STATE POWER TODAY: AN ORWELLIAN ANALYSIS

Frank Harrison

St. Francis Xavier University

Nova Scotia, Canada

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Like all utopias and anti-utopias, George Orwell's 1984 selected certain socio-political trends, and drew an imaginative picture of the kind of state and society that might develop should they become dominant. He was, of course, writing in 1948, three years after the end of the Second World War, and at the beginning of the Cold War. The lines were drawn for a propaganda battle of global proportions, which has continued down to the present day, keeping us aware of the constant threat to destroy us all through an escalation into a hotter war of thermo-nuclear destruction.

Even then, people not hypnotized by the rhetoric of either East or West (each in its own way claiming the mantle of true democracy), were concerned with the way in which this condition of permanent conflict influenced internal political developments. As early as 1945 the American libertarian, Dwight MacDonald, was warning us against the "Organic State". He argued that this concept of the state, already dominant in Germany and Russia, was making significant progress in western countries also. Faced with external enemies, real or imagined, governments were demanding that the thoughts and actions of everyone be in accord with the policies of their rulers. The individual was given no significance except as part of that greater whole, the state. He wrote,

> "...the theory is convenient for those in power on two scores: internally, it preserves the ladder of hierarchy, making rebellious behavior treason not only to those in authority but also to the alleged common interests of everybody, to what is reverently termed 'national unity' these days; in times of war, it makes it possible to treat the enemy population as a homogeneous single block, all of them equally wicked and detestable."[1]

He also argued that the theory was in correspondence with "the real arrangement of things in the modern world".[2] He hoped that the "long and honorable tradition of lawlessness and disrespect for authority"[3] which he

saw in America might provide some protection against this development; and we must judge for ourselves concerning whether or not his hope was realized.

The point to be made, however, is that what MacDonald called "the Permanent War Economy" emerging from the Second World War, and the domination of the individual by the state which was found with it, were critically identified. Orwell also identified them, and extrapolating from them, wrote a novel about it.

As a journalist, Orwell was conscious of the power of the media. Recognizing that words can possess both critical and conformist characteristics, he shows to us in 1984 a controlled system of communications using an absolutely uncritical new vocabulary, called Newspeak. A strictly functional vocabulary, Newspeak has no value-laden words which can expand the imagination and allow the individual to consider the possibility of alternative realities. Newspeak is an affirmation of the present. Words like Peace and Freedom lose all meaning through the enforced identity with their opposites. The slogans which symbolize the system are, War is Peace, Freedom is Slavery, and Ignorance is Strength. With this "doublethink", said often enough, reiterated in mindless reinforcement, in a system of controlled information, alternatives are denied. An uncritical acceptance of actual conditions, and the power relations which they sustain, is the result.

Orwell's other principle concern in 1984 is the modern state bureaucracy. That state has cut itself adrift to a considerable extent from the economically-defined class structures of social life. To the extent that the individuals involved in the state, employed and paid by the state, are isolated from particular class interests, they become a group apart from the

rest of society. The purpose of the average bureaucrat is to operate according to hierarchical rules, and to promote the interests of the organization. Orwell emphasizes this tendency by asserting that his future state has already destroyed private property. Given that, there are only the governors and the governed - the latter being the "proles". The purpose of those involved in politics becomes, simply, the getting and usage of power - for its own sake. The autonomous and bureaucratic interests of those who run the state become absolute and unqualified. The state's raison d'être becomes not a class, and not a specific moral goal towards which citizens must be persuaded and coerced, but the perpetuation of the state itself.

Thus we see that Orwell seized upon two identifiable features, present in both communist and non-communist societies, which seemed to be of increasing significance in the Cold War World of 1948. These were: 1) the control of language and opinion, and 2) the growth in the size and authority of the state; which together form the core of his dead-end Nowhere (Utopia) which is his 1984 state of Oceania. The television screens that watch over the actions of much of the population, the denial of spontaneous sexual and emotional relationships, and the material and spiritual poverty of the environment, are all but aspects of the all-consuming system which is characterized by the term, Big Brother.

On the other hand, let us remind ourselves that Orwell was writing a novel, not giving a scientific or sociological prediction. In so doing, he was isolating features of modern societies which offended his political sympathies. Those sympathies were both anarchist and socialist in their orientation. 1984 is, therefore, best viewed not as a prediction, but as a warning to socialists concerning significant questions which they must face -- in addition to property, exploitation, and class domination.

The warning is well taken, and should be. In western capitalist societies there are many evidences of what amounts to the monopolistic tendency of the state in areas of social control. It is true that leading state persons are linked by economic, social and family ties to other elites (which is not the case in Orwell's Oceania). Yet the state's *independent interest and capacity* to create a common opinion is substantial; and those who do not fall within its boundaries are named, numbered and filed by the police. A principle task of the police in both Canada and the USA is to keep a record not only of those who break the written law, but also of those who voice an extra-parliamentary criticism and challenge of the structure and policies of the state. The micro-chip and the modern computer have made this task all the easier. Thereafter, our dissidents have their phones tapped, their mail intercepted, their movements across national borders inhibited, and their employment opportunities blocked by both police intervention and the unwillingness of public and private employers to take on anyone who challenges the status quo. Where unemployment is endemic, particularly amongst the young, the personal costs of challenge become high. We should not wonder that university students have swallowed their bile of late. Criticism carries a high price when measured in the currency of job opportunities. Meanwhile, the language and orientation of the media continue to discourage alternate modes of thought and behaviour. It is, after all, 1984!

