

The New Barbarians: Totalitarianism, Terror and the Left Intelligentsia in Orwell's *1984*

by John David Frodsham

"One does not establish a dictatorship in order to safeguard a revolution; one makes the revolution in order to establish the dictatorship. . . . The object of torture is torture. The object of power is power. Now do you begin to understand me?" Orwell, 1984

"Political power is the power to oppress others." Lin Biao

To reflect on and discuss Orwell's *1984* is to do more than pay homage to a literary masterpiece. It is to reconsider and question ourselves, our society, our world; our past, our present and -- above all -- our future. For, whatever the date, *1984* will always remain as a menacing possibility, being not so much a year as a state of mind, a nightmare which we dread because we know it to be essentially true; because something in us responds ineluctably to Orwell's warning cry. It is surely because Orwell has captured our own latent fears that this book, which has sold nearly 12,000,000 copies and has been translated into some 62 languages since it was first published in 1949, has exerted such an influence on the thought and language of our time. Orwell is no longer just an English writer; he has become a figure of global stature, whose two main works, *1984* and *Animal Farm*, have made themselves familiar to millions. Thomas Mann once observed that "in our times the conscience of mankind expressed itself in political terms," a remark that can be applied directly to Orwell's writing. For Orwell's greatness lies in his moral stature, while his peculiar contribution to modern literature lies in his application of morality, of the dictates of unsilenced conscience, to the politics of our bloody and murderous era.

I have said that *1984* is a great novel and Orwell a major writer. Not everyone, however, would agree with me. His name has long been anathema in the Soviet Union and its satellites as well as in China, where it has long been banned. It is unlikely, I feel, that the work will ever be translated into Cambodian or Vietnamese, or that it will circulate widely in official circles in Cuba, Albania or North Korea. . . . It is noteworthy that, in the West, the Marxist intelligentsia, who increasingly dominate our universities, respond angrily to praise of Orwell who, to them, is (to quote a contemporary novelist) "a fink and a sick counter-revolutionary". . . .

But these dissenting and querulously sulky voices are very much in the minority. From its inception the novel was a critical and popular success. Lionel Trilling, doyen of American critics of the time, called the book "profound, terrifying and wholly fascinating." George Steiner called it "a desolate book" but "oblique and highly artful." Edward

Thomas went further in referring to it as "a book that towers above . . . almost any novel of our time." Irving Howe, while finding *1984* inferior to Kafka's *The Trial* argues that Orwell's book "is in some ways more terrible." No one who has read *1984* ever forgets it, Howe asserts, "for the book is written out of one passionate breath, each word is bent to a severe discipline of meaning, everything is stripped to the bareness of terror." He continues: "The book appalls us because its terror, far from being inherent in the human condition, is particular to our century; what haunts us is the sickening awareness that in *1984* Orwell has seized upon those elements of public life that, given courage and intelligence, were avoidable."

The terror referred to here is the terror inherent in totalitarian society, the terror we have seen manifested to its full in Hitler's Germany, Stalin's Russia, Mao's China, and Pol Pot's Kampuchea, to mention only some of the hells of the last 50 years of this bloodstained century. If there is an apocalyptic wildness about *1984* it springs from Orwell's insight into the nature of the murderous politics of the totalitarian state. In Stalin's Russia, 66,000,000 fell victims to this madness; in Hitler's Germany at least 12,000,000; in Mao's China, about 30,000,000; in Pol Pot's Kampuchea, over 2,000,000 -- and who knows how many elsewhere, in Eastern Europe or Central and South America? The magnitude of this slaughter is mercifully beyond our comprehension, for we cannot grasp the reality of death on this scale.

