



TECHNOLOGY IN OCEANIA – MECHANISATION OF SOCIAL LIFE IN THE WORLD OF ORWELLS'S *NINETEEN EIGHTY FOUR*

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Abstract

The paper deals with the problem of the role of technology in totalitarian society – from a literary point of view – that of Orwell's. His Nineteen Eighty-Four novel describes the world determined by different means of technology which mechanize all aspects of social life – especially those connected with communication and culture.

Keywords: Orwell, technology, communication, mechanization of social life

*With the feeling that he was speaking to O'Brien, and also that he was setting forth an important axiom, he wrote: Freedom is the freedom to say that two plus two make four. If that is granted, all else follows.
(George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Penguin Books, London 2003 (NEF), p. 93)*

Introduction

Seeing literature through a glass of technology described in it appears usually in publications concerning SF stories. Construction of a world placed fictionally in more or less distant 'future' or 'on other planets occupied by civilizations more perfect' (than ours) needed at first introducing 1) different 'technological' solutions according to discoveries which will appear after tens or even hundreds of years, or 2) machines that were results of working of incomparably higher (than human) intellects. Despite George Orwell's famous and widely commented book, one of the most important ones in XX-th century, is not included in the set of SF stories (however *Nineteen Eighty-Four*² is an anti-utopia or dystopia which conventions are sometimes the subject matter of theories of SF literature³), technology plays a very relevant role

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² At the beginning Orwell planned to name his book *The Last Man in Europe* (see Craig L. Carr, *Orwell, Politics and Power*, Continuum, New York 2010, p. 3). The phrase the last man appears in O'Brien's speech in one of the most important scenes in the novel, namely interrogation or more strictly exploring of ideological consciousness of Winston Smith who is tortured.

³ Peter Davison in his note points that Orwell in his youth was fascinated with stories of Herbert George Wells's. He knew Yevgeny Zamyatin's *We* and claimed that he intended to write that kind of book (see Davison, *A Note on the Text*, in: NEF, p. xxvi-xxx). In 1932 there was published Aldous Huxley's *A Brave New World*. In Carr's opinion

in the world of the novel. Under the concept of technology I will mean all technical instruments, consumer goods, procedures and mechanisms used in ordinary, professional and social life of citizens of Oceania.

Some Features of Technology in *Nineteen Eighty Four*

Special features of technology in *NEF* are connected with that 1) what is present in the world of the novel, and 2) what instruments, procedures etc. lack in the world. I shall describe technological (after a nuclear war⁴) background of Oceania first, then I shall point what is absent in the realm constructed by Orwell. I also shall make some remarks about two problems: 1) in what range Orwell realizes what the real function of technology in totalitarianism is and 2) whether the thread of totalitarianism is accurately diagnosed by him⁵, that means, if the thread is connected strictly with the omnipotent, dehumanized technology. Since the author of *NEF* seems to claim that terror is not only the means but the aim of totalitarianism, he does not pay his attention to that situation wherein totalitarianism functions with a small or even minimal 'dose of terror', moreover, when the citizens themselves accept or tolerate the state of being enslaved, treating it as if it were something natural and somehow safe.

In order to describe Oceania's technology I will use different sources. We can treat the political novel of Orwell's as palimpsestic in some way, since it contains different texts or subtexts which correspond each other however on different narrative, plot and semantic levels⁶. We can find in *NEF*: 1) descriptions from the all-knowing narrator, 2) remarks included in some 'quoted' articles, speeches, handbooks⁷, 3) the appendix (placed after the story) which explains syntactic, semantic and pragmatic problems of *newspeak*, 4) some fragments of the book of

the author of *NEF* was also inspired by James Burnham's books (*The Managerial Revolution*, 1941, and *The Machiavellians*, 1943), see Carr, Orwell..., p. 15. Orwell pointed to the world order being shaped after the Teheran Conference (1943), namely establishing 'zones of influence' (see Thomas Pynchon, Introduction, in: *NEF*..., p. s. xii).

⁴ According to *NEF* the nuclear war was to be in the 50's in XX-th century (p. 218, 224). It is not quite clear in what way (after such a short time) it would be possible to rebuild and establish three super-states (or superpowers) after the war over a couple of continents: At that time some hundreds of bombs were dropped on industrial centers, chiefly in European Russia, Western Europe and North America (p. 224), since earlier 'Goldstein' says that: the ravages of the atomic war of the nineteen-fifties have never been fully repaired (p. 218). According to what we can read in other place (p. 86) already in 60's there were to be the great purges. Probably Orwell alone did not realize how long-lasting effects of atomic bombing are.

⁵ See Philip Bounds, *Orwell and Marxism. The Political and Cultural Thinking of George Orwell*, I. B. Taurus, London 2009.

