

# **1984 Revisited: Orwell's Vision of 2000**

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Like many a person, I first read *1984* in my youth. Needless to say, it struck me like a thunderbolt. Naturally, I misconstrued the novel and Orwell's political themes, interpreting and relating to the book in a religious context, which was the only ideological framework I had at the time. Steeped in Catholicism with its dark and tortured vision of life and, like a Bosch painting, with its apocalyptic afterlife, particularly as practiced in Latin America, I easily accommodated all the main features of *1984* to that vision. Big Brother, like God, was everywhere, watching you even when you couldn't see him, and was infallible, as was God and his earthly representative, the pope of Rome. God, of course, had his heavenly angels and saints, the inner party, but also his earthly agents, the hordes of penguin-like nuns in their ominous, black and white habits and dour-looking priests and bishops, the outer party, who roamed the earth like thought-police, monitoring my every action and thought for offenses against Mother Church, which of course was the Party of God. My weekly trips to the confessional booth, like the public confessions of thought criminals in *1984*, were cathartic, cleansing my mind and soul of all forbidden thoughts, including the worst of sins, thoughts of pleasurable sex, considered unclean and forbidden outside of marriage, and then only for procreation, just as in Oceania. Satan was the Emanuel Goldstein of my Catholic vision, the arch-enemy of God, and was always tempting me against my own nature and trying to enlist me in the revolution against God. The tortures and fires of hell and eternal damnation were like Room 101, where one is sent to confront his worst fears, or the fires of Purgatory, where purification of sin and salvation were possible with confession, contrition, and enormous doses of pain and suffering until one declared eternal love and obedience to God, as Winston Smith declares his love of Big Brother at the novel's end. It was all too easy an accommodation, adjusting my Catholic world view to that of Big Brother and the state of Oceania.

In time, having called the existence of God and the Devil into question, and having lost the innocence that graces youth, I slowly began to adjust Orwell's vision to the political realm which he had intended.

*1984* was completed in 1948 as Orwell was dying of tuberculosis. He vacillated between calling it *1984* and *The Last Man in Europe*. Its dark vision for the future of

humanity draws inspiration from the world war Orwell had just witnessed, the atrocities of the monstrous Nazi War and Propaganda Machines, Stalin's equally vile purges and gulags and the consolidation of a Soviet police state, crushing any illusions of Marx's utopia of a workers state; even more disturbing, the war was brought to a close by the unimaginable horrors unleashed by the dropping of atomic bombs on civilian populations. More disturbing, because they were the actions of the so-called civilized world, the last bastion of freedom, democracy, and human rights. This collective horror by three different states - fascist, communist, and capitalist democracy must have thoroughly disillusioned Orwell and removed for him any hope of humans rising from the ashes of the war and rebuilding their societies on a higher moral plane.

In addition, Orwell had already experienced bitter disappointment while fighting for the Republican cause in the Spanish Civil War. In his *Homage to Catalonia* he describes the splintering of the Left into many disputing factions, and the betrayal of them all by the Soviet communists who failed to support the world revolution of the working classes which had begun in Barcelona, because, following the directive of Stalin, the time was not yet ripe - more to the point, Stalin had no control. Later, of course, there followed the communist purges of the anarchists in Barcelona in which Orwell himself was arrested and barely escaped with his life. Orwell was equally disgusted with the West, because it too betrayed the Republican cause, fearing the loss of its markets and investments with the possible victory of the revolting working classes. As a result, not only were a million lives lost in this most savage war, but the world, particularly the Spanish people, had Franco and the Fascists to contend with for forty more years, and the stage was set for WWII with Hitler and Mussolini conducting the first massive aerial bombing of Basque civilian populations. (The West played the Neutrality game, while only the USSR and Mexico provided weapons to the loyalists, but Stalin made sure the weapons did not fall into the hands of the anarchists or socialists not under his control.

