

George Orwell and the Left

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ジョージ・オーウェルと左翼

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George Orwell fused political writing and art. This paper explores his relations to the various political movements of his day.

Perhaps the most important message of George Orwell's *1984* is that totalitarianism is grounded in "protective" stupidity¹: holding as a virtue disbelief in one's senses, memory and simple logic when serving a cause presumably higher than one's self. It is not a happy commentary on our *1984* that droves of literary and political writers have tried to in effect rewrite Orwell's political point of view as *1984*'s Ministry of Truth rewrites history. They have done this by emphasizing Orwell's anti-Communism and his often bitter criticisms of the British Labor Party, pacifism, etc. while downplaying or ignoring his commitment to democratic socialism. *Time* magazine's recent lead article on Orwell cast him as a Left-baiting liberal, very much in *Time*'s editorial image.² Norman Podhoritz, editor of *Commentary* magazine, assumes that since he himself is a disillusioned leftist-turned-rightist, Orwell should be one too: ". . . I am convinced that if Orwell were alive today, he would be taking his stand with the neoconservatives and against the left," he declares in *Harper's*,³ noting a conservative organization, the Committee For the Free World, publishes material "under the imprint 'Orwell Press' and in general regards Orwell as one of its guiding spirits."⁴ Literary critic Conor Cruise O'Brien, calling *1984* "a break with the past" and a "new vision," suggests that Orwell became disillusioned with socialism toward the end of his life; he also says that he is a "Chinaman" if *1984* was even remotely a satire on "our Western way of life."⁵ *Izvestia*, an official organ of the Soviet Communist Party, on the other hand, argues that *1984*, though "anti-socialist" (meaning anti-Soviet), is ironically a picture of Western capitalist society, not the USSR.⁶

Probably no writer in the English language has had so many political camps competing with each other to use him for their purposes and has had so much rubbish written about himself as a consequence.

Though Podhoritz is partially correct in claiming that Orwell's criticisms of the Left "has given so much aid and comfort to antisocialists of all kinds,"⁷ this was not Orwell's intent. A socialist to the end of

his life, Orwell wrote essentially for the Left. His anti-Communism and criticisms of fellow leftists must be viewed from this perspective. In 1946 Orwell wrote: "Every line of serious work that I have written since 1936 has been written, directly or indirectly, *against* totalitarianism and *for* democratic Socialism, as I understand it."⁸ Notes Simon Leys in *Le Monde*: "Orwell's struggle against totalitarianism was merely the corollary of his socialist convictions. He believed indeed that only the defeat of totalitarianism could guarantee the victory of socialism."⁹

Arguing that Orwell was a closet conservative because he was anti-Communist and criticized the Left is fallacious. First, there is nothing unique about Orwell attacking fellow leftists. Anyone with but a casual knowledge of left-wing politics knows that arguments between various tendencies can be as bitter (or bitterer) than any of the Left's attacks on the status quo. Nor is Orwell unusual as a leftist anti-Communist, even in the 1930's. His seeming belief that corruption of socialism in Russia began with Stalin (if we can judge by *Animal Farm*) is conservative compared to the judgements of anarchists like Emma Goldman (*My Disillusionment with Russia*) and independent Marxists like Rosa Luxemburg (*Marxism or Leninism?*) who in the 1920's were already contending that Lenin had betrayed the Revolution. Orwell was part of the anti-authoritarian left, which during most of his lifetime was eclipsed by the pro-Soviet left, the result of the mythos created by the 1918 Russian Revolution. What is unusual about Orwell is his extreme individualism. Though identifying himself with the socialist cause, giving qualified support to the British Labor Party and briefly joining the Independent Labor Party, he remained essentially a political loner. He seemed to have consciously worked at being out of fashion.

