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If Orwell Were Alive Today



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If ORWELL WERE ALIVE TODAY

by Norman Podhoretz

He would be eighty-two years old. What would his politics be?

DICKENS," George Orwell once remarked, "is one of those writers who are well worth stealing," which was why so many different groups were eager to claim him as one of their own. Did Orwell foresee that someday he too would become just such a writer? Almost certainly he did not. In 1939, when he wrote those words about Dickens, he was still a relatively obscure figure, and among those who knew his work at all, a highly controversial one. Only a year earlier, his book about the Spanish Civil War, *Homage to Catalonia*, had been rejected on political grounds by his own publishers in both Britain and the United States; and far from being claimed by contending factions as one of their own, he was closer to being excommunicated and excoriated by them all. Nevertheless, by the time of his death in 1950 at the age of forty-six, he had become so famous that his very name entered the language and has remained there in the form of the adjective "Orwellian."

At first, this great status rested almost entirely on the tremendous success, both critical and commercial, of his two last novels, *Animal Farm* (1945) and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949). Thanks to them, all his other books, including several early novels that were scarcely noticed at the time of their publication, as well as literary essays, book reviews, and even fugitive pieces of dated journalism, came back into print and are still easily available. As these earlier works became better known, they gradually enhanced Orwell's posthumous reputation. For example, the much maligned *Homage to Catalonia* was pronounced "one of the important documents of our time" by the great American critic Lionel Trilling when it was finally published in the United States after Orwell's death. And when in 1968 *The Collected*

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Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell came out in four massive volumes, the occasion was seized upon by another American critic, Irving Howe, to proclaim Orwell not only "the best English essayist since Hazlitt, perhaps since Dr. Johnson" but also "the greatest moral force in English letters during the last several decades." Bernard Crick, one of Orwell's most recent British biographers,* goes, if possible, even further, placing him with Thomas Hobbes and Jonathan Swift as one of the three greatest political writers in the history of English literature (greater, in other words, than even Edmund Burke and John Stuart Mill).

This enormous reputation by itself would make Orwell "one of those writers who are well worth stealing." It is, after all, no small thing to have the greatest political writer of the age on one's side: it gives confidence, authority, and weight to one's own political views. Accordingly, a dispute has broken out over what Orwell's position actually was in his own lifetime and what it might have been if he had survived to go on participating in the political debates that have raged since the day of his death.

NORMALLY, to speculate on what a dead man might have said about events he never lived to see is a frivolous enterprise. There is no way of knowing whether and to what extent he would have changed his views in response to a changing world; and this is especially the case with a writer like Orwell, who underwent several major political transformations. On the other hand, the main issues that concerned Orwell throughout his career are still alive today, often in different form but often also in almost exactly the same form they took when he wrote about them. This is why

* *George Orwell*. Penguin, \$8.95.

so many of his apparently dated journalistic pieces remain relevant. Even though the particular circumstances with which they deal have long since been forgotten, the questions they raise are questions we are still asking today and still trying to answer.

If this is true of much of Orwell's fugitive journalism, it becomes even more strikingly evident when we consider some of his major works: *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* among his novels, and among his discursive writings, *Down and Out in Paris and London* (1933), *The Road to Wigan Pier* (1937), and *Homage to Catalonia* (1938), not to mention many of the wonderful essays collected in *Inside the Whale* (1940), *Dickens, Dali and Others* (1946), and *Shooting an Elephant* (1950). So relevant do all these works seem today that to read through them is to be astonished, and a little depressed, at the degree to which we are still haunted by the ghosts of political wars past.