II

Orwell stressed characteristic features of the modern state, as a state, irrespective of its ideological and economic bases. The tendency today, however, is to presume that Orwell's imagery is principally a reflection and criticism of the USSR and other countries ruled by Marxist-Leninists. Indeed, the book is still banned in those countries, a fact which might

be taken to support such a conclusion.

What is of particular concern to the ideological authoritarians in communist states, what reminds them so much of their own system, can be summarized in the following features of Orwell's Oceania (a super-state composed of the USA, the UK, Australasia and South Africa):

1) The society is dominated by The Party, in the same way that the Communist Party monopolizes political power in the USSR.

2) Under the guidance of The Party, the state controls the economy, as it does every other aspect of the social condition.

3) The society is one which suffers from poor housing and consumer deprivation.

4) It is a society where there are political trials of those who oppose the policies of the state.

5) There is no rule of law -- Orwell saying, no law at all. There can be arbitrary arrest by the Thought Police of anyone who is intellectually opposed to the regime.

6) Big Brother, a god-like figure removed from the population, could be thought to reflect the glorification of Stalin under the extremes of the"personality cult."

7) The arch-enemy of the regime, Goldstein, is a figure very much like Trotsky (whose real name, as we all know, was Bronstein).

These are all elements which remind us certainly of the Soviet Union of Orwell's time, a country dominated by Stalin from 1928 to 1953. Even the details of police procedure and incarceration suffered by 1984's principal character, Winston Smith, echo the style of Stalin's police state under the domination of the NKVD. When Winston is in jail, for example, he notices "the astonishing difference in demeanour between the Party prisoners

and the others. The Party prisoners were always silent and terrified, but the ordinary criminals seemed to care nothing for anybody....The positions of trust were given only to the common criminals, especially to the gangsters and the murderers, who formed a sort of aristocracy. All the dirty jobs were done by the politicals."[4] This is exactly the kind of thing that we are used to hearing about prisons and labour camps in Stalin's GULAG -- that acronym for the State Labour Camp Administration brought into common parlance by Solzhenitsyn's trilogy. Dissidents, the thought criminals, were treated more harshly than ordinary criminals.

Similarly, after imprisonment, torture, and constant questioning, Winston was ready to confess to anything and everything. "He became simply a mouth that uttered, a hand that signed, whatever was demanded of him. His sole concern was to find out what they wanted him to confess, and then confess it quickly, before the bullying started anew."[5] The end product in the communist reality was the show trial, the pseudo-legal self-immolation and sentencing of destroyed personalities. In the thirties such famous Old Bolsheviks as Kamenev, Zinoviev and Bukharin went through this process in the USSR. At the time that Orwell was writing, the new People's Democracies of Central Europe were gearing up to copy their master's model. Such show trials were, however, only for the important and symbolic few, beneath which there were millions of nameless citizens coerced and/or incarcerated for their supposed and real nonconformities. Orwell's character is just such a nameless soul, and perhaps his fate was even worse than those dragged off unwillingly by the security police. Losing every vestige of free will, Winston lost his humanity, and came to love Big Brother.

It might be argued that, even if Orwell's 1948 criticism of the Marxist-Leninist states was justified, things have changed; that the

socialist systems of 1984 have rejected Stalinism, with its personality cult, police state, and a standard of life which is denied improvement by investment policies which emphasize heavy industry and the military. After Stalin's death, was not his last police chief, Beria, executed, and the police hierarchy itself thoroughly purged? Were not thousands rehabilitated, their crimes admitted as being nonexistent, their names published in Pravda and Izvestia? Has not Stalin been condemned, his body removed from the Lenin mausoleum?

Yet none of this can persuade us that Orwell's imagery no longer applies to the USSR or its political acolytes. At its very best it still must be regarded as a mere reformed Stalinism, with his heirs hysterically afraid of anything that threatens the control of all values by the communist party. Unofficial publications (samizdat) and their producers are repressed by the KGB, and dissidents are incarcerated according to spurious clauses in the criminal code. Military expenditures still make all but the most privileged undergo consumer deprivation; making any small town in North America or Europe a varitable consumer paradise compared with any Soviet city. A bureaucratic one-party state, demanding unquestioning obedience from both subordinate officials and citizens alike, isolating the leadership behind the closed doors of Central Committee and Politburo meetings, seems unwilling to accept any change which would alter the centralized structure of power. Pravda and Izvestia continue to publish the official slogans before all public celebrations, covering their front pages, and ready for copying on the banners of the carefully-organized cohorts of the system who organize mass demonstrations into expressions of support for the Party. The list goes on; and it is certainly not difficult to see the chief features of Orwell's 1984 in the contemporary Soviet (and other communist-ruled) states.