"Fashionable" is a dirty word in the Orwell lexicon. One reason for this is undoubtedly because temperamentally he felt himself most, like Henry David Thoreau and Karl Marx, in opposition. A more important reason is that what was politically fashion-

nable in his time was largely totalitarian: political Catholicism, Communism, Facism. Whether left or right, it was dishonest and anti-democratic, therefore anti-socialist, as Orwell understood it. At a time which saw an unparalleled reaction against democracy, a totalitarian mentality in opponents must have been distressing enough; to see it in supposed allies was intolerable. This accounts for Orwell's harsh attacks on the left: not latent conservatism but a desire to restore the socialist movement to a democratic basis. He wrote in the preface to the Ukrainian edition of *Animal Farm* that ". . . I have been convinced that destruction of the Soviet myth was essential if we wanted a revival of the Socialist movement."¹⁰

Being out of fashion has its price. "A modern literary intellectual lives in constant dreadnot, indeed of public opinion in the wider sense, but of public opinion within his own group," Orwell wrote in "Writers and the Leviathan" (1948), observing that "at any given moment there is a dominant orthodoxy, to offend against which needs a thick skin and sometimes means cutting one's income in half for years."¹¹ It can also mean obscurity—which, along with semi-poverty, Orwell experienced until late into his career. That Orwell could endure such burdens without becoming cynical is itself a feat. But more surprising is that with all the betrayals and stupidities the Left was prone to in the 1930's and 40's (Stalin-worship, pushing for war with Germany through a united front and then switching to pacifism when war broke out, etc.),¹² Orwell did not get disillusioned with the Left early in his career. Witnessing the brutal repression of the anarchists and the "Trotskyists" by the Communists during the Spanish civil war could have reduced a weaker-willed person into dogmatic rancor or, more likely, apolitical silence. Orwell's reaffirmed patriotism at the start of World War II and his support of the war effort (in contrast to the Independent Labor Party, of which he was still a member) could have easily made a conservative out of him. Yet Spain solidified his his commitment to socialism. "I . . . at last really believe in Socialism, which I never did before," he wrote to Cyril Connolly on June 8, 1937.¹³ And his patriotism became the basis of his contention that love of country was a requisite for a successful revolution. "It is only by revolution that the native genius of the English people can be set free," he wrote in *The Lion and the Unicorn*.¹⁴

That potentially disillusioning situations fed, not starved Orwell's dedication to socialism is generally ignored by those conservatives (Podhoritz, et al) who religiously quote him on lies in the Left press about Spain, his love of England, or his attacks on pacifists in order to prove either progressive disillusionment or that he was always at heart none of them.

Podhoritz dwells heavily on Orwell's attacks on pacifists during World War II when speaking of Orwell's "transformations,"¹⁵ arguing in effect that

since Orwell "flirted" with pacifism almost up to the war and then turned against it during the war it is proof that he was heading toward neoconservatism—alas! had he but reached Podhoritz's ripe old age!—and would have opposed today's nuclear freeze movements. Besides distorting Orwell's supposed pacifist phase—which I will deal with presently—Podhoritz ignores the context in which his "transformations" occurred. Thus he ignores an important facet of Orwell's writing: its immediacy. Perhaps no other British writer was as dependent as Orwell on current events as a creative source.

All writers are of their times, but Orwell is more than most. Henry Miller's Paris could, with few changes, be the Paris of present day. Joyce's Dublin, Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha County could be moved backward or forward in time and retain the authors' worldviews. Think of Dickens and you see Nineteenth century England's decades melting unobtrusively into one another. But imagine Orwell out the context of England of the 1930's and 40's—colonialism, depression, Hitler, Stalin, war—and what remains is a vague sense of a man who is angry but compassionate, "on the left" but unorthodox and radically democratic. Beyond that there is only a void: the mental atmosphere of his works could be created at no other time than the year, sometimes the month and even the day they were written.

It is amazing that Orwell, given the ephemerality of "topical" writing, has worn as well as he has. It is also amazing that even as someone writing "for the moment" he managed to be free of mental time lag—especially so when considering the swift and radical changes his age underwent: the decline of the British empire and the atom bomb, to name but two. ("One need only be a little over forty to remember things that are as remote from the present age," Orwell wrote in 1948, "as chain armour or girdles of chastity.")¹⁶ Perhaps being out of fashion provided him with the intellectual solitude (to twist Gibbon a little) which nurtured his particular genius.

