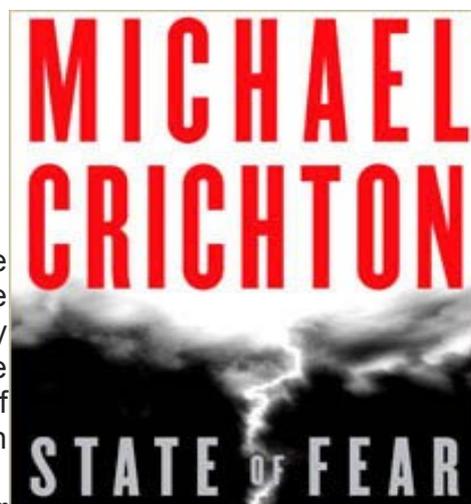


Michael Crichton : State of Fear
Michael Crichton : Welt in Angst
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"I am leading to the notion of social control, Peter. To the requirement of every sovereign state to exert control over the behavior of its citizens, to keep them orderly and reasonably docile. To keep them driving on the right side of the road-or the left, as the case may be. To keep them paying taxes. And of course we know that social control is best managed through fear." "Fear," Evans said.

"Exactly. For fifty years, Western nations had maintained their citizens in a state of perpetual fear. Fear of the other side. Fear of nuclear war. The Communist menace. The Iron Curtain. The Evil Empire. And within the Communist countries, the same in reverse. Fear of us. Then, suddenly, in the fall of 1989, it was all finished. Gone, vanished. *Over.* The fall of the Berlin Wall created a vacuum of fear. Nature abhors a vacuum. Something had to fill it."

Evans frowned. "You're saying that environmental crises took the place of the Cold War?"

"That is what the evidence shows. Of course, now we have radical fundamentalism and post-9/11 terrorism to make us afraid, and those are certainly real reasons for fear, but that is not my point. My point is, there is always a cause for fear. The cause may change over time, but the fear is always with us. Before terrorism we feared the toxic environment. Before that we had the Communist menace. The point is, although the specific cause of our fear may change, we are never without the fear itself. Fear pervades society in all its aspects. Perpetually."

He shifted on the concrete bench, turning away from the crowds.

"Has it ever occurred to you how astonishing the culture of Western society really is?"

Industrialized nations provide their citizens with unprecedented safety, health, and comfort. Average life spans increased fifty percent in the last century. Yet modern people live in abject fear. They are afraid of strangers, of disease, of crime, of the environment. They are afraid of the homes they live in, the food they eat, the technology that surrounds them. They are in a particular panic over things they can't even see-germs, chemicals, additives, pollutants. They are timid, nervous, fretful, and depressed. And even more amazingly, they are convinced that the environment of the entire planet is being destroyed around them. Remarkable! Like the belief in witchcraft, it's an extraordinary delusion-a global fantasy worthy of the Middle Ages. Everything is going to hell, and we must all live in fear. Amazing."

"How has this world view been instilled in everybody? Because although we imagine we live in different nations-France, Germany, Japan, the US-in fact, we inhabit exactly the same state, the State of Fear. How has that been accomplished?"

Evans said nothing. He knew it wasn't necessary.

"Well, I shall tell you how," he said. "In the old days-before your time, Peter-citizens of the West believed their nation-states were dominated by something called the military-industrial complex. Eisenhower warned Americans against it in the 1960s, and after two world wars Europeans knew very well what it meant in their own countries. But the military-industrial complex is no longer the primary driver of society. In reality, for the last fifteen years we have been under the control of an entirely new complex, far more powerful and far more pervasive. I call it the politico-legal-media complex. The PLM. And it is dedicated to promoting fear in the population-under the guise of promoting safety."

"Safety is important." "Please. Western nations are fabulously safe. Yet people do not feel they are, because of the PLM. And the PLM is powerful and stable, precisely because it unites so many institutions of society. Politicians need fears to control the population. Lawyers need dangers to litigate, and make money. The media need scare stories to capture an audience. Together, these three estates are so compelling that they can go about their business even if the scare is totally groundless. If it has no basis in fact at all."