When Orwell wrote his essay on Dickens, the two main groups trying to "steal" Dickens were the Marxists and the Catholics. (That they could automatically be taken as equivalent to Left and Right is one interesting measure of how things have changed in the past forty years.) The two main groups contending over Orwell today are the socialists on the one side and, on the other, the disillusioned former socialists who have come to be known as neoconservatives. The socialists, of whom Crick is a leading representative, declare that Orwell was a "revolutionary" whose values can only be (as Crick puts it) "wilfully misunderstood . . . when he is claimed for the camp of the Cold War." For their part, the neoconservatives deny that Orwell was a revolutionary; they think of him instead as a major critic of revolutionism. And they do indeed claim him for "the camp of the Cold War" in the sense that they see in his work one of the great prophetic warnings against the threat of Soviet totalitarianism. Thus the Committee for the Free World, an organization made up mainly of neoconservative intellectuals (and with which I am associated), publishes

material under the imprint "Orwell Press" and in general regards Orwell as one of its guiding spirits.

As a writer, Orwell is most admired, and rightly so, for the simplicity and straightforwardness of his style. "Good prose," he said, "is like a window pane." He valued such prose for its own sake, on aesthetic grounds, but he also believed that in political discourse clarity was a protection against deceit: "In our time, political speech and writing are largely the defense of the indefensible. . . .

Thus political language has to consist largely of euphemism, question-begging and sheer cloudy vagueness." Since Orwell wrote about politics in a language that not only avoided those vices but succeeded marvelously in the art of calling things by their proper names and confronting questions with plainness and precision, one might think that nothing would be easier than defining his point of view. The problem is, however, that he wrote so much and changed his mind so often—mostly on small issues but also on large ones—that plausible evidence can be found in his work for each of the two contending interpretations of where he stood.

As a very young man, Orwell was, by his own account, a "Tory anarchist." But at the age of thirty or thereabouts he converted to socialism and kept calling himself a socialist until the day he died. Crick therefore has no trouble in piling up quotations that support the socialist claim to possession of Orwell. He does, however, have a great deal of trouble in trying to explain away the side of Orwell that has given so much aid and comfort to antisocialists of all kinds. For, avowed socialist though he certainly was, Orwell was also a relentless critic of his fellow socialists from beginning to end.

Thus no sooner did he declare his allegiance to socialism than he began taking it upon himself to explain why so many decent people were put off by his new political faith. "One sometimes gets the im-



Antinuclear protesters marching in London.

Impatient with left-wing pieties, Orwell wrote: "At any given moment there is always an orthodoxy, a parrot-cry which must be repeated."

pression," he wrote in *The Road to Wigan Pier*, "that the mere words 'Socialism' and 'Communism' draw towards them with magnetic force every fruit-juice drinker, nudist, sandal-wearer, sex-maniac, Quaker, 'Nature Cure' quack, pacifist and feminist in England." Shortly after delivering himself of this observation, and while he still regarded the Communists as comrades in the struggle for socialism, he went to fight against Franco in the Spanish Civil War. There he learned two things: that the Spanish Communists were more interested in furthering the aims of Soviet foreign policy than in making a socialist revolution at home, and that the left-wing press in England (and everywhere else) was full of lies about what was actually going on in Spain. For the next few years, much of his writing was devoted to attacks on the Stalinists and their fellow travelers, who, in those days of the "Popular Front," included almost everyone on the Left.

These attacks were written from what can loosely be described as a Trotskyist or revolutionary-socialist perspective based on, among other things, the proposition that England was hardly, if at all, better than Nazi Germany. But with the outbreak of World War II, a new Orwell was born—Orwell the English patriot. "My Country, Right or Left," he now declared in one of his most memorable phrases, and went on to excoriate the "anti-British" attitudes that had been so fashionable on the Left throughout the 1930s and to which he himself had temporarily subscribed.

