# OBAMA'S 1984

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## *Obama's 1984*

By Mark Tapson

*On each landing, opposite the lift shaft, the poster with the enormous face gazed from the wall. It was one of those pictures which are so contrived that the eyes follow you about when you move. BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU, the caption beneath it ran.* – Nineteen Eighty-Four

*"Unfortunately, you've grown up hearing voices that incessantly warn of government as nothing more than some separate, sinister entity that's at the root of all our problems. Some of these same voices also do their best to gum up the works. They'll warn that tyranny is always lurking just around the corner. You should reject these voices."* – President Barack Obama, commencement address to the graduating class of Ohio State University on May 5, 2013[1]

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[1]http://www.realclearpolitics.com/video/2013/05/05/obama_to_ohio_state_grads_reject_voices_that_warn_about_government_tyranny.html

In June of 2013, Amazon.com sales of George Orwell's classic *Nineteen Eighty-Four* spiked nearly 10,000%.[2] Why? Because in the wake of recent revelations about secret, overreaching surveillance on the part of the National Security Agency, the ominous label "Orwellian" was being used so often by the media to describe the contemporary American political scene.

Orwell's famous dystopian novel is the story of Winston Smith's doomed rebellion against a Kafkaesque, all-knowing, all-seeing totalitarian state. The Great Britain of the future in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* – as imagined by Orwell in 1948, the year of the book's composition – is a world of omnipresent government surveillance and public mind control, a totalitarian government as successfully repressive as North Korea today, which stamps out all individualism and independent thought. The brainwashed people's reverence for the mysterious Party leader, Big Brother, whose glowering image is ubiquitous, is the very epitome of a cult of personality.

Smith works for the ironically-named Ministry

[2] http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/1984-sales-soaring-nsa-scandal-566336

of Truth, which is responsible for propaganda and historical revisionism. His job is to rewrite past newspaper articles so that the historical record always aligns with the current party line. Smith privately dreams of rebellion against Big Brother, but by the novel's bleak and terrifying end he comes to love his oppressor.

As the fearless iconoclast Christopher Hitchens put it in his introduction to a combined volume of Orwell's political fable *Animal Farm* and *1984*, the latter can be read "as a strong preventative medicine against the mentality of servility, and especially against the lethal temptation to exchange freedom for security: a bargain that invariably ends up with the surrender of both."

Orwell possessed an astute grasp of the ways totalitarians twist language in the service of their power-hungry agenda; that is reflected in this novel, which introduced into our lexicon some familiar and chilling terminology such as "thought police," "newspeak," "doublethink," and "memory hole."

But the most useful and common word we associate with the book is the adjective named after Orwell himself — *Orwellian* – to describe official

deception, ubiquitous surveillance, historical revisionism, and the mind-bending manipulation of language by a ruthlessly authoritarian state. That this word should be so commonly used in the United States today is an indication of the extent of the Obama Administration's intrusion into American lives and its success in making our social and political institutions tools of illicit government power.

* * *

Revelations of extensive spying on individuals by the National Security Agency was not the only – or even the first – major scandal to rock the second-term administration of President Barack Obama. In May 2013, a month before the NSA revelation shocked Americans, the political bullying of conservatives by the Internal Revenue Service and other government agencies began to come to light; and a little less than a year earlier, in September 2012, news dribbled out about the attempted official denial and cover-up of the murder of four Americans in a terrorist assault in Benghazi, Libya – including Ambassador Chris Stevens, the first American ambassador killed in office in over 32 years.

In addition to these scandals, the Obama administration was already fielding growing criticism over other examples of big-government abuse, such as the seizure of reporters' phone records, the escalation of lethal drone strikes, and the cover-up of a program which allowed weapons to fall into the hands of Mexican drug lords. Even the President's supporters in the mainstream media were forced to sit up and take notice, with *The New York Times*, for example, asserting that "Obama is proving the truism that the executive branch will use any power it is given and very likely abuse it." It is a serious issue when any Democrat President, but particularly this one, is slapped down in such a way by one of his major supporters.

The revelation at the heart of these scandals – actually, the word "scandal," implying merely naughty behavior, doesn't adequately describe what these transgressions are: politically abusive, unconstitutional and even criminal activities – is that they confirm the totalitarian mindset of this supposedly "liberal" administration, which is brimming with political bullies who secretly and illegally surveil American citizens, who circumvent the safeguards of the Constitution in order to advance their agenda, and who target their opponents

with the full intimidating weight of government. That is the totalitarian way.

The misnomer "liberal" implies a political philosophy advocating personal freedom. But today's liberals (who, after all, cynically appropriated this term for themselves after decapitating the true liberals in the postwar Democratic Party) are actually very uncomfortable with the notion of individual freedom. After all, if people are free to make their own life choices, they will very likely make ones that the left doesn't agree with; better to have an authoritarian government to step in and make the correct choices for you than trust you to make your own.

Take, for example, Mayor Michael Bloomberg's micro-managing obsession with eliminating choice from the everyday lives of New Yorkers, from salt in restaurants to supersized sodas. Such so-called "liberals" have a very illiberal compulsion to control every aspect of your existence. That is the totalitarian way.

Take, for another example, a concept that is gathering momentum among the leftist elites in, and connected to, the White House: "nudging," a

seemingly innocuous form of social engineering designed to steer Americans subtly toward making the "correct" choices in our personal and social lives – a kinder, gentler totalitarianism, if you will.