Seen in this light, Orwell's attitude toward pacifism seems more conditional than absolute: pacifism was justified when war would be an act of aggression (the "united front" against Germany) but unjustified when one's country was fighting for its life, as Britain was single-handedly after Germany's declaration of war. Out of this context, Podhoritz's remark that "although Orwell had flirted with pacifism in his youth, the experience of war changed his mind"¹⁷ is simplistic. Furthermore, Orwell's youth was not devoted to pacifist activities (he was a policeman in Burma in his youth; he supported and attacked pacifists in middle age) nor did his intellectual agreement with pacifism go beyond a desire to avoid a European war. (He killed fascists in Spain in 1936-37 and expressed no regrets over this during his "pacifist" phase.) Much of his emotional and moral

sympathy with pacifism, outside a common distaste for violence for vengeance's sake (like George Bolling),¹⁸ was that pacifism was out of fashion and that leftist "popular front" campaigns were hypocritical. In a letter to the editor of the *English Weekly*, May 26, 1938, he wrote:

Pacifism is so far from being acceptable to the possessing class, that all the big daily newspapers unite to boycott all news of pacifist activities. Virtually the whole of the left-wing intelligensia, via their mouthpieces in the *New Chronical*, the *New Statesman*, *Reynolds*, etc., are clamouring for a Popular Front government as a prelude to war against Germany. It is true that they are usually too meally-mouthed to say openly that they wish for war, but that is what they mean, and in private they will often admit that war is 'inevitable,' by which they mean desirable.¹⁹

But sympathy for the underdog was not his sole reason for supporting British anti-war movements; more important was his belief that a popular front made up of Left and pro-capitalist but anti-fascist elements would be a sell-out to imperialism. (This was why pacifism was unacceptable to the "possessing class.") In the same letter, he wrote: "The real enemies of the working class are not those who talk to them in too highbrow a manner; they are those of their exploiters, and into forgetting what every manual worker inwardly knows—that modern war is a racket."²⁰

In regard to Orwell's later attitudes toward pacifism, it is worth noting his essay "Reflections on Gandhi" (1949). Orwell questions whether Gandhi inadvertently helped British imperialism by exerting himself to prevent violence "—which from the British point of view meant preventing any effective action whatever—" but concedes that "how reliable such calculations are in the long run is doubtful; as Gandhi himself says, 'in the end deceivers deceive only themselves' . . ."²¹ Though he criticizes Gandhi's other-worldliness, his "home-spun cloth" economics, etc., he admires Gandhi's moral courage and the fact that he did not specialize in avoiding awkward questions "like most Western pacifists."²² One senses that Orwell believed an honest pacifism was possible: not necessarily one that he could agree with but at least one which he could respect.

This must be remembered when reading Orwell's attacks on pacifism.

Podhoritz quotes with relish a long passage from "Notes on Nationalism" in which the remark that "pacifist propaganda usually boils down to saying that one side is as bad as the other" but is actually "directed almost entirely against Britain and the United States" appears. Podhoritz writes: "The 'real though unadmitted motive' behind such propaganda, Orwell concluded, was 'hatred of Western democracy and admiration for totalitarianism.'"²³ He uses this

as a spring board for attacking " 'objectively' pacifist anti-defense movements of today" and the British Labor Party's anti-nuclear stand and claiming Orwell would opposed both and favor a nuclear first strike.²⁴ Answering arguments about what Orwell would have thought about specific present-day issues is best left to necromancers. It is important to point out that Podhoritz deliberately takes the above quote—which comes at the beginning, not the conclusion of Orwell's discussion of pacifism—out of context. In context, it reads:

Pacifism. The majority of pacifists either belong to obscure religious sects or are simply humanitarians who object to taking life and prefer not to follow their thoughts beyond that point. But there is a minority of intellectual pacifists whose real though unadmitted motive appears to be a hatred of western democracy and admiration for totalitarianism.²⁵