Then, toward the end of the war, and with the defeat of fascist totalitarianism in sight, Orwell began brooding more and more on the possibility that communist totalitarianism might turn out to be the inevitable wave of the future. In *Animal Farm*, written while the Soviet Union was still a wartime ally of the Western democracies, he produced a satire on the Russian Revolution so unsparing that it could be and usually was interpreted as a repudiation of all hopes for a benevolent socialist revolution. Like *Homage to Catalonia* before it, the manuscript was rejected as too anti-Soviet by the first few publishers to whom it was submitted. One of the publishers in this case was no less a personage than T. S. Eliot, whose own aggressive conservatism did not prevent him from doubting that Orwell's was "the right point of view from which to criticize the political situation at the present time."

Finally there was *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, which came out just at the height of the Cold War and very shortly before Orwell's death. In that novel, Orwell portrayed the England of the future as a totalitarian society ruled over by a Communist-like party in the name of "Ingsoc" ("newspeak" for English socialism). He later explicitly denied that in using this term he had intended to cast any aspersions on the British Labour Party, of which he was a (highly critical) supporter, let alone that he was attacking socialism itself. Nevertheless, neither in

Animal Farm nor in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* was there any trace of the idea that a socialist revolution could be accomplished without a betrayal of the ideals of liberty and equality to whose full realization socialism was in theory committed.

No wonder Crick has so much trouble staking the socialist claim to Orwell. No wonder too that other socialists of varying stripe like Isaac Deutscher and Raymond Williams have said that Orwell was not really one of them.

IF ORWELL was a great political writer—and I think he was, though I would not place him quite so high as Crick does—it is not because he was always right in his strictly political judgments. The plain truth is that he was more often wrong than right. For example, he predicted that the British Conservatives (the "Blimpocracy") would never go to war against Hitler; then, when they did, he refused to believe, and he doubted "whether many people under fifty believe[d] it either," that England could "win the war without passing through revolution."

In addition to making many mistaken political predictions, he was also capable of serious errors of political valuation, as when he joined briefly in the fashionable cry of the mid-1930s to the effect that there was no difference between fascism and liberalism. And even after correcting errors of this kind, he was capable of backsliding into such similar absurdities as saying that British rule in India was as bad as Hitler's rule in Europe, or that British policy toward Greece in 1945 was no different from "the Russian coercion of Poland."

Wrong though he so often was about particular events, however, Orwell in every stage of his political development was almost always right about one thing: the character and quality of the left-wing literary intellectuals among whom he lived and to whom he addressed himself as a political writer. More than anything else, the ethos of the left-wing literary intelligentsia was his true subject and the one that elicited his most brilliant work. Indeed, whatever ideas were fashionable on the Left at any given moment were precisely the ones he had the greatest compulsion to criticize. And the fact that he criticized them from within only added authority to the things he said—so much so that I wonder whether this was why he insisted on clinging so tenaciously to his identity as a man of the Left.

It is largely because of Orwell's relation to the left-wing intelligentsia that I believe he would have been a neoconservative if he were alive today. I would even suggest that he was a forerunner of neo-conservatism in having been one of the first in a long line of originally left-wing intellectuals who have come to discover more saving political and moral wisdom in the instincts and mores of "ordinary" people than in the ideas and attitudes of the

intelligentsia. "One has to belong to the intelligentsia to believe things like that," he wrote in 1945 after listing several egregious examples relating to the progress of World War II; "no ordinary man could be such a fool." This remark has become especially well known in recent years, but it is only one of many passages of similar import scattered throughout Orwell's writings.

Nor was it only on political issues that Orwell defended the "ordinary man" against the left-wing intelligentsia. Even in the mid-1930s, during his most radical period, he attacked Cyril Connolly's novel *The Rock Pool* for suggesting that "so-called artists who spend on sodomy what they have gained by sponging" were superior to "the polite and sheep-like Englishman." This, he said, "only amounts to a distaste for normal life and common decency," and he concluded by declaring: "The fact to which we have got to cling, as to a lifebelt, is that it is possible to be a normal decent person and yet to be fully alive."