Confronted with this towering edifice of death, the writer finds himself bereft of his art. To attempt to portray this holocaust in its entirety is beyond the resources of literature. Yet one way to make the tragedy of totalitarianism comprehensible is to reduce the scale of the drama and demonstrate, through the crushing of one man, the extinction of millions. This was Orwell's method in *1984*: to make of Winston Smith and Julia an Everyman and an Everywoman; to shadow forth through their destruction by the state the annihilation of so many anonymous others. To achieve this end, Orwell had to abandon the genres he had used before the war -- the realistic novel and the documentary -- and turn to fantasy, to the allegory of *Animal Farm* and the science fiction of

1984. Since the common sense of the rationalist humanist could no longer comprehend the homicidal psychopathology of contemporary society, Orwell was forced to turn to fantasy to drive his message home. "Wells [H. G. Wells] is too sane to understand the modern world," Orwell remarked, for he himself believed that civilization had become insane. "The world is suffering from some kind of mental disease which must be diagnosed before it can be cured," he wrote. It was a similar conviction that led Jonathan Swift to write that other great fantasy, *Gulliver's Travels*. But whereas Swift wrote out of an excoriating hatred for mankind -- the Yahoo species -- Orwell writes out of a passion for freedom, justice, and, above all, truth.

Orwell cast his satire on totalitarianism in the form of a dystopia or antiutopia, a genre with respectable literary antecedents, including Zamyatin novel *We* (My) (1920) and Huxley *Brave New World* (1932). As Irving Howe has pointed out: "Not progress denied but progress realized is the nightmare haunting the anti-utopian novel"

. . . For Orwell, Nature was essentially good and technology essentially evil. Technology in *1984* is used to enslave men, not liberate them. The telescreen, the speakwrite, the helicopter, the versificators that compose the songs sung by the proles, the book-writing machine on which Julia labors, and all the rest of the technological paraphernalia of the novel exist only to aggrandize the power of the state and violate human nature. . . Orwell's vision of the future would have been even grimmer had he been aware of the development of the computer, silicon chip technology, mind-altering drugs, and modern weaponry. As it is, the picture he paints of a society in which everyone is under surveillance for 24 hours a day is now not only possible but highly feasible.

I remarked earlier that *1984* had not been well received by our intelligentsia, who have, for the most part, either undervalued or systematically denigrated this work. The book has met with a great deal of resistance, mainly from the Left, who have objected vociferously and often abusively to Orwell's attack on the Soviet Union, a country which in their eyes is the embodiment of all they revere and therefore can do no wrong. Orwell himself made no apologies for his onslaught on Soviet communism, either in *Animal Farm* or in *1984*. His own harrowing experiences in Spain, combined with his careful observations of Soviet actions both at home and abroad, especially since the rise of Stalin, had convinced him that the Soviet Union was an epicenter of evil that had betrayed its own and every other revolution. In writing *1984* he was deeply influenced by the exiled Russian novelist, Yevgeny Ivanovich Zamyatin (1884-1937), whose satirical work *We*, with its devastating picture of a totalitarian state, was never published in the Soviet Union. . . .

Orwell was impressed -- as Stalin had been infuriated -- by Zamyatin's "intuitive grasp of the irrational side of totalitarianism -- human sacrifice, cruelty as an end in

itself, the worship of a Leader who is credited with divine attributes." He saw all these irrationalities and more in the Soviet Union, where the endless slaughter and degradation of human beings in the name of socialism sickened and revolted him. Today, thanks to the work of writers like. . . Solzhenitsyn, . . . we are only too aware of the sanguinary history of Soviet communism -- of the mass starvation of the Ukrainians, the genocide of the seven Lost Peoples, the savagery of the Moscow Trials and the purges, the destruction of entire classes held to be "decadent" or "useless," and above all the appalling senseless reign of terror that peopled the *Gulag Archipelago* with the living dead and destroyed an entire generation in the frozen inferno of the camps. Frederick Warburg once wrote that *1984* "was among the most terrifying books he had ever read." One wonders what he would have made of Solzhenitsyn, whose *Gulag Archipelago* gives us 2,000 pages of horrors. As Solzhenitsyn puts it, in describing a typical prisoner: "Having passed through the meat grinder of political interrogation, the human body was physically crushed in body; his soul was crushed too." This description of a Russian "Zek" could have been applied to Winston Smith, even before he was dragged off to Room 101, just as the description of him after months of torture -- "a bowed, grey-colored skeleton-like thing" -- could have been applied to any inmate of a labor camp, concentration camp or Soviet psychiatric ward.