This concept first appeared in 2009 with a book by Richard Thaler and Harvard law professor Cass Sunstein called *Nudge*, on "how government and other organizations could induce people to avoid common errors." We all have "a little Homer Simpson in us," says Sunstein, referring to the slothful, selfish cartoon character on the Fox animated show *The Simpsons*; and once people realize that, "then there's a lot that can be done to manipulate them" by *nudging* them in the right direction.

Sunstein was an official advisor to President Obama (and happens to be the husband of the influential Samantha Power, new ambassador to the United Nations, where she will be able to nudge American foreign policy into line with the will and interests of the international community.) Sunstein, who once wrote that "there is no liberty without dependency" – itself an exemplary nugget of doublethink – is the author of another book which argues that citizens' rights exist only to the extent

that they are granted by the government. In 2012, he gave a lecture at Yale on the topic of nudging and has a book forthcoming in 2014 called – with apparent seriousness – *Nanny Statecraft.*

Sunstein and his comrades in arms are designing "choice architectures" that rescue us from our Homer Simpson-like incompetence and sloth, and guide us, like cattle, in the direction of what the state deems to be the proper moral and societal choices. To apply this theory to policy-making, the Obama administration recently announced the creation of a "Behavioral Insights Team."

This may sound rather innocuous and even beneficial, but as David Brooks puts it in *The New York Times,* "This kind of soft paternalism will inevitably slide into a hard paternalism, with government elites manipulating us into doing the sorts of things they want us to do."

That is a polite way of saying that, for all their well-meaning intentions, the radical left's lust for power in the service of their utopian vision inevitably leads to the famous formulation from another of George Orwell's books: "Some animals are more equal than others."

How does this happen? How does the left become committed to allegedly benign social experiments whose ultimate objective is to constrain liberty in a way that heads us inevitably toward totalitarianism? How have we set sail so blithely for *1984*? It is not an overnight process, especially in a country as steeped in freedom and individual rights as the United States. The barriers to establishing a totalitarian state must be slowly, imperceptibly chipped away for the malign transformation to occur.

A first step on the road to serfdom is to institute policies and laws that diminish the power and freedoms of the individual, while simultaneously growing ever more expansive and more intrusive agencies which aggrandize ever more intimidating power. Two of the government agencies at the heart of Obama's scandals this year – the NSA and the IRS– have never been so large and powerful, have never been so interconnected, and have never had so much mutual access to so much personal information about every aspect of our lives, down to the most insignificant "metadata." Today's technology and interconnected bureaucracies are shaping a future more powerful than the one Orwell considered a nightmare.

This compulsion to empower bigger and bigger government is entirely consistent with the nature of the radical left, among them Barack Obama and his cronies like advisor Valerie Jarrett, Attorney General Eric Holder, and former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, all of whom in their various ways are Saul Alinsky devotees who possess an open resentment of and frustration with the Constitution, the "flawed document" that throws up roadblocks to their controlling, statist agenda.

Obama *et al* have made no secret of their willingness to compromise the First Amendment, for example, working as they have in concert with the largest international Muslim entity, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, to effectively criminalize any criticism of Islam.

They have made no secret of their desire to subvert the Second Amendment, working as they are toward the *de facto*, if not *de jure*, banning of private gun ownership while the Department of Homeland Security, which considers "anti-government types" to be an enemy of this country, buys up 1.6 billion rounds as part of a strategy to disarm

Americans.[3]

According to an unguarded 2001 radio interview[4] in which he laid out his big-government political, judicial, and economic philosophy, Obama views the Constitution as a flawed document from which we must "break free." After all, the Constitution is "a charter of negative liberties," which "says what the states can't do to you and what the federal government can't do to you, but doesn't say what the federal government or State government *must* do on your behalf." What we need instead is a "living" Constitution that shifts to "positive economic rights" in the form of income redistribution, government-provided health care, etc.

In addition to his dissatisfaction with what he views as the barriers to "social justice" presented by this country's founding documents, Obama is frustrated with the constraints on his personal power as President. He barely bothers to conceal his

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[3] http://www.forbes.com/sites/ralphbenko/2013/03/11/1-6-billion-rounds-of-ammo-for-homeland-security-its-time-for-a-national-conversation/

[4] http://patriotupdate.com/articles/obama%E2%80%99s-%E2%80%98redistribution-of-wealth%E2%80%99-radio-interview-2001/

impatience and contempt toward the other branches of government that hinder his authoritarianism – the judiciary and Congress. And he is selling his supporters on that attitude by painting Congress as the bad guys. Toward the end of a July 2013 speech in Jacksonville, Florida, for example, Obama said, "So where I can act on my own, I'm going to act on my own. I won't wait for Congress." Depressingly, this baldly totalitarian statement was greeted with applause.

In a speech later that month at Knox College in Galesburg, Illinois, Obama referred to his intention to act on his own authority at least four times: "That means whatever executive authority I have to help the middle class, I'll use it." This declaration too was followed by applause.