⁶ It is not clear which of the texts can be treated as 'the highest', namely, logically arranging the other ones in *NEF*. Is it the chapter of 'Goldstein's book' unraveling details of the totalitarian system? Or, as Pynchon writes in his introduction to the novel, is it the appendix which suggests (by its past tense and 'oldspeak', that is standard English) that the totalitarian experiment failed. Pynchon compares the appendix to hypertext pointing that yet on page 6 of *NEF* a reader can find the footnote which sends him to the appendix. Pynchon reminds also an anecdotal episode with the American Book-of-the-Month Club which demanded to cut the final chapter of *NEF* along with the fragments of 'Goldstein's' text. Orwell disagreed with it. Pynchon says that the appendix could appear in order to weaken the dark final of the novel (see Pynchon, Introduction, p. xxiii-xxiv). However there could be another scenario: the novel could be a pretext to politologico-philosophico-social analyses how Carr seems to suggest (Orwell, p. 7-8) provocatively saying that Orwell's novel is a happy story book since the main character thanks to O'Brien is cured and can feel as the Oceania's citizen for he loves Big Brother (Orwell..., p. 4).

⁷ There is a 'quotation' from a history school handbook on pages 83-84, wherein we can find a caricatural description of capitalism.

Emmanuel Goldstein's, who is a diehard renegade and public enemy in one (from the Party's point of view) as well; Winston Smith gets Goldstein's 'forbidden' book from O'Brien not long ago after his and Julia's visit in the house of the member of the Inner Party.

I pay attention to the differentiation of the sources informing us about Oceania's technology because as we can get to know from Smith's notes in his diary or from that what is said or thought by him (or what Julia or 'Goldstein' say) we cannot be sure what of some technological solutions or means exists for real in Oceania and what is just an element of propaganda used to influence citizens⁸. We can put the Goldstein's forbidden book in the propaganda as well since it is just a product of regime and not of any opposition to the Party (co-author of the renegade's book is O'Brien). By the way the picture of totalitarianism which in its highly sophistication is able to generate the 'opposition' (controlled by the secret police) is one of the greatest achievements of Orwell's novel and was confirmed by historical exemplifications especially in Eastern bloc countries.

The Purposes of Use of Technology in Oceania

There are two reasons or purposes technology in Oceania is used for: military and socio-oppressive ones. In other words, technology does not function to 'make easier' citizens' lives⁹, make more effective their work, education, communication etc., it does not connect with leisure or entertaining activities¹⁰, it even is not use in agriculture. It is an instrument of political power and as that instrument it is improved and its functionality is strengthen. Moreover technology is used to military and genocidal purposes (publicly performed hanging of 'criminals') however, as we know it (from Smith's notes or 'Goldstein's book') the war in the world of *NEF* is not for real,

⁸ We can read in 'Goldstein's book': But when war becomes literally continuous, it also ceases to be dangerous. When war is continuous there is no such thing as military necessity. Technical progress can cease and the most palpable facts can be denied or disregarded. As we have seen, researches that could be called scientific are still carried out for the purposes of war, but they are essentially a kind of daydreaming, and their failure to show results is not important (*NEF*, p. 227-228).

⁹ In any time that he could accurately remember, there had never been quite enough to eat, one had never had socks or underclothes that were not full of holes, furniture had always been battered and rickety, rooms underheated, tube trains crowded, houses falling to pieces, bread dark-colored, tea a rarity, coffee filthy-tasting, cigarettes insufficient – nothing cheap and plentiful except synthetic gin (*NEF*, p. 68-69).

¹⁰ In *NEF* (p. 50) it is said that the job of the Ministry's of Truth is (besides the past-regulating) to supply the citizens of Oceania with newspapers, films, textbooks, telescreen programmes, plays, novels – with every conceivable kind of information, instruction or entertainment, from a statue to a slogan, from a lyric poem to a biological treatise, and from child's spelling book to a Newspeak dictionary – but Orwell's characters do not entertain at all. It is hard to say that watching military films or listening to military music, or sitting at dirty bar (as sometime Smith does) is a kind of entertainment. It seems that in *NEF* all the entertainment in the sense of the 'lower culture', pop culture, mass culture etc. is something what is used only by the proles and produced by the Ministry of Truth which (p. 50): had not only to supply the multifarious needs of the Party, but also to repeat the whole operation at a lower level for the benefit of the proletariat. There was a whole chain of separate departments dealing with proletarian literature, music, drama and entertainment generally. Here were produced rubbishy newspapers containing almost nothing except sport, crime and astrology, sensational five-cent newspapers, films oozing with sex, and sentimental songs which were composed entirely by mechanical means on a special kind of kaleidoscope known as a versificator. There was even a whole sub-section – Pornosec, it was called in Newspeak – engaged in producing the lowest kind of pornography, which was sent out in sealed packets and which no Party member, other than those who worked on it, was permitted to look at.

The quotation above provokes to asking what kind of totalitarianism Orwell wants to diagnose, since in communism you can hardly find any pornography or tabloids produced and sold officially.

it is an illusion that is to hold citizens in the state of permanent fear, and on the other side, criminal activity of the Party focused on ordinary citizens (bombing of some areas, destroying consumer goods, wasting results of human work, wasting money).