If any book can bear comparison with *1984*, it is Solzhenitsyn's masterpiece, whose three volumes constitute an epic of suffering and death which overshadows even Orwell's great book. Yet Solzhenitsyn's work is only one of the accounts of the totalitarian purgatory. A sizable library could surely be assembled from books dealing with totalitarian barbarism in Nazi Germany, the Soviet Union, Mao's China, North Korea, Cuba, Kampuchea or the South American dictatorships. How, then, given this wealth of factual information, much of it compiled at firsthand, is it possible to argue that *1984* is "exaggerated and hysterical," that it springs not from reality but from Orwell's wounded psyche and -- as David Daiches puts it -- that "it is too obsessed and selflacerating to arouse serious political reflection"?

The question becomes even more insistent when one realizes that the fall of Hitler and Mussolini and the deaths of Stalin and Mao did not by any means spell the end of totalitarianism. Any intellectual who wishes to see what a totalitarian regime is like still has a wide variety to choose from. I remember visiting China in the last years of the Cultural Revolution -- an event that resembled Orwell "Two Minutes' Hate" extended over a decade -- and being astonished at how closely China resembled *1984*. Huge portraits of the "divine" leader everywhere, the ritualistic cult of the Little Red Book, the endlessly blaring loudspeakers in public places, the queues, the empty shops, men and women identically clad in shoddy blue overalls

and shuffling silently along drab streets, grossly overworked, half-starved, suffering from endless shortages of everything that makes life bearable, forbidden to marry for years and then promptly separated from their spouses, dehumanized, forbidden privacy, incessantly fed with lies and yet more lies, cowering under the menace of the Secret Police -- all this was 1984 before my very eyes.

As one observer commented, as late as 1975: "China is an immense barracks living in a permanent state of terror and fear. The Maoist way of life is based on surveillance of the citizenry. Several houses make up a cell whose members are required to report their thoughts and actions to each other. . . . In practice, everyone is required to do the same, including school children. . . . The individual has no right to personal life; each of his actions is subject to rigorous surveillance. Everything he does at home . . . where he goes, what he talks about, what he eats, what he reads, what he listens to on the radio, all this is immediately learned by those around him and reported to the neighborhood revolutionary committee!" Thanks to the bao-jia (mutual surveillance) system, Mao's China did not need the telescreen. Thought-control had been achieved without elaborate technology.

Phrases of Orwell's kept occurring to me as I journeyed through the China of the Gang of Four, especially one that ran: "Anything old, and for that matter anything beautiful, was always vaguely suspect." This could well have been the battle cry of the infamous Red Guards, who systematically destroyed anything old and anything beautiful in the name of ideology. To protest against what was happening was, of course, not only useless but often fatal. As Orwell put it, in words that apply to all totalitarian regimes: "When once you were in the grip of the Party, what you felt or did not feel, what you did or refrained from doing, made literally no difference. Whatever happened you vanished. You were lifted clear out of the stream of history."

In Mao's China some 30,000,000 victims were lifted clear out of the stream of history, generally with a shot in the back of the head, to say nothing of the 50,000,000 or so who perished of hunger in the appalling famines of 1959-1962 that followed the Great Leap Forward -- famines for which the Peking government must be held almost wholly responsible. There is as yet no Chinese Solzhenitsyn to describe the workings of a system beside which the Soviet model of terror was clumsy and inefficient. But we have accounts by now of what took place in China under Mao to make us realize the enormity of these events in terms of human tragedy.

How was it, then, that while these events were taking place the Western intellectuals were apparently as unaware of them as they had been blissfully unaware of Stalin's death camps? Why was it that, at a time when mass murder and destruction were occurring in China on a scale comparable only with Nazi Germany or Stalin's Russia, the

media and our universities presented to us only the picture of a happy, laughing people cheerfully engaged in building a new heaven and a new earth? The answer is simple. As an unusually frank Chinese official remarked to a visiting academic who posed precisely that question, "It was all very easy. You wished to be deceived and we wanted to deceive you."

