

# Comparison between the Totalitarian Regime of 1984 and the Foreign and Domestic Policy of United States of America and Its Western Allies

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**UNIVERSITY OF RIJEKA  
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

**Marko Komlenić**

**COMPARISON BETWEEN THE  
TOTALITARIAN REGIME OF *1984* AND  
THE FOREIGN AND DOMESTIC POLICY  
OF UNITED STATES OF AMERICA AND  
ITS WESTERN ALLIES**

**MASTER THESIS**

**MENTOR: DR.SC. PHIL. NIKOLA TUTEK**

**Rijeka, 2023.**

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Rijeka, 12. rujna 2023.

## **IZJAVA**

Kojom izjavljujem da sam diplomski rad naslova “Comparison between the totalitarian regime of 1984 and the foreign and domestic policy of United States of America and its Western allies“

izradio samostalno pod mentorstvom dr.sc.phil. Nikole Tuteka.

U radu sam primijenio metodologiju znanstveno istraživačkoga rada i koristio literaturu koja je navedena na kraju diplomskoga rada. Tuđe spoznaje, stavove, zaključke, teorije i zakonitosti koje sam izravno ili parafrazirajući naveo u diplomskom radu na uobičajen način citirao sam i povezao s korištenim bibliografskim jedinicama.

Student

Marko Komlenić

Potpis

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## **Abstract**

The aim of this thesis is to compare the aspects of the totalitarian regime, as described in *1984*, with the present-day United States of America.

This will be done through the topics of language, mass media and use of torture and human rights violations. The thesis will provide arguments, as well as circumstantial and direct evidence in order to substantiate those claims, in order to raise public awareness of the similarities between the two regimes.

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

In this thesis, certain comparisons will be drawn between totalitarian regime of 1984, and present-day United States of America. A thought which may immediately come to mind when reading the name of the thesis is “Why the United States?” Many countries around the world have, at some point in time, engaged in activities which are representative of totalitarian regime: mass surveillance, censorship, torture, intimidation and others. What distinguishes U.S. from those totalitarian regimes, is the longevity of its engagement in practices of war, Doublethink and propaganda, which makes it akin to Big Brother of Oceania. According to Orwell, “*the primary aim of modern warfare is to use up the products of the machine without raising the general standard of living*”<sup>1</sup> and “*the only way of achieving this was by continuous warfare*”<sup>2</sup>. This is eerily reminiscent of the United States of America, which has been in the state of continuous war for the most of its history.<sup>3</sup>

Another reason why it is being singled out is that the United States wields enormous power and influence globally, both militarily and economically, so the core values and beliefs it spreads around the globe have a significant and lasting impact on other countries and people in general. It is my view that actions of a country which influences the world in such a significant way, culturally, militarily and economically, should be subject to close scrutiny and criticism, in order to ensure that its military conquests, economic decisions, and foreign policy decisions do not have an insidious motive behind them.

Since the area of world affairs is a complex mixture of various sciences, such as sociology, psychology, anthropology, statistics, mathematics, biology and others, there is often no single way of looking at certain problem or phenomenon. Regardless, it is important to have an informed discussion and a debate which involves different points of view, without fear of punishment for expressing those views. Currently, I do not think that there is an exercise in free discussion in area of the world we call West, including U.S. Examples of this are banning of the Russian media channels as well as banning WION news channel for reporting the Russian statement, which we will cover in detail in the chapter about media control. Decisions like this eliminate the potential for a discussion between the two sides. In doing so, Western media

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<sup>1</sup> George Orwell, Nineteen Eighty-Four, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2021, page 238

<sup>2</sup> George Orwell, Nineteen Eighty-Four, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2021, page 241

<sup>3</sup> Beuck, Charles, PhD, Only 15 years of peace in the history of the United States of America, Traveling through history, Jan 9., 2020



engages in censorship and propaganda, two very things it criticizes and attributes to the Russian side.

The other reason why the United States is singled out is that many United States citizens, as well as its government, are very vocal about being the land of the free and having values such as freedom, equality and individuality,<sup>4</sup> however, many events which are part of United States history, such as top secret experiments performed by the government and on its own citizens,<sup>5</sup> which we will go in depth in the course of the thesis, do not corroborate these beliefs and virtues. United States also prides itself on democracy, to the point that it exports democracy and freedom to other countries via military operations.<sup>6</sup> It is my opinion that this is a great irony and an example of Orwell's Doublethink, that a country repeatedly invades other countries, brings chaos, destruction and torture to its borders,<sup>7</sup> but at the same time views itself as a saviour and portrays its actions in a favourable light<sup>8</sup>, even after "*most studies of US military actions abroad have been pessimistic about the ability of the US to boost democracy.*"<sup>9</sup> United States' exercise in Doublethink, like this one, is also the motive behind writing this thesis.

It is therefore the aim of this thesis to review known facts about United states history and its present day foreign and domestic policy, in order to prove that some comparisons between the totalitarianism in the 1984 and the United States are valid and true.

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<sup>4</sup> Praneeth, J., American Values (A piece by a high school student on the core American Values and what his views are on the subject. And it shows how the values affect people, and what experiences have led to the values.), Writing Our Future: American Creed

<sup>5</sup> „MK-ULTRA gave him life-or-death power over other people's minds and bodies.“ – Kinzer, Stephen, Poisoner in chief; Sidney Gottlieb and the Cia search for mind control, Henry Holt and company, 2019, New York, page 277

<sup>6</sup> Tures, A. John, *Operation Exporting Freedom: The Quest for Democratization via United States Military Operations*, The Whitehead Journal of Diplomacy and International Relations, page 97, Winter/Spring 2005, Online edition

<sup>7</sup> “One revealing example is the standard current interpretation of the campaign of slaughter, torture and destruction that the United States organized and directed in Central America“ – Chomsky, Noam, World Orders, Old and New; With a New Epilogue, Pluto Press, 1997, London, page 3

<sup>8</sup> “The enemies you confront will come to know your skill and bravery. The people you liberate will witness the honorable and decent spirit of the American military.“, President George W. Bush, Address to the nation, Iraq: Special report, The oval office, Washington D.C., 2001

<sup>9</sup> Tures, A. John, *Operation Exporting Freedom: The Quest for Democratization via United States Military Operations*, The Whitehead Journal of Diplomacy and International Relations, page 107, Winter/Spring 2005, Online edition

## 2. LANGUAGE

### 2.1. Neurological foundations of language

Human language is an extremely complex and multifaceted structure and as such, contains different aspects used by human beings in order to convey the message and the meaning. One of these aspects are emotions which are inextricably tied to words and human beings in general.

As humans, we lead rich emotional lives <sup>10</sup>, and we use words in our daily lives to convey those emotions to other people. For instance, we might agree upon the general meaning of the word “mother“ as a “female parent“ <sup>11</sup>, and dissect the meaning further by adding or subtracting certain semantic fields or categories to it, such as “not physically strong“, “old“, “young“, “human being“, and so on, based on our individual experiences and perceptions of the word “mother“. These meanings, according to Harvey, are called denotations. In addition to these, which are part of its core pool of meanings shared by significant portion of society, we also feel certain emotions when we hear such a word – in this example the word most often triggers feelings of love, security, calm, and acceptance. According to Harvey, these feelings are its connotations, or connotative meanings.<sup>12</sup>

To understand the relationship between connotative and denotative meanings in human brain, let us consider the following image, which illustrates the underlying mechanic behind these meanings. <sup>13</sup>

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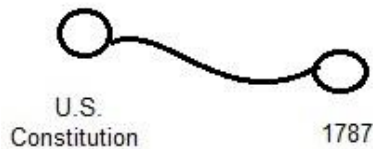
<sup>10</sup> <https://www.outlookindia.com/business-spotlight/relationship-between-emotions-truth-and-the-decisions-we-take-news-185992>

<sup>11</sup> <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/mother>

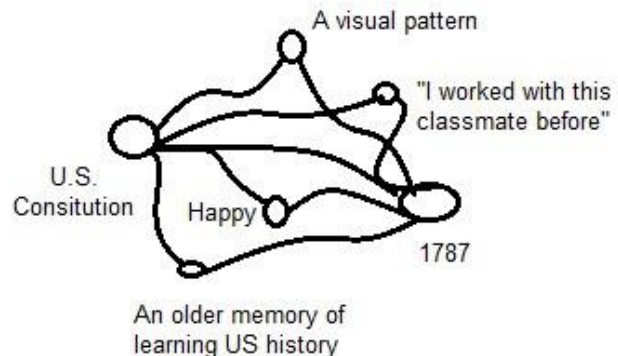
<sup>12</sup> “The denotation of a word is its core, essential meaning. The connotations of a word are all of its secondary implications, or emotional or evaluative, associations. For example, the denotation of the word “dog“ is its core meaning: it is the relation between the word and class of objects to which it can refer. The connotations of “dog“ might be “nice“, “frightening“ or “smelly“. Put another way, people agree on denotation, but the connotations differ from person to person.“, Trevor, A. Harley, The psychology of language, from data to theory, Fourth edition, Psychology press, 2014, page 321

<sup>13</sup> Trevor, A. Harley, The psychology of language, from data to theory, Fourth edition, Psychology press, 2014. page 322

## Passive Learning



## Active Learning



14

Human brain can be considered a large neural network, in which words and emotions represent certain points in the it <sup>15</sup>. Specific points in this network are connected in various ways and unique to each individual. For instance, the phrase “U.S. constitution“ might be connected with the feeling of happiness, so whenever we hear the word “constitution“ or remember its meaning, a feeling of happiness might be triggered because we experienced happiness at the same time we learned about that specific event. Word “constitution“ is connected to various information such as battle, 1787, written law and so on. A connection between “constitution“ and “1787“ is shared by most of the society, which is why we call those meanings connotations. The term „constitution“ sometimes also leads to the emotion, which makes the emotion in question its connotative meaning and that particular connection is unique to each individual.

