**Ed Snowden & David Miranda**

Edward Snowden was a contractor formerly employed by the NSA and the CIA. This exposed him to many top-secret documents. In particular, he discovered that France, UK and the USA were collecting private data from many social networking sites such as Facebook and even from our emails. Feeling that this was morally wrong, he decided to reveal this information to Glenn Greenwald, a Guardian journalist claiming that he did not want to live in a society that does these sorts of things. Having effectively broken the law, Snowden left the United States in order to avoid capture. He stayed in Hong Kong until June 23rd. From there, he requested asylum in several countries, and is currently residing in Moscow airport.

NSA programs, as leaked by Snowden, collect data including the phone records and the content of emails. The NSA relies crucially on two statues: Section 702 of the FISA Amendments Act (FAA) and Section 215 of the Patriot Act. The former authorizes the collection of communications content under PRISM and other programs, while the latter authorizes the collection of metadata from phone companies such as Verizon and AT&T. However, multiple reports and leaked documents indicate that the statutes have been interpreted in secret by the FISA intelligence courts to grant much broader authority than they were originally written to allow. Very recently, companies such as Facebook and Yahoo have spoken out regarding how the NSA threatened executives with jail if they revealed just how much information they were providing to them.

In August 2013, the partner of Glenn Greenwald, David Miranda, was detained at Heathrow airport for almost 9 hours to be questioned under schedule 7 of the Terrorism Act 2000. Miranda was returning from Berlin where he had visited the US filmmaker who had been working on the Snowden files with Greenwald. Although Miranda was released, officials confiscated his electronics equipment in an attempt to destroy the Snowden files. The MI5 even went as far as going to the Guardian offices and destroying hard drives containing such information. The attitude of the UK in not allowing the publication of these documents is in stark contrast to that of the US, who, under the First Amendment of their Constitution, allow for freedom to their national press.

**Alternative Journalism – Midia Ninja**

The government tends to release only specific information to the press. Thus, in recent months, the uprising of alternative journalism collectives with the intention of providing uncut and uncensored news has been profound. A particular example of this has been seen in Brazil in the wake of the protests that have been spreading through the country since June this year. The operation of the collective is mainly improvised, with broadcasts generally established through smartphones and cameras. The collective, named Media Ninja, rose to prominence in Rio on July 22nd when they were interviewing the protestor Bruno Telles who was charged for allegedly throwing incendiary bombs against the police. As Telles pleaded innocence, footage from Media Ninja showing a barehanded Telles secured his acquittal. The information that they provide as a collective is so raw, in fact, that the Bar association collaborates with them on issues of media freedom and police brutality. This allows their images to serve as formal evidence in court that can challenge police briefings which are often relied too heavily upon.

**“The ruling groups were always infected to some extent by liberal ideas… No government had the power to keep its citizens under constant surveillance.”**

George Orwell‘s uncanny predictions for the future of government surveillance in the extreme are exemplified in this quotation. The second sentence could have been lifted from a commentary on our current lives; such is its relevance to today’s society.

Opinion on the excessive use of closed circuit television vary, but it’s revolutionising of criminal prosecution is undeniable. In Nineteen Eighty-Four, telescreens allow for monitoring of human activity on an unprecedented level, and lead to our dystopian hero’s downfall.

**“How often, or on what system, the Thought Police plugged in on any individual wire was guesswork… But at any rate they could plug in your wire whenever they wanted to”**

This is similar to the previous quotation, and the wording holds vestiges of the phone tapping that is seemingly widespread today.

**“He knew now that for seven years the Thought Police had watched him like a beetle under a magnifying glass.” “BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU”**

Nineteen Eighty-Four’s dystopian world leans heavily on the surveillance of the common man, and maintains order through blatant warnings. ‘Big Brother’ has a grasp on everyone’s lives. This in itself bears resemblance to the activities of the NSA post 9/11, albeit the American agency worked, notoriously, much more covertly. However, in both instances an underestimation is present- Winston of the thought Police’s omnipresence and our societies of the government.

**“The messages he received referred to articles or news-items which for one reason or another it was thought necessary to alter”**

The suppression of news and the changing of historical facts and promises is a foundation of INGSOC, and is one of the reasons why *doublethink* needs to exist. One can draw parallels with the British Government’s interference in the leaking of information: such as their smashing up of the Guardian’s hard drives.

**“You are prepared to give your lives; commit murder; cause the deaths of hundreds of innocent people; betray your country; cheat, forge, blackmail, corrupt children, distribute drugs, encourage prostitution…”**

This quotation links to the terrorism mind-set associated most commonly in the 21st century UK with Islamic extremism. Of course, terrorism is an inevitable consequence of community, and is less of an astute prediction by Orwell. It does though clearly illustrate the mental state required to participate in terrorist activities.