As we can read in 'Goldstein's book':

In Oceania at the present day, Science, in the old sense, has almost ceased to exist. In Newspeak there is no word for 'Science'. The empirical method of thought, on which all the scientific achievements of the past were founded, is opposed to the most fundamental principles of Ingsoc. And even technological progress only happens when its products can in some way be used for the diminution of human liberty. In all the useful arts the world is either standing still or going backwards. The fields are cultivated with horse-ploughs while books are written by machinery. But in matters of vital importance – meaning, in effect, war and police espionage – the empirical approach is still encouraged, or at least tolerated. The two aims of the Party are to conquer the whole surface of the earth and to extinguish once and for all the possibility of independent thought. There are therefore two great problems which the Party is concerned to solve. One is how to discover, against his will, what another human being is thinking, and the other is how to kill several hundred million people in a few seconds without giving warning beforehand. In so far scientific research still continues, this is its subject matter. The scientist of today is either a mixture of psychologist and inquisitor, studying with extraordinary 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 as are relevant to the taking of life (NEF, p. 222-223).

In addition to those remarks (shared by Smith as well) are described by Orwell circumstances of (militarized) social and ordinary life of Oceanians. One of the fundamental technological solutions is 'telescreen', which is a multi-function and multi-media apparatus. It is a mixture of propaganda (indoctrinating) television and radio station, cinema, system which monitors behaviors of citizens, alarm clock, but also a sort of telephone and teletext¹¹. Telescreens are placed inside citizens' houses and outside the buildings. However it would seem that the technology is a modern form of mechanization of social life (in Oceania), there are some doubts among narrative remarks whether the functionality of telescreens is full – it is not certain if the monitoring of citizens is continuous for real, or the rulers of Oceania want citizens to feel as if they were being watched all the time (and to acquire proper behavioral habits with respect to it)¹².

Let alone the scene wherein Smith participates in morning obligatory sport exercises and is pushed around by the woman-instructor who sees him by the telescreen, there is no view from the 'outer perspective', namely we do not know how the observation of citizens is being made,

¹¹ One could assume that Whithers and his associates were now in disgrace, but there had been no report of the matter in the press or on the telescreen (NEF, p. 52).

¹² There was of course no way of knowing whether you were being watched at any given moment. How often, or what system, the Thought Police plugged in on any individual wire was guesswork. It was even conceivable that they watched everybody all the time. But at any rate they could plug in your wire whenever they wanted to. You had to live – did live, from habit that became instinct – in the assumption that every sound you made was overheard, and, except in darkness, every movement scrutinised (NEF, p. 5).

recorded and analyzed¹³. Besides, there is no telescreen at 'Mr. Charrington's' house and shop wherein Winston buys some 'forbidden old things'¹⁴ (perhaps because Charrington is an officer of the Thought Police). The technology is not widely introduced in the proles districts¹⁵ and outside the city (for example in the woods)¹⁶. And as we know from the scene of Winston and Julia coming to O'Brien – the latter switches off his telescreen showing to their astonishment the luxury possibilities of the members of the Inner Party inaccessible to those from the Outer Party. Telescreen is used also to organize public meetings connected with Hate when citizens' emotions are focused on 'public enemies' and a 'hostile super-state'.

Winston uses the telescreen during his working hours when (by the means of something like a phone) he calls for some papers¹⁷. And thanks to Smith we can see the 'outer perspective' according to the Ministry of Truth functioning whose clerk he is. The main character of Orwell's novel deals professionally with 'facts regulating', 'past changing' or 'bringing the past up to date' with the use of permanent alteration different newspapers, magazines, documents, publications, books, cartoons, photographs etc.¹⁸. In the moment we encounter a strange technological contrast in the world of *NEF*, because from one side there function the modern media as telescreens, but from the other side there plays some role that old paper medium:

As soon as all the corrections which happened to be necessary in any particular number of the Times had been assembled and collated, and the corrected copy placed on the files in its

¹³ When the novel is going to end and Smith in his cell waits for the last meeting with O'Brien in the room 101, we can read: He knew now that for seven years the Thought Police had watched him like a beetle under a magnifying glass. There was no physical act, no word spoken aloud, that they had not noticed, no train of thought that they had not been able to infer. Even the speck of whitish dust on the cover of his diary they had carefully replaced. They had played sound-tracks to him, shown him photographs. Some of them were photographs of Julia and himself (*NEF*, p. 317-318). Earlier, when Winston is at his secret meeting with Julia out of town, in woods, there is a following scene with a singing thrush (p. 142-143): Winston watched it with a sort of vague reverence. For whom, for what, was that bird singing? No mate, no rival was watching it. What made it sit at the edge of the lonely wood and pour its music into nothingness? He wondered whether after there was a microphone hidden somewhere near. He and Julia had only spoken in low whispers, and it would not pick up what they had said, but it would pick up the thrush. Perhaps at the other end of the instrument some small, beetle-like man was listening intently – listening to that.