It must be admitted that during the war years, Orwell's attacks on pacifism were his most extreme; he accused it of being "objectively pro-Fascist" because "if you hamper the war effort of one side you automatically help that of the other."²⁶ Yet the war marked Orwell's most extreme left phase as well in relation to British Socialism. Prior to the war, Orwell's tendency was to support reform. When he had joined the Independent Labor Party, he wrote that he had not "lost all faith in the Labour Party" and that he earnestly hoped that it would "win a clear majority in the next General Election."²⁷ With the outbreak of the war, Orwell believed the revolution had begun and was quite willing to support a bloody uprising. In "My Country Right or Left" (1940) he wrote the following:

Only revolution can save England, that has been obvious for years, but now the revolution has started, and it may proceed quite quickly if only we can keep Hitler out. Within two years, maybe a year, if only we can hang on, we shall see changes that will surprise the idiots who have no foresight. I dare say the London gutters will have to run with blood. All right then, let them, if it is necessary. But when the red militias are billeted in the Ritz I shall still feel that the England I was taught to love so long ago and for such different reasons is somehow persisting.²⁸

In *The Lion and the Unicorn*, published shortly after the above essay, Orwell tones down his remarks on violent revolution, by not by very much: "Revolution does not mean red flags and street fighting, it means a fundamental shift of power. Whether it happens with or without bloodshed is largely an accident of time and place."²⁹ In *The Lion and the Unicorn* he reiterates his belief that the English revolution had begun and that "the war and revolution are inseparable."³⁰

Whether or not Orwell's "revolutionary period" was temporary (it was not as temporary as Sonia

Orwell's editing of *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell* would make it seem)³¹ Orwell later admitted that he had been too optimistic about revolution being near at hand. In his "London Letter" to *Partisan Review* (December 1944) he wrote: ". . . I fell into a trap assuming 'the war and the revolution were inseparable.' There were excuses for this belief, but still it was a very great error."³²

Did Orwell's revolutionary ardor diminish after the war? Certainly he wrote no tracts or pamphlets on the order of "My Country Right or Left" or *The Lion and the Unicorn* (which might be coincidence as Orwell was primarily an artist, not a political theorist or a pamphleteer)³³ and a strong note of pessimism appeared in his writings on socialism. "Toward European Unity" (1947) begins:

A Socialist today is in the position of a doctor treating an all but hopeless case. As a doctor, it is his duty to keep the patient alive, and therefore to assume that the patient has at least a chance of recovery. As a scientist, it is his duty to face the facts, and therefore to admit that the patient will probably die. Our activities as Socialists only have meaning if we assume that Socialism *can* be established, but if we stop to consider what probably *will* happen, then we must admit, I think, that the chances are against us.³⁴

Orwell continued to give qualified support to the British Labor Party.³⁵ Whether he was still a revolutionary at heart largely depends upon how far we can identify him with Winston Smith in *1984*. Winston Smith believes that "if there is hope it lies in the proles"³⁶ (the proletarians) to overthrow Big Brother and joins what he believes is a revolutionary organization, the Brotherhood. *1984* may be Orwell's most revolutionary novel, but also his most pessimistic. Winston Smith is arrested and tortured into loving Big Brother. His torturer, O'Brien, tells him that "the proletarians will never revolt, not in a thousand years" and that "the rule of the Party is forever."³⁷

Podhoritz is correct in saying that Orwell was a "wholehearted patriot" and saw "patriotism as a great and positive force"³⁸ —though he neglects to add *for revolution*. Orwell severely criticized the Left intelligencia for being Europeanized and for being objectively anti-British.³⁹ Yet he was not a nationalist or a xenophobe. In "Notes on Nationalism," Orwell differentiated between patriotism and nationalism:

By 'nationalism' I mean first of all the habit of assuming that human beings can be classified like insects and that whole blocks of millions or tens of millions of people can be confidently labelled 'good' or 'bad.' But secondly—and this is much more important—I mean a habit of identifying oneself with a single nation or other unit, placing it beyond good and evil and recognizing no other duty than that of advancing its interests. Nationalism is not to be confused with patriot-

ism. Both words are normally used in so vague a way that any definition is liable to be challenged, but one must draw a distinction between them, since two different and even oppoing ideas are involved. By 'patriotism' I mean devotion to a particular place and a particular way of life, which one believes to be the best in the world but has no wish to force upon other people. Patriotism is of its nature defensive, both militarily and culturally. Nationalism, on the other hand, is inseparable from the desire for power. The abiding purpose of every nationalist is to secure more power and more prestige, *not* for himself but for the nation or other unit in which he has chosen to sink his own individuality.⁴⁰