## Obama's Cult of Personality

*The face of Big Brother seemed to persist for several seconds on the screen, as though the impact that it had made on everyone's eyeballs were too vivid to wear off immediately. The little sandy-haired woman had flung herself forward over the back of the chair in front of her. With a tremulous murmur that sounded like "My Savior!" she ex-*

*tended her arms toward the screen. Then she buried her face in her hands. It was apparent that she was uttering a prayer.* – Nineteen Eighty-Four

*"Give honor to God, our Lord and Savior, Barack Obama!"* – Entertainer Jamie Foxx at the 2012 Soul Train Music Awards

* * *

The totalitarian left craves to dominate – while it also craves to be dominated. This means submitting wholly to their own state oppressor – learning, like Orwell's Winston Smith, to love him.

From the beginning of his presidential career, Obama has been at the center of a cult of personality unequalled in American political history, an idolatry that is central to consolidation of control. From the iconic "Hope" campaign poster showing Obama gazing off toward the utopian horizon much like the workers of Soviet propaganda art, to the tendency of news editors to print photos in which Obama's head is haloed by the Presidential Seal, the President has benefited from a cult of personality consciously constructed by his supporters in political and media bureaucracies. This deifica-

tion —which is itself a subtraction from the power of average Americans – is summarized by a gushing comment of Newsweek editor Evan Thomas: "In a way Obama is standing above the country, above the world. He's sort of God. He's going to bring all different sides together."

Of course, it isn't just the media that are eager to sing Obama's praises. The left-leaning entertainment industry goes above and beyond the call of duty to lend their star power in his support. Remember the 2012 Obama campaign's "For All" pledge drive, in which celebrities, politicians and ordinary supporters were encouraged to submit photos of themselves to the campaign website, picturing them with hands on hearts, pledging to vote for Obama? This was, in effect, a new Pledge of Allegiance.

Every totalitarian leader knows how crucial it is to indoctrinate children into the cult of personality, in order to secure the future for the Party. Joseph Stalin presented himself as a strong, caring father figure to Soviet children, just as Hitler and Saddam Hussein did for their people. Now, in the age of Obama, Chris Rock described the President and First Lady Michelle as "kind of like the mom

and the dad of the country. And when your dad says something, you listen." We have disturbing video of New Jersey elementary school students being taught to rap his praises ("Mmm mmm mmm, Barack Hussein Obama").[5]

Then there is the even creepier video of Venice, California schoolchildren in matching "Imagine Hope" t-shirts singing "Obama's gonna change it, Obama's gonna lead 'em" and chanting "Yes, we can" before a banner of his red, white and blue "O" icon. Such indoctrination is unprecedented in American history.

Obama's cult of personality doesn't end with the children. In early 2012, for example, local veterans complained about an American flag with the stars replaced by Obama's face flying over a Florida county's Democrat headquarters. Democratic Party officials eventually took down the flag, but Nancy Hurlbert, chairwoman of the Lake County Democratic Party, defended it by diverting the discussion from its unpatriotic disrespect to the alleged racism of the complaining veterans: "It leads me to believe that it's not about the flag. Certain elements cannot

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[5] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PJFC1qFCgyA

accept Barack Obama as president."[6]

As with any totalitarian leader, mocking Obama is treated as dangerous sacrilege. Take, for a recent example, the Missouri rodeo clown in an Obama mask who made the mistake of doing what rodeo clowns do: clowning around in a mask of whoever currently occupies the White House.

The local NAACP actually demanded Justice Department and Secret Service probes into the clown and his past, as if he might be part of a conspiracy to overthrow or perhaps assassinate more than just the President's character. As if it weren't outrageous enough that the clown received death threats, the Missouri State Fair Commission announced it was permanently banning him from ever participating again, and it instituted mandatory sensitivity training henceforth for rodeo clowns.[7]

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[6] http://www.foxnews.com/us/2012/03/14/us-flag-depicting-president-obama-removed-from-floridas-lake-county-democratic/#ixzz2dbfa6vss

[7] http://www.cnn.com/2013/08/15/politics/missouri-rodeo-clowns-sensitivity-training-obama-clown

## Big Brother Is Watching

T*here was of course no way of knowing whether you were being watched at any given moment. How often, or on what system, the Thought Police plugged in on any individual wire was guesswork. It was even conceivable that they watched everybody all the time. But at any rate they could plug in your wire whenever they wanted to. You had to live – did live, from habit that became instinct – in the assumption that every sound you made was overheard, and, except in darkness, every movement scrutinized*. – Nineteen Eighty-Four

*"In the abstract, you can complain about Big Brother and how this is a potential program run amok, but when you actually look at the details, then I think we've struck the right balance."* – President Barack Obama on the NSA scandal[8]

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In June of 2013, *The Washington Post* and T*he Guardian* simultaneously published a series of articles about documents leaked by National Secu-

[8] http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/1984-sales-soaring-nsa-scandal-566336

rity Agency-contracted systems analyst Edward Snowden, documents which exposed a vast scale of secret domestic surveillance, including a massive accumulation of information about private telephone calls. Snowden was charged by federal prosecutors for violating the Espionage Act of 1917, while Obama went on national television to claim that "we don't have a domestic spying program" and "there is no spying on Americans." However, the many thousands of documents that Snowden leaked revealed a complex web of spy programs which intercepted internet and telephone conversations from over a billion users in dozens of countries.