## 2.2. Connection between language and propaganda

How does the knowledge about these processes in human brain relate to the topic of propaganda? Human beings are emotional beings and decisions they make in everyday life is heavily impacted by emotions. When we hear certain words, we experience emotions of some

<sup>14</sup> <https://keithslinguist.wordpress.com/2018/04/23/active-passive-knowledge>

<sup>15</sup> „Connectionists view a brain region not as an elementary unit but as a complex network composed of a large number of neurons. The connections of the network are organized so that its neurons can collectively generate the intricate patterns of activity that underlie our perceptions and thoughts“ (Seung, Sebastian, Connectome; How the brain's wiring makes us who we are, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, Boston, 2012, p. 20)

kind and we have a corresponding reaction to it. If we experience anger, most common reaction is aggression towards the object which caused it. If we experience fear, most common responses are fight, flight, or freeze instinct, directed towards the before mentioned object or event. Since human beings make decisions based on these emotions,<sup>16</sup> it therefore stands that their decisions can also be impacted and manipulated by adding or subtracting meanings which cause these emotions. Orwell himself was cognizant of this, writing in his appendix to *1984*:

*“This was done by.... eliminating undesirable words and by stripping such words as remained of unorthodox meanings, and so far as possible of all secondary meanings whatsoever.”*<sup>17</sup>. The secondary meanings which Orwell implies are likely connotative meanings because later on he writes how these words “impose a desirable mental attitude upon the person using it”.<sup>18</sup>

Here are some real life examples of how meanings are added or subtracted from words.

### **2.3. An example of intensifying the event by adding negative connotations**

One example of the importance of language, and the choice of words, is the name given to the current conflict between Russia and Ukraine. The best attempt at objective viewpoint of what is happening currently, is that there is an armed military conflict between Russian Federation and Ukraine, however, this conflict is consistently labeled as “invasion“ by the Western countries, and „special military operation“ by The Russian Federation.

In De Saussurean terms, both have the same “signified“<sup>19</sup> part – they both refer to what is an objectively an armed conflict between two sides, with considerable amount of civilian casualties caused by reasons two sides disagree on, but the “signifier“ for it is different – in the west most newspapers and media outlets insist and are consistently calling it “invasion“, and the objective is to cause negative emotions of fear, disgust, anger and hatred towards the other, disagreeing side, in this case The Russian Federation.

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<sup>16</sup> Trampe D, Quoidbach J, Taquet M. Emotions in Everyday Life. PLoS One. 2015 Dec 23;10(12):e0145450. doi: 10.1371/journal.pone.0145450. PMID: 26698124; PMCID: PMC4689475.

<sup>17</sup> George Orwell, Nineteen Eighty-Four; Appendix; The principles of Newspeak, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2021, page 286

<sup>18</sup> George Orwell, Nineteen Eighty-Four, Appendix; The principles of Newspeak, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2021, page 290

<sup>19</sup> Saussure, Ferdinand De, Course in general linguistics, Philosophical Library, New York, 1969, p. 65

## **2.4. Examples of euphemising the event by subtracting negative connotations**

### 2.4.1. Special military operation - invasion

In the aforementioned example, the other side uses its own propaganda by downplaying the seriousness of the conflict with the euphemism “special military operation“. The word itself is devoid of the negative connotations that Western media is consistently trying to create.

### 2.4.2. Long term non-religious fasting – starving, torture

The term “long term non-religious fasting“ originates from the Guantanamo Bay detention center, where prisoners went on hunger strikes on multiple occasions, causing a public uproar about human rights violations and the treatment of the prisoners, after which the Obama administration “undertook a rebranding effort“, calling those hunger strikes long term non-religious fasting.

Techniques performed on Winston in order to make him talk, and the long term non-religious fasting in Guantanamo Bay can both be considered a torture, which is used by the Big Brother in *1984*, and the United States, in order to extract information from people.

### 2.4.3. Enhanced interrogation, enhanced interrogation techniques, coercive management techniques, alternative set of procedures – torture

First used during George W. Bush administration, and denoting systematic torture of prisoners of war by Central Intelligence Agency, Defense Intelligence Agency, and U.S. Armed Forces at various places – some of which are Guantanamo Bay, Abu Ghraib, Bucharest and various “CIA black sites“ across the Europe.<sup>20</sup> “Techniques“ used at those sites include, but are not limited to, sexual degradation, stress positions, yelling, sleep deprivation, sensory deprivation, controlled fear through the use of dogs, sexual assaults, waterboarding and many others. Interrogations invoke the mental image of conversation between two people in small room about certain event, and likely, not an image of sexually assaulting them or using water on them while they are being constrained. The similarity between the use of words in

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<sup>20</sup> <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2007/08/13/the-black-sites>

Abu Ghraib case, and the use of Newspeak in 1984 is best compared in the “Opinion“ of Adam Hochschild, in New York Times: *“As Orwell pointed out most effectively, governments control language as well as people. Since the Abu Ghraib prison scandal broke, our government, from the highest officials in Washington to Army prison guards in Baghdad, have used every euphemism they can think of to avoid the word that clearly characterizes what some of our soldiers and civilian contractors have been doing: torture.”*<sup>21</sup>

#### 2.4.4. Assembly centers or internment camps – concentration camps

Another example of downgrading the intensity of feeling evoked by words, are the concentration camps designed specifically for Japanese Americans during World War II, by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, under Executive Order 9066, which saw many Japanese American civilians forcibly relocated to these centers and their assets seized by the government.<sup>22</sup> Upon hearing a phrase “assembly center“, listener is most likely to have a mental image of a group of people gathered together in one place for a common purpose<sup>23</sup>, usually benevolent purpose, and not a malicious and horrific as these Japanese concentration camps were. Timing of these camps and the creation of the phrase is also not coincidental – it comes after World War II, in which the American public and the world at large was made aware of the German concentration camps and deploring conditions in them. These conditions were also implemented in American concentration camps and include overcrowding, forced labour, violence towards the prisoners, planned beatings by the camp guards, insufficient rations and the barbed wire surrounding the camp, to name the few.

Japanese internment camps were in essence akin to concentration camps in Nazi Germany as they both featured imprisonment of large number of people in an inadequate living conditions with torture and mass executions being used. Denotative value of both terms is largely the same, but connotations between “internment camps“ and “concentration camps“ are different. One evokes connotations of anger, disgust, fear, and the other one is devoid of such meanings. One can question the motive behind creation of the term “internment camp“, but given the strong denotative similarity between the two phrases, as well as existence of other phrases featuring the same phenomena of changing the word's connotations from negative to neutral, there is a strong possibility that the creation of the term “internment camp“ is not accidental and suggests

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<sup>21</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2004/05/23/opinion/what-s-in-a-word-torture.html>

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.history.com/topics/world-war-ii/japanese-american-relocation#executive-order-9066>

<sup>23</sup> <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/assembly>

malicious intent. The process of stripping the words of their negative connotative meanings is reminiscent of the world of Oceania, where Big Brother strives to manipulate the words in such a way, as to facilitate the exclusion of “*all other meanings and also the possibility of arriving at them by indirect methods*”.<sup>24</sup>

#### 2.4.5. Difference in describing president Vladimir Putin and president Volodymyr Zelenskyy

More recent attempt at using language to incite hatred and distorted views, and a clear example of mass media's bias is tabloid Sun's referral to Vladimir Putin, president of the Russian Federation, as “shameless Vlad“, “coward Putin“ “tyrant Putin“ “sickly Vlad“, “twitchy-footed Putin“<sup>25</sup> and so on.

All of the phrases and words listed above not only insinuate extreme bias towards the topic, but also portray the official and key figure in the conflict in negative view, with clearly implied connotative meanings of “bad“, evil“ and many others.

One example in the 1984 of this strategy of making the human person appear grotesque, so as to evoke fear and disgust, is the description of Eurasian soldier and Goldstein, contrasted by the calm, heroic and idealised portrayal of Big brother.

*“The Hate rose to its climax. The voice of Goldstein had become an actual sheep's bleat, and for an instant the face changed into that of a sheep. Then the sheep-face melted into the figure of a Eurasian soldier, who seemed to be advancing, huge and terrible, his sub-machine gun roaring, and seeming to spring out of the surface of the screen, so that some of the people in the front row actually flinched backwards in their seats.*

*But in the same moment, drawing a deep sigh of relief, from everybody, the hostile figure melted into the face of Big Brother, black-haired, black-moustachio'd, full of power and mysterious calm.”*<sup>26</sup>

On one side, there is a representation of evil, danger and ugliness, embodied in the figure of Goldstein and Eurasian soldier, and on the other, perfect, calm and omnipotent figure of Big Brother which evokes calm and strength, as he manages to suppress feelings of fear and despair

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<sup>24</sup> George Orwell, Nineteen Eighty-Four, Appendix; The principles of Newspeak, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2021, page 377

<sup>25</sup> [https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/21772461/twitchy-footed-putin-squirms-xi-meeting/?fbclid=IwAR1\\_HDN7m1WJH9kigiUYylWQibusV3OgMIp4TDqIHTchdC40XsZxSGXw9AE](https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/21772461/twitchy-footed-putin-squirms-xi-meeting/?fbclid=IwAR1_HDN7m1WJH9kigiUYylWQibusV3OgMIp4TDqIHTchdC40XsZxSGXw9AE)

<sup>26</sup> George Orwell, Nineteen Eighty-Four, Appendix; The principles of Newspeak, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2021, page 16

caused by Goldstein. This type of polarization can also be observed in the descriptions of president Vladimir Putin and his counterpart in the conflict, president Volodymyr Zelenskyy. Tabloid „Sun“ often calls President Putin “shameless“, “sickly“, and labels Zelenskyy as “lionheart“. In one instance, when president Zelenskyy visited the Bakhmut frontline to give his support to soldiers, Sun called him brave for doing so, calling out president Putin for not doing the same, but when the President Putin visited the frontlines, he was characterized as shameless and cowardly.<sup>27</sup> This hypocrisy clearly demonstrates one of the principle Ingsoc philosophies in *1984*: “*To know and not to know, to be conscious of complete truthfulness while telling carefully constructed lies, to hold simultaneously two opinions which cancelled out, knowing them to be contradictory and believing in both of them*“.<sup>28</sup>

To believe that the same act can be bravery and cowardice at the same time if perpetrated by different individuals is the prime example of Doublethink.