In "Notes on Nationalism" he speaks of "negative nationalism"—hatred of one country—and "transferred nationalism"—loyalty to another nation, idelolgy, race or class.⁴¹ Right-wing commentators like Podhoritz emphasize these points when Orwell refers to British Communists and anti-British left-wing intellectuals, but ignore them when he refers them to right-wingers: British facists and what he called "professional Roman Catholics" (who were usually pro-facist). Two prominent political Roman Catholics and facists from the 1920's to the 1940's were D. B. Wyndham Lewis and J. B. Morton who wrote under the pseudonyms of, respectively, "Timothy Shy" and "Beachcomber." He says of them in the June 23, 1944 instalment of his *Tribune* column "As I Please":

Their general 'line' will be familiar to anyone who has read Chesterton and kindred writers. Its essential note is denigration of England and of the Protestant countries generally. From the Catholic point of view this is necessary. A Catholic, at least an apologist, feels that he *must* claim superiority for the Catholic countries, and for the Middle Ages as against the present, just as a Communist feels that he must in all circumstances support the U. S. S. R. Hence the endless jibing of 'Beachcomber' and 'Timothy Shy' at every English institution. . . . Hence also Timothy Shy's attempts to rewrite English history and the snarls of hatred that escape him when he thinks of the defeat of the Spanish Armada. (How it sticks in his gizzard, that Spanish Armada! As though anyone cared, at this date!)"⁴²

Dislike of nationalism made Orwell dislike the anti-Americanism that was fashionable in post-war Britain. Podhoritz quotes Orwell at great length on this subject and also quotes him as saying that he would side with the United States against the Soviet Union were he forced to make a choice, as the U. S. was a democracy.⁴³ But this must not be seen as a blind endorsement of the United States as Podhoritz would wish us to think. In "Burnham's View of the Contemporary World Struggle" (1947) Orwell wrote

of the possibility of making western Europe and Africa into a "Socialist United States" which would be an alternative to *both* the Soviet and American empires.⁴⁴ He repeats this point of view in "Toward European Unity," which he declares one of the obstacles to a Socialist United States would be "American hostility," along with hostility from the USSR and the Catholic church.⁴⁵

The late 1940's saw a large number of disillusioned ex-Communists become rightists. (Pace Podhoritz, there is nothing new about "neoconservatism.") This was another fashion that Orwell avoided: what illusions he had about Communism were smashed in Spain. When the Dutchess of Athol, known as the "Red Dutchess" in the 1930's and who had just become a reactionary, invited Orwell to join the League of European Freedom, he wrote back :

Certainly what is said on your platform is more truthful than the lying propaganda to be found in most of the press, but I cannot associate myself with an essentially Conservative body which claims to defend democracy in Europe but has nothing to say about British imperialism. It seems to me that one can only denounce the crime now being committed in Poland, Jugoslavia, etc. if one is equally insistent on ending Britain's unwanted rule in India. I belong to the left and must work inside it, much as I hate Russian totalitarianism and its poisonous influence in this country.⁴⁶

In the same letter, Orwell mentions in the above letter that he went to a meeting given by the League and subsequently wrote about it. Here is a sample of what he said :

Victor Raikes, the Tory MP, who is an able and outspoken reactionary, made a speech which I should have considered a good one if it had referred only to Poland and Jugoslavia. But after dealing with those two countries he went on to speak about Greece, and then suddenly black became white and white became black. There was no booing, no interjections from quite large audience--no one there, apparently, who could see that the forcing of quisling governments upon unwilling peoples is equally undesirable whoever does it.

