



Written by [Ralph R. Reiland](#) on November 14, 2014

Big Brother Stamping Out Dissent

What's the perfect way for a government to  indict itself, to show the public they're being governed by a tyrannical regime that's establishing the nightmarish society depicted in George Orwell's *1984*, a nation where individualism and free thought are crushed and the ruling party is all-pervading?

Answer: Have the police arrest anyone who is caught reading Orwell's *1984*.

"The crackdown on opposition to the May 22 coup continues," TIME magazine reported this past summer regarding the Thai government's suppression of pro-democracy, anti-martial law demonstrators in Bangkok. "On Sunday, June 22, eight people were arrested outside the capital's Siam Paragon mall — one for reading George Orwell's dystopian classic *1984*, copies of which have become symbols of the protest movement. Others were arrested for holding sandwiches, which have also become a tongue-in-cheek pro-democracy prop."

Reported The Associated Press on June 22, 2014: "The junta that took power last month has proven to be one of the most repressive regimes in Thailand in more than four decades. Military authorities have made it clear they will tolerate no dissent. They have summoned hundreds of people perceived as threats to public order — mostly members of the ousted government, activists and intellectuals; most of those released have had to sign pledges saying they will not instigate unrest."

Continued The Associated Press, specifically related to Orwell's *1984*, "Handfuls of anti-coup protesters have staged several silent readings of the classic book elsewhere in the capital in recent weeks because they say its indictment of totalitarianism has become relevant after the army deposed the nation's elected government."

A Thai journalist who witnessed the arrest of the man reading Orwell's book reported the man "was taken away by half a dozen plainclothes police," reported The Associated Press. The man at first "read the book quietly, then held it up as officers approached and journalists took photos. When questioned, the man said he was reading the book for 'liberty, equality and fraternity' — the slogan of the French revolution. The man was also playing the French national anthem on his smartphone, the reporter said."

With a large decline in tourism in Thailand since the coup, the military junta began promoting "martial law tourism." The government's ad campaign, "24 hours Enjoy Thailand," stresses that the new far-reaching arrest and confinement powers ensure that foreign tourists "can be safe 24 hours a day."

In Orwell's *1984*, a man named O'Brien, a prominent and zealous leader of the Inner Party, appears at the cell of Winston Smith to torture and brainwash him into becoming a loyal subject of Big Brother.

O'Brien paints a dispiriting picture for Smith of the world that is being created: "There will be no loyalty, except loyalty towards the party. There will be no love, except the love of Big Brother. There will be no curiosity, no enjoyment of the process of life. All competing pleasures will be destroyed. But always — do not forget this, Winston — always there will be the intoxication of power, constantly increasing and constantly growing subtler. Always, at every moment, there will be the thrill of victory, the sensation of trampling on an enemy who is helpless. If you want a picture of the future, imagine a



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boot stamping on a human face — forever. And remember, that is forever. The face will always be there to be stamped upon. The heretic, the enemy of society, will always be there, so that he can be defeated and humiliated over again.”

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