



by THOMAS A. DAVIS

*Signs of the Times 1968*

IN THE YEAR 1949 a very disturbing book, entitled simply *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, came off the press. In it the author, George Orwell, looked ahead to that year and, on the basis of certain trends which he saw around him, portrayed what he imagined conditions would be like by 1984.

The world he described was one in which life had been regimented to the extent that men lived liked robots ruled by an absolute dictator, under almost constant surveillance, able to call neither their bodies nor their souls their own.

Orwell's world of 1984 was an imaginary one. Yet, there are indeed trends around us which are making *Nineteen Eighty-Four* more and more possible.

Perhaps the most powerful force that could be used to bring about a world such as Orwell envisioned is the modern communications systems, especially radio and T.V.

A few months ago *Time* magazine ran a feature article on television in which some very revealing and significant statements appeared concerning the awesome powers of this communications medium. "The range is virtually unlimited, the impact is almost awesome," the article stated. T.V. is "a commodity

of indefinable power and, inevitably, incalculable value." "It can . . . gather its audience into a cohesive whole with a sureness that is unmatched in any other area of communications."

And, the article states, T.V. carries into the home "a kind of subliminal authority" which means that in addition to its effects upon the conscious it functions outside the area of conscious awareness, influencing thought, feeling, or behaviour in a manner not recognized by the one being influenced.

Already the stage is set for world-T.V., for, hovering above our heads are relay satellites ready to beam their pictures anywhere. Today, by means of these relays and other methods, a message, either of sight or sound, may be transmitted around the world in two seconds.

Think of the barrage of "managed news" and propaganda that could be fired at us constantly, leading us all to have the same over-all opinions. Think of the fearsome power that could be gathered into the hands of some popular, but unprincipled, demagogue, or by some unscrupulous, scheming organization ambitious for world domination by means of these communications media.

Consider the significance of this in the light of the following observation made by a certain African official. "The most cherished possession of the African is the transistor radio. Everything spoken on the radio is accepted as the rule of life." When the people hear a commercial stating that no home should be without a certain aspirin, he went on, they run out to buy it.

This attitude is not by any means limited to Africa. The uncritical attitude of most people to persuasive propaganda, be it commercial, political, or any other, is well known.

Generally freedom is lost not so much by political upheaval as by the uncritical reception of ready-made ideas which block individual thinking and thus set the stage for dictators.

"Today we are willing to accept ideologies," wrote Franz E. Winkler in *Man: The Bridge Between Two Worlds*, "provided their phraseology is complicated enough to give us a valid excuse for not reading them, their conclusions simplified enough to learn without effort, and their truth guaranteed by the social or academic positions of their authors." He continues: "Lack of initiative in thinking creates a mental vacuum into which alien concepts flow unchallenged. In newspapers, radio, television, movies, and popular-science magazines, our time has countless channels through which such concepts can enter a person's subconscious mind, evading his mental defences."

In the Bible is a terse prophecy which leads us to believe that George Orwell's world is not as impossible as some may think. The prophecy pictures the rise of a despotic power hitherto unmatched for world influence. It is not possible even to outline the prophecy here, but it is given in Revelation, chapter 13. In this chapter we are told how "it [the power referred to] causes all, both small and great, both rich and poor, both free and slave, to be marked on the right hand or the forehead, so that no one can buy or sell unless he has the mark, that is, the name of the beast [symbolic reference to an associate power] or the number of its name." (Verses 16, 17, R.S.V.) In chapter 17 verse 13, we are told that the nations of earth will support this tyranny with their power and authority. Certainly the type of thought manipulation and control we have been referring to would do much to bring this situation about. □