## 2.5. Linguistic determinism

Why is the language so important in propaganda? One of the reasons for it lies in the principles of linguistic determinism (popularly known as linguistic relativity or Sapir-Whorf hypothesis) – that the language determines how we view the world. Whorf argued that language can influence human thought, as much as it is influenced by thought. He gives an example of a chemical plant, where two storage rooms existed, one for full barrels and one for empty barrels. He further on noticed that no employees smoked in the room with full barrels, but no one minded smoking in the room with empty barrels, although smoking in both of them was equally dangerous. Whorf argued that the employees were cognitively aware of the risk, but the use of the word “empty“ shaped their perception of the empty barrels as harmless.<sup>29</sup>

In *1984*, George Orwell features the hypothesis through words of Syme:

*“Don't you see the whole aim of Newspeak is to narrow the range of thought? In the end we shall make thoughtcrime literally impossible, because there will be no words in which to express it“.*<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/21763044/putin-ukrainian-city-mariupol-arrest-warrant/?fbclid=IwAR2VuROKxdb1Kg0cnZy-4KKJYJmXr1QHHzvUiNHKEAGwzbCa9bCAM9KV2UY>

<sup>28</sup> George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Appendix; *The principles of Newspeak*, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2021, page 34

<sup>29</sup> Whorf, Benjamin Lee, *Language, thought, and reality; Selected writings of Benjamin Lee Whorf*, The M.I.T. press, 1956

<sup>30</sup> George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Appendix; *The principles of Newspeak*, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2021, page 50



American government shaped public's perception and reaction in regards to torture techniques and all the illegal activities it performed in much the same way. If there is no word for "torture", with all of its negative connotations, it is unlikely that society or parts of it will have an adverse reaction to it, be it rebellion against the government, public protest, social unrest, criticism in media or international condemnation. The fact that "internment camps", "enhanced interrogations" and "long term non-religious fastings" were invented, testify to the validity of this hypothesis, because the phrases likely would not have been coined if the need for them had not existed. The importance of choosing the right word to describe the horrors perpetrated at Abu Ghraib is best exemplified by words of United States Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, "*What has been charged so far is abuse, which I believe technically is different from torture. I'm not going to address the "torture" word.*"<sup>31</sup> This quote best exemplifies the desperation in trying to avoid a certain word, or in Orwell's words, trying to "eliminate undesirable words".

Lastly, all of those events did result in dire consequences so American government had every incentive to avoid "bad" words. In the case of Abu Ghraib president George W. Bush had to publicly apologize for the abuse of prisoners at Abu Ghraib, which was presumably an embarrassing event for the public figure of his status, many of the staff involved were prosecuted and convicted, British Periodical, The Economist, which had backed president Bush in previous election, published a photo of the abuse with the words "Resign Rumsfeld", United States was criticized by international community as well as domestic media, to name just a few.

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<sup>31</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2004/05/23/opinion/what-s-in-a-word-torture.html>

### **3. HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS PERPETRATED BY THE STATE IN NINETEEN EIGHTY-FOUR AND IN RECORDED HISTORY**

Big brother can use variety of instruments in order to achieve its goals: language, in order to misrepresent, economic strangulation of the country in order to subjugate the economy, or employ the use of Doublethink and media silence in order to hide its hypocrisy from the general public, or in Orwell's terms, from the "Proles".

However, when all else fails, there is one other method, which is used to change people's opinions or direct their actions: by force.

This method includes torture techniques of various kinds, perpetrated either directly, by government itself, or by supporting regimes inside its sphere of influence in order to facilitate mass killings, torture and intimidation.<sup>32</sup>

The following chapters will show that the human rights violations regularly occur within the boundaries of United states, and that the abuse is systematic, performed by the government itself, and that the abuse is performed on its own citizens. Examples of abuse are categorized into 3 categories: The prison system, concentration camps and secret government programs.

#### **3.1. The prison system**

In the world of Oceania, Big brother controls everything. Language, rations given out to the Proles, public opinion, foreign politics, thoughts, and also, the prison system. By looking at the prison system as Orwell describes it, and the current U.S. Penal system, we can immediately observe several similarities:

First similarity described in *1984*, is the structure of the prison system. Prisoners in Oceania are categorized according to their crime, that is, whether they are political prisoners, or common

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<sup>32</sup> "The actual photographs and TV footage of massacred villagers, napalmed children, Vietnamese prisoners being tortured and murdered, wounded GI's screaming in agony, and body bags being loaded by the dozen for shipment back home were being replaced by simulated images of American POWs in the savage hands of Asian communists" – Chomsky, Noam, Herman, Edward S, Manufacturing consent; The political economy of the mass media, The bodley head, 2008, London, page 38

criminals.<sup>33</sup> In that system political prisoners hold the lowest rank possible, even in such environment where personal freedoms are taken and people are put in the environment unfit for human beings.<sup>34</sup> In such system, different type of punishment is reserved for each group, where as harsher punishment, in the form of room 101<sup>35</sup>, is reserved for Polits, rather than for common criminals who can still hold hope for re-entering the society.

We already know that the Big brother of United States of America holds large number of common criminals in its prison system, making it a country with 6<sup>th</sup> highest incarceration rate in the world, at 531 people per 100 000, and the largest prison population in the world,<sup>36</sup> however, it is also no stranger when it comes to housing political prisoners.

The reason why prison system is mentioned in the chapter about the torture, is that the conditions in these prisons are tantamount to torture techniques: prisoners endure humiliating treatment, lack basic healthcare and are denied treatment for mental health <sup>37</sup>, there is a widespread abuse of prisoners at the hands of guards <sup>38</sup>, corruption, systematic abuse and violence between prisoners, including, but not limited to prison rape and assaults with deadly weapon, to name the few. All of these conditions are eerily similar to the prison of Oceania, where there is “*bribery, favouritism, and racketeering of every kind, there were homosexuality and prostitution, there was even illicit alcohol distilled from potatoes*”.<sup>39</sup> Ironically, prisoners in U.S. prisons have a culture of manufacturing “pruno”<sup>40</sup>, or the prison wine, which is distilled from fermented fruits, rather than potatoes, like in Oceania’s prison, but the end product is the same. Homosexuality and rape is also widespread in U.S. prisons, with 21 percent of inmates “*experiencing at least one episode of pressured or forced sexual contact*” <sup>41</sup>, despite prison authorities claiming that it is an “*exceptional occurrence rather than a systematic problem*”. <sup>42</sup> Solitary confinement is often used in American prisons to house either political prisoners, allegedly for their own safety (to safeguard them from other inmates), or to hold the prisoners

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<sup>33</sup> “*The Party prisoners were always silent and terrified, but the ordinary criminals seemed to care nothing for anybody.*” – George Orwell, Nineteen Eighty-Four, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2021, page 286

<sup>34</sup> “*They had put him into a cell similar to the one he was now in, but filthily dirty and at all times crowded by ten or fifteen people.*” – George Orwell, Nineteen Eighty-Four, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2021, page 286

<sup>35</sup> “*‘You asked me once,’ said O’Brien, ‘what was in Room 101. I told you that you knew the answer already. Everyone knows it. The thing that is in Room 101 is the worst thing in the world.’*” – George Orwell, Nineteen Eighty-Four, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2021, page 286

<sup>36</sup> <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/profiles/US.html>

<sup>37</sup> “*More than half of all Americans in prison or jail have a mental illness*” - <<https://eji.org/issues/prison-conditions/>

<sup>38</sup> <https://eji.org/issues/prison-conditions/>

<sup>39</sup> George Orwell, Nineteen Eighty-Four, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2021, page 287

<sup>40</sup> <https://thebeerexchange.io/pruno/>

<sup>41</sup> <https://www.hrw.org/reports/2001/prison/report1.html>

<sup>42</sup> <https://www.hrw.org/reports/2001/prison/report1.html>

deemed “too dangerous for general population”. In these prison cells, called SHU’s, or Special Housing Units, prisoners are denied social interaction, which is a basic human need, and are held in a small confined space where lights are never turned off, which is again eerily similar to Orwell’s vision of prison where Winston knew that “*in this place, the lights would never be turned out. It was the place with no darkness*”<sup>43</sup>.

To hold human beings in a small confined space, with constant light and no social interaction for long periods of time, is tantamount to torture, evidenced by a number of mental illness cases caused by these SHU’s. “Research shows that the denial of meaningful human contact can cause “*heightened feelings of anxiety, emotional hypersensitivity, ideas of persecution, and thought disorders.*”<sup>44</sup> Inmates housed in these conditions leave the prison forever changed<sup>45</sup>, just as Winston left Oceania’s prison with the altered state of mind, believing that 2+2 is 5, and truly loving Big Brother.<sup>46</sup>

Another point of interest is the death penalty. In Oceania’s prisons, many of the political prisoners never leave the prison alive. In U.S. penal system, death is not only a byproduct of living conditions already described in this chapter, it is also a form of punishment “reserved for those convicted of capital offences, such as murder, treason, genocide, or the killing or kidnapping of a Congressman, the President, or a Supreme Court justice”.<sup>47</sup> Whether such punishment constitutes as “cruel and unusual”, which would be in direct conflict with the Eighth amendment to the United States Constitution, is still the matter of debate in U.S.