It is very hard to believe that people like this are really interested in political liberty as such. They are merely concerned because Britain did not get a big enough cut in the sordid bargain that appears to have been driven at Tehran.⁴⁷

It is difficult to imagine someone who had written the above supporting the "neoconservative's" selective outrage which condemns Soviet bloc repression and excuses Latin American dictatorships which are bolstered by right-wing death squads. One cannot see him either as uncritically accepting the Cold War dogmas which dominated even the writings of liberals

in the 1950's and early 60's.

It is coincidental that the books Orwell is most famous for (the only ones most people know), *Animal Farm* and *1984*, were written just as the Cold War was starting up. *Animal Farm*, which had been turned down by every major publisher, except Secker and Warburg, because the Soviet Union was an ally against the Nazi's became an anti-Communist best-seller. The same happened to *1984*. The unfashionable Orwell was suddenly fashionable—for the wrong reasons.

Are *Animal Farm* and *1984* exclusively anti-Communist as the right-wing understands the term: indirectly pro-capitalist ?

In *Animal Farm* it is clear from the first that Orwell is on the side of the animals. He sees them as exploited and their master, Mr. Jones, as not only harsh but incapable.⁴⁸ He sees their revolt as justified. Orwell says this in his preface to the Ukrainian edition :

I saw a little boy, perhaps ten years old, driving a huge cart-horse along a narrow path, whipping it whenever it tried to turn. It struck me that if only such animals became aware of their strength we should have no power over them, and that men exploit animals in much the same way as the rich exploit the proletariat.

I proceeded to analyse Marx's theory from the animals' point of view. To them it was clear that the concept of a class struggle between humans was pure illusion, since whenever it was necessary to exploit animals, all humans united against them: the true struggle is between animals and humans. From this point, it was not difficult to elaborate the story.⁴⁹

Old Major (Marx/Lenin) comes off as a sympathetic character ; Napoleon (Stalin) is villainous because he and the other pigs emulate the humans (the capitalists) more and more until they end up walking on two legs, in violation of *Animal Farm's* regulations.⁵⁰ In the end the pigs change the name of *Animal Farm* back to *Manor Farm* and makes peace with the humans. "The creatures outside looked from pig to man, and from man to pig, and from pig to man again ; but already it was impossible to say which was which."⁵¹

Were the novel written from a conservative view point, the animals would have had to look ridiculous from the first and all their efforts seem outright failures. The humans would have had to look kind and misunderstood. The quarrel at the end, when Napoleon and Mr Pilkington play an ace of spades (a dig at the Tehran Conference) would have been out of place: So would Moses, Mr Jone's tame raven, "spy and tale-bearer," who preaches " of a mysterious country called Sugercandy Mountain, to which all animals went when they died,"⁵² as would Boxer, faithful to the revolution until the end.

Animal Farm is a cautionary tale about what happens when elites are allowed to take over a revolutionary government. In this regard, it is worth noting Orwell's attitude toward the Soviet Union, which, whatever it is, is not in line with Cold War ideology. In above-quoted preface, he wrote:

I have never visited Russia and my knowledge of it consists only of what can be learned by reading books and newspapers. Even if I had the power, I would not wish to interfere in Soviet domestic affairs: I would not condemn Stalin and his associates merely for their barbaric and undemocratic methods. It is quite possible that, even with the best of intentions, they could not have acted otherwise under the conditions prevailing there.

But on the otherhand it was of the utmost importance to me that people in western Europe should see the Soviet regime for what it really was. Since 1930 I had seen little evidence that the U.S.S.R. was progressing towards anything that one could truly call Socialism. On the contrary, I was struck by clear signs of its transformation into a hierarchical society, in which the rulers have no more reason to give up power than any other ruling class.⁵³

