experiences. Script: domestic enemies and international system have cheated them. Formula: repression at home, expansion abroad
 - Loyalty is requirement for job, not ability
 - Strongmen appeal when society is divided. Thus, they exacerbate strife
 - Take advantage of shock events, economic depressions, polarization. Institute state of emergency
 - Violent temperament, opportunist, way with words, can turn into gentleman
 - Male leaders who promise to harness modernity
 - Hire former soldiers. Bring war tactics home. War forges supporters
 - Reverse female empowerment
 - Neutralize galvanized workers
 - Magnetic energy
 - Speak of destiny. Projects of national greatness
 - Support of the elite.
 - Electoral “reform”. Refusal to accept election results. Recounts. Voter intimidation
 - Setting up side militaries and congresses
 - Denounce all criticism as leftist propaganda. Suppression and murder of press. Control over media. Systems of surveillance. Being all over media so they can seem omnipresent, magical. Sow confusion. Establish the media as biased to condition people for when they get exposed.
 - Close universities, philosophy departments, gender studies, climate science
 - Violence against the left as a constant
 - Not prepared to be opposed, unloved, unseated
 - Give free education, cheap housing, tax relief (but not to all). High approval rates (according to media they control)
 - “Before it’s too late”
 - Rituals like heil salute are central to transformation
 - Control over female bodies, reproduction in the name of population growth. Banning of contraception. Holding mass weddings. Taxing bachelors over 25. Honoring prolific mothers
 - Persecution of gays, “non-traditional sexual relations”
 - Utopia, nostalgia, crisis
 - Chosen by God to cleanse an evil
 - A morality that sees persecution of enemies as patriotic and good. Ends justify the means
 - Hitler youth learning violence
 - The church as ally
 - Taking power to protect self against suits. Changing laws
 - Cult of virility. Can make sterile wombs fertile
 - Co-opt the poor and talented by giving them jobs
 - Radios subsidized and installed everywhere, factories etc.
 - A Superman who is approachable

- Rallies as emotional training. Feeling of being transported at such events. But effects of propaganda fading over time
- Teleclubs to watch leader on TV together
- “Women and girls, Jews are your ruin”
- “You have a terribly homosexual face”
- “Donations” of property, companies, media outlets
- Conformity sold as unity
- Virility
 - Body display
 - The dominate male leader the country needs
 - Gaddafi big bureaucracy; secret police, state employees; sex dens, including on university campuses; tapping on shoulders at university events (on the day of the student executions, hangings on university gates)
 - Women as beauties made for pleasure
 - Berlusconi: “Can’t deploy a military force to avoid rapes. There would need to be as many soldiers in the street as beautiful Italian women.”
 - Pay off or threaten women when necessary, including wives of state officials
 - Humiliation of homosexuals (though there were many gay Nazis at first; homoeroticism of masculine ideologies)
 - Dominate and possess everyone around them
 - Scouts could take your kids away
 - Media saturated with women in submissive roles (parallels to 50’s US, The Vow)
 - But he promotes women to keep up the guise (often in traditional female departments like Ministry of Education). Sexual favors worked
 - Demean professional women: “You’re so talented I’m tempted to invite you to a sex party.” Get others to laugh with him at them
 - One woman: “I feel bad for him, needs to throw parties so he’s not alone. I think he’s actually quite lonely.” This woman is disappeared or escapes to America
- Corruption
 - Frequent purges of ruling elite, create climate of insecurity and dependency on the leader, competition, make them too weakened by rivalries to stand up, too cowed to tell unwanted truths (but also less loyal perhaps); reverse orders recently given; sabotage their work
 - Participation in system yields wealth but makes vulnerable, because can be accused of corruption any time (but leader is above it all due to his special mission)
 - Massive assets through bribery, taking state resources, tax and licensing, illegal raids/sham audits or investigations, nationalization, kickbacks, siphoning, “loans” from state banks
 - Use wealth to do some good things
 - Purges of judiciary
 - Journalists and activists imprisoned, smeared, disappeared
 - Taking what you want and getting away with it = manhood, virility
 - Grant pardons, resulting in debt to leader
 - Rolling back environmental regulations, women’s rights
 - Mussolini presented Fascism as getting rid of war profiteering then shut down investigations into the same when he came to power
 - Micromanagement
 - Trying people for war crimes when there isn’t war
 - When under investigation, all of the above becomes more intense, all efforts to avoid prosecution (especially toward the end); saturate media with claims of innocence
 - Oligarchs, wealth disparity

- Culture of fealty compounds because conformists thrive, dissenters don't join, leave or are disappeared
- Conformity starts with staying quiet, not challenging. You are already a co-conspirator. Then the demands escalate
- Violence
 - Propaganda gets you to see violence differently: national and civic duty
 - The emotional charge young men feel at giving instincts free rein. States of exception can be normalized in people. Violence can be felt as purifying
 - Informers everywhere, culture of surveillance
 - Public acts of persecution
 - Concentration camps. For Jews but also "asocial work averse" people, alcoholics, gays, prostitutes, criminals, vagrants. Psychological, labor and physical abuse to disintegrate sense of self. "This is so you feel the Empire."
 - Solitary. Electric shocks in vagina, eyes. Dogs. Watching family members tortured. Rats and spiders in vagina. Impregnated from rape and told they should be proud. Loud music to hide screams
 - When the goal becomes annihilation, things have reached the latest stage
 - Gestapo side business selling skulls and bones
 - We must exterminate them or they will exterminate us
 - "Here there is no why." (178)
 - Immigrants as criminals, killers, predators. Warning of the invasion
 - Family separations at borders. Kids raised by more appropriate people
 - Voter registration offices bombed, people harassed
 - Rape as policy or revenge and intimidation
- Losing Power
 - "Internal exile"
 - What keeps them going is knowledge that this isn't right
 - Down with Hitler graffiti
 - Strongmen dread being laughed at
 - Critical mass of protesters sends message to country and international community that things are not right
 - Authority can erode due to war going badly, exhausted by violence, seemingly fraudulent election, economic downturn, unemployed youth; a sign is having to incentivize people to cheer
 - Dictatorships put people to sleep. The only ones awake are the youth
 - Self-immolation, mouths sewn shut
 - Refusing to act: not listening to the radio, not doing the salute, not sending kids to youth activities, women not having babies
 - Private acts like recording deaths, saving keepsakes for family and washing them of blood
 - Rebuilding of dignity and self worth that strongman sought to destroy
 - Air-dropped protest messages
 - Passive resistance (parallel to The Vow)
 - Acting out of inner conviction
 - Finally losing the fear
 - Coffee shop debate returns...
 - Campus hunger strikes, prayer vigils, sit-ins, marches
 - Culture as a vehicle of protest
 - Symbols like No+ dictatorship/violence/etc.
 - US starts to question their investments

- Heightened resistance met with greater repression: student executions, see your peers die (but this creates not just fear but loathing)
- “What we are experiencing is not normal.” (218)
- Inspired by other movements
- Elites start to take away support
- Opposition gains international recognition
- No longer revered, entire sense of self of strongman is at risk. Demand more loyalty and attention. They do more of everything. They get superstitious, e.g. hire astrologers
- “My husband appeared to be a lion, but he was a rather sad and small man.” [regarding Mussolini] (229)
- Chronic tendency to underrate enemy capabilities
- Conclusion
 - Fear is why strongmen are strongmen
 - Their culture includes thrill of transgression and comfort to submitting to his power
 - Strongman is exceptional but also embodies the everyday person
 - “If you don’t dominate, you’re wasting your time.” - Trump (258)
 - “Keep your heart a desert.” - Mussolini (259)