¹⁴ 'There's no telescreen!' he could not help murmuring. 'Ah,' said the old man, 'I never had one of those things. Too expensive. And I never seemed to feel the need of it, somehow (...)' (*NEF*, p. 111).

¹⁵ The great majority of proles did not even have telescreens in their homes. Even the civil police interfered with them very little (*NEF*, p. 83). See also p. 82: To keep them in control was not difficult. A few agents of the Thought Police moved always among them, spreading false rumors and marking down and eliminating the few individuals who were judged capable of becoming dangerous; but no attempt was made to indoctrinate them with the ideology of the Party. It was not desirable that the proles should have strong political feelings.

¹⁶ In general you could not assume that you were much safer in the country, than in London. There were no telescreens, of course, but there was always the danger of concealed microphones by which your voice might be picked up and recognized; besides, it was not easy to make a journey without attracting attention (*NEF*, p. 135).

¹⁷ Winston dialed 'back numbers' on the telescreen and called for the appropriate issues of the Times, which slid out of the pneumatic tube after only a few minutes' delay (*NEF*, p. 45).

¹⁸ And he likes his work: Winston's greatest pleasure was in his work. Most of it was a tedious routine, but included in it there were also jobs so difficult and intricate that you could lose yourself in them as in the depths of a mathematical problem – delicate pieces of forgery in which you had nothing to guide you except your knowledge of the principles of Ingso and your estimate of what the Party wanted you to say. Winston was good at this kind of thing. On occasion he had even been entrusted with the rectification of the Times leading articles, which were written entirely in Newspeak (*NEF*, p. 51).

Similarly Julia (p. 149): She enjoyed her work, which consisted chiefly in running and servicing a powerful but tricky electric motor.

stead. This process of continuous alteration was applied not only to newspapers, but to books, periodicals, pamphlets, posters, leaflets, films, sound-tracks, cartoons, photographs – to every kind of literature or documentation which might conceivably hold any political or ideological significance. Day by day and almost minute by minute the past was brought up to date. In this way every prediction made by the Party could be shown by documentary evidence to have been correct; nor was any item of news, or any expression of opinion, which conflicted with the needs of the moment, ever allowed to remain on record. All history was a palimpsest, scraped clean and re-inscribed exactly as was necessary. In no case would it have been possible, once the deed was done, to prove any falsification had taken place. The largest section of the Records Department, far larger than the one in which Winston worked, consisted simply of persons whose duty it was to track down and collect all copies of books, newspapers and other documents which had been superseded and were due for destruction. A number of the Times which might, because of changes in political alignment, or mistaken prophecies uttered by Big Brother, have been rewritten a dozen times still stood on the files bearing its original date, and so other copy existed to contradict it. Books, also, were recalled and re-written again and again, and were invariably re-issued without any admission that any alteration had been made. Even the written instructions which Winston received, and which he invariably got rid of as soon as he had dealt with them, never stated or implied that an act of forgery was to be committed; always the reference was to slips, errors, misprints or misquotations which it was necessary to put right in the interests of accuracy (NEF, p. 46-47).

One may think that the description above expresses what Orwell's in a couple of places in his book wants to show as examples of nonsensical wastefulness which is a constitutive element of totalitarianism¹⁹. And in some way the author of *Animal Farm* is right, if we took as examples of such wastefulness the tones of propaganda newspapers, brochures, books, socio-realistic publications etc. as well as different and completely sick soviet investments with the use of slave labor (prisoners, people from Gulag etc.). There is no doubt that totalitarianism really can waste human efforts, talents and goods on a gigantic, monstrous scale. But on the other side Orwell seems to forget or unsee that totalitarianism does not work that way with *printed* media and does not treat those means of communication destructively. Why not? By the fundamental reason of that paper is a very durable or solid medium. It is more durable than telescreen or any magnetic, electric, electronic etc. record. And even if there can happen occasional corrections of

¹⁹ The primary aim of modern warfare (...) is to use up products of the machine without raising the general standard of living. Ever since the end of the nineteenth century, the problem of what to do with the surplus of consumption goods has been latent to industrial society. At present, when few human beings even have to eat, this problem is obviously not urgent, and it might not have become so, even if no artificial process of destruction had been at work (...) (NEF, p. 218). The essential act of war is destruction, not necessarily of human lives, but of the products of human labor. War is a way of shattering to pieces, or pouring into the stratosphere, or sinking in the depths of the sea, materials which might otherwise be used to make the masses too comfortable, and hence, in the long run, too intelligent. Even when weapons of war are not actually destroyed, their manufacture is still a convenient way of expending labor power without producing anything that can be consumed. A Floating Process, for example, has locked up in it the labor that would build several hundred cargo ships. Ultimately it is scrapped as obsolete, never having brought any material benefit to anybody, and with further enormous labors another Floating Fortress is built. In principle the war effort is always so planned as to eat up any surplus that might exist after meeting the bare needs of the population. In practice the needs of the population are always underestimated, with the result that there is a chronic shortage of half the necessities of life (...) (p. 220).

what was written/printed²⁰, then they are quite seldom and they are not parts of routines of functioning of totalitarian institutions.