The intrusive secret data-mining didn't end there. A top-secret communications surveillance program called PRISM enabled the U.S. intelligence community to access the servers of nine internet behemoths such as Google, Yahoo, YouTube, Skype and Facebook for a wide range of digital data. That NSA service grew exponentially under Obama at the same time he was trumpeting the end of Bush's War on Terror.

The *Washington Post* reported[9] that the NSA had broken privacy rules or overstepped its legal authority thousands of times each year since 2008, including violation of a court order, unauthorized use of data on more than 3,000 Americans and green-card holders, unauthorized access to intercepted communications, the distribution of protected content, and the use of automated systems without built-in safeguards to prevent unlawful surveillance.

In June, after promising to explain the NSA's record in "as transparent a way as we possibly can," Deputy Attorney General James Cole confessed to Congress, "Every now and then, there may be a mistake."

Actually, an internal NSA audit from May 2012 counted 2,776 such "mistakes" in the preceding 12 months (the audit counted only incidents at NSA facilities in the Washington area; the number could have been substantially higher had it included other areas.)

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[9] http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/nsa-broke-privacy-rules-thousands-of-times-per-year-audit-finds/2013/08/15/3310e554-05ca-11e3-a07f-49ddc7417125.html

U.S. intelligence officials claimed, however, that the controversial programs helped foil "dozens of potential terror plots" in the U.S. and in more than twenty other countries.[10] In truth, there is legitimate debate to be had regarding the justification for such programs in the interests of national security in the post-9/11 era. But as columnist Mark Steyn put it:

> We're told that universal surveillance has prevented all kinds of atrocities we can never hear about — an answer straight out of Orwell. Yet oddly, in the ones we do hear about, the perps are hiding in plain sight (Major Hasan with "Soldier of Allah" on his business card), the intelligence services do nothing (the Pantybomber known to the CIA but still permitted to board the plane), and the digital superstate is useless (the Tsarnaev photo rang no bells with the facial-recognition software, but was identified by friends who saw it on TV).

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[10] http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2013/06/16/officials-nsa-programs-broke-plots-in-20-nations-1706735692

> And thus, the bozo leviathan blunders on. Big Politically Correct Brother sees everything . . . and nothing.[11]

Even *The New York Times* found the national security rationale too much to swallow:

> To casually permit this surveillance — with the American public having no idea that the executive branch is now exercising this power — fu*ndamentally shifts power between the individual and the state, and it repudiates constitutional principles governing search, seizure and privacy.* [Emphasis added]

NSA Director Keith B. Alexander said last year that "we don't hold data on U.S. citizens." But the agency's internal definition of "data" does not cover "metadata" such as the trillions of American call records that the NSA is now known to have collected and stored since 2006. Those records include the telephone numbers of the parties and the times and durations of conversations, among other details (but not their content or the names of call-

[11] http://www.nationalreview.com/article/351120/big-politically-correct-brother-mark-steyn/page/0/1

ers).

The TechDirt website points out that "Anyone who claims that 'it's just metadata' in an attempt to minimize what's happening is basically revealing that they haven't the slightest clue about what metadata is… Your metadata effectively creates a 'fingerprint' that is unique to you and easy to match to your identity."[12] As the Center for Digital Democracy's Jeffrey Chester says, "We've crossed a digital Rubicon here; there's no going back. Big data is ruling our lives, and the big question is whether there will be any kind of limits here, protecting our consumer information and our democratic right to privacy."[13]

And how does the White House intend to rein in the NSA in the future? It reportedly proposed Cass Sunstein as a member of a panel to review the surveillance practices of the NSA, among other former White House and intelligence staff-

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[12] http://www.techdirt.com/articles/20130708/01453123733/anyone-brushing-off-nsa-surveillance-because-its-just-metadata-doesnt-know-what-metadata-is.shtml

[13] http://www.mcclatchydc.com/2013/06/07/193356/few-options-for-online-users-to.html

ers.[14] Sunstein was the head of the White House's Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs until last year, when he returned to teaching at Harvard Law School. You may recall him as the architect behind the soft totalitarianism of "nudging."

In 2008, Sunstein co-authored a working paper that suggests government agents or their allies "cognitively infiltrate" conspiracy theorist groups by joining "chat rooms, online social networks or even real-space groups" and influencing the conversation.

Sunstein's paper notes that his plan of "cognitive infiltration" should be used only against *false conspiracy theories that could be harmful to the government or society.* [Emphasis added] The paper also suggests that the government "formally hire credible private parties to engage in counterspeech," a word which Orwell would have admired.

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[14] http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/the-switch/wp/2013/08/23/obama-pick-for-nsa-review-panel-wanted-paid-pro-government-shills-in-chat-rooms/

## The Hemisphere Project

Smaller government agencies got into the spy game as well. *The New York Times* reported[15] recently that for at least six years, law enforcement officials had been working on a counter-narcotics program called the Hemisphere Project, a partnership between federal and local drug officials and AT&T, which gives the government routine access to an enormous database containing the records of decades of Americans' phone calls — the scale and longevity of which is unequalled, even by the NSA's collection. The program apparently began in 2007 and has been carried out in great secrecy.

While the NSA stores the data for nearly all calls in the United States for five years, AT&T supplies law enforcement with phone data from as far back as 1987. Approximately four billion call records are added to the database *every day*. And unlike the NSA data, the Hemisphere data includes information on the locations of callers.