Moreover, as a young man, Orwell had experienced British imperialism and its brutalities while serving with the Imperial Police in Burma. (*Burmese Days*) He had also witnessed French colonialism and atrocities against Arabs while living in Morocco. During the war he had experienced, in addition to the Blitz, state censorship as a journalist in London, and had himself worked for BBC spreading propaganda to India over the airwaves. Wherever Orwell looked, and his gaze missed very little, he saw freedom threatened. Surely these experiences collectively were to later find their way onto the pages of *1984*.

It is true that Orwell patterned Oceania after the police state of communist USSR with its gulags, purges, contrived trials, KGB, labor camps, its inner party and so forth. The omnipresent mustachioed Big Brother is certainly modeled after Stalin, and there is a

similar, almost god-like aura about him. The arch betrayer, Emanuel Goldstein can easily be substituted for Trotsky, the fallen angel, glasses, goatee and all. But it would be a *great mistake* to interpret *1984* solely as a critique of Soviet communism, as it was so interpreted in the United States, which accounts for its enormous popularity - particularly during the McCarthy era. We must not lose sight of the fact that Oceania is an English-speaking state with its center in London, not some remote and exotic location. Orwell's vision of the future is that of the centralization of state power and the crushing of the individual, of human freedom and the human spirit. It is a state power without ideology, neither communist, capitalist, socialist, or fascist, though it has elements of all these. It is simply raw, brutal power acting for its own sake. (A vision of the future is the stomping of a boot on a human face forever, O'Brien tells Winston.) If we interpret *1984* as primarily a critique of Stalinist Russia, or as the disillusion and disappointments of Orwell with socialism, his book would not read nearly as profound, nor his warning be so eminent. In a word, *1984* raises the central question as to what the second half of the twentieth century holds for human kind based on the ominous events of the first half century. Orwell is projecting the social and political currents in place in 1948 and warning us as to *what could happen* in the future if we are not on guard against propaganda and demigods. Orwell was shocked at seeing members of the British intelligentsia so easily seduced by propagandas, orthodoxies, and ideologies that departed, in his opinion, from rationality and sanity. Thus, *1984* reflects this mistrust in human nature, knowing the ugly causes humanity can embrace, seemingly by rational and intelligent people.

He himself was very distraught by the many reviews which appeared shortly after *1984's* publication and he found it necessary to issue a statement to clarify his intention and defuse the many misinterpretations.

"It has been suggested by some of the reviewers of *1984* that it is the author's view that this, or something like this, is what will happen inside the next forty years in the Western World. This is not correct. I think that, allowing for the book being after all a parody, something like *1984* could happen. This is the direction in which the world is going at the present time, and the trend lies deep in the political, social, and economic foundations of the contemporary world situation. Specifically, the danger lies in the structure imposed on Socialist and on Liberal capitalist communities by the necessity to prepare for total war with the USSR and the new weapons, of which of course the atomic bomb is the most powerful and the most publicized. But danger lies also in the acceptance of a totalitarian outlook by intellectuals of all colors. The moral to be drawn from this dangerous nightmare situation is a simple one: *Don't let it happen. It depends on you.*"

In *1984* the world is dominated by three states, Oceania, Eurasia, and Eastasia that are constantly at war with one another, but in an eternal deadlock, none of them having

the advantage. The southern hemisphere I like today's Third World, as source of raw materials and the arena wherein armies fight one another. The three states are continuously shifting opponents, so one is never quite sure who is at war with whom. But it really doesn't matter, because that there be war continuously is what ultimately matters. In truth, each state is at war with its own populations, subjugating and exploiting them completely, and uses war against an official enemy in order to deflect internal criticism, muster patriotism, and use up the production of workers which would otherwise go towards creating affluence and making their lives more comfortable. This in turn would lead to leisure and thinking, the worst possible scenario for Big Brother and the Party.

