



How is Yertle the Turtle an allegory for the rise and collapse of Totalitarian Regimes before, during, and after World War 2?

*On the far-away island of Sala-ma-Sond,
Yertle the Turtle was king of the pond.
A nice little pond. It was clean. It was neat.
The water was warm. There was plenty to eat.
The turtles had everything turtles might need.
And they were all happy. Quite happy indeed.*

*They were... until Yertle, the king of them all,
Decided the kingdom he ruled was too small.
“I’m ruler”, said Yertle, “of all that I see.
But I don’t see enough. That’s the trouble with me.
With this stone for a throne, I look down on my pond
But I cannot look down on the places beyond.
This throne that I sit on is too, too low down.
It ought to be higher!” he said with a frown.
“If I could sit high, how much greater I’d be!
What a king! I’d be ruler of all that I see!”*

*So Yertle the Turtle King, lifted his hand
And Yertle, the Turtle King, gave a command.
He ordered nine turtles to swim to his stone*

*And, using these turtles, he built a new throne.
He made each turtle stand on another one's back
And he piled them all up in a nine-turtle stack.
And then Yertle climbed up. He sat down on the pile.
What a wonderful view! He could see 'most a mile!*

*"All mine!" Yertle cried. "Oh, the things I now rule!
I'm the king of a cow! And I'm the king of a mule!
I'm the king of a house! And, what's more, beyond that
I'm the king of a blueberry bush and a cat!
I'm Yertle the Turtle! Oh, marvelous me!
For I am the ruler of all that I see!"*

*And all through the morning, he sat up there high
Saying over and over, "A great king am I!"
Until 'long about noon. Then he heard a faint sigh.
"What's that?" snapped the king, and he looked down the stack.
And he saw, at the bottom, a turtle named Mack.
Just a part of his throne. And this plain little turtle
Looked up and he said, "Beg your pardon, King Yertle.
I've pains in my back and my shoulders and knees.
How long must we stand here, Your Majesty, please?"*

*"SILENCE!" the King of the Turtles barked back.
"I'm king, and you're only a turtle named Mack."*

*"You stay in your place while I sit here and rule.
I'm the king of a cow! And I'm the king of a mule!
I'm the king of a house! And a bush! And a cat!
But that isn't all. I'll do better than that!
My throne shall be higher!" his royal voice thundered,
"So pile up more turtles! I want 'bout two hundred!"*

*"Turtles! More turtles!" he bellowed and brayed.
And the turtles 'way down in the pond were afraid.*

*They trembled. They shook. But they came. They obeyed.
From all over the pond, they came swimming by dozens.
Whole families of turtles, with uncles and cousins.
And all of them stepped on the head of poor Mack.
One after another, they climbed up the stack.*

*Then Yertle the Turtle was perched up so high,
He could see forty miles from his throne in the sky!
“Hooray!” shouted Yertle. “I’m the king of the trees!
I’m king of the birds! And I’m king of the bees!
I’m king of the butterflies! King of the air!
Ah, me! What a throne! What a wonderful chair!
I’m Yertle the Turtle! Oh, marvelous me!
For I am the ruler of all that I see!”*

*Then again, from below, in the great heavy stack,
Came a groan from that plain little turtle named Mack.
“Your Majesty, please... I don’t like to complain,
But down here below, we are feeling great pain.
I know, up on top you are seeing great sights,
But down here at the bottom we, too, should have rights.
We turtles can’t stand it. Our shells will all crack!
Besides, we need food. We are starving!” groaned Mack.*

*“You hush up your mouth!” howled the mighty King Yertle.
“You’ve no right to talk to the world’s highest turtle.
I rule from the clouds! Over land! Over sea!
There’s nothing, no, NOTHING, that’s higher than me!”*

*But, while he was shouting, he saw with surprise
That the moon of the evening was starting to rise
Up over his head in the darkening skies.
“What’s THAT?” snorted Yertle. “Say, what IS that thing
That dares to be higher than Yertle the King?”*

*I shall not allow it! I'll go higher still!
I'll build my throne higher! I can and I will!
I'll call some more turtles. I'll stack 'em to heaven!
I need 'bout five thousand, six hundred and seven!"*

*But, as Yertle, the Turtle King, lifted his hand
And started to order and give the command,
That plain little turtle below in the stack,
That plain little turtle whose name was just Mack,
Decided he'd taken enough. And he had.
And that plain little lad got a bit mad.
And that plain little Mack did a plain little thing.
He burped!
And his burp shook the throne of the king!*

*And Yertle the Turtle, the king of the trees,
The king of the air and the birds and the bees,
The king of a house and a cow and a mule...
Well, that was the end of the Turtle King's rule!
For Yertle, the King of all Sala-ma-Sond,
Fell off his high throne and fell Plunk! in the pond!*

*And today the great Yertle, that Marvelous he,
Is King of the Mud. That is all he can see.
And the turtles, of course... all the turtles are free
As turtles and, maybe, all creatures should be.*

by Dr. Seuss