To follow such a line of argument, however, to concentrate upon the USSR

as a model for Orwell's 1984, then or now, is to miss the critical breadth of his orientation. We should note that Orwell was writing about something which he called English Socialism (Ingsoc), not Bolshevism. In his image of a 1984 world, Bolshevism had ceased to exist. It had become Neo-Bolshevism, the ideology of Eurasia in the tripartite division of the world between three superpowers (Oceania, Eurasia and Eastasia). In his 1984 the state and the power structures associated with it had become far more important than the ideologies which justified them for all three super-states. Irrespective of ideology, each of the three was a functional copy of the others, with no difference between them. Orwell was presenting what has come to be called a "convergence theory." For him all states, whatever they called themselves, were heading in the same direction; and that direction was one in which the individual had less and less meaning or significance.

Part of this general distrust of state power (including, but not especially, that of the USSR) was Orwell's refusal to be associated with any specific ideology. What can be seen as an anarchistic distrust of all states is combined with an anarchist rejection of all-embracing theories. It is significant that the only ideological criticism of the state in 1984 is presented through the writings of the rebel, Goldstein (who does not even appear as a character); and that Goldstein's book is given to given to Winston by a servant of the state hierarchy, O'Brien, (who becomes Winston's torturer). In this manner, Orwell distanced himself from a formal ideological position. Like Bakunin in the nineteenth century, he seems to have mistrusted ideology as a basis for an intellectual repression, with a new "priesthood" of ideological leaders forcing everyone into their own model of perfection, their own Procrustean bed.

Ideologies, as world-views which seek to co-ordinate the ideas and

actions of large groups of individuals, possess a capacity to deny the significance of the individual. We have all seen how general combinations of ideas, going under the title of nationalism, communism, fascism, etc., have justified the sacrifice of individual human beings to a grand design explained in terms of intellectual abstractions. Structures of authority are reinforced by the voluntary and enthusiastic obedience of the adherents of an ideology to its promoters. At the same time, the followers are encouraged to lose their own sense of worth, well-being, and autonomy. The ideology comes to deny independent thought and criticism, and becomes a framework for an automatic response of the believer to the leader, without thought, without reason, without even a modicum of common sense. Individuals thereby become a yelping mob of thoughtless respondents to the calculated phrase of their leaders -- as when Maggy Thatcher screamed nationalism to the British during the Falklands War, arranged for the deaths of a few soldiers, and won an overwhelming victory in the general election shortly afterwards.

At a more general level, any number of value-laden terms can be used to stir the emotions, rather than the minds, of a population. We have "hurrah" words like democracy and freedom; and "boo" words like communist and anarchist. Such is the power of this ideological conditioning that it continues as a central feature of the continuation of all political systems, dependent on the mindlessness of their inhabitants. One group of Dutch libertarians presented it as follows, discussing the perpetuation of the capitalist state:

> "Indeed, far from rebelling, the workers continued to work hand in glove with the capitalists. In wartime they showed themselves willing to die in droves at the behest of the capitalists. And, in peacetime, the workers cooperated to the extent of backing the imprisonment of fellow working-class people found guilty by ruling-class courts of 'petty' 'illegal' capitalist acts such as thievery and bank robbery, while the biggest thieves of all -- the capitalists -- were accorded great prestige, wealth and privileges for their large-scale crimes committed openly every day of the year."[6]

We are reminded of Diogenes the Cynic who, upon seeing a thief chased from the temple by priests, asked, "Why are the big thieves chasing the little thief?" The answer is that the received values of an authoritarian ideology pursuade us to maintain a double standard which legitimizes the powerful. It is Doublethink.

In 1984 the direction of public emotion by key words and phrases is revealed as the fundamental purpose of political ideology. This can occur as much under a socialist economic system as any other. As a socialist Orwell was concerned to show this, and to warn that socialism might be side-tracked through the control of ideas by a statist elite. Meanwhile, the manipulative capacity of the state is presented as being so strong that, when Oceania suddenly changes sides in the perpetual military conflict, its population responds immediately: ""One minute more, and the feral roars of rage were again bursting from the crowd. The Hate continued exactly as before, except that the target had been changed."[7] Orwell's own example might have been the way in which public attitudes towards the USSR were altered following the end of the Second World War. Smiling Uncle Joseph became, after a short time, that evil Dictator Stalin. On the other side of the coin the Western Allies soon became capitalist imperialists for the communists. And today, in 1984, we are witness to the amusing turnabout in American relations with China, with Ronald Reagan clasping the hand of Communist China's Premier. Historical events may move more slowly than literary events, taking years rather than minutes, but the conclusion is the same. Policies change, and public opinion is manipulated to support them, in whatever political system you happen to reside.

We can conclude, therefore, that the fundamental question of Orwell's novel is not, "What is wrong with socialism?" Rather, the question is,

"What is wrong with the state as a political mechanism?" - whatever the structures of government, whatever the nature of property therein. 1984 is properly seen as a reaffirmation of the anarchism with which Orwell had been fascinated ever since the Spanish Civil War, and of which he wrote in Homage to Catalonia. In this anti-utopia which he outlines for us, he is saying that the state -- even a socialist state -- is in itself possessed of such capacities of control that all autonomy can be denied. In so doing, he raised the level of inquiry above the sterile categories of Marxism, and beyond the simplistic "them/us" perception of international politics.