And „the paper” exactly (in Russian *bumaga*) is one of the fundamental means of oppression, (omnipotent) power (of the Party), subordinating or instrumentalization of citizens in totalitarianism. A citizen has to have and receive (from various institutions) appropriate papers just to be able to function (as the citizen) in society and to avoid painful sanctions. Lack of papers causes lots of problems for the citizen when there is coercion of education, of work, of register (in a place of living). You cannot freely travel abroad since there is coercion of acquiring (on paper) an agreement (from the controlled by the Party institutions) to such a travel, but first you have to receive an agreement to have a passport (for a while) and so on. Furthermore 'papers' decide about someone's fate (at work, in his/her private life etc.) as different instructions, orders, commands, regulations. Monetary system in totalitarianism it is 'papers' – not only bank-notes (without real value) are printed by the Party, but also coupons, ration-cards, special 'notes' (to buy foreign goods in special shops) etc.

Yet it is not the end. The most important thing (when we talk about paper medium in totalitarianism) is connected with that that printed media deliver obligatory literature on every level of education and culture (either 'the high', or the mass or popular one). Hence totalitarian system does not work in the way described by Orwell, that it *destroys* its own products. On the contrary, it destroys 'hostile products', but it creates 'proper' ones, that means, obligatory for citizens and various institutions. 'Classic' or 'cannon' works, novels, compositions etc. are printed in millions of copies, they are recited, reviewed, adapted (in theatre, television, radio and cinema). In short, totalitarianism develops its 'culture industry' around printed media and in that area there are plenty of artists, scientific circles of people, while it hinders any edition, it blocks any circulation of the texts or works which are 'improper', 'inappropriate' from the Party's point of view. And that is the reason of functioning of censorship machinery which is a sieve serving to letting through only 'proper' cultural or scientific products to the public (respectively that is the reason of developing underground, 'illegal', editing 'out of censorship', magazines or books).

Orwell does not see that social engineering in totalitarianism does not constraint itself to destruction and terror – and does not reduce to them as well. In contrast – terror (certainly total one at the beginning because targeted on all citizens who do not want to stand on the side of the evil system) is just an intermediate period or 'initial paralysing' with respect to social feelings. After terror there comes the period of 're-education' – the citizens can 'choose': more repressions or some 'awards' (respectively if they disagree or agree with the system). A promise of extinguishing of terror and at the same time receiving some 'piece of mind' and perhaps some benefits out of cooperation with the Party is so tempting that many people decide to cooperate with the evil system. And what the most important is, there are people who want to cooperate as volunteers, as enthusiasts of the regime, because they for example 'can't stand capitalism', 'hate bourgeoisie, religion etc.' or are fascinated with the vision of the end of history of the old world – and they prefer standing by the side of winners than losers²¹.

On that background Winston's adoration of the book allegedly written by the renegade Goldstein is really astonishing. He alone working on the continuous and detailed falsifying of

²⁰ For example in soviet encyclopedias or history handbooks.

²¹ See Czesław Miłosz, *The Captive Mind*, especially the problem of the pill of Murti-Bing and 'new faith' of intellectuals. The poverty of Smith in NEF is quite strange since we know that he is the Party member.

*documents, prints, books etc.*²², does not get the obvious idea that the book can simply be a product of the Ministry of Truth (he does not know all the departments of it), namely, a fake (and as we know from NEF – the book really is a result of work of the people serving the regime).

Paradoxes of media used in Oceania

Coming back to Oceania's technology. The work of Smith's in the Ministry of Truth seems to be puzzling since (besides occasional remarks²³) we do not see press or books in the world of NEF, and since telescreens function as delivering news media. Another paradox of technological base of Oceania is an oldschool pneumatic post used in Winston's ministry²⁴, whereas telescreens

²² But actually, he thought as he re-adjusted the Ministry of Plenty's figures, it was not even forgery. It was merely the substitution of one piece of nonsense for another. Most of the material that you were dealing with had no connection with anything in the real world, not even the kind of connection that is contained in a direct lie. Statistics were just as much a fantasy in their original version as in their rectified version. A great deal of the time you were expected to make them up out of your head. For example, the Ministry of Plenty's forecast had estimated the output of boots for the quarter at a hundred and forty-five million pairs. The actual output was given as sixty-two millions. Winston, however, in re-writing the forecast, marked the figure down to fifty-seven millions, so as to allow for the usual claim that the quota had been over-fulfilled. In any case, sixty-two was no nearer the truth than fifty-seven millions, or than a hundred and forty-five millions. Very likely no boots had been produced at all. Likelier still, nobody knew how many had been produced, much less cared. All one knew was that every quarter astronomical numbers of boots were produced on paper, while perhaps half of the population of Oceania went barefoot. And so it was with every class of recorded fact, great or small. Everything faded away into a shadow-world in which, finally, even the date of the year had become uncertain (NEF, p. 47-48).