Half a century ago a similar collusion between deceivers and deceived was practiced in Stalin's Russia, where during those dreadful years of starvation and mass slaughter, Western travelers came in bemused throngs to exclaim over what the Webbs -- blest pair of Sirens! -- fondly called "a New Civilization." Malcolm Muggeridge, who was living in Moscow at the time and traveling widely throughout Russia in his role as newspaper correspondent, has recorded his astonishment at the fathomless gullibility of these early tourists:

"I have never forgotten these visitors, or ceased to marvel at them, at how they have gone on from strength to strength, continuing to lighten our darkness, and to guide, counsel and instruct us; on occasion, momentarily abashed, but always ready to pick themselves up, put on their cardboard helmets, mount Rosinante, and go galloping off on yet another foray on behalf of the downtrodden and oppressed. They are unquestionably one of the wonders of the age, and I shall treasure till I die as a blessed memory the spectacle of them traveling with radiant optimism through a famished countryside, wandering in happy bands about squalid, overcrowded towns, listening with unshakeable faith to the fatuous patter of carefully trained and indoctrinated guides, repeating like schoolchildren a multiplication table, the bogus statistics and mindless slogans endlessly intoned to them. There, I would think, an earnest office-holder in some local branch of the League of Nations Union, there a godly Quaker who once had tea with Gandhi, there an inveigher against the means test and the blasphemy laws, there a staunch upholder of free speech and human rights, there an indomitable preventer of cruelty to animals; these scarred and worthy veterans of a hundred battles for truth, freedom and justice -- all, all chanting the praises of Stalin and his Dictatorship of the Proletariat. It was as though a vegetarian society had come out with a

passionate plea for cannibalism, or Hitler had been nominated posthumously for the Nobel Peace Prize."

It was precisely this wish to be deceived, this refusal to look at the unpalatable truth, which Orwell castigated in the intelligentsia of his day. The evidence was there, in front of their eyes, yet they refused to see it. We must not forget that Orwell was, until the end of his days, a convinced socialist who maintained a deep-rooted belief in democracy, which he insisted was the only force capable of resisting the advance of the totalitarian state. "So long as democracy exists," he wrote, "totalitarianism is in deadly danger." Yet, to his dismay, the Left-wing intellectuals, seduced by the specious theories of Marxism, had betrayed democracy and paved the way for totalitarianism by their worship of power and their deliberate distortion of the truth and refusal to face reality. For Orwell, the great disease of the modern world was its worship of power, whether the power of the leader, the power of the state or the power of the machine. Before the triad of power, dehumanized and dehumanizing, the intellectuals of the West had fallen prostrate in worship. As O'Brien says: "The Party seeks power entirely for its own sake. We are not interested in the good of others. . . . We are interested solely in power. Power is inflicting pain and humiliation. Power is in tearing human minds to pieces and putting them together again. . . . If you want a picture of the future, imagine a boot stamping on a human face -- forever."

. . .Orwell was . . .certainly right in stating that the besetting sin of the intellectuals was to crawl abjectly before power. Since Orwell detested power in any form, whether the power of the state or the power of capital, he could never forgive his fellow intellectuals of the Left for their worship of this false god. "Why do so many socialist intellectuals want the state to be all-powerful?" he asked. "Why cannot they understand that many decent people might be repelled by their objectives?"

Orwell came to regard the intelligentsia as essentially underminers of everything "decent," to use his favorite term. "Decency" for Orwell was a comprehensive virtue including truth, liberty, justice, fair play, and compassion. "The thing that frightens me about the modern intelligentsia is their inability to see that human society must be based on common decency," he wrote. For Orwell, intellectuals were, above all, subversive of democracy, an institution he equated with decency. "During the past 25 years, the activities of what are called 'intellectuals' have been almost wholly mischievous. I do not think it an exaggeration to say that if the intellectuals had done their work a little more thoroughly, Britain would have surrendered in 1940."

As George Watson put it: "The intellectual's dream of perfection is for Orwell the nightmare in which men may all soon be slaves." Orwell argued that the intellectuals

were often frustrated men of action, romantically fascinated by dictatorship and violence. If this was true of the 1930s, it has proved even more true of our own era where, since the 1960s, many intellectuals have moved steadily to the extreme Left, embracing not only Marxism, but also most forms of extremism and terrorism en route. To quote Watson again: "If Orwell could see them [the intellectuals] now. . . he might still feel he had warned in vain." Or, as Lionel Trilling put it: "No one knows better than he (Orwell) how willing is the intellectual Left to enter the prison of its own mass mind."