Thinking, independent thinking free of the official Party line, is naturally, the worst enemy of the state, and must be eradicated. Doublethink, the ability to hold to contradictory views as being true and selectively employ one or the other as needed by the Party, was a technique commonly employed. History, the collective memory of the past and of society, is destroyed daily so a context for thought does not exist, and the door is left open for invention and contriving of events by the state since there is nothing to check them against. (Winston himself is engaged in this dirty work at the Ministry of Truth.) The official language of Oceania, "newspeak," is gradually replacing English as old dictionaries are being eliminated and replaced with new ones. The new dictionary of newspeak is designed to eliminate words and concepts, with the rationale of eliminating the thinkable. If there is no word for "freedom" say, there cannot be the concept, and so on. With a limited vocabulary and a lack of historical sense, the state is assured of eliminating enemies. Meanwhile, until the new language is in place, the ultimate police state consisting of thought police and two-way television screens are put in place to monitor subversive thoughts. Torture, disappearances, and out and out murdering of citizens complement the above techniques at the Ministry of Love. Controlling the outer person, one's behavior, is easy for a totalitarian state; the challenge is to control the inner person, and this of course is the problem for the inner party. It must not only control but destroy the inner person, so that the only *objective reality* outside the human mind is that which the Party dictates. The Party is objective reality. There is a parallel here to Plato's Cave: the party members of 1984 are like the prisoners who are shackled forever facing the wall, the only reality being the fleeting shadows of objects reflected on the wall which the Party chooses to exhibit.

Having given this brief overview to remind you of some of the more salient features of 1984, I come now to the question, to what extent has the world realized Orwell's dark vision as we near the end of the century? There are two answers I should like to give to this question, although, one can imagine numerous responses. If we talk about the Cold War era, we see much of Orwell's structure in place. Three grand areas and

ideologies roughly describe the world: the US, USSR, and China along with their satellites and spheres of influence and their huge militaries. War is continuous but never takes place in the three major regions, but instead is fought in the Third World mostly with proxy armies. The arms race is such that production is largely used up for military rather than the well being of citizens, concentrated instead among the multinationals, particularly the defense contractors. There is a state religion inculcating hatred among the peoples of these grand areas, deflecting internal criticism and manufacturing consent for military adventures abroad. In our own case, communism is Satan, the USSR the evil empire, to use the immortal words of one of our great statesmen. Stalin and Mao, and eventually Ho Chi Minh, the Ayatollah, and Fidel Castro are the Emanuel Goldstein's who with their minions attempt to overthrow the good and the just, namely, the peace-loving and democratic societies of the West. Of course, the good and the just are simply Yankee imperialists and their running dogs in the Chinese state religion, and capitalist criminals in Soviet propaganda. Each of these grand areas has its thought police, a system of spies, counterintelligence, prisons, and so on, to protect the state religion from heresies. In our own case we had the McCarthy era with its accusations and purges, HUAC, the FBI's Cointelpro, enemy lists, the CIA, and our puppet regimes abroad.

The tension between these three states accounts for nearly all the political violence which occurred since the end of WWII. It expressed itself in the many wars of national liberation and the attempt of the European colonial powers to hold on to their pre-war empires. Such is the case, for example, in Southeast Asia where first the French, then the Americans became mired in the massive destruction and quicksand of Vietnam. One can interpret the French and American interventions in Vietnam, at least on one level, as the attempt to maintain the long standing underdevelopment of southeast Asia, and control of its resources and markets. In some sense, the entire forty-five years of Cold War can be attributed to similar motives, though it has been described in other terms, as the fight for freedom, the struggle between the evil of communism and the good of democracy - always democracy, incidentally, never capitalism. History, however, does not record the developed nations as ever demonstrating an interest in freedom for the underdeveloped nations, if by freedom one means independence, both economic and political. But ultimately, whatever the terminology used to describe the struggle, even official apologists would have difficulty in denying that the West fought to preserve the fruits and tools of **development**, its homelands and grand areas, its markets, its sources of raw materials, its geopolitical positions, its high standards of living and quality of life - by claiming the right to keep half the world in a state of continuous exploitation, political control, and permanent underdevelopment.