A question which may arise while reading this is “Why is the prison system indicative of totalitarian regime?” Non-totalitarian regimes also have prisons, which are used to confine and rehabilitate those who break society's rules, therefore, prison cannot be considered a tool used exclusively by totalitarian regimes and Big Brother.

One reason is that such instrument of torture can be used on political prisoners, or Polits<sup>48</sup>, as Orwell calls them. Big Brother in *1984* used such an instrument on Polits, as did The United

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<sup>43</sup> George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2021, page 290

<sup>44</sup> Haney, Craig, Restricting the use of solitary confinement, Annual review of criminology, Department of Psychology, University of California, Santa Cruz, California, November 3, 2017

<sup>45</sup> “*Prolonged isolation can destroy a person’s personality and their mental health and its effects may last long after the end of the period of segregation.*”, <https://www.penalreform.org/issues/prison-conditions/key-facts/solitary-confinement/>

<sup>46</sup> “*He had won the victory over himself. He loved Big Brother.*” – George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2021, page 376

<sup>47</sup> <https://www.justice.gov/usao/justice-101/sentencing>

<sup>48</sup> “*No one else had spoken to him. To a surprising extent the ordinary criminals ignored the Party prisoners. ‘The Polits,’ they called them, with a sort of uninterested contempt.*” – George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2021, page 288

States of America, as we shall see in the next chapter. The other reason why American prison system is indicative of Big Brother's oppression and corruption, and not just regular prison system created to house common criminals, is what John Roche calls "*private governments*"<sup>49</sup>. Private governments are corporations which, according to Chomsky, control United States government through "*control of the media, political associations, elimination of labour unions, and interference with domination of the state concentrated private power*".<sup>50</sup> In such a system, where a corporation can directly influence the government, Polits are even more disadvantaged because they have to be wary of criticizing not only the government, but also the private governments. Enabled by the lobbying structure, private governments are both the judge and the executioner – they control the environment meant to punish them, as well as laws used to convict them.

Main difference between the Party in 1984 and the United States government, is that in 1984 there is no voting, the Party is the only Party, while in the United States there are formally two major Parties, but both of them are controlled by private corporations and interest of small group of people. According to Chomsky, "*the propaganda model, and the institutional arrangements that it reflects, suggests that the same forces that preclude competition among the parties on issues on which the major investors agree, will also dominate media choices and rule out "mass deliberation and expression" on those issues*".<sup>51</sup> Chomsky lists the example of public's desire for a smaller defence budget and a spending shift from defence to education and other civil functions, however, "*the two dominant parties compete only on whether the one or the other is stinting on military expenditures, with both promising to enlarge it*".<sup>52</sup> Oceania's Big Brother and America's two main parties ruled by private corporations, share the same principal – they are both ruled by small group of wealthy people<sup>53</sup> who wield and exercise enormous power over affairs of the state. Going by normal word usage of "totalitarian"<sup>54</sup>, both of those regimes are totalitarian in nature.

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<sup>49</sup> Chomsky, Noam, *Necessary illusions; Thought Control in Democratic Societies*, Pluto Press, 1989, London, page 5

<sup>50</sup> Chomsky, Noam, *Necessary illusions; Thought Control in Democratic Societies*, Pluto Press, 1989, London, page 5

<sup>51</sup> Chomsky, Noam, *Manufacturing consent; The political economy of the mass media*, The Bodley Head, 2008, London, page 45

<sup>52</sup> Chomsky, Noam, *Manufacturing consent; The political economy of the mass media*, The Bodley Head, 2008, London, page 45

<sup>53</sup> "*In a world of concentrated wealth and major conflicts of class interest, to fulfil this role requires systematic propaganda*" - Chomsky, Noam, *Manufacturing consent; The political economy of the mass media*, The Bodley Head, 2008, London, page 61

<sup>54</sup> "Relating to a system of government that is [centralized](#)" – Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary & Thesaurus, Cambridge University Press, 2017

### 3.1.1. Polits

In 1984, Polits are political prisoners detained by Thought police, for not adhering to Big Brother's policies and beliefs, or accused of perpetrating Thoughtcrime.<sup>55</sup>

United States government is no stranger to using inhumane prison conditions on Polits. Some of the many people persecuted because of their opposition to the United States policies are: Eugene Debs, an anti-war socialist, Angelo Herndon, an African-American labor organizer whose case reached Supreme Court, which ruled that his First Amendment rights of free speech and assembly were violated, Rosa Parks for her now infamous disobedience to Montgomery bus segregation, Martin Luther King Jr. who was often arrested for his opposition to racial segregation. Some of the prisoners Amnesty International considers political prisoners, or prisoners of conscience are: Martin Sostre, Imari Obadele, The Wilmington Ten, Charlotte Three, Camilo Mejía, Agustin Aguayo, Kimberly Rivera. In more recent times, we can identify many objectors to Iraq war, who are also considered as political prisoners by Amnesty International: Abdullah William Webster, Kevin Benderman, Mark Wilkerson, Victor Agosto, Travis Bishop, Kimberly Rivera, Jeremy Hinzman, Matthew Lowell, Jeremy Hinzman, James Corey Glass, Dean Walcott, Ehren Watada, Pablo Peredes.<sup>56</sup>

Recent example is the case of Julian Assange, who is currently confined in HM Prison Belmarsh in London since April 2019, fighting U.S. extradition request. Assange is the founder of Wikileaks, which is a non-profit media organisation and publisher, which publishes classified documents and material, and as a part of that organisation, he has earned the wrath of U.S. government by releasing video footage of the July 12, 2007, Baghdad airstrike which shows United States soldiers shooting and killing 18 civilians from a helicopter in Iraq, by publishing Iraq War Logs and a quarter of a million U.S. diplomatic cables known as "Cablegate" files. The fact that even *"the Obama DOJ concluded that it could not prosecute Assange in connection with the publication of those documents because there was no way to distinguish what WikiLeaks did from what the New York Times, The Guardian, and numerous media outlets*

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<sup>55</sup> " 'Thoughtcrime is a dreadful thing, old man,' he said sententiously. 'It's insidious. It can get hold of you without your even knowing it. Do you know how it got hold of me? In my sleep!' " - George Orwell, Nineteen Eighty-Four, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2021, page 294

<sup>56</sup> "While claiming to champion human rights, the US government continues to convict people for exercising their freedom of thought, conscience and religion, Amnesty International said today as US naval officer Pablo Peredes is sentenced to three months' hard labour for refusing to participate in the war on Iraq." - Amnesty International press release, May 13<sup>th</sup>, 2005, London, UK

*around the world routinely do: namely, work with sources to publish classified documents*<sup>57</sup>, testifies to the fact that he is the Polit: his only crime is exposing government hypocrisy and crimes. His status as a political prisoner is reinforced by “*many jurists, politicians, associations, academics and campaigners viewing his arrest as an attack on freedom of the press and international law*”<sup>58</sup>, “*breaking the century-old tradition that the Espionage Act not be used against journalistic activities*”.<sup>59</sup>

As a Polit, Assange is being treated in a similar manner as Winston. He is currently being held in solitary confinement for up to 23 hours a day in a room *where there is no darkness*<sup>60</sup>, and is subject to constant surveillance by prison authorities<sup>61</sup>, which is reminiscent of telescreens always watching the prisoners in Oceania’s prison. If he is extradited to the U.S., he will almost certainly be subject to the torturous conditions of U.S. solitary confinements described above, despite Biden administration assuring the Crown Prosecution Services that “*Mr Assange will not be subject to SAMs or imprisoned at ADX*”.<sup>62</sup> Those assurances seem hollow, considering that the part of the prison which houses common criminals, i.e. general population, is too dangerous for him, and therefore, leaving the solitary confinement the only option.

### 3.1.2. Private governments

One example of the “*domination of the state*”, in regards to torture, is the second largest private corrections company in U.S, CoreCivic or Corrections Corporation of America (CCA), which operates more than 65 state and federal correctional facilities. What is most egregious about its existence and relationship to the government is that it is allowed to lobby the decision-making bodies such as United States congress and Supreme Court in order to argue for specific legislation. Some of the controversies which have arisen out of this lobbying environment is the 1 billion no-bid contract given to CCA by the Obama administration in order to detain asylum seekers from Central America, and a lobbying for stricter criminal laws which, if

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<sup>57</sup> “*The Obama DOJ tried for years to find evidence to justify a claim that Assange did more than act as a journalist — that he, for instance, illegally worked with Manning to steal the documents — but found nothing to justify that accusation*” - <https://theintercept.com/2019/04/11/the-u-s-governments-indictment-of-julian-assange-poses-grave-threats-to-press-freedoms/>

<sup>58</sup> [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/julian-assange-unlikely-to-face-us-charges-over-publishing-classified-documents/2013/11/25/dd27decc-55f1-11e3-8304-caf30787c0a9\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/julian-assange-unlikely-to-face-us-charges-over-publishing-classified-documents/2013/11/25/dd27decc-55f1-11e3-8304-caf30787c0a9_story.html)

<sup>59</sup> <https://www.eff.org/fr/deeplinks/2019/05/governments-indictment-julian-assange-poses-clear-and-present-danger-journalism>

<sup>60</sup> George Orwell, Nineteen Eighty-Four, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2021, page 308

<sup>61</sup> <https://inews.co.uk/news/julian-assange-solitary-confinement-human-rights-gavin-macfayden-award-344528>

<sup>62</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/07/07/us/politics/julian-assange-extradition-appeal.html>

relaxed, would “*affect the number of persons arrested, convicted, and sentenced, thereby potentially reducing demand for correctional facilities to house them*”.<sup>63</sup>

In Oceania, there is no such concept as “private governments” or corporations, everything is about Big Brother, however, given the amount of power both of them have in their respective worlds and influence they wield over the people, we can be so bold as to suggest that today’s corporations are the Big Brother, and formal government being only a puppet of theirs. In the words of Noam Chomsky, “*There are important actors who do take positive initiatives to define and shape the news and to keep the media in line. It is a “guided market system” that we describe here, with the guidance provided by the government, the leaders of the corporate community, the top media owners and executives, and the assorted individuals and groups who are assigned or allowed to take constructive initiatives. These initiators are sufficiently small in number to be able to act jointly on occasion...*”<sup>64</sup> Initiators who are sufficiently small in number and are presumably very rich because of their rank in the corporation, is reminiscent of the members of Inner Party in 1984, who enjoy “*the whole atmosphere of the huge block of flats, the richness and spaciousness of everything, the unfamiliar smells of good food and good tobacco, the silent and incredibly rapid lifts sliding up and down, the white-jacketed servants hurrying to and fro...*”<sup>65</sup> Members of the Inner party are also smaller in number than the Outer Party and the Proles, making up “*2 percent of the population of Oceania*”<sup>66</sup>, as well as being the “*brains of the State*”<sup>67</sup>. People who control the media and who can lobby for specific legislation, could be called, in Orwell’s terms, “brains of the State”, because they control everything.