The Obama administration said that Hemisphere uses "routine investigative procedures" and

[15] http://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/02/us/drug-agents-use-vast-phone-trove-eclipsing-nsas.html

poses “no novel privacy issues.” The phone data is stored by AT&T, not by the government as in the NSA program.

Columbia law professor Daniel C. Richman sympathizes with the government’s argument that it needs such voluminous data to catch criminals in the era of disposable cellphones. But Richman said the program raised the Fourth Amendment concern that even just the government *possession* of huge amounts of private data, rather than its actual use, may trespass on the Amendment’s requirement that searches be “reasonable.”

## The Internal Revenue Service

But no clandestine government abuse quite exposed the Obama administration’s political bullying like that of the intimidating Internal Revenue Service.

In early May 2013, the Treasury Inspector General released an audit report confirming that, from April 2010 to April 2012, the IRS stalled the processing of applications for tax-exempt status received from organizations with such presumably conservative indicators as “Tea Party,” “patriots,”

or "9/12" in their names, approving only four while over the same period green-lighting applications from several dozen organizations whose names included the likely left-leaning terms "progressive," "progress," "liberal," or "equality."

The *Washington Examiner* reported that, according to the inspector general, only six progressive groups were targeted compared to 292 conservative groups. In addition, 100 percent of applications for special tax status from groups with Tea Party, Patriots, or 9/12 in their names were put under IRS review, as opposed to only 30 percent of the progressive groups.[16] This news destroyed later Democratic objections that progressive groups were targeted as much as conservative ones.

Not only that, but the House Ways and Means Committee found that conservative groups seeking tax-exempt status were asked three times as many questions by the IRS and had longer delays than progressive groups.

The IRS also demanded from some conservative organizations unwieldy and intrusive amounts

[16] http://washingtonexaminer.com/treasury-irs-targeted-292-tea-party-groups-just-6-progressive-groups/article/2532456

of documentation and private information, such as what books their members were reading or what they had posted on social networking sites. The Coalition for Life of Iowa was actually asked to detail the content of their prayers at meetings. The Cincinnati office of the IRS used these responses to leak confidential donor information from some conservative applications to an investigative reporting organization. Mark Steyn labeled this abuse "a scale of depravity hitherto unknown to the tax authorities of the United States."

In advance of the Inspector General for Tax Administration's report, Director of the IRS Exempt Organizations division Lois Lerner stated that the IRS was "apologetic" for what she called "absolutely inappropriate" actions. She sought to divert responsibility from higher-ups and place the blame squarely on lower level workers: "It's the line people that did it without talking to managers." But the report showed that Lerner herself had been informed of the targeting at a meeting she attended on June 29, 2011.

Washington-based IRS supervisor Holly Paz acknowledged that she was personally involved in reviewing Tea Party applications for tax-exempt

status as far back as 2010, which contradicted the IRS' initial claim that the practice was limited to a handful of employees in Ohio. Media reports soon revealed that IRS officials in two other regional offices had also been involved. Paz said dozens of tea party applications sat untouched for more than a year while field agents waited for guidance from Washington on how to handle them.

Then, as an *Investor's Business Daily* editorial points out, there is "the suspicious timeline of Obama-appointed IRS chief counsel William Wilkins visiting the president on April 23 last year; then-IRS Commissioner Douglas Shulman visiting the White House the next day; and Wilkins' office sending the IRS 'guidance' on the Tea Party the day after that."[17]

In addition to conservative organizations applying for tax-exempt status, *existing* conservative groups like Morton Blackwell's Leadership Institute and the Claire Booth Luce Policy Institute were hit with IRS audits in the months before the 2012 election.

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[17] http://news.investors.com/ibd-editorials/073113-665955-irs-scandal-wont-die-thanks-to-new-revelations.htm#ixzz2ajfUZUuj

Revealingly, in a video clip from October 2010, Lerner comments to a small group at the Sanford School of Public Policy about how pressure was being brought to bear on the IRS to "fix the problem" of conservative tax-exempt groups.[18]

Three years later in May 2013, Lerner declared in a statement at a congressional hearing: "I have not broken any laws. I have not violated any IRS rules or regulations. And I have not provided false information to this or any other congressional committee." She then invoked her Fifth Amendment right not to incriminate herself and refused to testify. As historian and political essayist Victor Davis Hanson put it, "When a high commissioner of the IRS takes the 5th Amendment, it sends a frightening message: those audited go to jail when they refuse to testify; those who audit them who do the same do not."[19]

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[18] http://freedomslighthouse.net/2013/08/12/uncovered-2010-video-shows-irs-lois-lerner-talking-about-pressure-on-the-irs-to-fix-the-problem-of-political-activity-by-501-c4-groups-video-10192010/

[19] http://victorhanson.com/wordpress/?p=6331

## Church Groups

The IRS intimidation apparently extended to church groups as well. The Obama administration allegedly put in place in 2009 a highly classified program to solicit the aid of Christian pastors in identifying and exposing anti-government sentiment within conservative, evangelical churches. The request was worded in a manner that was intended to give the impression that the concern was about potential domestic terrorism.

One pastor claims he was asked by government operatives to keep his eyes and ears open to anyone in the congregation who was highly critical of the government, and to report such suspicious activity. The pastor also claims he was told to keep tabs on anyone in his flock who were avid gun owners and/or Tea Partiers.[20]

Several well-known religious organizations say they too were targeted, among them the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, the international charity Samaritan's Purse, and the Biblical Recorder, the newspaper of the North Carolina Bap-

[20] http://www.examiner.com/article/exclusive-obama-snoops-allegedly-infiltrate-christian-churches

tist State Convention.