Solzhenitsyn has repeatedly and despairingly alleged that the Western democracies have lost the will to resist totalitarianism and are eaten hollow from within by their own moral decay and the termite-like attacks of their radical intellectuals. Here, once again, he finds himself anticipated by Orwell who averred that the ultimate threat to human freedom would not come from the reactionary right, from the champions of class, capital, and privilege, but rather from a Fifth Column, from "the new aristocracy of bureaucrats, scientists, trade-union organizers, publicity experts, sociologists, teachers, journalists, and professional politicians."

Orwell's words are all the more sobering, all the more chilling when we realize that they came not from a conservative or a liberal but from a socialist, a man of the libertarian Left. Orwell's record of commitment to liberty, freedom, and justice is undeniable and acknowledged even by some of those who disagree with him politically. Furthermore, he was a scrupulously fair man, who managed to see the slightest vestige of good wherever it existed, even in his enemies. Yet he never retracted these words, but remained adamant that this "new aristocracy could well bring about the end of Western democracy." As his most gifted biographer, George Woodcock, has put it: "He believed that in every modern society, without exception, there were tendencies which, allowed to develop unchecked, might bring us within a generation into a world where all the values of truth and justice, mercy and freedom, decency and equality . . . would be sacrificed to make way for a new world in which Utopia would emerge in its own gross and terrifying caricature under the sign of 'a boot stamping on a human face -- forever.' "

Such a regime cannot appear miraculously of its own accord, born out of the evil latent in our hearts. It must be brought into being by a group of people bound together by a common purpose. Toward the end of his life, Orwell became certain that he had identified those progenitors of totalitarian order, and stepped up his attacks on this coterie of Left-wing intellectuals, whom he saw as dedicated to the destruction of decency, freedom, and justice in the name of a barren and soulless ideology. As Goldstein puts it, in a passage of vital importance to the comprehension of the message of *1984*: "These people . . . had been shaped and brought together by the barren world of monopoly industry

and centralized government. As compared with their opposite numbers in past ages they were less avaricious, less tempted by luxury, hungrier for pure power, and above all, more conscious of what they were doing and more intent on crushing opposition."

Orwell's fears were justified. Since his death only 34 years ago, extremism has grown like a cancer to an extent that would have convinced him, had he lived to see it, that the regime he portrayed in *1984* was "slouching towards Bethlehem to be born." The blood-dimmed tide of which Yeats spoke so prophetically has indeed loosed and is spreading like a red stain across the world. It is little wonder that Western universities are permeated through and through with radicalism and Marxism; yet the latter, only 30 years ago, was an alien creed very largely confined to a few hotheads in departments of sociology and economics. Nowadays it is scarcely an exaggeration to say that whole faculties may be deemed Marxist or Marxisant and that in many universities the free play of tolerant debate has given way to an intolerant stifling of controversy in the name of Leftist dogma. If "doublethink" and "duckspeak" are to be found throughout our society today, one must lay the blame where it belongs, at the gates of our institutions of higher learning. What Julien Benda called "la trahison des clercs" -- "the treason of the intellectuals" -- has already occurred, just as Orwell foretold it would. Nor can we afford to dismiss the present ascendancy of Marxism in our universities as simply a harmless piece of eccentricity. From our universities this stultifying doctrine has been systematically exported into every profession and calling that employ graduates, spreading the virus through our schools, our trade unions, our political parties, our bureaucracy, our publishing houses, our media, and even the churches, of whatever denomination. It is this that accounts for the widespread adulation of despotism in the West; for our obdurate refusal to look political reality in the face; for our continual servile willingness to excuse or justify behavior on the part of the totalitarian regimes which would be subject to the strongest expressions of outrage on our part were it to occur elsewhere. . .

It is well to bear such incidents in mind when it comes to assessing Orwell's indictment of his fellow intellectuals. As one of my New Left colleagues once remarked to me contemptuously: "The trouble with you bourgeois liberals is that you are sentimentalists, incapable of understanding the historical necessity of killing." His psychopathic observation was all the more bizarre, since he was attempting to justify the mass murders of Idi Amin, a dictator of the Right, if ever there was one, but one who had overnight become an ally of the extreme Left when the Soviet Union and Libya supplied him with arms and defended his murderous actions.