The communist resistance to this, sometimes out of hegemonic motives, such as flowed from the Soviet Empire, at other times drawn from motives of nationalism and the struggle for autonomy and liberation, together checked Western economic expansion for decades. But it helped to create a dangerous world of enormous military weaponry and nuclear arsenals as well as huge national debts left over as residue. It is only now, with the defeat and collective suicide of communism, that economic globalization is firmly entrenching itself throughout the world as had been planned since the end of WWII with the creation of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and GATT, later fine-tuned by the Trilateral Commission, and now, by the World Trade Organization.

If the West can be accused of leaving trails of misery and death in the wake of its violent "defense" of freedom, the Soviet communists can easily be accused of victimizing the other half of the world in its "defense" of the working classes. From the murderous years of Stalin's purges to the invasion of Soviet tanks in Eastern Europe, the communists have left a trail of bodies - victims of gulags, secret police, occupying armies, prisons, tortures, forced labor, imposed totalitarian governments, suppressed voices and the denial of liberties and human rights - all the while devastating and polluting the environment in a style that would make the West envious. The West has of course also contributed to these types of horrors, if not in their developed home turfs, where national myths and ideology forbid them, then indirectly by CIA-backed coups abroad and by supporting, training, and arming corrupt fascist regimes, puppet governments, and surrogate armies who were willing to cooperate in these dark and profitable undertakings. These hired guns qualify for the dirty wars, their hideous deeds often overlooked, because they declare themselves to be the "staunch enemies of communism."

To be sure, most of the violence of the Cold War was generated by the two nuclear super-powers, the US and the USSR, with china, still a sleeping giant, having a lesser impact, but still an important player in this global mischief. Needless to say, the US played off the two communist giants, one against another, sometimes in détente with one, and nearly at war with the other, at other times a reversal of adversaries, much like the situation in 1984. And naturally, the USSR and China played the same game, playing all sides against the middle. Chomsky claims that all sides profited by the cold War which explains why it lasted so long.

At the height of the cold War, then, only God must know how very, very close we came to nuclear war (on fourteen occasions we went on decom alert and were at the brink of launching missiles). Consider; had the world engaged in nuclear war, the kind of society the survivors, if any, might have constructed from the ashes. I think such a world very likely would have resembled Orwell's horrific vision of the future. It is more than a remote possibility that Orwell's dark vision may have come within a h

heartbeat of coming to pass as depicted in Kubrick's film, *Dr. Strangelove*. That then, is the first answer I should like to give. The Cold War era not only resembled life depicted in *1984* to a large degree, but may have been directly on track towards achieving its full scenario with nuclear war and the rise of monstrous states like Oceania in the aftermath, has there been survivors.

With the end of the Cold War and the disintegration of the Soviet Bloc, the world has changed dramatically, moving from an East-West confrontation to a North-South dichotomy, an era of communications and information, of biotechnology, and a hegemony of multinational corporations. The victory of capitalism and the market place has ushered in new dangers to freedom, to individual rights, and to the environment. With the lack of communists to interfere with the market place, Economic Globalization has left no corner of the earth and its resources untouched. It has redefined the world in its own image, creating a master-slave relationship between the North and South while the developed nations of the East and West fight economic wars with one another for the lion's share of these spoils under the rationale of democratizing the world.

Consider that the master, the riches 20% of the global populations, owns or controls 82.7% of total world income. The slave, the poorest 20%, shares 1.4%. The richest 400 Americans, according to *Forbes*, have a combined worth equal to the GNP 's of India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Nepal, shared by one billion people! These figures are absolutely shocking and unconscionable, on their own, made even more so, when one considers they describe the reality of a "free world" no longer engaged in nuclear posturing, no longer having an excuse or rationale for the massive defense budgets of the Cold War. I mention them here not simply to show the huge inequity in the world, a fact well known, but to suggest the connection with the erosion of freedom for the masses of people which this concentration of wealth implies.