## **3.2. Government programs: MKUltra**

### **3.2.1. The project**

MKUltra was an illegal, top secret, government program undertaken by CIA whose purpose was to develop procedures which would facilitate forced confessions through

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<sup>63</sup> CCA 2008 10-k annual report, United States Securities and Exchange Commission, Washington, D.C.

<sup>64</sup> Chomsky, Noam, Manufacturing consent; The political economy of the mass media, The Bodley Head, 2008, London, page 56

<sup>65</sup> George Orwell, Nineteen Eighty-Four, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2021, page 212

<sup>66</sup> George Orwell, Nineteen Eighty-Four, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2021, page 263

<sup>67</sup> George Orwell, Nineteen Eighty-Four, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2021, page 263



brainwashing and psychological torture.<sup>68</sup> It used methods such as electroshocks, sensory deprivation, hypnosis, isolation, sexual and verbal abuse in order to manipulate the minds of the witting and unwitting subjects. It especially focused on the use of drugs, specifically LSD, in order to alter the mental states of its subjects.

The program began in 1953 and ended in 1973, during which time the agency experimented on American and Canadian citizens, as well as its own agents, most notably agent Frank Olson, resulting in the only official, verifiable death associated with MKUltra.

### 3.2.2. Similarities with *1984*

In the next passage, I will note some similarities of the social, political, and cultural phenomena described above with the actual instances from Orwell's *1984*. These instances include the objective of the experiment (the goal), similar nature and qualification of the people who participated in it (the torturers), instruments used (the drugs), actions performed in order to conceal the facts (the destruction of evidence), target audience of the experiment (application of the torture on their own citizens), and the similar details of the torture performed (physical and mental torture).

#### 3.2.2.1. The goal

As stated, CIA's goals were to forcefully unlock the secrets of human mind in order to extract information from resistant targets, which is similar to Big Brother's ultimate goal of "*how to discover, against his will, what another human being is thinking.*"<sup>69</sup>

Some of the goals that were set for the program, which are pertinent to the comparison with *1984*, include:

- I. Can we guarantee total amnesia under any and all conditions?
- II. Can accurate information be obtained from willing or unwilling individuals?
- III. Physical methods of producing shock and confusion over extended periods of time.
- IV. Can wilfully suppressed information be elicited through drugs affecting higher nervous systems? If so, which agents are better for this purpose?

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<sup>68</sup> "*Mulholland's writing on delivery of pills, potions, and powders was just one example of research carried out back then in fields as diverse as brainwashing and paranormal psychology*" – Kinzer, Stephen, *Poisoner in chief; Sidney Gottlieb and the Cia search for mind control*, Henry Holt and company, 2019

<sup>69</sup> George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2021, page 244

## V. Can we “alter” a person’s personality? How long will it hold? <sup>70</sup>

Hypnosis, drugs and “physical methods” were also used by O’Brien in order to convince Winston that 2 plus 2 is 5, that Oceania was always in war with East Asia and that he truly loves Big Brother.

### 3.2.2.2. Torturers

In order to achieve these goals, CIA recruited and used the expertise of well known scientists, most notably chemist Sidney Gottlieb who led the program, and psychiatrist Donald Ewan Cameron who, at one point, served as president of the American Psychiatric association and Canadian Psychiatric Association. Their use of LSD, hypnosis (performed by Cameron on his patients in Allan Memorial Institute), shock therapies (some patients were given electroconvulsive therapy at 20 to 40 times the normal power <sup>71</sup>) and physical torture (patients being forcefully restrained to their beds in order to put them into the state of sensory deprivation, being exposed to extreme temperatures and dehydration <sup>72</sup>) makes them eerily similar to the scientists of Oceania who are *“a mixture of psychologist and inquisitor, studying with real ordinary minuteness the meaning of facial expressions, gestures, and tones of voice, and testing the truth-producing effects of drugs, shock therapy, hypnosis, and physical torture; or he is chemist, physicist, or biologist concerned only with such branches of his special subject are relevant to the taking of life”*. Interestingly, Cameron was psychiatrist and Gottlieb a chemist, and both were using their respective sciences in order to take life, just as the scientist of Oceania had.

Out of all of them, Cameron’s philosophy and opinions bear the most resemblance to the philosophy of the Big Brother. Cameron differentiated the population into the “*weak*” and the “*strong*” <sup>73</sup>, and held the view that the weak should not be able to reproduce, because their weakness is both hereditary and contagious. <sup>74</sup> This eugenic (or scientific racism <sup>75</sup>) approach

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<sup>70</sup> Kinzer, Stephen, *Poisoner in chief: Sidney Gottlieb and the CIA search for mind control*, Henry Holt and company, 2019, New York, page 51

<sup>71</sup> Torbay J. The work of Donald Ewan Cameron: from psychic driving to MK Ultra, *History of Psychiatry*, Volume 34, Issue 3, 2023

<sup>72</sup> Torbay J. The work of Donald Ewan Cameron: from psychic driving to MK Ultra, *History of Psychiatry*, Volume 34, Issue 3, 2023

<sup>73</sup> Torbay J. The work of Donald Ewan Cameron: from psychic driving to MK Ultra, *History of Psychiatry*, Volume 34, Issue 3, 2023

<sup>74</sup> *“It is not simply against future conspiracies of evil men which we have to guard ourselves but it is against ourselves, against our weaknesses and faults in our own social order, in our own ways of living against which we have to be on continual guard.” – Donald Ewan Cameron, <https://en-academic.com/dic.nsf/enwiki/462457>*

<sup>75</sup> <https://www.genome.gov/about-genomics/fact-sheets/Eugenics-and-Scientific-Racism>

to social issues and society in general is similar to the philosophy of Big Brother who wants to ensure that “*weaklings are excluded from the Inner Party and that the ambitious members of the Outer Party are made harmless by allowing them to rise.*”<sup>76</sup>

### 3.2.2.3. Drugs

Another similarity is the focus on drugs. Both in *1984* and in *MKUltra*, emphasis was put on the use of drugs in order to cause the desired state of minds in subjects. During his ordeal, it is noted in *1984* that the drugs played a prominent part in his torture - “*It was he who decided when Winston should scream with pain, when he should have a respite, when he should be fed, when he should sleep, when the drugs should be pumped in his arm.*”<sup>77</sup> While Orwell does not specify what kind of drugs are used, it is well known that throughout the program and especially in its early days CIA was focused on the use of LSD<sup>78</sup>, because the drug is capable of causing ego dissolution, mystical experiences and most importantly, increased suggestibility in subjects, which would be desirable state of mind in subject during the interrogation.

### 3.2.2.4. The application of the torture on their own citizens

Big Brother, as well as CIA and the American government, were never reluctant to use torture on their own citizens, as well as dissidents. Not only that, punishment is also reserved for people who are merely suspected of treason or thoughtcrime. Best examples of that is Syme, who was an ardent supporter of Big Brother and proponent of Newspeak when he vanished, as well as Parsons, who ended up in the prison, despite “*never knowing he had any bad stuff in his mind at all*”<sup>79</sup>. CIA experimented on American people, but also, on its own agents, with LSD.<sup>80</sup> Most notable example is the agent Frank Olson who expressed concern over the morality of the project, after which he was poisoned with LSD and driven to jump out of the window, with fatal result.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2021, page 264

<sup>77</sup> George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2021, page 308

<sup>78</sup> “*After this experience, Gottlieb accelerated the pace of his LSD experiments. His first subjects were volunteers, either CIA colleagues or scientists from the Special Operations Division at Camp Detrick.*” – Kinzer, Stephen, *Poisoner in chief; Sidney Gottlieb and the CIA search for mind control*, Henry Holt and company, 2019, New York, page 65

<sup>79</sup> George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2021, page 294

<sup>80</sup> “*He would be free not only to experiment on “expendables” at secret prisons abroad, but also to feed LSD to witting and unwitting American.*” – Kinzer, Stephen, *Poisoner in chief; Sidney Gottlieb and the CIA search for mind control*, Henry Holt and company, 2019, New York, page 74

<sup>81</sup> “*Slowly a counter-narrative emerged: Olson was disturbed about his work and wanted to quit, leading his comrades to consider him a security risk. All of this led him to room 1018A.*” – Kinzer, Stephen, *Poisoner in*

### 3.2.2.5. Physical and mental torture

As previously mentioned, physical torture ranged from sexual abuse to exposure to extreme cold and heat, as well as inducing extreme dehydration in patients, while the mental torture included the administration of LSD, hypnosis, constant playing of the repetitive statements through tapes or earphones and verbal abuse.<sup>82</sup>

### 3.2.2.6. Destruction of evidence

Large part of successful manipulation of the past in Oceania was the destruction of evidence. Winston himself was employed at such a job. His duty was getting rid of any photo or document pointing to the conflicting, past statements, by throwing them to the “memory hole”<sup>83</sup>. In the same manner, after MKUltra was revealed to the public in 1975 by the Church Committee, CIA director Richard Helms ordered that all MKUltra files be destroyed, which seriously hampered the investigation.