Such arguments irresistibly recall the world of *1984*, whose insane, ideological logicians are prepared to justify

any atrocity in the interests of ideology and pure power. Like the crazed terrorist in Conrad novel, *The Secret Agent*, their cry is "Exterminate! Exterminate!" As J. Hillis Miller argues, such a theorist wishes "to employ the power of death in a special way. By using it as the erasure and forgetting of history, he believes he can make the minds of all men pure and empty. Mankind will then be possessors . . . of a sinister freedom." Precisely such a "freedom" as this is envisaged in *1984*, where O'Brien points out that the slogan "Freedom Is Slavery" also means "Slavery Is Freedom" and where the past disappears forever into the "memory holes" at the behest of the party. It was such logic that led the Pol Pot regime to declare that since only 1,500,000 young Cambodians out of 6,000,000 were needed to rebuild a "pure" Marxist society, the rest must be exterminated. As François Ponchaud remarked, aghast at the consequences of this statement: "One can no longer speak of barbarism: what barbarians have ever acted in this way?"

The gist of Orwell's message should by now have become quite clear. Either we resist the onslaught of the Marxists and the machines or civilization perishes. But how strong a resistance can we mount to this troika of totalitarianism, technology, and terror? The answer, I fear, must be a pessimistic one.

Since World War I, Western society has been gravely weakened by the attrition of traditional authority. Beginning with attrition of the individual conscience, the process has spread to the attrition of the authority of the family, the law, religion, public morality, and government. Increasingly, authority is denied in principle and vilified in practice at home, while being -- paradoxically enough -- admired and respected abroad, in the communist world. Along with this abrogation of the individual and collective superego, there has developed, as if by way of compensation, a narcissistic cult of the ego aided and abetted by the Third Force psychology of Maslow and Rogers, a cult which appears to have acquired the status once held by religion. This narcissism finds social expression in an epicurean consumerism, which has elevated self-indulgent materialism to a virtue, a moral relativism which can justify or excuse any action, however base or vicious, and a resuscitated Pelagianism which insists that mankind is ultimately capable of building a perfect society since we are innately good, all evil being attributable to outside causes and not to our own natures. Hence one only has to reform society and the innate good within us, hitherto obscured by "the others" (note the illogicality!), will shine forth in all its pristine splendor.

Beneath the facile optimism of this jejune and degenerate ethos, there yawns an abyss of nihilism. In truth, few of us believe in future utopias; in fact, few of us believe in anything. "Eat, drink, and be merry -- for tomorrow come the missiles" is the watchword of our age, where, as Edmund Spenser wrote:

"That which all men then did vertue call,
Is now cal'd vice, and that which vice was hight,
Is now hight vertue, and so us'd of all;
Right now is wrong, and wrong that was is right."

For modern man, who has made the fatal error of understanding the science on which our civilization is based not as a useful methodology but as a system of belief, a new religion, is at heart convinced that ultimately the universe is totally meaningless and his own existence quite devoid of sense or purpose.

"It is a tale told by an idiot,
Full of sound and fury, signifying nothing."

Why should we not repeat this comfortless creed? Does not science tell us coldly that the universe is simply an enormous mechanism governed by blind chance -- that ancient goddess resurrected by research -- which has accidentally brought forth man, an automaton programmed with instincts, emotions, sexuality, and the Freudian thanatos instinct, whose species will perhaps be replaced during the next century or so by infinitely more intelligent robots? This deep-rooted nihilism, springing from a nihilistic and ultimately sadomasochistic science, is responsible for the prevalence of what Viktor Frankl has called the noögenic neuroses, which arise from a failure to find meaning and sense of responsibility in one's existence, leading to what Frankl has termed "an existential vacuum," a void within us which drains us of all hope."

Now the society which Orwell depicts in *1984* is in some respects the polar opposite of our own. Whereas we have been taught to repudiate authority and to worship ourselves, the totalitarian state exalts authority and crushes individuality. It is one of the weaknesses of the novel that Orwell nowhere makes it clear just how this extraordinary social transformation has been effected, apart from indicating that it has been preceded by an atomic war. How can a society which is fast repudiating all authority transform itself in a few years not just into an authoritarian but into a totalitarian state?