Franklin Graham, the president of his father's ministry and of Samaritan's Purse, wrote a letter to Obama saying "I do not believe that the IRS audit of our two organizations last year is a coincidence – or justifiable... I believe that someone in the Administration was targeting and attempting to intimidate us. This is morally wrong and unethical – indeed some would call it 'un-American.'"[21]

Both organizations were notified of IRS audits on the same day, shortly after running advertisements urging voters to vote according to Biblical principles on North Carolina's Marriage Amendment. It was the first time in its history that the ministry had been audited. The Biblical Recorder too was audited for the first time since it was founded in 1833. It earned national attention last summer after publishing an interview with the Chick-Fil-A food chain president Dan Cathy, who stated his support for the traditional family. The Biblical Recorder also published the Billy Graham ministry's ads supporting traditional marriage.

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[21] http://www.redstate.com/toddstarnes/2013/05/15/irs-targeted-well-known-christian-ministries/

## Pro-Israel Groups

*National Review Online* reported[22] that the IRS also targeted pro-Israel groups, routing their applications for tax-exempt status to a unit in the agency that examines groups for potential terrorist ties.

In 2010, for example, after the pro-Israel organization Z Street applied for tax-exempt status, the IRS sent it requests for further information, and an IRS official told the group that its application was delayed because it was assigned to a "special unit" to determine "whether the organization's activities contradict the Administration's public policies," referring to Obama's opposition to Israeli settlements.

The irony is that charities based in the United States *have* indeed funneled money to organizations controlled by terrorist groups. But those charities have been *anti*-Israel, most notably the Holy Land Foundation, the Texas-based charity whose employees were indicted in 2004 for using the group as a front to steer funds to Hamas.

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[22] http://www.nationalreview.com/article/351208/irs-vs-pro-israel-groups-eliana-johnson

In light of these revelations that the IRS is not above using its frightening power for political payback (earning it the grim nickname the "Internal Revenge Service"), the fact that it will be in charge of implementing the upcoming ObamaCare leviathan – an unprecedented and unauthorized expansion of its power – is disturbing to say the least.

The new director of the IRS' ObamaCare office is Sarah Hall Ingram, who just happened to be the commissioner of the IRS's Tax Exempt & Government Entities division from 2009-2012, the period in which it began discriminating against conservative applicants. She was Lois Lerner's direct boss.[23] Now she will preside over the largest consolidation of personal data in history. It will link information about you and your family from the Treasury Department, the IRS, the Department of Homeland Security, and the Department of Justice.

## Federal Election Commission

Evidence also emerged that officials at the Federal Election Commission bullied conservatives as well.

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[23] http://www.nationalreview.com/article/350379/hey-lets-have-irs-run-obamacare-deroy-murdock

*The Wall Street Journal* reported[24] that emails from 2008 and 2009 show that the FEC's general counsel staff was investigating conservative political groups without the approval of its commissioners – a violation of FEC rules. It sought tax information about those groups from Lois Lerner – *a former FEC employee* – at the IRS. The emails show that Lerner then asked her staff to provide that confidential information to the FEC, even though the IRS is legally barred from releasing such information, *including* to the FEC.

*National Review* reports that Lerner was in email contact with at least one attorney at the Federal Election Commission to whom she apparently gave tax status information of a conservative group, the American Future Fund, before the FEC lawyer recommended "that the commission prosecute it for violations of campaign-finance law."

Subsequent disclosures made by Don McGahn, one of three Republican FEC commissioners, showed a litany of FEC staff abuses aimed largely at investigating conservative political groups, including unauthorized investigations, unsanctioned

[24] http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424127887323681904578642190875395974.html

work with law enforcement, and cases when documents were kept from commissioners.

In one example, FEC staff took an insubstantial Democratic accusation made in March 2012 against Republican Rick Santorum's presidential campaign and ran with it, going to extraordinary lengths to find a violation. McGahn said that the general counsel's office "performed extensive research during an extra-statutory investigation that produced various news articles and materials that claimed violations had occurred."

## AP Phone Records

Their cheerleading for the President did not save the media from being targeted by Attorney General Eric Holder. The Justice Department secretly collected telephone records for April and May of 2012 from as many as twenty of the Associated Press wire service's reporters and editors, ostensibly in relation to an apparent leak to the AP about an al Qaeda plot in Yemen. It was later revealed that the illegal procurement of those phone records was Holder's punishment for the AP ignoring a CIA request to delay its scoop until after Obama's counterterrorism advisor John Brennan

appeared on Good Morning America.[25]

In further persecution of media figures who aren't sufficiently obsequious, Holder signed off on a search warrant identifying Fox News reporter James Rosen as a "possible co-conspirator" in violations of the Espionage Act and authorizing seizure of Rosen's private emails. Holder, who misled the House Judiciary Committee about his involvement in targeting Rosen,[26] later half-heartedly reassured the press that reporters would never be arrested for "doing their job" (leaving the implication that they'll be fine as long as they continue to provide cover for the Obama regime).