1984 is also a cautionary tale, but it is an attack on totalitarianism in general, not as Cold War ideologues maintain, simply another anti-Soviet novel. While the mental atmosphere of *1984* resembles the Stalinist 1930's and 40's and Big Brother, pictured with heavy mustaches and who asks rhetorical questions and then answers them, resembles Stalin more than anyone else, the physical atmosphere is that of London during the blitz. Rocket bombs periodically send people rushing for the tube and reduce a house or two to rubble; there are constant shortages and what goods there are inferior: cigarettes disintegrate, the chocolate and coffee are ersatz and bitter. Even the censorship and distorted war reports are as much a part of war-torn England as totalitarianism. The snobbery of Oceania's Inner Party toward the proles is much like English snobbery. Also the Inner Party's proclivity toward war hysteria and the proles' immunity to it is an English trait (as seen by Orwell at any rate.)⁵⁴ The Party's puritanism could easily satirize English or Catholic prudery as well as Soviet. Also, Britain (Air Strip One in the novel) is dominated by the United States, which swallowing the British Empire formed the super-state Oceania, not the Soviet Union (Eurasia, whose ideology is Neo-Bolshevism.)⁵⁵ The corruption of language, epitomized by Newspeak, doublethink, blackwhite and crimestop, do not refer only to Soviet distortions of language, as Conor Cruise O'Brien maintains⁵⁵ but to everyone. This attitude is expressed by Orwell in "Notes on Nationalism," "Politics and the English Language," etc. Oceania's prime enemy,

Goldstein, notes that those the three competing superstates are taught to hate each other's ideologies, they are in fact very much the same.⁵⁶

Orwell was aware that he was being misinterpreted by the right-wing, mainly in America. In a letter to Francis A. Henson, of the United Automobile Workers, parts of which were later published in *Life* and the *New York Review of Books* (July 25 and 31, 1949) he said: "My novel [*1984*] is NOT intended as an attack on Socialism or the British Labour Party (of which I am a supporter) but as a show-up of the perversions to which a centralized economy is liable and which have already been partly realized in Communism and Facism."⁵⁷ In a press release dictated to his publisher, Fredrick Warburg he said:

George Orwell assumes that if such societies as he describes in *Nineteen Eight-Four* come into being there will be several superstates. . . . These superstates will naturally be in opposition to each other or (a novel point) will pretend to be much more in opposition than in fact they are. Two of the principal super states will naturally be the Anglo-American world and Eurasia. If these two great blocks line up as mortal enemies it is obvious that the Anglo-Americans will not take the name of their opponents and will not dramatize themselves on the scene of history as Communists. Thus they will have to find a new name for themselves. The name suggested in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is of course Ingsoc, but in practise a wide range of choices is open. In the USA the phrase 'Americanism' or 'hundred per cent Americanism' is suitable and the qualifying adjective is as totalitarian as anyone could wish.⁵⁸

Ingsoc means English Socialism. Though Orwell intended to make this part of the corruption of language by the Party ("The Party rejects and vilifies every principle for which the Socialist movement originally stood, and it chooses to do this in the name of Socialism")⁵⁹ it is easy to misconstrue his intent. Had he called Ingsoc something else, much of the misinterpretation of *1984* could probably been avoided. (Anyway, Insoc is an anomaly, as Oceania is not dominated by England but by North America.) "Ingsoc" was undoubtedly meant to rock the mental laziness of the Left—this typical of Orwell—but while it might have done so, it encouraged the mental laziness of socialism's opponents. Probably Orwell was not aware of this. Honest people often tend to expect (if but unconsciously) that others will somehow be as honest as themselves.

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To say that George Orwell was deeply tied to his age is to say he was tied to the Left as it was. Were there no significant Left in the 1930's and 40's Orwell would not have been as we know him. And this must be said in favor of the English Left, for all its faults:

at least it had room for a George Orwell. Orwell published almost exclusively in small leftist publications.