Chomsky, in his book “World orders, old and new” calls concealment and fabrication of the facts about the past events “*historical engineering*”.<sup>84</sup> He lists the example of Vietnam war, where United States government, alongside mainstream media, portrayed U.S. as victims and Vietnamese as villains.<sup>85</sup> Destruction of evidence pointing to one’s crimes can also be considered historical engineering, because both deal with the misrepresentation of the past events by hiding objectionable and often criminal behaviour from general public. In the case of Vietnam war, hiding all the massacres and war crimes, such as chemical warfare<sup>86</sup>, and in the

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chief; Sidney Gottlieb and the CIA search for mind control, Henry Holt and company, 2019, New York, page 113

<sup>82</sup> *There he or she was fed LSD and given only minimal amounts of food, water, and oxygen. Cameron fitted patients with helmets equipped with earphones, into which he piped phrases or messages like “My mother hates me,” repeated hundreds of thousands of times.* – Kinzer, Stephen, Poisoner in chief; Sidney Gottlieb and the CIA search for mind control, Henry Holt and company, 2019, New York, page 140

<sup>83</sup> *“He was gone, leaving Winston holding the scrap of paper, which this time there was no need to conceal. Nevertheless he carefully memorized what was written on it, and some hours later dropped it into the memory hole along with a mass of other papers.”* – George Orwell, Nineteen Eighty-Four, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2021, page 200

<sup>84</sup> Chomsky, Noam, World Orders, Old and New; With a New Epilogue, Pluto Press, 1997, London, page 97

<sup>85</sup> *“Washington began to shift policy, perceiving “progress” in Vietnam’s acknowledgment of its sins.”* – Chomsky, Noam, World Orders, Old and New; With a New Epilogue, Pluto Press, 1997, London, page 97

<sup>86</sup> *„Between 1961 and 1971, however, the U.S. Air Force sprayed 20 million gallons of concentrated arsenic-based and dioxin-laden herbicides (mainly Agent Orange) on 6 million acres of crops and trees, besides using large quantities of the “super tear gas” CS and vast amounts of napalm and phosphorus bombs.”* – Chomsky, Noam, Manufacturing consent; The political economy of the mass media, The Bodley Head, 2008, London, page 33

case of MKUltra, hiding all details about specific procedures and torture methods they used on the victims.

Historical engineering, defined as deliberate and systematic misrepresentation of the past events through the use of media, is also reminiscent of one of the core philosophies of the Big Brother: “ ‘Who controls the past’, ran the Party slogan, ‘controls the future: who controls the present controls the past’. “<sup>87</sup> By controlling the media and the narrative about the war in Vietnam, and by destroying the evidence which pointed to the misconduct and criminal behaviour by one of its agencies, the United States controls the past, in much the same way that the Oceania does. It is also interesting to note how both regimes, through the use of media, try to demonize its enemies, and portray them in an extremely idealistic and unrealistic light. *The North Vietnamese and Viet Cong were portrayed as “savage”, “brutal”, “murderous”, “fanatical”, “suicidal”, “halfcrazed”, mere vermin in areas that were “Communist infested” or “Vietcong infested” and thus had to be cleansed by the American liberators.*<sup>88</sup> , while Oceania’s enemy, Eurasia, “represented absolute evil, and it followed that any past or future agreement with him was impossible”.<sup>89</sup>

### 3.3. Concentration camps

Since the topic has been touched on in the chapter about language, we shall briefly mention Japanese internment camps, alongside CIA black sites, Abu Ghraib tortures and Guantanamo bay as an evidence that the torture is systematic, consistent, and authorized, as well as performed by Big Brother directly<sup>90</sup>, and not just a sporadic incident carried out by a rogue element within the government.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> George Orwell, Nineteen Eighty-Four, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2021, page 44

<sup>88</sup> Chomsky, Noam, Herman, Edward S, Manufacturing consent; The political economy of the mass media, The bodley head, 2008, London, page 273

<sup>89</sup> George Orwell, Nineteen Eighty-Four, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2021, page 43

<sup>90</sup> “It was he who decided when Winston should scream with pain, when he should have a respite, when he should be fed, when he should sleep, when the drugs should be pumped into his arm.” - George Orwell, Nineteen Eighty-Four, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2021, 308

<sup>91</sup> Roosevelt, Franklin, Executive order 9066, February 19<sup>th</sup>, 1942, Washington, D.C.

### 3.4. Conclusion

All of the examples of abuse mentioned above testify to the fact that the United States government repeatedly engages in criminal (as in the case of MKUltra and other secret government programs), and morally objectionable behaviour, in order to further its agenda. Although Japanese internment camps, Guantanamo bay detention center and Abu Ghraib prison are considered violations of the international law <sup>92</sup>, *“the United States has in the past consistently denied the extraterritorial application of human rights obligations. It has also denied that human rights apply in time or armed conflict, and has recently reiterated both of these positions with regard to the detainees at Guantanamo Bay.”* <sup>93</sup>

In the case of MKUltra program, one might argue that the MKUltra was a rogue project made by, and led by rogue agents and scientists and does not represent attitude of US governments over the centuries, however, the fact that the program lasted for more than 20 years, that it consisted of more than 149 side projects, that the eminent scientists worked on the program, and most importantly, that the American and Canadian government directly funded, approved and carried out the torture <sup>94</sup>, speaks to the fact that it was not an isolated incident carried out by few rogue employees or agencies.

Of note is also the fact that MKUltra was not the only project of that kind to be carried out inside and outside United States of America. Project Artichoke and Bluebird which preceded MKUltra had the same objectives, Edgewood Arsenal human experiment tested the chemical warfare agents on military personnel, project MKOFTEN which had the goal of testing behavioural and toxicological effects of certain drugs on people and animals, and many others.

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All of these speak to the fact that the Big Brother of America consistently and constantly, through multiple iterations of the government, uses torture on foreign, as well as on its own

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<sup>92</sup> *“Declarations of violations of international law may be of little comfort to all those whose rights have been violated over this period”* – Borelli, Silvia, Casting light on the legal black hole: International law and detentions abroad in the “war on terror“, International review of the Red Cross, Volume 87, number 857, March 2005, page 68

<sup>93</sup> Borelli, Silvia, Casting light on the legal black hole: International law and detentions abroad in the “war on terror“, International review of the Red Cross, Volume 87, number 857, March 2005, page 52

<sup>94</sup> *“...he asked President Truman to authorize the drug research Greene proposed—and give the job to the CIA. Truman agreed”* – Kinzer, Stephen, Poisoner in chief; Sidney Gottlieb and the CIA search for mind control, Henry Holt and company, 2019, New York, page 41

<sup>95</sup> *“There, Bluebird interrogation teams injected captured North Korean soldiers with drugs including sodium amytal, a depressant that can have hypnotic effects, and with three potent stimulants”* - Kinzer, Stephen, Poisoner in chief; Sidney Gottlieb and the CIA search for mind control, Henry Holt and company, 2019, New York, page 48

citizens, in order suppress dissidents, quash free thought, and destroy everyone it deems an enemy. Such behaviour is reminiscent of Big Brother, whose Thought Police will stop at nothing in order to destroy anyone not in compliance with its rules and philosophy <sup>96</sup>.

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<sup>96</sup> *“A few agents of the Thought Police moved always among them, spreading false rumours and marking down and eliminating the few individuals who were judged capable of becoming dangerous”* – George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2021, page 91

## 4. ROLE OF THE MEDIA IN PROPAGANDA

Media is an important tool and an actor in controlling the populace. The reason why they are considered by Chomsky to be a part of the state control is because there are only 24 media giants which control majority of the market and are owned by small number of wealthy people, and because those people have close ties not only to other members of corporate community, but to the government itself through the lobbying system.<sup>97</sup>

In 1984, as has been stated in the earlier chapter, there are no private entities, however, given the close ties between the corporate community, media, and the government, the outcome is essentially the same – total control of information by small circle of people.

### 4.1. Use of Doublethink in media propaganda

According, to Winston, Doublethink “*is to know and not to know, to be conscious of complete truthfulness while telling carefully constructed lies, to hold simultaneously two opinions which cancelled out, knowing them to be contradictory and believing in both of them, to use logic against logic, to repudiate morality while laying claim to it, to believe that democracy was impossible and that the Party was the guardian of democracy, to forget whatever it was necessary to forget, then to draw it back into memory again at the moment when it was needed, and then promptly to forget it again: and above all, to apply the same process to the process itself.*”<sup>98</sup> By examining some of the news reporting of the contemporary Western media, we can see the examples of the use of Doublethink.

