

# Technology as a form of control



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Technology misused in *1984* and nowadays

Technology is irreplaceable in people's daily life, and it is viewed as a tool to increase the quality of people's life. It is also a testimony of advanced society. Yet, in the novel *1984*, rather than making people's life convenient or to increasing security, technology was used primarily as a tool of repression. The Party treated technology as only one of the methods it employed to ensure and ascertain control. The obvious impact brought by the misuse of technology was non-existent privacy. Ultimately, in *1984*, technology helped to control people's freedom to think. Similar to what George Orwell depicted in *1984*, technology is misused nowadays through the use of propaganda, the surveillance over citizen, and to spread false information to control.

Propaganda, the spread of statements that are often false or exaggerated, is to enhance a political leader or government's control over its people. In *1984*, propaganda was widely deployed through technology in order to brainwash its citizen. An example of the propaganda that was used by Party in *1984* was "War is Peace, Freedom is Slavery. Ignorance is Strength." This quote shows us that the citizens had been brainwashed and forced to believe that war brings peace, freedom was in doing work for other such as a slave. The quote was the proof of the success of the Party used propaganda to bring people under the influence of the government that they believed in exaggerated information. Winston also said before that "Freedom is the freedom to say that two plus two make four. If that is granted, all else follows." Yet, through the spread of Party's propaganda, citizens in Oceania

all believed that two plus two makes five, which this again shows the success on Party using propaganda to brainwash its own citizen.

Nowadays, just like in 1984, China deployed propaganda to assure and ascertain the control on its citizen's mind through propaganda. "Propaganda always wins," said Leni Riefenstahl, "if you allow it." This quote that is said by Leni Riefenstahl, a German film director, clearly exemplified the huge power that propaganda hold and also somehow shows that propaganda was the key weapon for China to successfully brainwash its citizen. The most famous propaganda in China was the *Little Red Book*, which collected many mind-control information which came from Mao Zedong, the leader of China before 1976. Back to those days, citizen of China were all forced to carry the *Little Red Book* all the time. People who didn't carry this book would be considered disrespectful to Mao Zedong and be punished. One of the famous propaganda from Mao Zedong was also discussed in the book *Mao's Little Red Book: A Global History*, which was "to read too many books is harmful." This quote was totally wrong because reading is a good way to open one's mind, increase one's knowledge and also stronger analytical thinking skills. Yet, Mao's purpose to say the words can echo the quotes in 1984, "Ignorance is Strength." Both of them discouraged people to gain knowledge or to have the ability to recognize the truth. Not reading too many book could limit the knowledge that the citizen of China could get and also decrease their analytical thinking skills. China had been successful on control and brainwashing its citizen thoughts through propaganda and causing its citizen to be loyal and ignorant in everything that Mao said.

By placing telescreens all across Oceania in *1984*, and spying on citizen 24 hours everyday, Oceanians didn't allow privacy. Citizen that lived in Oceania all had telescreens in their house, even their working place. Everything they did, everything they discussed and talked about were all been monitored by the Party. The quote "Big Brother is Watching You" in *1984* is the best proof of the massive surveillance of the Party. Take the example of Winston, the main character of *1984*, he took a huge risk in writing down his own diary and having rebellion thought toward the Party due to the surveillance of the telescreen. "The telescreen received and transmitted simultaneously. Any sound Winston made, above the level of a very low whisper, would be picked up by it." This quote also clearly shows how telecreeen had limited Winston's and other citizens freedom from doing things without being monitored even at home. In order to safely record his own thought in the dairy, Winston had to rent an old room from Mr. Charrington where he thought there was no telescreen, and he could write his diary freely and secretly. Also, another example from Winston was that he and Julia, his lover, had difficulty to meet each other and find a good place for date under the massive surveillance of the Party. These two examples clearly showed that the Party used telescreen on surveillance to attack on personal privacy and took away citizen's right to do everything without being monitored.

Not only in *1984*, as a means to control people, massive of surveillance can still be found nowadays. According to Edward Snowden, Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) employee's words that "the NSA routinely lies in response to congressional inquiries about the scope of surveillance in America." This quotes had shown that nowadays, America's National Security Agency, a

group of people that use to protect its citizen and also privacy, had misused technology as a tool that illegally do surveillance over citizen. Through some more research, data had shown that NSA had been watching through every single email, message of each American. The NSA had claimed that this act of spying through every message was to wiretapping terrorists and are only a palliative to the fight against terrorism. Yet, this act of NSA had took citizens privacy away immediately, and causes citizen to have no confidence on technology anymore. Nassim Nicholas Taleb, a Lebanese-American essayist, had once said that “ the difference between technology and slavery is that slaves are fully aware that they are not free,” which this quote also shows how technology has took away citizens freedom and also privacy. Again, technology is used to benefit citizens life condition, whereas in *1984* and now, technology is misused, it even takes away citizens privacy through surveillance and also causes citizen to distrust technology.

Through the misuse of technology, false information was also spread all over Oceania in *1984* . Take two bloody examples in *1984* , “ The actual output was given as sixty two millions. Winston, however, in rewriting the forecast, marked the figure down to fifty seven millions.” “ Ministry of Plenty had issued a promise that there would be no reduction of the chocolate ration during 1984. Actually, as Winston was aware, the chocolate ration was to be reduced from thirty grams to twenty at the end of the present week.” These two quotes had shown that Winston’s job was to fix information that the Party recently made and fixing the claim into another number. Then, the information that had been rewritten spread all over Oceania again and caused citizen to believe in this information instead of the truth. Citizen who

wanted to doubt this information would also fail because the Party had burn all of the evidence and recent claim into Memory hole, where the true information had been burned and what was left and what people believed in will be the information that had been changed and spread.

The book *Nothing to envy* describes the lives of North Korean similar to 1984, where citizens of North Korea basically all lived under thousands of false information that the government (Kim Jong-Il) intended to brainwash their people. One of the examples of the false information was that the North Korean believed that Kim Jong-Il is god, who had a supernatural birth. People believed that he was born on a sacred mountain, Mt. Baekdu, and at the moment of his birth, the season had changed from winter to spring, and a new star had formed and illuminated the sky. Another false information that was spread through technology in North Korea is that citizen believed that Kim Jong-Il invented the hamburger. Instead of hamburger, Kim Jong-Il had name it " double bread with meat." The book *Rooms in Dramatic Realism* had said that " there are some things one remembers even though they may never have happened." Most of the North Korean have believed in false information just like citizens in 1984 believed in false production number. The improvement on technology could have good benefit on the spread of knowledge and important of information, but when it is misused, citizen could lose their knowledge and also rely and believe on the false information that the government spread.

In 1984 , technology were misused through propaganda and also its surveillance over every citizen. Nowadays, people thought that technology is improving our society and benefiting our life condition, however, technology

is also misused just like in *1984*. Technology had caused citizen to lose their own privacy and also believe in false information and been brainwashed. Is technology really a tool that will lead us to a better world with full of convenience, or is it slowly and secretly grow and applied by people as a means to controlling. I think the misuse of technology is a huge, serious question that had to be solve, and set clear law for in nowadays in order to prevent more technology misused.

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