In that situation the question whether Goldstein's book is not a part of the 'shadow-world' should be posed by Smith when he hears about it: There were also whispered stories of a terrible book, a compendium of all heresies, of which Goldstein was the author and which circulated clandestinely here and there. It was a book without a title. People referred to it, if at all, simply as the book. But one knew of such things only through vague rumors. Neither the Brotherhood nor the book was the subject that any ordinary Party member would mention it there was a way of avoiding it (NEF, p. 16).

Moreover, when Smith finds (in 1973) a piece of magazine which content contradicts the official messages in the Party media (it is a secret history of three delegates of the Party wiped out in the purges (p. 89-90)), he treats the paper as if it were an authentic, genuine document informing about facts: this was concrete evidence; it was a fragment of the abolished past, like a fossil bone which turns up in the wrong stratum and destroys a geological theory. It was enough to blow the Party to atoms, if in some way it could have been published to the world and its significance made known (p. 90). See also the scene wherein Smith when changing the speech of Big Brother makes up a fictitious story about one Party hero 'Comrade Ogilvy' (p. 53-55).

²³ As such (NEF, p. 29): And with good reason, for hardly a week passed in which the Times did not carry a paragraph describing how some eavesdropping little sneak – 'child hero' was the phrase generally used – had overheard some compromising remark and denounced his parents to the Thought Police. Besides, we know that Smith writes some articles to The Times in newspeak. The newspeak dictionary often returns in the novel, there are also some remarks about publications 'against goldsteinism heresies' and about translating old works into newspeak – however generally speaking characters in NEF (let alone 'Goldstein's book') do not use printed media.

²⁴ Surroundings of Winston's place of work is described in following way (NEF, p. 44): In the walls of the cubicle there were three orifices. To the right of the speakwrite, a small pneumatic tube for written messages; to the left, a larger one for newspapers; and in the side wall, within easy reach of Winston's arm, a large oblong site protected by a wire grating. This last was for the disposal of waste paper. Similar slits existed in thousands or tens of thousands throughout the building, not only in every room but at short intervals in every corridor. For some reason they were nicknamed memory holes. When one knew that any document was due to destruction, or even when one saw a scrap of waste paper lying about, it was automatic action to lift the flap of the nearest memory hole and drop it in, whereupon it would be whirled away on a current warm air to the enormous furnaces which were hidden somewhere in the recesses of the building.

could be used as a medium to publish/send texts and photographs. There are no computers as well, Smith uses in his work a machine called *speakwrite* however²⁵. The apparatus changes uttered sentences into printed ones.

In the Ministry of Truth clerks use machines to construct texts (for example novels²⁶) and song lyrics (*versificators*²⁷), however in the process of alteration of those texts some people can participate as well²⁸. Mechanization spreads over not only cultural and intellectual life but also sexual and reproductive activities of citizens of Oceania in consequence of policy of the Party to fight against the eroticism²⁹ and to control marriages. There exists the Junior Anti-Sex League which postulates complete celibacy and submitting women to *artsem*, that means artificial insemination³⁰.

What is absent in Oceania? To start with many consumer goods which are luxury objects (approachable to the members of the Inner Party³¹) as white bread, coffee, tea, new razor blades, shoe-laces, comfortable clothes and so on – or, what is worth to mention, stuff used by the proles only, as for example cosmetics³². Nevertheless when Hate Week is prepared and decorations are constructed to it we are not informed about lack of any materials³³. We hardly see too many means of communications (only one train³⁴) and telephones. There are no phone boxes (strange in London) and even home phones. Orwell does not tell us why those means are absent, whereas totalitarianism (as we know from history) does not eliminate means of communication (as telephones), but spread its control over them (overhearing) and regulate the accessibility of

²⁵ Polish translators of NEF (Juliusz Mieroszewski (1953) and Tomasz Mirkowicz (1988)) saw the apparatus as 'voice recorder' (dictaphone) or something like a telex, but in Orwell's world a *speakwrite* is simply rather a typewriter without typing. The typing is only replaced by speaking.

²⁶ [Julia] could describe the whole process of composing a novel, from the general directive issued by the Planning Committee down to the final touching-up by the Rewrite Squad. But she was not interested in the finished product. 'She didn't much care for reading', she said. Books were just a commodity that had to be produced, like jam or bootlaces (...). 'What are these [porn] books like?' said Winston curiously. 'Oh, ghastly rubbish. They're boring, really. They only have six plots, but they swap them round a bit. Of course I was only on the kaleidoscopes. I was never in the Rewrite Squad. I'm not literary, dear – not even enough for that' (NEF, p. 149-150).

²⁷ NEF, p. 50.