One notable example, stemming from the current Russo-Ukrainian military conflict, are the reports of the significance of the city of Bakhmut, which was besieged by Russian army, as well as Wagner private military forces, and defended by Ukrainian armed forces. Bakhmut, which has since come under complete Russian control, held an important strategic value to both sides, with President Zelenskyy stating that “*after Bakhmut they could go further. They could go to Kramatorsk, they could go to Sloviansk, it would be open road for the Russians after Bakhmut to other towns in Ukraine, in the Donetsk direction*“.<sup>99</sup> Russian breakthrough into

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<sup>97</sup> Chomsky, Noam, Herman, Edward S, Manufacturing consent; The political economy of the mass media, The bodley head, 2008, London, page 69

<sup>98</sup> George Orwell, Nineteen Eighty-Four, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2021, page 44

<sup>99</sup> <https://english.alarabiya.net/News/world/2023/03/08/Russia-would-get-open-road-into-Ukraine-if-Bakhmut-falls-Zelenskyy->



other unconquered territories is presumably very important, evidenced by the statement itself, however, in order to criticize Russian armed forces and its military command, it is often stated that Bakhmut holds no military or strategic significance.<sup>100</sup> For the town to be and at the same time not to be militarily and strategically important, is the example of Doublethink. When it suits Western propaganda, for example when Ukrainian armed forces are suffering a defeat or setbacks on battlefield, the narrative is that the town is not important, in order to minimize the loss. When Ukrainian side exhibits certain successes on the battlefield, it suddenly becomes very important. To hold simultaneously two opinions is best exemplified in a single sentence, as reported by CNN: *“Though Bakhmut does not hold significant strategic value in itself, its road connections to Kramatorsk and Sloviansk – two densely populated, industrial urban hubs to the northwest – mean those cities be next in Russia’s crosshairs if they are able to take control.”*<sup>101</sup> This sentence represents how one can seemingly state one claim, and then repudiate it in the same sentence, while expecting the reader to believe in both.

#### 4.1.1. Crimestop

To successfully perform a Doublethink, one has to employ the use of Crimestop. *“Crimestop means the faculty of stopping short, as though by instinct, at the threshold of any dangerous thought. It includes the power of not grasping analogies, of failing to perceive logical errors, of misunderstanding the simplest arguments if they are inimical to Ingsoc, and of being bored or repelled by any train of thought which is capable of leading in a heretical direction.”*<sup>102</sup> One example of media’s Doublethink and Crimestop technique is United States stance towards assassinations, where *“assassinations, terrorism, torture, and aggression are crimes that must be harshly punished when the targets are people who matter: they are not even worth mentioning... if perpetrated by chief Mafia don himself”*.<sup>103</sup> Here, Chomsky is referring to the assassination attempt of President George Bush in Kuwait,<sup>104</sup> which was characterized as *“an outrageous crime”*<sup>105</sup> and *“an act of war”*<sup>106</sup>, but the media stopped short of the

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<sup>100</sup> *“Some commanders and lower level officers have questioned the merit of holding Bakhmut amid a rising number of casualties and a growing risk that hundreds or even thousands of Ukrainian troops could get cut off.”* – [https://amp.cnn.com/cnn/2023/03/07/europe/ukraine-volodymyr-zelensky-cnn-interview-bakhmut-intl/index.html?fbclid=IwAR36lbpN5xLSWckNYb9frLPe6l0uSJyMA1ANawHvC8YOb5mCJIp\\_zu-rzvk](https://amp.cnn.com/cnn/2023/03/07/europe/ukraine-volodymyr-zelensky-cnn-interview-bakhmut-intl/index.html?fbclid=IwAR36lbpN5xLSWckNYb9frLPe6l0uSJyMA1ANawHvC8YOb5mCJIp_zu-rzvk)  
<sup>101</sup> [https://amp.cnn.com/cnn/2023/03/07/europe/ukraine-volodymyr-zelensky-cnn-interview-bakhmut-intl/index.html?fbclid=IwAR36lbpN5xLSWckNYb9frLPe6l0uSJyMA1ANawHvC8YOb5mCJIp\\_zu-rzvk](https://amp.cnn.com/cnn/2023/03/07/europe/ukraine-volodymyr-zelensky-cnn-interview-bakhmut-intl/index.html?fbclid=IwAR36lbpN5xLSWckNYb9frLPe6l0uSJyMA1ANawHvC8YOb5mCJIp_zu-rzvk)

<sup>102</sup> George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2021, page 267

<sup>103</sup> Chomsky, Noam, *World Orders, Old and New; With a New Epilogue*, Pluto Press, 1997, London, page 23

<sup>104</sup> <https://oig.justice.gov/sites/default/files/archive/special/9704a/05bush2.htm>

<sup>105</sup> Chomsky, Noam, *World Orders, Old and New; With a New Epilogue*, Pluto Press, 1997, London, page 21

<sup>106</sup> Chomsky, Noam, *World Orders, Old and New; With a New Epilogue*, Pluto Press, 1997, London, page 21

“repeated attempts of the Kennedy administration to assassinate Fidel Castro”<sup>107</sup>, and that “Washington holds the world record for attempts to assassinate foreign leaders”.<sup>108</sup>

The Doublethink in this situation is that the assassinations are both good and a bad thing, depending on who performs it. According to the principle of Doublethink, sometimes it is necessary to forget that United States government often carried out assassinations on foreign leaders, in order to demonize others for trying to perform the same act on United States leaders. Examples of Doublethink in regards to United States foreign policy and the media’s Crimestop are many. Some of the examples Chomsky lists are:

1. Condemnation of Soviet Union’s aggression in Afghanistan which is “readily documented”<sup>109</sup> in the media, while the U.S. aggression in Indochina becomes a “non-fact”.<sup>110</sup> Writing about Soviet Union’s invasion is convenient and therefore extensive, while one has to use Crimestop when U.S. invasions are concerned.
2. United States has a longstanding history of meddling in the affairs of Nicaragua, when it tried to destabilize the Sandinista government in the favour of “Contra” opposition. One aspect of interference was an effort to “cast the Nicaraguan election in an unfavourable light”.<sup>111</sup> The sentence which perhaps best illustrates the principle of Doublethink, is the statement from Robert Pastor, Carter’s Latin American adviser and respected scholar, who states: “We want everyone to be free – free to act as we determine”.<sup>112</sup> He then proceeds to explain that “The United States did not want to control Nicaragua or the other nations in the region, but it also did not want to allow developments to get out of control”.<sup>113</sup> Going by the normal word usage, freedom means “the power or right to act, speak, or think as one wants.”<sup>114</sup>, which is in direct opposition with the belief and desire that the United States should determine how Nicaraguans control their election and who they elect.

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<sup>107</sup> Chomsky, Noam, *World Orders, Old and New; With a New Epilogue*, Pluto Press, 1997, London, page 22

<sup>108</sup> Chomsky, Noam, *World Orders, Old and New; With a New Epilogue*, Pluto Press, 1997, London, page 22

<sup>109</sup> Chomsky, Noam, *Necessary illusions; Thought Control in Democratic Societies*, Pluto Press, 1989, London, page 9

<sup>110</sup> Chomsky, Noam, *Necessary illusions; Thought Control in Democratic Societies*, Pluto Press, 1989, London, page 9

<sup>111</sup> Chomsky, Noam, Herman, Edward S, *Manufacturing consent; The political economy of the mass media*, The bodley head, 2008, London, page 151

<sup>112</sup> Chomsky, Noam, *World Orders, Old and New; With a New Epilogue*, Pluto Press, 1997, London, page 136

<sup>113</sup> Chomsky, Noam, *World Orders, Old and New; With a New Epilogue*, Pluto Press, 1997, London, page 136

<sup>114</sup> *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary & Thesaurus*, Cambridge University Press, 2017

## 4.2. Suppression of unwanted facts by the media

For the facts and events which are hard to present in favourable light, often the best solution is to omit them altogether from the media. The less contact the people have with the opposing side, and their view, the better. In Oceania, “*the average citizen never sets eyes on a citizen of either Eurasia or Eastasia, and he is forbidden the knowledge of foreign languages. If he were allowed contact with foreigners he would discover that they are creatures similar to himself and that most of what he has been told about them is lies*”.<sup>115</sup> If we perceive “*the knowledge of foreign languages*” in the more general sense, as “all the information coming from the other side”, U.S. media follows similar trend.

One example of this is an online suppression of Russian media channels RT and Sputnik by Western internet service providers, in response to the Russo-Ukrainian conflict. Another example is the banning of the Indian news channel Wion by American company, Google, for reporting Russian statement, justifying its decision by asserting that their “*community guidelines prohibit content denying, minimizing, or trivializing well-documented violent events, including the Russian invasion of Ukraine*”<sup>116</sup>, even after Wion complained to Google that the statement was made by Russian minister and not them, and that they likewise included statements from Ukrainian side, providing the view from both sides. It is also interesting to note in this specific situation that “*this treatment was reserved only for WION—a channel from India. Not for Western channels.*”<sup>117</sup> After a considerable public outcry regarding the ban, Google decided to reinstate Wion on Youtube after 12 hours.<sup>118</sup> This in itself proves that the ban was politically motivated and possessed ulterior motives, because the facts of the case did not change after the outcry – Russian Prime Minister still said what he said, Ukrainian minister said what he said, and Wion published the content exactly as it was, staying the same after the ban. Before the outcry, it was flagged as “*denying, minimizing and trivializing*“, but suddenly, after the negative media exposure and bad publicity, it was no longer “*denying, minimizing or trivializing*“.

What Google's motivation behind the ban was, is anyone's guess, but it is interesting to note that the Minister Sergei Lavrov in his speech, which Google was referencing, talks about not attacking other countries and not attacking Ukraine, and how the situation in the Ukraine arose

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<sup>115</sup> George Orwell, Nineteen Eighty-Four, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2021, page 238

<sup>116</sup> <https://www.wionews.com/india-news/youtube-blocks-wion-for-reporting-russian-statement-465552>

<sup>117</sup> <https://www.wionews.com/india-news/youtube-blocks-wion-for-reporting-russian-statement-465552>

<sup>118</sup> <https://www.dnaindia.com/india/report-youtube-unblocks-wion-after-12-hours-and-25000-posts-in-support-of-channel-2942173>

from security concerns that the Russian federation had.<sup>119</sup> Whether such statements are true or not is debateable, but what *is* certain, is that such statements and their seemingly non-confrontational character, would not benefit the propaganda and the culture of fear and hatred that the United States cultivates in order to maintain perpetual war.<sup>120</sup> The culture of fear is certainly not new, and is well documented in the U.S. history, two of the most notable fear campaigns U.S. orchestrated being anti-communist, anti-Soviet one, which was used to invade Vietnam<sup>121</sup> and a campaign of fear after 9/11 attacks, which paved the way for invasion of Iraq and overthrow of Saddam Hussein.

