

## Political Ideologies in George Orwell's 1984

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**ABSTRACT:** *George Orwell was an English author, essayist, journalist and critic. His writings are characterized by simple prose, biting social critique, resistance to tyranny and unambiguous support for democratic socialism. Orwell shows a world where authoritarian elites have built regimes that are the only ones to inflict pain on the people. George Orwell's 1984 is regarded as a great negative utopia, depicting the horror of oligarchic collectivism taken to its logical conclusion. The price of illusive peace in a society based on authoritarian savagery is everlasting battle. The work is a brilliant satire that tries to analyze man's alienation in all its forms, emphasizing Marx's and Stalin's social arrangement. This research paper analyses many political ideologies offered in this magnificent work.*

**Key Words:** *Political ideology, social criticism, Democracy, totalitarian*

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*In 1984*, written by George Orwell in 1948, is a dystopian novel, displaying a future under the iron-rule of totalitarianism. George Orwell throws caution to the world, for the rising tides of dictatorship and the decline in democracy by painting the picture of an imagined future where human rights, freedom and democracy are long gone.

In addition to those external elements that have inspired Orwell, one may look at Orwell's own works that clearly indicate in the direction of his masterwork from the beginning. Orwell describes his origins, his education, and his early impact on his creative skills in an article entitled *Why I Write* in 1947. He examines the motives that lead to all his writing: pure selfishness; aesthetic passion; a historical drive; a political aim. In particular, we should observe the last for one cause. He refers to his political beliefs which led to 1984: "The Spanish war and other events in 1936-7 turned the scale and thereafter. I knew where I stood. 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 understood it. It seems to me nonsense, in a period like our own, to think that one can avoid writing of such subjects. Everyone writes of them in one guise or other. It is simply a question of which side one takes and what approach one follows. And the more one conscious of one's political bias, the more chance one has of acting politically without sacrificing one's aesthetic and intellectual integrity." (Howe, 1982, 247).

In yet another 1946 essay, *The Prevention of Literature*, Orwell expresses his political ideas in unmistakable terms, demonstrating his unwavering commitment to socialism. Bureaucracy may repress truth in literature; dictatorship can completely suppress it, and any other forms of expression. Ideas refuse to reach a person who fears the government. Orwell believed that the decline of the English language had political and economic causes. He believes that the process is reversible if only we change our bad habits a little bit, he said. But he also suggested avoiding pretentious dictions, dying metaphors, meaningless words, etc.

The fictional future of 1984 geographically consists of three totalitarian super-states, Oceania, Eurasia and Eastasia. The plot of Orwell's narrative is set in 'Airstrip one', formerly known as Great Britain, which is now a province in Oceania. The province is ruled by the party led by a mysterious, dictatorial and cult of the leader, the 'The Big Brother'. Under the party's 'Ingsoc' political ideology (English Socialism), no fragment of democracy is left unexploited. Through weapons of political brainwash, constant and complete surveillance, mass manipulation and fear, the Big Brother's regime left no trace of any rebellion against the party. Anyone disagreeing with the Big Brother and his ways, became an 'unperson', whose history and any sign of existence, with him, is made to disappear.

Through the character of Winston Smith, Orwell shows the diminishing flame of democratic revolution. The protagonist is a member of the 'Ministry of Truth' within the party's government and is in charge of rewriting historical records to align with the party's agendas and beliefs. The secret hatred for Big Brother and his rule is buried within Winston Smith under the grave fear and danger of being a 'thought criminal' to the Thought Police. His hidden affair with Julia (a woman working at the Ministry with him), secretly writing his hatred for the Big Brother in a diary and his developing alliance of disagreement with the party with

O'Brien (an inner party official) begins the spiral of his position within the party and the rule. As O'Brien reveals himself as a Thought Police Agent, Winston is caught by the party for his heinous crime of disagreement.