This streak of populism, always strong in Orwell, became even more pronounced with the outbreak of World War II, when it took the form of a celebration of England and the English character. As a corollary to becoming a wholehearted patriot—and in coming to see patriotism as a great and positive force—Orwell lashed out more ferociously than ever at the British intelligentsia:

... the really important fact about so many of the English intelligentsia [is] their severance from the common culture of the country. ... England is perhaps the only great country whose intellectuals are ashamed of their own nationality. In left-wing circles it is always felt that there is something slightly disgraceful in being an Englishman and that it is a duty to snigger at every English institution. ... All through the critical years many left-wingers were chipping away at English morale, trying to spread an outlook that was sometimes squashily pacifist, sometimes violently pro-Russian, but always anti-British. ... If the English people suffered for several years a real weakening

of morale, so that the Fascist nations judged that they were "decadent" and that it was safe to plunge into war, the intellectual sabotage from the Left was partly responsible.

Is it any wonder that the neoconservatives see Orwell as a guiding spirit when everything he says here has been echoed by them in talking about the American intellectuals of today? And when Orwell was charged with "intellectual-hunting" by a leading young pacifist named Alex Comfort (who, as though to confirm Orwell's diagnosis of the phenomenon of which Comfort was a typical specimen,

would go on to greater heights of fame in later years as the author of *The Joy of Sex*), he replied in terms that have been echoed in similar arguments by the neoconservatives as well: "It is just because I do take the function of the intelligentsia seriously that I don't like the sneers, libels, parrot phrases and financially profitable back-scratching which flourish in our English literary world. . . ."



The Soviet Union's sixtieth anniversary parade.

ANOTHER and related reason for thinking that Orwell would be a neoconservative if he were alive today lies in his attitude toward pacifism. For a very brief period in his youth Orwell flirted with pacifism, but nothing could

have been more alien to his temperament and he soon broke off the affair. By 1938 he was writing (and in language that shows how far he was willing to go in speaking plainly even when euphemism might better have served his own political position):

If someone drops a bomb on your mother, go and drop two bombs on his mother. The only apparent alternatives are to smash dwelling houses to powder, blow out human entrails and burn holes in children with lumps of thermite, or be enslaved by people who are more ready to do these things than you are yourself; as yet no one has suggested a practical way out.

And again in 1940, when a British defeat seemed likely: "There is nothing for it but to die fighting,

Although Orwell had flirted with pacifism in his youth, the experience of war changed his mind. "Despotic governments can stand 'moral force' till the cows come home," he wrote. "What they fear is physical force."

but one must above all die *fighting* and have the satisfaction of killing somebody else first."

Moved by such feelings, Orwell came to write about pacifism with an even fiercer edge of scorn and outrage than before. Later he would regret using the term "objectively pro-Fascist," but that is what he now accused the pacifists—or "Fascists," as he called them—of being (for, "If you hamper the war effort of one side you automatically help that of the other"); he also attacked them for "intellectual cowardice" in refusing to admit that this was the inescapable logical implication of their position; and he said that they were hypocritical "for crying 'Peace!' behind a screen of guns." But in trying to imagine where Orwell would have stood if he were alive today, the key sentence in his attack on pacifism is this: "Insofar as it takes effect at all, pacifist propaganda can only be effective *against* those countries where a certain amount of freedom of speech is still permitted; in other words it is helpful to totalitarianism."

Everything I have just quoted was written at a time when Nazi Germany was the main totalitarian enemy. But here is what Orwell said about pacifism at the very moment when the defeat of Hitler was imminent and when the Soviet Union was about to replace Nazi Germany as the most powerful embodiment of totalitarianism in the world:

Pacifist propaganda usually boils down to saying that one side is as bad as the other, but if one looks closely at the writings of the younger intellectual pacifists, one finds that they do not by any means express impartial disapproval but are directed almost entirely against Britain and the United States. Moreover they do not as a rule condemn violence as such, but only violence used in defense of the Western countries. The Russians, unlike the British, are not blamed for defending themselves by warlike means. . . .

