

The Empire of Lies.

In 1946, a British author named Eric Blair wrote an essay about how words shape ideas, and vice versa. Of particular interest to this former newspaper journalist was how politicians often used words not to expose ideas, but to obscure them; not to clarify thoughts, but to make rational thought nearly impossible. He had this to say: "In our time it is broadly true that political writing is bad writing. Where it is not true, it will generally be found that the writer is some kind of rebel, expressing his private opinions and a not a 'party line'...when one watches some tired hack on the platform mechanically repeating the familiar phrases - one often has a curious feeling that one is not watching a live human being but some kind of dummy...the appropriate noises are coming out of his larynx, but his brain is not involved as it would be if he were choosing his words for himself." In this era of tele-prompters and speech-writing committees, we can certainly appreciate Mr. Blair's observation. We need to examine the words of today's American "leaders" with an equally unforgiving attention to detail.

In 1950, Mr. Blair passed away - but not before writing one of the greatest novels of the 20th century. Like many of his generation, Blair had fallen in youthful infatuation with the egalitarian ideals of the socialists - but had become disillusioned, as he realized that human beings were not capable of peacefully wielding the sort of power that a socialized economy must require for its central planners. Ironically, if he had also known economics - and understood the more crucial, but unfortunately less riveting, reality: that socialism cannot work, simply because economic calculation (and the ordering of even the most simple production processes) is impossible without the prices generated in a free market - his novel (which is a sort of character study of human nature) might not have been nearly as interesting. For, in his depiction of a future totalitarian state - ruled by "revolutionaries" who (as usual) inscribe on their banners the words Peace, Freedom, and Strength - he was really concerned with human emotional failings rather than those of a purely intellectual nature. Orwell - as he is better known - understood that when men are deceived by false prophets, when they close their minds to reason, they do so voluntarily. Our leaders may lie to us, but we do not become unfree until we begin lying to ourselves.

In Nineteen Eighty-Four, Big Brother has perfected the art of propaganda. The Ministry of Truth is engaged in a gradual process of rewriting the English language, so that heretical ideas - or thoughtcrimes, as they are called - will eventually be impossible to put into words, let alone action. In order to convince the masses of people to accept the inherent contradictions contained in any totalitarian system, the Party has coined three slogans that involve the pairing of words whose meanings are opposites. In doing this, the rulers both boldly display their domination over the minds of their subjects (wielding language as a blunt instrument of coercion) and siphon away any real meaning from the words themselves (hollowing out concepts that the proletarians would need to understand, before being able to mount a successful resistance movement). Let us see what these slogans tell us today:

WAR IS PEACE

The U.S. government has been engaged in a perpetual war since about 1950. To be sure, the names change occasionally, the face of the enemy shifts - and, very rarely, a goal is actually declared to have been "accomplished." The latest mechanical larynx has declared that the "War on Terror" is henceforth to be referred to as the "Overseas Contingency Operation." But as the words change, the facts remain the same: we have thousands of soldiers scattered across the globe, and numerous factories constantly churning out new guns, bombs, aerial drones, and other instruments of violent death. America used to supply the world with ever-improving consumer goods, and in exchange, our working class once lived a proud and prosperous existence. We were respected - not hated - for being rich and free. Today, we export destruction, occupation, and a philosophy of aggressive force. We are despised, like any oppressor - euphemisms just don't seem to work as well on people who have lost a life, a limb, or a loved one. Ironically, in today's America, war IS peace: we have not legally declared war since 1942. Some would say that avoiding an honest declaration of intent makes it easier to avoid responsibility. Ultimately, the American people are responsible. We have been lying to ourselves, pretending to believe in freedom, while spreading fear and unfreedom throughout the world - and bankrupting ourselves and our children in the process. Soon the bills come due.

FREEDOM IS SLAVERY

The most brazen tyrants have a habit of telling what Hitler called the “Big Lie.” This involves telling an untruth so colossal that the “broad masses” of people cannot believe that the teller “could have the impudence to distort the truth so infamously.” The best liars, of course, are those who believe the lies they are telling - and it is for this reason that the “progressive” movement has been so successful. Their process of self-hypnosis began with acts of verbal trickery. So - in order to oppose individual liberty (a concept rooted solidly in the American experience) and substitute its opposite (a centralized nanny-state) - the socialists simply co-opted the language of the very philosophy they were setting out to destroy. Before they stole the banner of Liberalism from the defenders of freedom, they changed the meaning of freedom itself. For today’s “liberal,” freedom equates roughly to equality of means - you are not “free” for example, if you don’t have access to all the luxury goods of your neighbor, or if you have to ask someone for a job (instead of being entitled to it), or if you don’t have special laws and privileges accorded to you, simply because you belong to one particular group or another. When Americans began using this “positive” definition of freedom (the right **to** do or **to** have) instead of the purely “negative” one (freedom **from** coercion, compulsion and fraud), we began the long journey down the road to contradiction. In today’s America, freedom IS slavery - in the form of an ever more entrenched and dysfunctional paternalism. Now that government programs have made us free from addiction, poverty and unemployment, the latest Big Lie is that bureaucrats will make us all healthy. When socialism fails again, in addition to having lost more of our dignity, we’ll all be poorer as well. Ironically, we’ll all then be less free, no matter which definition of the word you prefer.

IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH

In Nineteen Eighty-Four, there are three remaining superpowers left, all vying for world supremacy. Each empire demonizes the other two, and presents its own system of political economy as both morally and mechanically superior to the others’ (when, in fact, they are all of them virtually identical). In order to keep war hysteria at a frenzied level - and so that individuals will continue to sublimate their own

identities beneath that of the total state - an external enemy must exist, and the enemy must be the opposite of all that is good. The domestic servants of empire come to love their dictator because he protects them from the fearful “other” and - on a less conscious level - because he shields them from a sense of degraded and distasteful self. To people who are accustomed to lies, the truth hurts. Many people are happy to trade peace, freedom, AND truth to postpone a painful process of self-realization, and in exchange for a false feeling of security. In today’s America, ignorance IS strength. None of these empires, fictional or real, could be paid for, if the governments and the banks (choose whichever one it is that you find more unacceptable!) didn’t jointly control the supply and distribution of money - through taxation, inflation, and endless borrowing. But after decades of dependence, many people don’t want to be free. They prefer to pretend, pushing the cognitive dissonance they are daily required to accept deep down into their subconscious. The West, Eurasia and China have all converged upon virtually identical economic systems: and no matter what names the economic planners attach to them, they each conform well to what Orwell presciently called “oligarchical collectivism.” The dogmas of the world’s vast empires might all be summed up in a new slogan: **CAPITALISM IS SOCIALISM**. If you were born after the revolution, there’s a good chance you do not know what at least one of these two words REALLY means. How many words have we left to go?

Ben Bernanke says that the world must remain ignorant of the monetary maneuvers he executes from behind his oracular curtain. Secrecy is necessary, we are told, to protect the strength of the dollar (95% of whose value the Fed has already destroyed). Transparency will surely endanger this jobless economic “recovery.” To the unemployed and to the confused, Ben says: Why the mistrust? The Fed, after all, is only there to protect you: to ensure a smoothly-functioning economy by constantly tinkering with the value of your money - and haven’t they done a great job? Monetary policy is far too sensitive an issue for proles like you and me - and apparently even for the most privileged members of “the Party.” The resistance needs only to restore the truth: for when we end the ignorance, we will end the Fed. If we succeed, we will restore the promise of peace, freedom and strength to the American people. If we fail, we’ll all just have to learn to love Big Brother.