This gap between the rich and the poor, between the developed and underdeveloped worlds, is growing even more so each year under globalization. Nor is there much hope that this new *colonialism* called globalization will lead to a more egalitarian society. Unfortunately, those who have the wealth, and with it political and economic power over the world's population, are not likely to embrace egalitarianism. They profit from a world of underdevelopment, not one of equality. Nor are their arguments to justify those profits encouraging for change. Lawrence Summers, chief economist for the World Bank and now advisor to the Clinton administration, has argued that "It is economically more efficient for the rich countries to dispose of their toxic wastes in poor countries, because poor people have both shorter life spans and less earning potential than wealthy people." *The Economist* follows up Summer's graceless comment by adding that "It is a moral duty of the rich countries to export their pollution to poor countries because this provides poor people with economic

opportunities of which they would otherwise be deprived." Given this rationale, among the industrial nations, Japan should be commended for transferring over 90% of its smelting industry to the Philippines, and much of its copper smelting. In Leyte, the copper smelting plant producing high-grad copper cathodes for shipment to Japan produces all the waste and pollution anyone can desire, providing many economic opportunities for the local people. "Gas and water waste emissions from the plant contain high concentrations of boron, arsenic, heavy metals, and sulfur compounds that have contaminated local water supplies, reduced fishing and rice yields, damaged forests, and increased the occurrence of upper respiratory diseases among the local residents." This is an example of the efficiency and moral obligation that Lawrence Summers and *The Economist* referred to.

Nor is there much in the way of hope to be derived from the second Earth Summit which met this summer in New York City. Joby Warrick, covering the event in a piece for the LA Times-Washington Post Service, reported on the progress made (or not made) since 1992 when 178 nations gathered in Rio. "In 60 months, the human population has grown by nearly half a billion, and clean water and arable land have become scarcer. Tropical rain forests are vanishing at a faster pace, and greenhouse gases from cars and smokestacks soar to record levels in the atmosphere." The attempts of the poor countries to tie environmental issues with poverty and economic issues at the Rio conference also failed. The poor nations of the underdeveloped south called upon the rich nations of the industrial North to commit money to help develop their economies. They received a non-binding promise of aid targeting 0.7% of the Northern countries' GNP. The promise was never kept, as the AP reported. In fact, "that figure has declined, not risen - from 0.35% in 1992 to 0.27% in 1995." The \$59 billion in aid was not even half the Rio target of \$125 billion. The US led the way in cuts, slashing its aid contribution to \$7.4 billion from \$9.9 billion a year earlier. Not surprising given its past contributions to poor nations. President Bush also refused to join the other nations of the world in signing a treaty to protect biological diversity. It is worth mentioning that we in the North, the First World, are consuming 80% of the world's resources and our industrialization economies are polluting the earth from pole to pole - and even the pole itself if we consider the hole in the ozone layer.

To be sure, the modern world at the close of the century **does not** resemble Orwell's Oceania. At least not in the developed world. Oceania is bleak, dreary, stark, a shadowy world of black and white, a montage of film noir, Orson Well's *Citizen Kane* or Kafka's *The Trial*. The modern, developed world is technicolor, flamboyant, a world much more resembling Huxley's BNW with its sexual promiscuity, worship of celebrity, massive drug use, endless consumerism, a world of biotechnology, genetic research and cloning - though of course it has its crime, its homelessness, its poverty, its unconscionable distribution of wealth. But the "Oceania" of the modern world

exist as well, as complements to the developed world, indeed, one could argue, as the necessary concomitants to accommodate the needs and affluence of the developed world. The torture rooms, the political murders, police surveillance, the biting poverty and squalor, the totalitarian police states and the misery and hopelessness of *1984* do indeed exist today, or they did throughout the Cold War, in many parts of the underdeveloped world, and are largely sponsored by the democratic North. The Peru of Fujimori, the drug wars of Columbia, the low intensity warfare in Chiapas; the massacres of humanity in Cambodia, East Timor, and Rwanda and Zaire, to name only a few Orwellian scenarios. Spend a Saturday night before the fireplace reading the latest reports of Amnesty International or of Human Rights Watch Americas if you doubt this.