Not anti-socialist, but anti-state socialist, 1984 holds a warning against a dehumanization which exists to a degree in every modern state, and which is characterized by a pure will to power. Power as a self-subsistent purpose is what typifies the Orwellian image of the state. Thus, the senior servant of the state, O'Brien, says,

> "That Party seeks power entirely for its own sake. We are not interested in the good of others; we are interested solely in power.... We know that no one every seizes power with the intention of relinquishing it. Power is not a means, but an end."[8]

The Party is a unified agent of power coterminous with the state bureaucracy. Itself a hierarchy, only its elite (the Inner Party) has real power. Opposed to any human being having purposes other than those determined by itself, the elite seeks to ensure that everybody -- but particularly those who administer its wishes, the lesser bureaucrats like Winston Smith himself -- be its enthusiastic slaves. It is to make Winston fit this sterotype that he is taken to prison and reformed. As O'Brien tells him:

> "We shall crush you down to the point from which there is no coming back. ...Never again will you be capable of ordinary human feeling. Everything will be dead inside you. Never again will you be capable of love, or friendship, or joy of living, or laughter, or curiosity, or courage, or integrity. You will be hollow. We shall squeeze you empty, and then we shall fill you up with ourselves."[9]

And there is never any doubt that the state will be successful. In his rebellion against the state Winston Smith lived in constant fear, always feeling that he would be caught. He is heroic in a pathetic sort of way, battling impossible odds, doomed from the start. 1984 becomes a tragedy in the classical sense of the term, with an individual fighting for personal significance against superhuman forces. That is the logical end of the ideology of the modern state, and it is against that which Orwell is warning us in novel form.

III

Orwell was not being prophetic, and the world of which he wrote is not inevitable. However, we are given a possibility, given the development of factors which he himself saw in his own time. So we must ask ourselves, "What aspects of our own society seem to fit the Orwellian pattern outlined in 1984?" How does the state impinge upon our lives and consciences today in our "liberal democracies"? -- in answer to which my discussion will refer principally to aspects of the contemporary Canadian state.

In approaching this question we should first remember that the largest group in Orwell's anti-utopia is the Proles, who make up the bulk of the population. Not involved in the administration of the state, this mass of the population is kept passively indifferent to questions of political power, although it is important to mobilize them through propaganda into a general support for state policies. Orwell gives us a Minstry of Truth whose purpose is the manipulation of the Proles into appropriate channels of belief and behaviour.

We do not have a Ministry of Truth, but the media does manipulate information. Chomsky and Herman have produced two volumes which show how the "free" American press follow the line of the State Department of the USA in reporting foreign events and policy. In Canada the disproportionate bulk of the press is equally selective and biassed in its reporting, as Eleanor MacLean's excellent book, Between the Lines, reveals.[10] Friends and enemies are implicitly or explicitly identified, and praised and blamed accordingly.

At the same time, the bulk of the media are concerned with the trivial -- with sports, gossip, popular entertainment and fashion. Then beneath that, or with it, there is the neverending supply of pulp publications and celluloid images - everything from Donald Duck to Harlequin Romances and snuff movies. The Pornography Section of Orwell's Ministry of Truth performed the same function as our own free market garbage. It directed the population's thought away from an assessment of the character of the world around them, debasing and destroying self-esteem. It was all part of the calculated depoliticization of the masses, which is the necessary condition of unchallenged rule. More an aspect of capitalism in our own society, it nonetheless continues to work to produce the same results.

With the bulk of the population accepting the prevailing political myths, minimally participating when it bothers to vote, largely indifferent, then those who play the political game are left largely to themselves. Looking at federal MPs, we note that they are rather less Spartan in their conditions than Orwell's party people as they use their positions to line their pockets. Most typical of the Canadian parliamentary system is not, however, the member of the elected House of Commons. At least those characters are expected to appear to cast their vote when the bells ring. Then like

Pavlov's dogs they earn their $70,000-plus per annum by voting the way they are told to by the party whips. Nice work if you can get it, but hardly condusive to a critical posture by those voting machines who, in their activity, deny the autonomy of both themselves and the people whom they are supposed to represent. More typical even than the MP is the Canadian Senator, a party hack appointed according to a well-established system of patronage, and receiving $61,425 in 1984 if he or she can muster the energy to turn out on a couple of occasions during each parliamentary session.[11]

Then, behind the public politics of party conformity, there are the bureaucrats, paid by the parties or by the public purse, who never come under the public gaze. These unelected officials, the professionals who despise the elected amateurs, protect their isolation. Under the pretence of political neutrality (although, indeed, they are largely neutral between the Tweedledums and Tweedledees of our party system), the handmaidens of the perpetuation of the state organize themselves. They are the civil service, ranked and arranged under the deputy ministers as a self-perpetuating structure of political and social control. Winston Smith would have been quite at home there after his cure.