The "real though unadmitted motive" behind such propaganda, Orwell concluded, was "hatred of Western democracy and admiration for totalitarianism."

IT IS HARD to believe that the man who wrote those words in 1945 would have felt any sympathy for the various "objectively" pacifist anti-defense movements of today, about which the very same words could be used without altering a single detail. I can even easily imagine that Orwell would have been still angrier if he had lived to see so many ideas that have been discredited, both by arguments like his own and by historical experience, once again achieving widespread acceptability. It goes without saying that he would have opposed the unilateral disarmament that is now the official policy of the British Labour Party under the leadership of his old journalistic colleague Michael Foot. He understood, after all, that "Despotic governments can stand 'moral force' till the cows come home;

what they fear is physical force." But I think he would also have opposed such measures as the nuclear freeze and a unilateral Western pledge of no-first-use of nuclear weapons. Given the conception of totalitarianism he developed in *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as a totally closed system in which lies become truth at the dictate of the party, the notion that a verifiable disarmament agreement could be negotiated with the Soviet Union would surely have struck him as yet another pacifist "illusion due to security, too much money and a simple ignorance of the way in which things actually happen."

As for no-first-use, Orwell surely would have seen this as a form of unilateral disarmament by the West (since it would make Soviet superiority in conventional military power decisive on the European front) as well as a euphemistic screen behind which the United States could withdraw from its commitment to the defense of Western Europe under the hypocritical pretext of reducing the risk of nuclear war.

Nor is it likely that Orwell would have been reconverted to pacifism by the fear of nuclear weapons. As a matter of fact, he thought that "the worst possibility of all" was that "the fear inspired by the atomic bomb and other weapons yet to come will be so great that everyone will refrain from using them." Such an indefinite Soviet-American stalemate, he predicted, would lead to precisely the nightmare he was later to envisage in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* ("the division of the world among two or three vast totalitarian empires unable to conquer one another and unable to be overthrown by any internal rebellion").

This does not mean that Orwell contemplated the possibility of a nuclear war with equanimity, or that he did not on other occasions say that it could mean the destruction of civilization. Nevertheless, in 1947, the very year in which the Cold War officially began, Orwell wrote: "I don't, God knows, want a war to break out, but if one were compelled to choose between Russia and America—and I suppose that is the choice one might have to make—I would always choose America." Later that same year, he made the point again: "It will not do to give the usual quibbling answer, 'I refuse to choose.' . . . We are no longer strong enough to stand alone, and . . . we shall be obliged, in the long run, to subordinate our policy to that of one Great Power or another."

The same essay contains another one of those uncanny passages we so often come upon in Orwell that could be applied to our situation today without altering a single detail:

To be anti-American nowadays is to shout with the mob. Of course it is only a minor mob, but it is a vocal one. . . . I do not believe the mass of the people in this country are anti-American politically, and certainly they are not so culturally.

But politico-literary intellectuals are not usually frightened of mass opinion. What they are frightened of is the prevailing opinion within their own group. At any given moment there is always an orthodoxy, a parrot-cry which must be repeated, and in the more active section of the Left the orthodoxy of the moment is anti-Americanism. I believe part of the reason . . . is the idea that if we can cut our links with the United States we might succeed in staying neutral in the case of Russia and America going to war. How anyone can believe this, after looking at the map and remembering what happened to neutrals in the late war, I do not know.

So much for Orwell's attitude toward the neutralism that lies at the basis of what in Western Europe is called the "peace movement" today.