If one looks beneath the veneer and glitter of freedom in the developed world, one finds troubling signs and trends. In *1984* reality was shaped by state propaganda. "Reality is all in the mind," O'Brien tells Winston. "Not in the individual mind; that is meaningless and unimportant. But in the Party's mind, collectively. If, the Party says that 2 plus 2 equals 5, then it does. It becomes reality." In this vein, we must not lose sight of the enormous propaganda machinery in place in contemporary society. Fewer and fewer corporations are in control of the media in all of its manifestations: tv, news, entertainment, newspapers, magazines, books. And some, like G.E. and Westinghouse are in the arms and nuclear weapons manufacturing business. The average person watches TV approximately five hours a day. Most people's contact with the world is through their local newspaper, unfortunately, or 30 minutes of Dan Rather or Tom Brokaw. MTV, surely a mindless platter of sensation and sex with lyrics of oblivion, a culture of lobotomy, is now the most widely viewed program in the world. Or, witness the madness generated by the death of Princess Diana, a millionairess jet-setter who made the cover of *People Magazine* on 44 occasions, and whose main attributes were that she married well, divorced even better, and embraced a cause or two in her spare time. Or, the enormous attention given to the OJ Simpson trial, a year of intense media attention spent pondering the guilt or innocence of one man while hundreds of thousands of human beings were being tortured, arrested, murdered, or masses of children were dying of malnutrition or starvation, all quietly with little or no media attention. The daily networks too absorbed with the bloody glove or DNA of a football celebrity or blaming the small-fry paparazzi to cover up the sleaze of the real paparazzi, ABC, CBS, NBC, CNN, and all the rest of the mainstream media. It is not an exaggeration to say, following Chomsky, that our values and opinions, in short, the contents of our mind, our reality, is being shaped and our consent manufactured by this corporate media to an alarming extent. All this, I suspect, would bring a sinister smile to Orwell's face.

Then, there is the demise of historical consciousness. The displacement of Old English by newspeak not only, was designed to eliminate thought, but also to wipe out memories of the past, what we should call history. In the 1980s, coverage of Nicaragua and the contra war was badly distorted in the media, but worse, was given no historical context. Contras, Somoza's former brutal national guardsmen, true terrorists and murderers of innocent civilians bent on destroying the economy, were represented by the media as "freedom fighters" while the Sandinistas who distributed vast tracts of land to peasants and conducted literacy and vaccination campaigns were branded as terrorists by the Reagan administration, his lead dutifully followed by the disciplined press. (He also referred to MX missiles as Peacemakers, in other newspeak terms, the CIA resolves problems with "extreme" prejudice," the euphemism for assassination, our China policy is one of constructive engagement, etc.,). Little historical context of the many U.S. incursions and support of dictatorships in Haiti, Guatemala, or Cuba, for that matter, are ever mentioned. It was as if the events of the day pooped up out of thin air, like bread from a toaster, with no prior history. Nor is there a historical context by which to assess reportage of the daily occurrences between Israel and the Palestinians, the media construing all Palestinian violence as terrorism, and that of state terrorism on the part of Israel as "justifiable retaliation". Nor is there a historical framework within which to understand Mexican immigration. Hence, the immigrant bashing and blame for this country's economic woes are blamed on the Mexican without reference to NAFTA, the exploitation of the Mexican economy and natural resources by Wall Street investors, or reference to the US acquisition of the Southwest and California from Mexico in 1848. Examples of these kind exist in the thousands, if only we bother to look.