However, our own personal 1984 is not entirely subtle, not entirely dependent upon techniques of persuasion, be they media manipulation or the circus of politics. Any person raising a critical voice, suggesting that our democracy is an ineffective and immoral facade, becomes a target for the security branch of the RCMP. Consequently, even in the political gamesmanship which passes for sober discussion Parliament (largely ignored by the public to the relief of the participants) the tip of the coercive iceberg of repression sometimes emerges. So we know that the security branch of the RCMP got 20% of the force's total budget in 1983 -- as was revealed in an administrative bulletin, and reported to the House of Commons by NDP

MP Svend Robinson in September, 1983. And we know that the RCMP ran security checks on 76,521 public servants in 1982 -- as Human Rights Commissioner, Gordon Fairweather, informed the Senate committee examining national security legislation in October, 1983. These were just procedural checks, to make sure that the civil servants in question were not closet communists, hawking secrets to the Russians. At a more sinister level the Security service has taken upon itself the task of identifying and disrupting the existence of political targets selected by itself, in accordance with the fine political sense which we all know to be there in the average policeman's mind.

In April, 1980, the McDonald Commission gave specific information concerning ways in which the RCMP had pursued its political goal of spying upon, harrassing, and stealing documents from extra-parliamentary targets with, literally, unwarranted zeal. In breaking the law they thus denied the very rule of law which is their raison d'être, making themselves the self-appointed protectors of the nation's political morality. They took to themselves the role of Orwellian Thought Police. In January, 1984, information was still appearing from the Commission's enquiries. The police had filed false tax returns for a Canadian radical, in order "to disrupt the individual by exposing him to an income tax investigation (and to the possible expense of attaining legal and accounting assistance)..."[12] Typically, some information was with-held for "national secruity reasons."

A paranoid statist mentality persists in the security force. They have recruited participants to inform on the activities of persons supporting the El Salvador revolutionaries, persons organizing against racism, and those involved in the peace movement.[13] They have raided the Toronto offices of the Cruise Missile Conversion Project, seized documents

and lists of names, and tapped the phones of activists.[14] Some have claimed that in the Vancouver area alone more than 3,700 telephone lines are under continuous wiretaps.[15]

Nearly all of this information, and it is by no means comprehensive, has appeared in the press. Does this not indicate a protection provided by the media against Orwellian conclusions? Hardly. It is merely evidence of ongoing police surveillance, and we have no idea what else goes on under the veil of national security. Moreover, it is absolutely justified by many members of the system, particularly by Robert Kaplan, the Solicitor-General of Canada at the time of writing. Also, this kind of information is essentially transitory. It is sometimes said that, trying to understand political events by reading newspapers is like trying to tell the time by looking at the second hand of a clock. We see bits of information, which relate to the lives of very few, and which are rapidly forgotten. Grains of significant information are lost in the chaff of trivia.

The policing of the Canadian population, therefore, continues. On February 25, 1984, we were told that "the Government wants to make it easier for 17 of its investigative agencies to conceal their activities when they obtain information about people from the files of other federal departments and agencies."[16] This was an aspect of a proposed reform to the Privacy Act. Moreover, it seems highly probable that a new Secruity Intelligence Service will be created, with the specific task of acting as a political watchdog over "suspicious" elements at large in Canadian society. This new service is to be separate from the RCMP, whose bumbling incompetence had been revealed by the McDonald Commission (i.e., they had been discovered). Some of us would prefer the RCMP to keep its security responsibilities for that very reason. Better incompetent fascists than the more efficient variety, is the argument. Meanwhile, the denial of a

private sphere, sacrosanct against state interference, remains. It worries liberals who remember the warnings of John Stuart Mill's essay On Liberty, published more than a century ago. It threatens those to the left of mainstream politics, whose values lie outside the sphere of received opinion; for it forbodes the increasing capacity of the state to perfect its policement role and intrinsically coercive character.

The justification of this police surveillance is inevitably couched in terms of an external enemy, as if a few activists and writers might overthrow the Canadian political system with the help of a foreign power. That non-communists might find it in themselves to oppose American imperialism, to suppprt the revolutionaries in Nicaragua and El Salvador, to oppose the testing of nuclear delivery systems such as the Cruise missile (which is also an armament mechanism), to support the Canadian withdrawal from NATO, to oppose racism -- such a possibility seems unlikely to the security-minded mentality. Such a mentality refuses to believe that most Canadian dissidents, loosely defined as those who deny the efficacy of the capitalist and parliamentary system, also find communist systems highly (even more) unattractive. They are not likely to be attracted towards Soviet, let alone Chinese, paradigms of perfection. Nevertheless, the assertion of a connection between domestic and foreign "threats," however unreal, is the standard argument used to justify the arbitrary power of the police.

Nor should we forget that those policemen who are involved in out-of-the-ordinary police work get a larger sense of self-esteem than the mere traffic cop. How much greater is the sense of self-importance ~~than~~ when you're checking up on a question of state security? The need to believe in a global competition and a foreign threat is of high significance here as an aspect of promoting one's own status. The bigger the stakes, the more important the

stake-out! So the political and police paranoids continue to promote the fiction. The fact that there is probably nothing of international importance in Canada to protect -- although we can never know for certain, for "security reasons" -- is not considered. Thereafter, the political police are to be permitted to break the law, and the presumed constitutional rights of those who are targetted are not worth anything.

The police everywhere is a frightening establishment. The paramilitary character of its organization in Canada further stresses an attitude of being separate from the rest of the population. It also encourages an authoritarian mentality, a willingness to accept orders without question. The end product is that the police come to regard themselves as persons and as a hierarchy with the authority and responsibility to protect us from ourselves. Like all bureaucrats they come to regard the public, whom they are purportedly serving, as opponents. But for policemen, the public are also all potential criminals, and they are the watchdogs. With this splendidly Platonic conception (if they did but know it), regarding themselves as persons who see the world more clearly than ordinary folk, they take the right to impose upon us.

