



2 + 2 = 5

**THE DYSTOPIAN NOVEL
AND CONTEMPORARY
FEARS**

OLIVER COHEN

TOTALITARIANISM

Source: Institute Of Modern Russia

Totalitarianism

How dictators use their power to control society

"We were told how great he was, that he could ride a horse when he was 5 years old and shoot a gun when he was 3. Of course we didn't believe these things, but if you laughed or said anything, you'd be killed." this is a quote from a north Korean citizen who left the country in 2015 (article published by Wall Street Journal). This is the reality of north Korea and many other totalitarian societies throughout history.

In 2011 Kim Jong-Un became the highest military and political power in north Korea. He now controls most of the government thanks to a form of leadership called totalitarianism. totalitarianism is described as "a system of government that is centralized and dictatorial and requires complete subservience to the state." This perfectly explains north Korea's current government with Kim Jong-Un being the dictator with power at the center.

Kim Jong-Un uses his control and power to censor and manage every aspect of north Koreans media, from what's published in newspapers, to what they watch on TV. Totalitarianism is what gives Kim Jong-Un this ability to directly choose what his citizens are exposed to, because with the power that he has there is no position in north Korean government that is able to question or stop the decisions of Kim Jong-Un.

"but if you laughed or said anything, you'd be killed"

Kim Jong-Un's restrictions are extremely tight. Only 9.7% of north Koreans own a cell phone (excluding smuggled phones from other countries.) Very few high ranking government officials have access to the worldwide internet, while some schools have access to a intranet, a private/local network called Kwangmyong, that is closely watched and censored by the north Korean government. After his uncle, Jang Song Thaek, was executed for wanting reform, Kim Jong-Un had Jang's name taken out of the media through post-editing of newsreels yet another way Kim controlled the media within north Korea.



This image shows Kim Jong-Un contacting a machine plant to give them field guidance using a computer.

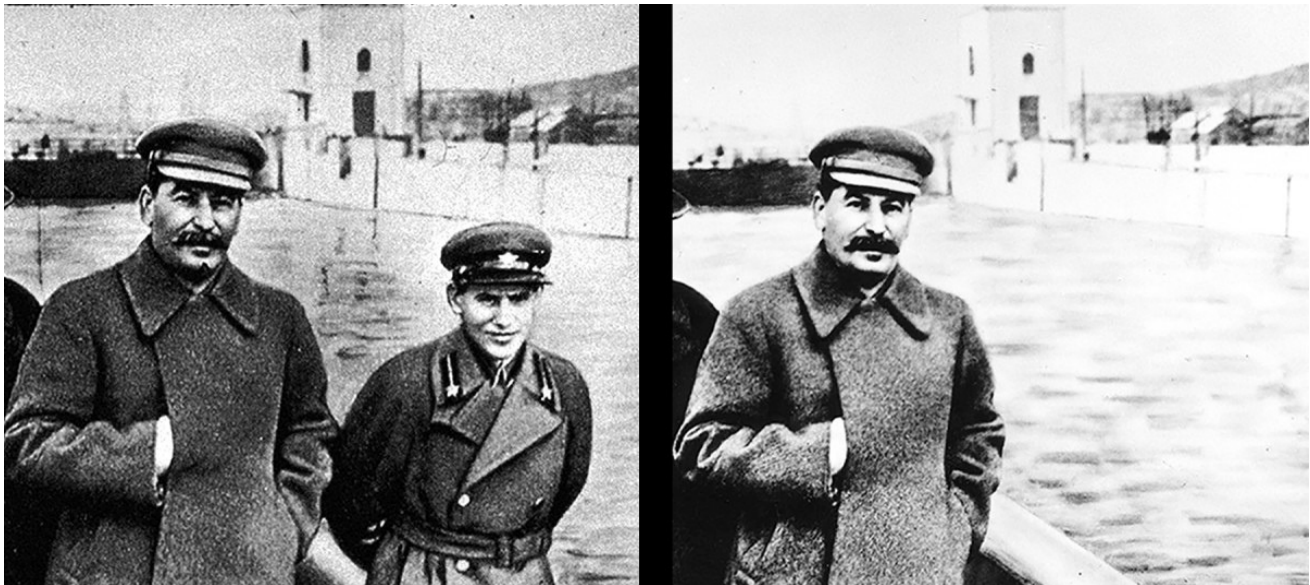
source: abc news

North Korea's government allowing Kim Jong-Un to control all forms of media was not the only example of censorship in dictator-led countries in history. Another society that had almost all government centralized in one person was the USSR with Joseph Stalin. Stalin censored books, poems, advertisements, photos, paintings, and many other forms of expressive media.