There are several ways in which such a transformation could come about. . . It is important to realize that the Marxists of the West are mostly disciples of the Italian theoretician, Antonio Gramsci, who is especially concerned with the problem of seizing power in countries of advanced capitalism. Gramsci argues that there is no need for communists to seek to overthrow democratic government by violent revolution. Instead, they must "attain hegemony" by taking over the "hegemonic apparatuses," that is, the universities, the schools, the churches, the trade unions, the publishing houses, the bureaucracy, and the media and so gradually separate "civil society" from the ruling class. Government will then fall into Marxist hands like a ripe fruit. This "war of position" is currently being waged

throughout the Western world, for this, according to Gramsci, is the revolutionary strategy best suited to countries where the bourgeoisie has established hegemony. Since Gramsci insists that the achievement of proletarian hegemony is a matter of education, current communist strategy assigns a key role to the so-called "organic intellectuals" in this struggle, a much greater role than that assigned to the Communist Party itself. Given such systematic Gramscian permeation of our educational system, our communication channels, and our unions, even a moderate social-democratic government could eventually find itself toppling inexorably into the communist chasm.

It might be objected that even if this occurred, the resulting regime would not be totalitarian so much as authoritarian, being based on the Euro-communist model and accepting the rules of democratic pluralism. To this I reply that a tree must be judged by its fruits. The European communists have never yet obtained majority rule. Only if they did attain such a majority and then allowed themselves to be ousted from office when defeated in free elections would it be meaningful to talk of a new type of communism. But since in essence communism is irrevocably opposed to free elections, freedom of speech, and opposition parties, this scenario is an unlikely one. At the moment we can say that all communist governments without exception are essentially totalitarian and therefore essentially Stalinist. The most succinct definition of communist society is to say that it is one in which everything that is not forbidden is compulsory. All such societies exhibit the totalitarian syndrome, namely, an infallible leader; an official ideology to which everyone must adhere; a single mass party; elite control of mass communications and all organizations, including economic ones; police control through physical and psychological terror; a theory of world domination; and the need for constant mass mobilization of effort.

All these factors are present in the world of Orwell's *1984*; all of these are present in every totalitarian regime today. To imply that it is possible to have communism without these attributes is nonsense. If a country ever falls victim to communism, it will eventually become a totalitarian state. No matter how a country falls into the communist net, the end result is the same -- in a word, *1984*.

. . . We have increasingly allowed the pleasure principle and not the reality principle to dominate our lives with the result that, when reality finally obtrudes itself, we shall be quite unable to cope with it. It will be with relief perhaps, that we hand over our tiresome freedom to the new barbarians, who are ideologically conditioned to seize power in the name of History, the People, the Revolution or any other catch phrase. We shall then find ourselves ruled, to quote Hannah Arendt, by "a form of government whose essence is terror and whose principle of action is the logicity of ideological thinking." *1984* will have finally

arrived, no matter what the year.

Solzhenitsyn has observed that the tragedy of the modern world is that man has forgotten God and so embarked on a moral and spiritual decline that will shortly bring about the collapse of Western civilization and the onset of a long night of cruelty and despotism. He is struck by the irony of the fact that, though democracy has been under sentence of death since the formation of the Comintern in 1919, we do not believe in our own imminent subjugation and refuse to be awakened even though, as he puts it, "the ceiling is falling on our heads." To become aware of our peril, he continues, "the West must hear the voices of those writers, those publicists, those leaders who say: 'We are now already in mortal danger, we are in greater danger than we were in 1940.'

Orwell is just such a writer, and *1984* was his last attempt to sound the alarm bell and awaken the sleepers before it was too late. . . .F. R. Learis maintains: "In coming to terms with great literature we discern what at bottom we really believe." Orwell's novel forces us to

search our consciences and decide what we ultimately believe in -- the uphill path of freedom and responsibility or the downhill path of mindless surrender to state, party, leader, and machine.

In spite of his lack of religious faith and his overreliance on commonsense pragmatism, Orwell was a deeply moral man whose profound commitment to absolute values, especially truth, freedom, and justice, and unflinching courage and resolution brought him very close to the position held by the deeply religious Solzhenitsyn. Like Solzhenitsyn, he has warned us of what our fate will be if we persist in defining ourselves in materialistic and economic terms, forgetting who we really are. "For what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his soul?" the Gospel asks us. But as Orwell has chillingly demonstrated, once we lose our souls in this devil's bargain, we lose the whole world as well. This is the lesson we must all soon learn -- or perish.