The Cold War is over, but even with the premature death of communism, the result has not been a desirable one for the majority of the world's population. The victory of "freedom" and the market place has resulted in a social instability consisting of huge debts, widespread unemployment, millions of displaced people and refugees, growing insecurity, and a backlash of racism and discrimination against immigrants in the developed West. European governments are straining to trim their budgets of social spending and worker benefits to meet the stringent demands of trade agreements such as Maastricht and the European Union. Meanwhile, in the United States, billions of dollars spent on MX missiles rust in their silos at taxpayer expense while government agencies search among depressed minority communities and Native American reservations for places to bury its nuclear waste and dismantle the stockpile of chemical weapons, and the Pentagon goes searching for new enemies to justify its Cold War budget and interventions. Multinational corporations discipline American workers by downsizing or shutting down plants and setting up business in the factories of exploitation of the Third World where cheap labor, favorable tax breaks, lax environmental regulations, and the lack of organized labor guarantee huge profits.

This maquiladorization of the globe has been the legacy of the victory of freedom and the market place to the peoples of the Third World. Exploited workers unwilling to tolerate these conditions occasionally rise up and demand a livable wage, but they are repressed with state violence by the machinery of police and army of host countries, with weapons sold to them by the West, as occurred recently in Indonesia and Vietnam at striking Nike factories. For the millions of people of under development mere survival is the priority of life, with the severity of life and the specters of hunger, disease, and death making each day like the aftermath of nuclear war.

There is no escaping from this new world order. It has penetrated every corner of the globe, permeated every culture, "battered down even Chinese Walls." It has reached even into the public schools, as corporations provide "educational" videos and computer software and satellite dishes in return for mandatory viewing of various programming. Cyber-history is now presented in the schools sponsored by the *Forbes* corporation under the theme "The History of the United States for Young People." One can only imagine such a vision of history presented through corporate lenses. And in these times of tight school budgets, enterprising school officials are selling space on campus walls for corporate advertising.

But before I leave you completely in the dumps, having replaced Orwell's nightmarish vision with another, perhaps equally horrific one, let me conclude more positively with a few encouraging remarks. We are at a crossroads. We can remove ourselves from all of this, burrowing deeply into some comfort zone or ivory tower high above it all and live inside our heads, oblivious to the world. Or, we can join with others in rejecting this ugly and oppressive vision of the future, as millions throughout the world are doing to take back their communities, their economies, their values, their humanity, and their planet. The Zapatista rebellion and protest against this new world order, led by the poorest and most exploited of all, the indigenous peoples of Chiapas, is one example of courage and of moral fortitude. Everywhere the choice that peoples face who are confronted with economic globalization will be the same. The choice between freedom and the loss of control of their lives and communities, between the life or death of the spirit, between active struggle or passive acquiescence. If, we choose struggle, then the human spirit will say no to oppression, not to the denial of human rights and human dignity. No to the chains and prisons and police states that would deny the expression of our humanity, our art, our opinions, our differences. No to making war in order to make peace, the self-righteous states whose ideologies or religions dictate sending their sons too foreign shores to kill the inhabitants in order to save them from themselves in the name of freedom or God. No to a freedom of the market that impoverishes the many for the enrichment of the few. That creates bloated bellies and victims of starvation while others die in the fine linens of their best from a life of plenty and overindulgence. No to any system which rapes and pillages the

earth. And yes to life and to freedom and to diverse ways of life with respect for all. History is indeed this struggle for freedom, as more than one philosopher has said. Without that struggle, we are dead before our time. This, I believe, is what animated Winston Smith to rebel against all odds, and of course, what made him such a danger to the state. We must not forget Orwell's one or two pieces of optimism in *1984*: recall that he has Winston write in his diary, "if there is any hope, it lies with the proles." And in another place, Winston tells Julia, "getting caught or killed is not important. What counts is remaining human." That remark, I believe, is at the heart of *1984* and Orwell's message. At any rate, this, I believe, is how Orwell would have responded to our modern world at the close of the twentieth century. His warning is as relevant today as it was fifty years ago.