One example of the *unwanted information* in recent times is evident from the Russo-Ukrainian conflict. According to the statement by the Head of the United Nations Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine, Matilda Bogner, there were 91 documented cases of enforced disappearances and arbitrary detention committed by Ukrainian security forces, and out of 73 victims interviewed, 53 percent had been tortured or ill-treated by members of Ukrainian armed forces and law enforcement agencies. There is also an evidence of summary executions, torture, ill-treatment and beatings of Russian prisoners of war.<sup>122</sup> It has to be said that the occurrences of torture, summary executions, and mistreatment of Ukrainian POWs were also documented, making both sides equally guilty of war crimes, however, a large portion of Western media chose to ignore war crimes committed on Ukrainian side, and to focus instead on Russian ones. Portraying the Russian side as evil and Ukrainian side without the blemish on their record is comparable to Big Brother's strategy of portraying an Eurasian soldier, "*huge and terrible, his sub-machine gun roaring, and seemingly to spring out of the surface of the screen*"<sup>123</sup> and Big Brother as the "*face full of power and mysterious calm*"<sup>124</sup>. The purpose of this polarization, according to Orwell, is to "*lash the Proles, normally apathetic about the war, into one of their periodical frenzies of patriotism*".<sup>125</sup> In Chomsky's words, "*this ideology helps mobilize the*

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<sup>119</sup> <https://www.wionews.com/india-news/youtube-blocks-wion-for-reporting-russian-statement-465552>

<sup>120</sup> "*The technique of whipping up fear and hatred of "foreigners," "communists," "anarchists," and other miserable creatures was, of course, long familiar, virtually second nature to propagandists in a political culture.*" – Chomsky, Noam, *World Orders, Old and New; With a New Epilogue*, Pluto Press, 1997, London, page 156

<sup>121</sup> „*Washington could "save" the people of South Vietnam and Cambodia from Communism only at a cost that made a mockery of the word "save"*. – Chomsky, Noam, Herman, Edward S, *Manufacturing consent; The political economy of the mass media*, The bodley head, 2008, London, page 239

<sup>122</sup> Janowski, Krzysztof; OHCHR spokesperson, *OHCHR's "35th report on the human rights situation in Ukraine and a thematic report on the treatment of prisoners of war"*, March 2023,

<sup>123</sup> George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2021, page 20

<sup>124</sup> George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2021, page 20

<sup>125</sup> George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2021, page 188

*populace against an enemy*"<sup>126</sup>, or in this case, to mobilize the public in the Western countries against Russia.

### 4.3. Suppression of books

We can infer from the *1984* that knowledge, when it does not suit the propagandists, is dangerous. A testament to that claim is the fact that the citizens of Oceania are not permitted to have any contact with the foreign culture and people. Real life confirms that claim, as evidenced by following examples.

In the United States, book censorship is as old as the country itself, beginning in the 17th century when William Pynchon's work, *The meritorious price of our redemption* was burned by the government. Communist literature was especially targeted. Examples of such books are *Pedagogy of the oppressed*, which explores the relationship between colonizers and colonized, but also explores Marxist ideology, *The Pentagon papers*, which documents the history of United States' involvement in Vietnam war, and ironically, the very book we are writing about here, *1984*. According to the article on University of California Press, "*1984 has repeatedly been banned and challenged in the past for its social and political themes, as well as for sexual content.*"<sup>127</sup> Since the book was banned both in Soviet Union as well as in America, countries which are ideologically on the polar opposite sides, this in itself proves our claim that *1984* is not a book about specific regime. It is a book about aspects of any totalitarian regime, which can be found in both United States history, as well as in Soviet Union's history, and its successor state, the Russian Federation.

United States is certainly not alone in suppressing information, as well as the books which promote *wrong* ideas or are written in wrong language. Ante Lešaja, a professor at the University of Zagreb, in his book "*Knjigocid – The destruction of books in Croatia during 1990s*", documents the book burning and the disposal of the books written in Cyrillic alphabet at the Korčulan library. In his book he states that "*in the times of social turmoil, in the times of tense social conflicts, we are confronted with the desire to utterly destroy or suppress everything that is "hostile"*".<sup>128</sup> He lists the example of parents coming to the library and

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<sup>126</sup> Chomsky, Noam, Herman, Edward S, Manufacturing consent; The political economy of the mass media, The bodley head, 2008, London, page 89

<sup>127</sup> <https://www.ucpress.edu/blog/52211/more-banned-books-week-at-uc-press/>

<sup>128</sup> Lešaja, Ante, *Knjigocid – The destruction of books in Croatia during 1990s*, Profil knjiga d.o.o., Zagreb, 2012, page 11

protesting about specific books their children were required to read, which were written in Serbian language. <sup>129</sup> The news which reports that that “*Kyiv City Council has completely excluded the Russian language from being taught as part of the curricula at municipal institutions of preschool and general secondary education*”, should come to no surprise then. <sup>130</sup> Serbian language was highly politicized after the war between Croatia and Serbia, and we can see that the history is repeating itself during the Russo-Ukrainian war. While there is an enemy of the state, even their language has to be suppressed in order to achieve control.

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<sup>129</sup> Lešaja, Ante, *Knjigocid – The destruction of books in Croatia during 1990s*, Profil knjiga d.o.o., Zagreb, 2012, page 15

<sup>130</sup> <https://www.kyivpost.com/post/4902>

## 5. CONCLUSION

Since the first publication in 1949, George Orwell's dystopian novel *Nineteen Eighty-four* has left a deep and lasting impression on its readers. It has likewise influenced popular culture to an extraordinary degree, with terms such as Big Brother, Newspeak, Doublethink, Thought police and Ministry of truth becoming widely known and used in everyday speech.<sup>131</sup> This thesis hopefully showed the timelessness of the masterpiece that is *1984*, and how it applies to modern times. It was written in a time which featured much different political situation in the world, aiming the criticism at the philosophies of Communism, however, in that criticism, it managed to be critical towards more than just one political system: it managed to be critical towards all totalitarian regimes, whatever form they happen to take.

By looking at all the examples of United States' instances of torture, surveillance of its own citizens, use of Doublethink, persecution of political adversaries, use of language and media for the propaganda purposes and practice of continuous war, it is reasonable to conclude that the country bears many similarities to the totalitarian regime of Oceania.

*1984* concludes with a grim view of the future, both for its protagonists as well as for the society at large: Winston's and Julia's relationship is marked by betrayal and dissipation of love they once held, Winston came to truly love his oppressor, and Big Brother continued to successfully manipulate, deceive and torture. In today's real life world, we can see that today's Big Brother is also going strong: people who criticize it, like Julian Assange, are successfully being persecuted, tortured and silenced, war is successfully being perpetuated through the use of proxies,<sup>132</sup> and its grip on the media is stronger than ever.<sup>133</sup>

However, there are also specks of hope in Orwell's world: Winston will repeatedly express his view that *"if there is hope, it lies in the Proles"*<sup>134</sup>, even when tortured and coerced to say otherwise. Perhaps the most hopeful part of the book is the existence of Brotherhood, which, whether it was a literal brotherhood or just a metaphor denoting resistance, continues to live on in Oceania, despite telescreens, Thought police and Big Brother's efforts to destroy it. In

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<sup>131</sup> "Doublethink, memory hole, unperson, thoughtcrime, Newspeak, Thought Police, Room 101, Big Brother—they've all entered the English language as instantly recognizable signs of a nightmare future." – <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2019/07/1984-george-orwell/590638/>

<sup>132</sup> "The leak of the documents, which have the imprint of the Pentagon and other US agencies all over them, demonstrates conclusively the proxy nature of the Ukraine war, with the US and its NATO allies on one side, and Russia on the other." – Srivastava, Niraj, Former Ambassador, TribuneIndia newspaper, Apr 29, 2023

<sup>133</sup> "The magnitude of the public-information operations of large government and corporate bureaucracies that constitute the primary news sources is vast and ensures special access to the media" – Chomsky, Noam, Herman, Edward S, Manufacturing consent; The political economy of the mass media, The bodley head, 2008, London, page 79

<sup>134</sup> George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2021, page 89

Orwell's words, "*Goldstein and his heresies will live forever. Every day, at every moment, they will be defeated, discredited, ridiculed, spat upon, and yet they will always survive.*"<sup>135</sup> If we are to compare the real world with all aspects of the book, it leaves us hopeful that there is also hope for the real world and destruction of real life Big Brother. People like Assange who reveal Big Brother's secrets and Noam Chomsky, who publicly points criticism at it, prove that Big Brother's grip on free thought and speech is not absolute and that there are people who can see through the propaganda and have the courage to write and act against it.

In the end, it has to be stated that this thesis is no way a criticism, nor does it bear ill-will towards American people or their virtues, values and culture – it is the criticism of the powerful few who have all the power and wealth in their hands<sup>136</sup>, and choose to exploit and oppress the people, the Proles, in order to become even more rich and powerful. It is the criticism of totalitarianism, wherever we may find it.

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<sup>135</sup> George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2021, page 338

<sup>136</sup> „*The power elite build on their structural economic power, their store-house of policy expertise, and their success in the electoral arena to dominate the federal government on the issues about which they care.*“ – Domhoff, William G., *Who rules America? Power, politics, and social change*, fifth edition, University of California, Santa Cruz, McGraw-Hill, 2005, page 161



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