But the media got the intimidating subtext. Guardian journalist Glenn Greenwald explained the implications of the DOJ targeting Rosen: "This newfound theory of the Obama DOJ – that a journalist can be guilty of crimes for 'soliciting' the disclosure of classified information – is a means for… criminalizing the act of investigative journal-

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[25] http://www.discoverthenetworks.org/individualProfile.asp?indid=2357

[26] http://www.foxnews.com/opinion/2013/05/24/did-holder-mislead-congress-about-targeting-reporters-like-james-rosen/

ism itself."[27]

## If You See Something, Say Something

*Hardly a week passed in which the* Times *did not carry a photograph describing how some eavesdropping little sneak – "child hero" was the phrase generally used – had overheard some compromising remark and denounced his parents to the Thought Police.*– Nineteen Eight-Four

* * *

Totalitarian regimes are masters at turning citizens against each other, breaking down the bonds of friendship and even of families as people live in perpetual fear of being reported for any offense against the state – or for none at all. The Obama administration too knows well how to enlist its supporters to report on its opposition.

In 2009, the White House instituted "WhiteHouse.gov/realitycheck" to counter rising popular opposition to Obamacare. "There is a lot of disinformation about health insurance reform out there," the White House noted:

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[27] http://frontpagemag.com/2013/arnold-ahlert/obamas-war-on-fox-news-reporters/

> These rumors often travel just below the surface via chain emails or through casual conversation. Since we can't keep track of all of them here at the White House, we're asking for your help. If you get an email or see something on the web about health insurance reform that seems fishy, send it to flag@whitehouse.gov.[28]

It wasn't enough for the administration to set up a website for Obamacare information; it was also asking supporters to *report* on sources of "disinformation," to alert the government about any sources of opposition. This was essentially a call for informants.

After outrage spread over what conservative blogger Michele Malkin called this "internet snitch brigade," the White House quickly disabled the tip box. But in 2012, Obama's re-election campaign launched a new website, www.AttackWatch.com, to monitor "inaccuracies," "falsehoods," "gossip," and "smears" against Obama:

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[28] http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/Facts-Are-Stubborn-Things

> If you're worried about the increasing negativity of the attacks on President Obama and his record, now's your chance to fight back with the facts. Visit AttackWatch.com to learn the truth about frequent smears, track new attacks as they happen, and *report false allegations you've seen or heard.* [Emphasis added]
>
> We've heard it all since 2008, from lies about the Affordable Care Act to false rumors that the Obama administration hasn't been an ally to Israel. These aren't just unfounded allegations about the President — they're attempts to derail the momentum of this movement and undermine everything we've accomplished together in the last three years.

AttackWatch.com is a subdivision of the "Truth Team," itself part of Organizing for Action (OFA). Discover the Networks, the online encyclopedia of the left, notes that OFA, which was originally set up as a tax-exempt nonprofit group independent of the Democratic National Committee, served as:

> essentially a sitting president's re-election campaign that morphed, after the election, into a nonprofit issue-advocacy group dedicated to advancing his agendas—something for which there was no precedent in American politics. As one news report put it: "Obama is the first [president] to form a group that will raise millions of dollars as it seeks to perpetuate a year-round campaign for him."[29]

The White House had already announced, in 2011, the creation of a Progressive and Media Response department, a sort of online rapid response team to counter stories the administration considers "unfavorable."[30]

## Benghazi, Down the Memory Hole

*Similar slits existed in thousands or tens of thousands throughout the building, not only in ev-*

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[29] http://www.discoverthenetworks.org/printgroupProfile.asp?grpid=7774

[30] http://www.theblaze.com/stories/2011/05/24/meet-the-white-houses-new-story-squasher-director-of-progressive-media/

*ery room but at short intervals in every corridor. For some reason they were nicknamed memory holes. When one knew that any document was due for destruction, or even when one saw a scrap of waste paper lying about, it was an automatic action to lift the flap of the nearest memory hole and drop it in, whereupon it would be whirled away on a current of warm air to the enormous furnaces which were hidden somewhere in the recesses of the building.* – Nineteen Eighty-Four, George Orwell

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Orwell's "memory hole" refers to the chilling totalitarian practice of rewriting politically inconvenient history – even as it happens, if necessary – or of erasing it altogether, to suit the state's needs. This applies directly to the September 11, 2012 attack on the U.S. mission in Benghazi, Libya, and the Obama Administration's clumsy cover-up of the cause of the deaths of Ambassador Chris Stevens and three other Americans there. Certainly the Obama Administration has shown that it would prefer for the whole embarrassing debacle to simply disappear down a memory hole. "What difference at this point does it make?" Hillary Clinton snarled in response to questions about her involvement. "Benghazi happened a long time ago," Obama's

press secretary Jay Carney said dismissively when pressed about whistleblowers being prevented from testifying.

The Obama administration immediately insisted that the attack, carried out on the anniversary of 9/11, was not a premeditated act of terrorism, but a spontaneous, unplanned protest sparked by an obscure and comically inept movie trailer, posted on YouTube, called *The Innocence of Muslims.*

In truth, however, U.S. intelligence agencies had already accumulated more than enough evidence to conclude without doubt that the attack was a planned act of terrorism, although State Department officials and President Obama himself overrode these findings in pushing the revisionist scapegoating of a "hateful" video and its "Islamophobic" creator.