²⁸ And a few cubicles away a mild, ineffectual, dreamy creature named Ampleforth, with very hairy ears and a surprising talent for juggling with rhymes and meters, was engaged in producing garbled versions - definitive texts, they were called – of poems which had become ideologically offensive but which for one reason or another were to be retained in anthologies (NEF, p. 49).

²⁹ NEF, p. 75.

³⁰ NEF, p. 76.

³¹ We can read in 'Goldstein's book': By the standards of the early twentieth century, even a member of the Inner Party lives in austere, laborious kind of life. Nevertheless, the few luxuries that he does enjoy – his large well-appointed flat, the better texture of his clothes, the better quality of his food and drink and tobacco, his two or three servants, his private motor-car or helicopter – set him in a different world from a member of the Outer Party, and the members of the Outer Party have a similar advantage in comparison with the submerged masses whom we call 'the proles' (NEF, p. 220-221).

³² Only the proles ever used scent, we read when Winston recalls his memories of having sex with an old prostitute (NEF, p. 74), no woman of the Party ever used scent, or could be imagined as doing so. And that is strange, since perfume, cosmetics etc. were luxury goods (accessible especially for the Party members) in totalitarian countries.

³³ NEF, p. 170-171. Economy in Orwell's world is full of contradictions. Lots of people live in poverty while Ministry of Truth products plenty of things to deprave the proles and its work with 'facts alternation' is connected with tonnes of papers, books, records etc. that must be transported as quickly as it possible to libraries and other institutions.

³⁴ NEF, p. 135-136.

them³⁵. We do not know anything about medical care in Oceania, but Winston's physical condition implicates that health care institutions are not good, while there might exist special clinics owned by the Party, since O'Brien tells Winston and Julia about the possibility of plastic surgery³⁶.

We do not see cars (they are luxury goods) besides lorries carrying war prisoners in the streets. There appear helicopters (police patrols), military airplanes and tanks, there are official and unofficial (as in 'Goldstein's book') statements about 'Floating Fortresses' (are they something like aircraft carriers?). The architecture of Oceania is post-war and war at the same time (here and there, there are some bombings from time to time), however on the background of dirty, old buildings there are four enormous pyramidal structures of four ministries of the super-state³⁷. Smith lives in 'Victory Mansions' which is an old building (from 30's), wherein lifts do not work, heating is poor and the lights are cut off at 23.30³⁸.

The role of technology in the world of *NEF* is hardly to overestimate, but Orwell actually overestimates technological possibilities of totalitarianism. In that way he could be included to those technological determinists as Marshall McLuhan, Neil Postman and Jerry Mander who absolutize functions of technology in connection with their influence on human communities and mind. A distinct example of such determinism in *NEF* is mechanical alternation of the past which Smith deals with. I shall repeat again: totalitarianism does not work that way.

The essence of totalitarianism (for example that of communist countries') is not 'total extermination' (in the sense of the Cultural Revolution in China of 60's or the 'order' developed in the second half of 70's by the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia)³⁹, but construction of new (soviet) society and new (soviet) man, thus the terror is not the aim for aim's sake even if it is a necessary instrument to maintain the totalitarian status quo. That what passed does not have to be bringing up to date in totalitarianism, as it was seen by Orwell, namely, by destroying one proofs of the past and replacing them by new ones permanently⁴⁰. On the contrary, rulers of totalitarian countries tend to continuously bring up to date social consciousness and by the means of social engineering to 'tune in' the consciousness to the 'waves' of ideology. In other words, the rulers want to teach enslaved citizens the proper way of *seeing* things in the past (proper from the monopoly's point of view), proper *interpreting* the past etc. And the past after that process of re-interpretation, can be an element of further indoctrination and in that sense can be a fundament of the 'order' of totalitarianism.

Conclusions. Totalitarianism and Orwellian world

³⁵ The first ones who can use telephones are the party members usually.

³⁶ O'Brien says to them: '(...) and you yourself might have become a different persons. Our surgeons can alter people beyond recognition. Sometimes it is necessary. Sometimes we even amputate a limb' (*NEF*, p. 200).

³⁷ Ministry of Truth, Ministry of Peace, Ministry of Plenty and Ministry of Love (*NEF*, p. 6).

³⁸ *NEF*, p. 166.

³⁹ However some elements of such extermination are in *NEF* since there are lots of executions, concentration camps and there are no older people (besides some proles) (see p. 99-100).

⁴⁰ It was very unlikely that there existed anywhere in Oceania a copy of a book printed earlier than 1960 (*NEF*, p. 111).

Totalitarianism does not have to be a cultural autarky at all⁴¹. Admittedly there were (or still have been) a few extreme examples of constructing such closed societies in (former) Albania, Cambodia, Romania or North Korea, but even with respect to those 'experiments' we can hardly say that they succeeded. Totalitarianism does not function on the principle of implosion, it spreads over and its propaganda (or pills of Murti-Bing as S. I. Witkiewicz's predicted in his novel) is developed to captive minds of citizens of free countries as well. And totalitarianism is very flexible, it can alternately (by turns) use terror and thaw, and within the thaw it can freely use 'enemy goods' (either cultural, or counter-cultural⁴²) as means of further transformation of enslaved society and sovietization of human minds.