TO UNDERSTAND the force and the courage of Orwell's forthright repudiation of the idea that there was no significant moral difference between the United States and the Soviet Union, we have to remind ourselves that neither anti-Americanism nor neutralism was confined exclusively to the pro-Soviet Left. For example, in *The God That Failed*—the famous collection of autobiographical essays in which six prominent writers explained why they had broken with communism—Orwell's friend the poet Stephen Spender insisted that "no criticism of the Communists removes the arguments against capitalism" and that "both sides are forces producing aggression, injustice, destruction of liberties, enormous evils." The Soviet Union was bad, but "America, the greatest capitalist country, seems to offer no alternative to war, exploitation and destruction of the world's resources." This, in 1949—a time when Stalin was consolidating his imperial hold over Eastern Europe and untold millions were suffering and dying in the Soviet Gulag. This, in 1949—when the "alternative" America was offering was not "aggression, injustice, and the destruction of liberties" but rather peace, freedom, and prosperity to formerly fascist countries like Germany, Italy, and Japan as well as to the war-torn and wounded democracies of Western Europe. This, in 1949—when the United States had just expended blood and treasure to save these nations from the totalitarianism of the Right, and was now prepared to spend blood and treasure to defend them from the totalitarianism of the Left.

Orwell recognized it all. "I particularly hate that trick of sucking up to the Left cliques by perpetually attacking America while relying on America to feed and protect us," he wrote in a letter to a friend. Unlike the anti-Americans, the people in the British Labour Party who openly wanted "to appease Russia" at least understood "that the only big political questions in the world today are: for Russia—against Russia, for America—against America, for democracy—against democracy."

DESPITE Crick's sophisticated protestations, then, there can be no doubt that Orwell did belong in "the camp of the Cold War" while he was still alive. Nor can there be much doubt that if he were alive today he would have felt a greater kinship with the neoconservatives who are calling for resistance to Soviet imperialism than with either the socialist supporters of détente or the coalition of neutralists and pacifists who dominate the "peace movement" in Europe and their neoisolationist allies in the United States.

For consider: Orwell's ruling passion was the fear and hatred of totalitarianism. Unlike so many on the Left today, who angrily deny that there is any difference between totalitarianism and authoritarianism, he was among the first to insist on the distinction. Totalitarianism, he said, was a new and higher stage in the history of despotism and tyranny—a system in which every area of life, not merely (as in authoritarian regimes) the political sphere, was subjected to the control of the state. Only in Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union had totalitarianism thus far established itself, and of the two the Soviet variety clearly seemed to Orwell to be the more dangerous.

Indeed, Orwell's loathing for Nazi Germany was mild by comparison with his feeling about the Soviet Union. He was sufficiently serious in his opposition to fascism to risk his life in struggling against it in Spain (where as a soldier he was very nearly killed by a bullet through the neck). Yet he showed surprisingly little awareness of how evil Nazism actually was. Not only did he never write anything like *Animal Farm* about the Nazi regime; there is scarcely a mention in all his writings of the death camps. (Two of his closest friends, Arthur Koestler and T. R. Fyvel, saw a relation between this curious "blind spot" about Nazism and his equally curious hostility to Zionism.)

When Orwell wrote about the dangers of totalitarianism, then, whether in his essays or in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, it was mainly the communist version he had in mind. To be sure, he followed no party line, not even his own, and he could always be relied on to contradict himself when the impulse seized him. At one moment he would denounce any move to establish good relations with the Russians, and at another moment, he might insist on the necessity of such relations.

But these were transient political judgments of the kind that, as he himself ruefully acknowledged, were never his strongest suit. What he most cared about was resisting the spread of Soviet-style totalitarianism. Consequently he "used a lot of ink" and did himself "a lot of harm by attacking the successive literary cliques" that had denied or tried to play down the brutal truth about the Soviet Union, to appease it, or otherwise to undermine the Western will to resist the spread of its power and influence.

If he were alive today, he would find the very ideas and attitudes against which he so fearlessly argued more influential than ever in left-wing centers of opinion (and not in them alone): that the freedoms of the West are relatively unimportant as compared with other values; that war is the greatest of all evils; that nothing is worth fighting or dying for; and that the Soviet Union is basically defensive and peaceful. It is impossible to imagine that he would have joined in parroting the latest expressions of this orthodoxy if he had lived to see it return in even fuller and more dangerous force.