In his appearance a full week after Benghazi on *The Late Show with David Letterman*, Obama said that "extremists and terrorists used [*The Innocence of Muslims*] as an excuse to attack a variety of our embassies." In a Univision Town Hall appearance on September 20, he reiterated that the "natural protests that arose because of the outrage

over the video were used as an excuse by extremists to see if they can also directly harm U.S. interests."

Obama's Ambassador to the United Nations, Susan Rice, appeared on five separate television news programs the following Sunday, where she falsely claimed that the attack was not premeditated but a "spontaneous reaction" to "a hateful and offensive video that was widely disseminated throughout the Arab and Muslim world."

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton too denounced the film as "disgusting and reprehensible." At the receiving ceremony for the bodies of the Americans, Clinton told grieving family members, "We've seen rage and violence directed at American embassies over an awful internet video that we had nothing to do with." According to the father of slain Navy SEAL Tyrone Woods, Clinton "came over … she talked with me…. [S]he did not appear to be one bit sincere at all and she mentioned about, 'We're going to have that person arrested and prosecuted that did the video.'"

What were they all trying to send down the memory hole? Discover the Network's resource

suggests that the Obama Administration's post-Benghazi falsehoods and scapegoating were likely aimed at diverting public attention away from a pile of inconvenient truths, some of which are below:[31]

- The administration had ignored dozens of warning signs about growing Islamic extremism and jihadism in the region over a period of more than 6 months;

- The administration, for political reasons, had ignored or denied repeated requests for extra security by American diplomats stationed in Benghazi;

- The administration had failed to beef up security even for the anniversary of 9/11, a date of obvious significance to terrorists;

- The administration, fully cognizant of what was happening on the ground during the September 11 attacks in

[31] http://www.discoverthenetworks.org/viewSubCategory.asp?id=1755

Benghazi, nonetheless denied multiple calls for help by Americans who were stationed there;

- The administration had hired members of the February 17th Martyrs' Brigade, a Libyan militia group with clear al Qaeda sympathies, to provide security at the U.S. mission in Benghazi; and

- Throughout 2011 and 2012 the administration had been lending its assistance to jihadists affiliated with al Qaeda, supposedly the organization that represented the prime focus of Obama's anti-terrorism efforts; moreover, some of those same jihadists had personally fought against U.S. troops in Iraq and Afghanistan.

For a President who has made his sympathies for the Islamic world clear from his earliest days in office (as in his highly touted Cairo speech shortly after his first election), the hapless filmmaker of T*he Innocence of Muslims* was a convenient scapegoat. As Victor Davis Hanson put it, "Beating up on the

unsympathetic Nakoula killed two birds with one stone: it reminded the world that the multiculturalist Obama would not tolerate anti-Muslim thought on his shores, and it propped up the sinking narrative of an extinguished al-Qaeda."[32]

And so, two weeks after Benghazi, in a speech to the UN Assembly, Obama again stated that "a crude and disgusting video sparked outrage throughout the Muslim world." He then went on to say, astonishingly, that "The future must not belong to those who slander the prophet of Islam," siding with the Islamic fundamentalists who are eager to criminalize what they deem to be "defamation" of Islam.

The truth about Benghazi is not yet known. Was it attacked because it was a CIA staging area funneling weapons from Libya to the Syrian "resistance"? Were there Special Forces contingents ready to assist Ambassador Stevens and his supporters who were prevented from leaving? We have to believe that the truth will out. But until it does, one thing is clear: Obama and his administration have continued to stuff the whole sordid affair down a memory hole. And in so doing, they have

[32] http://victorhanson.com/wordpress/?p=6331

not only grievously wounded U.S. national security interests, but given the lie to a President who claimed that his would be "the most transparent administration in history."[33]

## It Can't Happen Here…

*"In the Soviet Union before, in China today, and even in the US, officials always think what they do is necessary, and firmly believe they do what is best for the state and the people. But the lesson that people should learn from history is the need to limit state power."* – Chinese dissident Ai Weiwei on the NSA scandal[34]

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George Orwell set *Nineteen Eighty-Four* not in some distant, corrupt third world locale but in his native England, to warn readers that no country, however civilized and theoretically democratic, however much it purports to celebrate freedom and individual rights, is free of the threat of a totalitarian state. That includes the United States where the threat of government power (and, paradoxically,

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[33] http://techpresident.com/news/23512/obama-most-transparent-administration-history

[34] http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/jun/11/nsa-surveillance-us-behaving-like-china

government impotence) is greater than it has ever been before.

While our present certainly does not yet match Orwell's vision of the future, President Obama and the radical left are "nudging" us in that direction, fulfilling his commitment, boldly announced upon his inauguration to "fundamentally transform" America. His authoritarian impulses, the unprecedented cult of personality he has used to agglomerate power, the expansion and interconnectedness of vast, Big Brother-style government programs like ObamaCare and the IRS, the Orwellian denials and on-the-fly historical revisionism, are all gathering momentum as Obama seeks, in his second and final term, to push us swiftly and irrevocably toward an America that will not resemble the place where we were born.

The conflict between servitude and freedom is eternal. But the way in which this conflict is being played out in our country today is not an abstraction but a situation with urgent consequence. What is at stake is whether the United States can survive the onslaught against its historic institutions and basic character. If it cannot, America will vanish down a memory hole altogether.

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