Over the span on several months, Smith is tortured to be 'cured' to align with the party through the systemic breakdown of his democratic beliefs. He realizes the self-serving motive of the party and the utter disregard for individual lives. At the very end, he is taken to room 101, where he is met with his worst fear. That situation leads him to betray the last part of his beliefs and emotions: betraying Julia. As the novel comes to an end, Winston is released back to his life as a new man, one who has no sense of identity or individuality. The readers are left with dread as the last words in the book read, "He loved Big Brother", and democracy is symbolically dead.

Written in 1948, his work is a reaction to the then-developing rule of Hitler in Germany and Stalin in Russia. Orwell, before the Second World War, was convinced of Britain's defeat and the end of democracy due to the rapidly propagating totalitarianism. According to him, the question was not of defeat of the pre-existing democracy but the cause of it, as he considered the socialist revolution and the fascist propaganda.

The party in *1984* is heavily based on the Stalin government in USSR and the Big Brother-Stalin. The ideological and strategic similarities between Orwell's work and the dictatorship in the USSR are impossible to ignore. Mass manipulation, heavy surveillance, sacrifice of individual at the altar of collectivism, manipulated mass hatred for opposition, concentration camps and altering of history to suit the fascist ideology are all the parallels between Big Brother's rule and that of Stalin in USSR.

There is vast similarity between the treatment of Winston Smith, the revolutionist in the book and the treatment of the revolutionists of the Bolshevik revolution and the French revolution. In both, the revolutionist's ideology is erased from social discussion and a systemic breakdown of individuality is done.

The portrayal of betrayal within a revolution is based on the change of alliance after the Cold War and the rhetoric of it. The ministry of truth in the novel is heavily based on The Ministry of Information, that functioned under UK during the first and second World Wars, while the room 101 is based on the conference room at BBC's broadcasting.

Orwell's architectural description of 'minitruer' in the novel is based on the Senate House at the University of London. These parallel display Orwell's lack of belief in UK's post-war democracy and administration. English socialism, referred to as 'Ingsoc' in the novel, is the reflection of Orwell's critical opinion of pseudo-socialism during the post- Cold War era. Violation of socialism in the name of it stands as the principal characteristic of Big Brother's political ideology.

Orwell's work was viewed by historical critics with skepticism as he failed to align completely with the socialists as well as the fascists. He had passion for socialism but also aligned with the unpopular reality of its susceptibility to dictatorship. His fear and dread regarding the rise of totalitarianism from among socialism is what made his work during the time unique and path-breaking.

Orwell's *1984* is fictional, but indirect political documentary featuring the historic conflict between democracy and dictatorship. They are crystal clear reflections of Orwell's political and social beliefs. His dynamic with democratic socialism is unique and interesting. Orwell considered a socialist world ideal but fearfully, impossible. He believed that socialism is the birthplace of dictatorship and that to strive for ultimate power is irresistible to man. His books offer a frightening vision of totalitarian rule, that he feared as well. The depressing and shocking ends of his books are impactful and no doubt, were meant to serve as reminder to the world that the end of democracy marks the end of a lot mankind cannot afford to lose. His distaste for dictatorship is a hopeless contradiction to the fact that he strongly believes it to be the ultimate end. Orwell's desperate fear of it is reflected strongly in his works.

George Orwell's works are not only a literary treat to a reader like me, but also a beautiful reminder of the quintessential nature of democracy. It makes me think of every little freedom and right I exercise and take for granted. Concepts like 'Thought Police', 'Unperson' and 'Big Brother' made me understand the deep roots of Democracy in human psyche and lifestyle. Quotes like and 'Big Brother is watching you' are unforgettable ironies on democracy in the history of political literature. Orwell truly defined democracy. The conclusion that can be drawn from all that has been said so far is that Orwell was a real person with serious aims and a care for mankind, in contrast to the governments that surrounded him at the time. As far as that is concerned, *1984* is a success.

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