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The Arrival Of Orwellian America

by Rick Gee, 1 Jan 2002

In George Orwell's classic novel *1984*, Oceania is in a state of perpetual war with Eurasia. Even though the "Big Brother" state of Oceania insists that such has always been the case, the protagonist, Winston Smith, remembers that the states were in fact at one time aligned. The same is true of the United States and Osama bin Laden/Afghanistan. The CIA provided funding and arms to bin Laden during the decade-long proxy war with the Soviet Union. Now bin Laden, "The Evil One," has become the Goldstein character, who is held up as the "Enemy of the People." And our rulers readily admit that the War on Terrorism will last indefinitely.

To keep the masses in line and to suppress opposition, Oceania developed a language called *Newspeak*, which actually *reduced* the number and variety of words in use to render dissenting thought obsolete. Closely related to Newspeak is *doublethink*, in which someone is conditioned to either say the opposite of what he thinks or think the opposite of what is true.

The U.S. government has engaged in such obfuscations with the passage of the Uniting and Strengthening America Act by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism. Yes, it's the USA PATRIOT Act. Clearly the name of the bill was concocted to fit the acronym. The purpose of this acronym is two-fold. One, it makes it politically dangerous for politicians to vote against it ("He voted against the Patriot Act? Who can we nominate to run opposite this traitor in the next election?"). Two, it stifles opposition among the American people. "You're either with us, or you're with the terrorists."

Since we are all in favor of stopping acts of terrorism, we should all be in favor of this legislation, right? But this legislation -- which was not available for members of Congress to read before they had to vote on it -- will do nothing to prevent future terrorism and much to increase the power of government over its subjects. The legislation, among other things:

- Allows law enforcement agencies to search homes and offices without notifying the owner for days or weeks after, not only in terrorism cases, but in all cases -- the so-called "sneak and peek" authority.
- Allows government agents to collect undefined new information about Web browsing and e-mail.
- Overrides existing state and federal privacy laws, allowing the FBI to compel disclosure of any kind of records upon the mere claim that they are connected with an intelligence investigation.

If you believe that the government could never use these unconstitutional powers against *you* because you're not a Middle Eastern "raghead," you are unfamiliar with history. J. Edgar Hoover's FBI became a *de facto* domestic political police force. Franklin Delano Roosevelt used the FBI to spy on his political enemies, especially antiwar groups.

The PATRIOT Act does not restrict its provisions to terrorism investigations. In fact, they may be used against anyone, whether or not he is a suspect related to terrorism. On the other hand, the act broadens the definition of terrorism to "an offense that is calculated to influence or affect the conduct of government by intimidation or coercion; or to retaliate against government conduct." While the PATRIOT Act ostensibly protects Americans

against terrorism, in reality it protects the government against its own people.

With this new expanded, nebulous definition of terrorism now the law of the land, will I be considered a terrorist because I do not blindly follow everything George W. Bush and John Ashcroft decree; because I dare to write columns that question the actions of government? Do I "intimidate" government functionaries by exposing their duplicitous dealings? Will the editors of *Strike-the-Root* now be deemed terrorists for publishing my columns?

Earlier this month, John Ashcroft testified before Congress regarding President Bush's Executive Order that allows the president to try "terrorists" before military tribunals rather than in open court. Ashcroft's appearance was largely a dog-and-pony show, a political exercise designed to allow some Democrats on Capitol Hill to criticize the administration without disparaging President Bush directly, something they clearly cannot do in light of Dubya's 90% approval rating.

During the appearance, Ashcroft, who has recently engaged in an authoritarian power grab that would make Torquemada blush, uttered the following: "To those who pit Americans against immigrants, citizens against non-citizens, to those who scare peace-loving people with phantoms of lost liberty, my message is this: your tactics only aid terrorists for they erode our national unity and diminish our resolve. Our efforts have been crafted carefully to avoid infringing on constitutional rights, while saving American lives."

By now, the theme should be clear: you are either with us, or you are with the terrorists. Ashcroft attempts to manipulate "peace-loving people" into doublethink with some crafty *doublespeak*. It is Ashcroft and his minions who attempt to scare us with their alerts of impending terrorism, always based on "credible information," of course. And unfortunately, the loss of liberty is all too real.

As for his claim that constitutional rights will not be infringed upon and that American lives will be saved, this goes well beyond mere obfuscation; it is an outright lie. We already know that the government failed to save thousands of American lives on September 11, and the Constitution has taken a severe thrashing ever since.

Ashcroft concluded, "Charges of kangaroo courts and shredding the Constitution give new meaning to the term *fog of war*." No, Mr. Ashcroft -- it is not those who oppose your encroaching police state and global hegemony that perpetrate a "fog of war." It is you and your cohorts in government who wage the war -- both the bombing campaigns abroad and the war on liberty at home -- who are responsible for the "fog of war." And it is up to the lovers of freedom everywhere to lift the veil of euphemism in which we are assured, as were the people of Oceania, that "War is Peace. Freedom is Slavery. Ignorance is Strength."

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