Orwell does not understand the relationship between technology and individual or human community in totalitarianism (the latter one is seen as growing from communism, Nazism and capitalism⁴³). Let alone remarks about the proles lack of knowledge or consciousness in *NEF* – the workers themselves in totalitarian countries dared to stop machines, strike, go out to the streets, struggle against militia and the 'People's Army'. And to pose political postulates.

A resistance to totalitarianism is possible only on the ground of defense of a system of values connected with our life, namely when we defend the goods which we deserve because we are humans and without which we lose our humanity. And this way we encounter the most astonishing moment in Orwell's Oceanian history: the meeting of Winston, Julia and O'Brien. Winston and Julia come to the house of the member of the Inner Party (thinking he is an oppositionist) with their declaration that they want to join the Brotherhood and to commit crimes. O'Brien asks them whether they are prepared to fight against the Party and super-state, and they answer that they are able to murder, commit acts of sabotage killing innocent people, cheat, forge, blackmail, corrupt children minds, distribute drugs, encourage prostitution, disseminate diseases, hurt children and even commit suicides⁴⁴. Are then Winston and Julia real rebels⁴⁵ fighting for freedom for themselves and other people or just... ordinary dissidents (within the

⁴¹ The problem is the same for all three super-states. It is absolutely necessary to their structure that there should be no contact with foreigners, except, to a limited extent, with war prisoners and colored slaves. Even the official ally of the moment is always regarded with the darkest suspicion. War prisoners apart, the average citizen of Oceania 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. The sealed world in which he lives would be broken, and the fear, hatred and self-righteousness on which his morale depends might evaporate (*NEF*, p. 225-226).

⁴² American movies, Western rock music and books etc. especially when their contents are anti-capitalist ones.

⁴³ See *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell*. Vol. II. *My Country: Right or Left 1940-1943*, Penguin Books, Middlesex 1970 and *NEF*, p. 226.

⁴⁴ *NEF*, p. 199-200.

⁴⁵ Sometimes, too, they talked of engaging in active rebellion against the Party, but with no notion of how to take the first step. Even if the fabulous Brotherhood was a reality, there still remained the difficulty of finding one's way into it (*NEF*, p. 175), we read. What forces Smith (taking Julia along with him) to the 'rebellion'? An illusion that O'Brien, the member of the elite of the Party, is one of the enemies of the state: [Winston] told her of the strange intimacy that existed, or seemed to exist between himself and O'Brien, and of the impulse he sometimes felt, simply to walk into O'Brien's presence, announce that he was the enemy of the Party and demand his help (p. 175). The second impulse is... a returning memory of a meeting with O'Brien in a dream (p. 29-30) – another illusion. Paradoxically one can say that O'Brien becomes the real 'big brother' for Smith who has his strong and irrational feelings to O'Brien (Winston even writes his secret diary as a 'letter to O'Brien' (p. 92)). Meanwhile since Smith is conscious of criminality of the Party and its elite and of monstrous hypocrisy of them (at first he suspects Julia of being the Thought Police agent), then the last thing to him to think about would be hoping that any member of the Inner Party can join the rebellion against it. Natural areas for searching would be the proles – but they, in Smith's opinion, do not have consciousness of political evil, living like animals (p. 81-82).

Party), since they both are the Party members? It seems that Orwell alone in his famous anti-totalitarian novel does not know what system of values can be set against the presented in *NEF* absolutist regime.

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The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell. Vol. II. My Country: Right or Left 1940-1943, Penguin Books, Middlesex 1970.

Nineteen Eighty-Four opens with an elaborately staged scene of writing: Winston begins his diary. We meet Winston at home from work for his lunch hour. Winston's nostalgia occurs in the context of an almost complete mechanization of writing. A machine, the "speakwrite," produces everyday writing from the dictated words of the "writer." Like other dystopian writers, Orwell "selects the elements in his own world that seem to pose the greatest threat to liberty and dignity and then extrapolates these factors into a future where they are completely triumphant." He was imagining the possible consequences of political totalitarianism in his own time and taking especially into account how modern technologies would make such totalitarianism more possible than ever before. Orwell's Inspiration To understand why Orwell wrote Nineteen Eighty-Four, one has only to look at his less famous writings: most significantly, Homage to Catalonia does a lot to explain his distrust of totalitarianism and the betrayal of revolutions; Coming Up For Air, at points, celebrates the individual freedom that is lost in Nineteen Eighty-Four; and his essay "Why I Write" explains clearly that all the "serious work" he had written since the Spanish Civil War in was "written, directly or indirectly, against totalitarianism and for democratic socialism." However, the