In so mundane a matter as the consumption of alcohol and driving a car, they use the excuse of alcohol-related accidents to stop anyone and everyone at will. Thus, although 33,050 cars were stopped in Vancouver in December, 1983, only 115 people were charged. In Winnipeg the respective numbers were 8,561 and 58. These figures suggest that harrassment of the public is more important than ensuring safety on the highways, which would involve a far more selective and judgmental intervention.[17]

Harrassment and intimidation is the police style. If you are young and driving an old car, and therefore probably working class, you will be stopped and searched. If you have open liquor or a marijuana joint, you are charged and acquire a criminal record. You become an immediate suspect for

later petty crimes and, in the event of another minor offence, you can end up doing time. You are sent to the best school for criminality -- the prison. Thereby, you become criminalized by the police system, one purpose of which is the reproduction of the group in society which justifies its existence. In this process, as all lawyers know, the police lie persistently when on the witness stand in court. Only rarely do we find a judge taking the position of Judge Paul Matlow who, in May, 1984, accused the police of incompetence and downright lying in the case before him; and accepted a defendant's claim that he had been viciously assaulted by a Metro Toronto police officer (rather than vice-versa).[18]

Consequently, we should see the harrassment of political targets not as something unique, but as an extension of normal police practice. Violence is a feature of the process. So we should not be surprised that in May, 1984, "a lawyer who alleged his 'throat was squeezed and wrist twisted' by RCMP officers when he refused to become a paid informer in 1972 has accepted a $23,000 out-of-court settlement from the federal Government."[19] Nor should we be less surprised that, "in November, 1982, RCMP Inspector Bernard Blier pleaded guilty to forcibly detaining Mr. Chamard (the lawyer in question) and was given an absolute discharge. A month later, Constable Richard Daigle was acquitted of kidnapping and holding the lawyer against his will."[20] The police state protects its own under the facade of the rule of law.

Intimidation, however, need not resort to strongarm tactics. In April of 1984 numerous activists in the peace movement in Canada received letters informing them that their mail and phone calls were being intercepted. No reason was given. In a letter which I saw, but did not personally receive, an indecipherable signature rode over the title (no name) of the Attorney

General of Quebec. It was a model of bureaucratic impersonalness, the nameless authority of the state, Big Brother watching over you. What should one do? Censor one's thoughts and withdraw from the peace movement? Worry always about what one says and does, no matter how legal the activity? Hesitate to exercise those rights supposedly guaranteed in writing? As another recipient has publicly said about his own letter: "What does that mean? That peace activists are considered criminal? That their activites have some way been criminalized? Is this a sign of things to come? That's the kind of thing that we are concerned about."[21] That is also the kind of thing that Orwell was concerned about, as should we all.

IV

None of this discussion leads on to the conclusion that our 1984 is a mirror image of the situation described by Orwell. However, the factors stressed by Orwell as primary to the degrading system which he conjured up for us do, quite obviously, still exist. At the very least we live in a partial Oceania. It can be said to be only partial because the arbitrary powers of the police in its controlling capacity are sometimes revealed and controlled; and there are sources of opposition to prevailing cultural prejudices in the form of radical publications and the activity of extra-parliamentary oppositions (such as the peace movement).

Yet even in the public revelation of police extremes, and even in the public character of political criticism, there remains the underlying evidence that:

1) The political orientation, capacity and actual repressive conduct of the police is widespread in our society, and

2) The political culture of our society, on the whole, is one which accepts the legitimacy of the status quo, and the authority of the police as protectors of the state.

In consequence, the critic of the system is faced with a significant ideological and organizational inhibition. He or she seems doomed to remain in a small minority. Specific issues, such as the threat of a nuclear holocaust, may bring out crowds of hundreds of thousands. However, at the end of the day, a view of policy questions as being of only secondary importance to a thorough overhaul of the structures of power, is held by few. For most members of a political demonstration, their action is seen as no more than a modern equivalent of a humble and faithful petition to their sovereign. The need for state power, expressed through a police and political hierarchy, is not questioned.

So all-pervasive is the authoritarian myth that those who are paid to think, the intellectuals, partake both innocently and enthusiastically in the process of state promotion. As Orwell himself speculated,

> "...by the fourth decade of the twentieth century all the main currents of political thought were authoritarian. The earthly paradise had been discredited at exactly the moment when it became realizable. Every new political theory, by whatever name it called itself, led back to hierarchy and regimentation."[22]

Belief and argument in favour of the inevitability of authority is indeed the common characteristic of everyone but the anarachists today. (Consequently, the anarchists are viewed by both communists and capitalists alike as either dangerous terrorists or crazy dreamers). In communist-ruled states the Marxist "dictatorship of the proletariat" became party rule. The communist party replaced the proletariat in the creation of what Milovan Djilas called a "new class". That Leninist-Stalinist theory and practice of a "vanguard party" has persisted down to the present. Before his death the grand old Soviet ideologue, Mikhail Suslov, affirmed that even though the state may wither away, the party would persist. Then, in contrast to the frozen

formulae of that statist ideology, social science in the west has been hypnotized by Michels' arguments concerning the "inevitability of oligarchy." However much our political scientists talk of interest groups and elections, political parties and electoral competitions, politics as the wielding of power by the few over the many is presumed.