We must ultimately take the man at his word: "I belong to the left and must work inside it. . ." His immersion in the Left might explain why Orwell seems to have had little forethought that his criticisms of leftists might be misused by the Right. Be that as it may; no matter how angry he got, Orwell was never guilty, as he said of Swift, of being "one of those people who are driven into a sort of perverse Toryism by the follies of the progressive party of the moment."⁶⁰

Notes :

1. 1984, Harcourt Brace Jovanich, Inc. New York. p. 175.
2. "That year is almost here," *Time* magazine, November 28, 1983. pps. 26-35
3. Norman Podhoritz, "If Orwell were alive today," *Harper's*, January, 1983. p. 37.
4. *ibid.* p. 31
5. Conor Cruise O'Brien, "Orwell's Legacy, *Asahi Evening News*, January 3, 1984.
6. *World Press Review*, March, 1984, p. 53.
7. Podhoritz, *op. cit.* p. 31.
8. "Why I Write," *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell*, edited by Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus. Four volumes. Secker and Warburg. London. 1968. (Paperback edition, Penguin Book. London. 1970. Vol. I. p. 28.)
9. Simon Leys, "Orwell fut-il un prophete: L'horreur de la politique," *Le Monde*, December 30, 1983.
10. "Author's Preface to the Ukrainian Edition of *Animal Farm*." CE. III. p. 457.
11. "Writers and the Leviathan." CE. IV. p. 464.
12. See, for example, pages 115-117, *The Lion and the Unicorn: Socialism and the English Genius*. CE. II.
13. "Letter to Cyril Connolly." CE. I.
14. CE. II. p. 108.
15. Podhoritz, *op. cit.* p. 30.
16. Review of *Great Morning* by Osbert Sitwell. CE. IV. pps.501-502.
17. Podhoritz *op. cit.* p. 34.
18. *Coming Up for Air*.
19. "Letter to the editor of the *New English Weekly*." CE. I. p. 367.
20. *op. cit.* p. 368.
21. "Reflections on Gandhi." CE. IV. pps. 523-524.
22. *op. cit.* p. 528.
23. Podhoritz. *op. cit.* p. 35.
24. *ibid.*
25. "Notes on Nationalism." CE. III. pps. 424-425.
26. "Pacifism and War." CE. II. p. 261.
27. "Why I Joined the Independent Labour Party." CE. I. p. 374.
28. "My Country Right or Left." CE. I. p. 591.
29. *op. cit.* CE. II. p.
30. *ibid.* p.
31. R. Klitzke (Ph.D. thesis, London, 1977) writes that certain omissions from the *Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters*, particularly articles on the Home Guard and those in *Betrayal of the Left* and *Victory and Vested Interests* distort Orwell's revolutionary period and his commitment to English socialism. (See Bernard Crick, *George Orwell, A Life*, Secker and Warburg Ltd. London, 1980, p. 621.)
32. "London Letter to *Partisan Review* CE. III. p. 336.
33. For a discussion of artistic integrity and politics, see "The Writer and Leviathan," CE. IV. pps.463-470.
34. "Toward European Unity." CE. IV. p. 423.
35. See note 56 below.
36. *op. cit.* p. 60.
37. *ibid.* p. 216.
38. Podhoritz. *op. cit.* p. 34.
39. See, for example, "Notes on Nationalism." *op. cit.* pps. 425-426.
40. *ibid.* *op. cit.* p. 411.
41. *ibid.* pps. 423-428.
42. "As I Please." CE. III. pps. 205-206.
43. Podhoritz *op. cit.* pps. 35-36.
44. "Burnham's View of the Contemporary World Struggle." CE. IV. p. 370.
45. *op. cit.* pps. 426-427.
46. Letter to the Dutchess of Atholl. CE. IV. p. 49.
47. "As I Please." CE. III. p. 369.
48. *Animal Farm*. Secker and Warburg Ltd. 1945, 1971. p. 16.
49. *op. cit.* pps. 458-459.
50. *Animal Farm*. p. 99.
51. *ibid.* p. 104.
52. *ibid.* p. 15.
53. *op. cit.* p. 457.
54. Compare Orwell's remarks that anti-militarism is rooted deep in the working and lower middle classes in *The Lion and the Unicorn*, *op. cit.* pps. 79-80, to the war enthusiasm of Outer Party members and the apparent disinterest or dislike of war by the proles in 1984.
55. 1984. p. 162.
56. *ibid.*
57. Letter to Francis A. Henson. CE. IV. p. 564.
58. Crick. *op. cit.* p. 566.
59. 1984. p. 178.
60. "Politic vs Literature." CE. IV. p. 243.

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