I HAVE NO hesitation, therefore, in claiming Orwell for the neoconservative perspective on the East-West conflict. But I am a good deal more diffident in making the same claim on the issue of socialism. Like Orwell, most neoconservatives began their political lives as socialists; and most of them even followed the same course Orwell himself did from revolutionary to democratic socialism. Moreover, those neoconservatives who were old enough to be politically active in 1950, the year Orwell died, would still at that point have joined with him in calling themselves democratic socialists. About thirty years later, however, most of them had come around to the view expressed by the philosopher William Barrett in explaining why he had finally given up on his long and tenaciously held faith in "democratic socialism" (the telling quotation marks are Barrett's):

How could we ever have believed that you could deprive human beings of the fundamental right to initiate and engage in their own economic activity without putting every other human right into jeopardy? And to pass from questions of rights to those of fact: everything we observe about the behavior of human beings in groups, everything we know about that behavior from history, should tell us that you cannot unite political and economic power in one center without opening the door to tyranny.

The question is: would Orwell, in the light of what has happened in the three decades since his death, have arrived eventually at a position similar to Barrett's? Crick is certain that he would not—that he would have remained a socialist, and a militant one. I am not so sure.

Orwell was never much of a Marxist and (beyond a generalized faith in "planning") he never showed much interest in the practical arrangements involved in the building of socialism. He was a socialist because he hated the class system and the great discrepancies of wealth that went with it. Yet he also feared that the establishment of socialism would mean the destruction of liberty. In an amazingly sympathetic review of F. A. Hayek's *The Road to Serfdom*, Orwell acknowledged that there was "a great deal of truth" in Hayek's thesis that "social-

ism inevitably leads to despotism," and that the collectivism entailed by socialism brings with it "concentration camps, leader worship, and war." The trouble is that capitalism, which "leads to dole queues, the scramble for markets, and war," is probably doomed. (It is indeed largely as a result of the failure of capitalism that the totalitarian world of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* comes into being.)

SUPPOSE, however, that Orwell had lived to see this prediction about capitalism refuted by the success of the capitalist countries in creating enough wealth to provide the vast majority of their citizens not merely with the decent minimum of food and housing that Orwell believed only socialism could deliver, but with a wide range of what to his rather Spartan tastes would have seemed unnecessary luxuries. Suppose further that he had lived to see all this accomplished—and with the year 1984 already in sight!—while "the freedom of the intellect," for whose future under socialism he increasingly trembled, was if anything being expanded. And suppose, on the other side, he had lived to see the wreckage through planning and centralization of one socialist economy after another, so that not even at the sacrifice of liberty could economic security be assured.

Suppose, in short, that he had lived to see the aims of what he meant by socialism realized to a very great extent under capitalism, and without either the concentration camps or the economic miseries that have been the invariable companions of socialism in practice. Would he still have gone on mouthing socialist pieties and shouting with the anticapitalist mob?

Perhaps. Nothing has been more difficult for intellectuals in this century than giving up on socialism, and it is possible that even Orwell, who so prided himself on his "power of facing unpleasant facts," would have been unwilling or unable to face what to most literary intellectuals is the most unpleasant fact of all: that the values both of liberty and equality fare better under capitalism than under socialism.

And yet I find it hard to believe that Orwell would have allowed an orthodoxy to blind him on this question any more than he allowed other "smelly little orthodoxies" to blind him to the truth about the particular issues involved in the struggle between totalitarianism and democracy: Spain, World War II, and communism.

In Orwell's time, it was the left-wing intelligentsia that made it so difficult for these truths to prevail. And so it is too with the particular issues generated by the struggle between totalitarianism and democracy in our own time, which is why I am convinced that if Orwell were alive today, he would be taking his stand with the neoconservatives and against the Left. ■