If, however, this cultural and intellectural acceptance of authoritarianism is so general, why the enthusiastic attack upon radicals who form such an insignificant minority within the system? The horns of oppression may be occasionally visible above the fog of liberal democratic conceit, but they are seen by so few that it would seem to be unnecessary to stifle the voices of those who point towards them. Few listen to radicals, and few look at that to which they point.

As I have already suggested, an answer to this question may be found in the fact that "security" activity gives the police a greater sense of status. Link that targetting of internal dissidents with an external enemy and such activity becomes a justification for the arbitrary power of the police, and for the structure of the state itself. In addition, and as part of this process, although the North American dissident is but a minor aspect of the system overall, radicalism is invariably associated with violence. This is entirely wrong, but is asserted as a form of wish-fulfilment. If the radicals are violent, the argument goes, then all means of attack are permissible. Thus, when a bomb is exploded by a group of self-styled anarchists -- as happened in Ontario at the Litton plant involved in production of missile parts a couple of years ago -- every kind of broad response is permitted. Any organization or group associated with them in even the most remote way is open to the standard procedures of harrassment. It does not require the application of the War Measures Act for Canadians to lose their civil rights.

It's happening to some of us all the time because of the fertile imaginations of the hysterical and authoritarian personalities of those whose task is to "protect" us. Extremism in the defense of liberty, as Barry Goldwater said in 1964, is permissible. Thereby the terrorism of the state takes upon itself a halo of legitimacy.

Looking again at Orwell's 1984 we see that Winston Smith swore an oath which committed him to any and every kind of violence, in strict obedience to revolutionary leaders whom he had never met, in pursuit of the destruction of the authoritarian state. On the other hand we should also note that all that Winston actually did was to make love to a woman (in opposition to established rules) and to think that the system was wrong. His thoughts were: "Not merely the love of one person but the animal instinct, the simple undifferentiated desire: that was the force that would tear the Party to pieces. ...Their embrace had been a battle, the climax a victory. It was a blow struck against the Party. It was a political act."[23] Individual acts of terror had no part in the actuality of his personal rebellion against Big Brother.

The terrorist, the black-cloaked figure with a hidden bomb, is the popular image of the anarchist -- and some who have called themselves anarchists have taken that route. However, like the tragic hero of 1984, the anarchist is more likely to say, "If there is hope, ...it lies in the proles."[24] The proles are of course, the proletariat, the dispossessed, everyone in society outside the hierarchy of political and economic power in Oceania. In a word, it is the masses; and Orwell's character was placing hope, as slim as it might appear, in a mass movement which seemed most unlikely to occur. This is sensible, for the killing of symbolic individuals does not alter the structures of power, and rather than raising public consciousness

tends to turn public opinion against the radical perpetrators. Moreover, terror implies a moral absolutism which is most untypical of anarchists. To use terror is to take upon oneself the belief that one partakes of a higher truth than that seen by average mortals, to express in action a right which transcends the concerns of ordinary mortals. Terror dehumanizes, making persons into killable objects.

Terrorists excuse themselves by reference to a higher law -- and that law is today most usually framed in nationalist terms, be it the terrorism of an FLQ or the militaristic response of the state to it. This is not anarchist, which position is usually stated thus:

> "National terrorists oppose one nation with another. They consider their nation is at war with another nation. It is purely a matter of which side you're on as to whether the French Resistance is called 'terrorist' (the Germans calling it such, the Allies didn't). Precisely the same reasoning applies to the Irish or the Arabs. They are indiscriminate in their attacks because they are nationalist -- as long as they 'hit the enemy' it does not matter to them what their position in society is. They differ from the national armies, such as the British, French, German, Russian, American, only in status. The difference is not moral but legal.... Nobody can, from a libertarian standard, defend nationalist attacks any more than war..."[25]

Consequently, there are practical, moral and ideological objections to the most usual form of terrorism in the modern world.

The anarchist's hope, like Orwell's, lies in a spontaneous mass movement of opposition. This has always been the source of effective attack upon state structures, in opposition to and in spite of the propaganda and the coercive capacity of specific systems. What happened in Hungary in 1956, in France and Czechoslovakia in 1968, in Poland in 1980, what is happening in Argentina and Chile and El Salvador today, what many in the peace movements of Germany and Britain and Canada and the USA are expressing in demonstrations and civil disobedience -- all

of these are examples of the inability of the modern state to persuade and/or command obedience in the face of fundamental opposition to its orders and policies. Speaking of the possibility of effective rebellion in even the most authoritarian systems, Martin Glaberman argued

> "How do you revolt in a situation like that? ... If you stop to think about it, it's impossible. The one advantage workers have is that they haven't the time to think about it. They have a resistance that they have to conduct every day of their lives. And if that resistance stopped, then the spontaneous outbreaks are impossible. What I'm talking about is the day-to-day resistance of the working class. Every day on the job you are trying to give your employer a little less, you're trying to protect yourself from the disciplines which is routine, you're trying to protect your humanity when it is being demeaned by the way you are being treated... It is because that is continuous that these larger outbreaks take place."[26]

Broad apathy towards the political system and the workplace persist under both communist and capitalist regimes. In the last analysis, rebellion is possible because the state fails in persuading the citizens to support either itself or its laws. Social control through propaganda and ideological conditioning is not sufficient, and we can see it all the time.

When a Canadian soldier decided to shoot up the Quebec National Assembly in May, 1984, it was the brutal and cruel act of a mentally-disturbed young man. In political terms it was an irrelevant act, and would have remained so even if he had succeeded in assassinating members of the provincial assembly and government (as he had intended). As it was, he opened fire on a number of office employees, killing and injuring them. Any civilized person must condemn such actions -- and most anarchists would combine this with a sigh of relief that it was a soldier, and not some self-styled radical civilian, who perpetrated the act, knowing how the police would have responded in that event.

What is of interest here, however, is not the event itself, but the response of the public to it. Most people with whom newspaper reporters spoke saw fit to express regret that ordinary workers rather than politicians were the ones to suffer.[27] I suggest that this rather unkind response is yet another example of the ongoing antipathy of the public to state power, symbolized in the persons of its own elected politicians.

Popular antipathy towards authority and its symbols, activated, is the principle precondition which lies at the core of all the crises of political (and other) hierarchies. States have never collapsed because of the intrigues of small groups of self-styled leaders, who seek only to lead popular rebellions which are not of their making. Of course, this popular energy has been tapped and used by statists from every point in the political spectrum, and the carnival of revolution, that local autonomy and spontaneous rejection of imposed authority, has had to succumb to new generations of moral absolutists and political authoritarians. Each and every system of state authority has thereby remained oppressive, no matter what its ideological guise. Given those characteristics of the modern state which were emphasized by Orwell, and which we can see around us today, it is not difficult to view the contemporary alternatives. Either one thinks and acts independently of the state in perpetual scepticism and distrust of all structures of authority, or one contributes to those patterns of authority. Winston Smith was not given such a choice in Orwell's novel. We must make the choice before it also becomes impossible for us too.

Footnotes

1. Dwight MacDonald, "The Responsibility of Peoples," in Politics, Vol. 2, No. 3 (March, 1945), p. 90. This journal was published in New York.

2. Ibid., p. 91.

3. Ibid, p. 90.

4. George Orwell, 1984, p. 196. Panguin Books, 1984.

5. Ibid., p. 209.

6. The HAPOTOC Rebel, September-December, 1977. Published in Amsterdam by the Help A Prisoner, Outlaw Torture Organizing Collective.

7. Orwell, op. cit., 161.

8. Ibid., p. 227.

9. Ibid., p. 270.

10. In this paragraph reference is being made to the two volumes by Norm Chomsky and Edward S. Herman, jointly called The Political Economy of Human Rights. Volume I is entitled The Washington Connection and Third World Fascism; Volume II is After the Cataclysm: Post-war Indo-China and the Reconstruction of Imperial Ideology. Both were published by Black Rose Books, Montreal, 1979. Eleanor MacLean's book, Between the Lines: How to Detect Bias and Propoganda in the News and Everyday Life, was published by Black Rose Books in 1981.

11. Figures published in The Globe and Mail, December 30, 1983.

12. The Globe and Mail, January 31, 1984.

13. The Ottawa Citizen, June 30, 1983.

14. The Globe and Mail, April 13, 1983.

15. This figure was provided in Newsletter Number One (February, 1984) by the Citizens Against State Surveillance group in Montreal.

16. Report by Jeff Salot in The Globe and Mail, February 25, 1984.

17. Report by Michael Tenszen, The Globe and Mail, December 30, 1983.

18. The Globe and Mail, May 3, 1984.

19. The Globe and Mail, May 4, 1984.

20. Ibid.

21. Statement by Norman Nawrocki, a Montreal freelance writer and public relations adviser to a Montreal peace group. See The Globe and Mail, May 2, 1984.

22. Orwell, op. cit., 177.

23. Ibid., p. 112.

24. Ibid., p. 64.

25. Black Flag (United Kingdom), December 1976, Vol. IV, No. 12.

26. Martin Glaberman, "Poland and Eastern Europe," presented at the third annual conference on Human Rights, January 23, 1983, Kingston, Ontario. See Speaking Out, Vol. 2, No. 3-4.

27. On May 8, 1984, Cpl. Denis Lortie of the Canadian armed forces killed 3 people and wounded another 13 workers in the Quebec National Assembly. The following report was written by Graham Fraser in The Globe and Mail on May 12, 1984: ((Emerging from the funeral of the three victims of Tuesday's shooting in the Quebec National Assembly, politicians from both sides of the House were unnerved by the reactions they had heard last week. "People are going so far as to say, 'Its a shame those poor innocent people were killed instead of some nasty politicians,'" said a visibly shaken Guy Tardif, Housing and Consumer Protection Minister. ..."I heard that in my riding," said Pierre Paradis, Liberal MNA for Brome-Missisquoi. "People are saying, 'What a shame it was honest citizens instead of politicians.' It wasn't just anglophones, either -- francophones too."))