Joseph Stalin rose to power in 1929 and became the dictator of the USSR. He was a totalitarian leader who controlled all aspects of life under the Soviet regime. Joseph Stalin brought the Soviets from a poor "peasant society" to a military powerhouse. He ruled his people with fear and caused one of the largest man-made famines in history.

Stalin used his power to control media in the USSR much like Kim Jong-Un in North Korea. One main tool he used throughout the censoring and controlling of media was through photo doctoring. Stalin had some allies and other government officials that were removed from pictures that included him through retouching. This was done to protect Stalin's appearance to the public and many of the people cut from pictures were eventually killed by the government. One photo of Stalin and Nikolai Yezhov, a member of Stalin's secret police, is an example of Stalin's editing of pictures. He was shown to the right of Stalin in the photo before he crossed the dictator, but once he was tried and sentenced to execution, he was removed from the photo by Stalin's censors.

Stalin used the ability to freely edit any painting, photo, or portrait he wanted to create an image of himself and the Soviet Union. He edited political opponents out of pictures often, and even owning some photographs in different forms could have you punished. It showed Stalin using his power to control and take advantage of all people through the media they were exposed to.



This image shows the before (left) and after (right) of a photo where Joseph Stalin had Nikolai Yezhov, his former secret police officer, cut from a photo of the two when Stalin had Yezhov executed.

source: history.com

Adolf Hitler's way of controlling and manipulating media was similar to that of Kim Jong-Un and Joseph Stalin's. Hitler controlled access to books, magazines, radio, art, and newspapers. Hitler and the Nazis wanted to change or destroy any kind of media that would communicate a message to the German public that did not line up with the Nazis' beliefs or ideas. They even fed ideas to children about obedience to Hitler, anti-Semitism, and respect for the Nazi empire through textbooks in schools.

Adolf Hitler was the dictator of Nazi Germany from 1933 to 1945. He started World War II and the Holocaust, and controlled almost every aspect of German society during his time as leader. He used his platform to spread his ideas of anti-Semitism through propaganda. He was a totalitarian leader that did everything in his power to spread his racist and anti-Semitic views and stop any and all political opponents that argued against his ideas.

Hitler's censoring of media was mainly through the destruction of books. On May 10, 1933, Nazis burned more than 25,000 books that did not line up with their beliefs. They burned books by Jewish authors and did so in the streets to send a message that the Nazis now controlled everything that the Germans were exposed to.

The Nazis used pure destruction of media and influence on education in Germany to keep all their citizens thinking and believing the same things. Being a totalitarian government is what allowed Hitler to have enough power to control what citizens are allowed to read, look at, and even what they can learn in schools.

Even though Hitler's more public displays of media destruction were different than the internet access restraint in North Korea or the retouching of photos in the USSR, it still aimed to do the same thing, change or control the citizens' minds through what they can access and keep those people thinking like the government wants them to.



This image shows a Nazi book burning On May 10, 1933, with university students at Opera Square in Berlin.
source: articles.mcall.com

In the book *Brave New World* the author, Aldous Huxley predicts that the rise of totalitarianism in some countries would allow dictators to have all the power in society. He feared the power would allow dictators to censor and control what media people are allowed to access. Huxley thought that this meant totalitarian leaders could influence how people think and feel about certain topics and events. He shows this fear through Mustapha Mond and the world controllers within the society of brave new world.

In *BNW* the main society that is featured in the book is a place where people are created through a form of cloning called the "Bokanovsky Process." Once people are born they are conditioned to do and think certain things by having phrases and sayings directly streamlined to their brains during childhood. The society has a centralized form of government, where only ten people have control of the entire world. These "world controllers", as they are called in the book, make all the decisions in the society and the one that is explained by the book is a man named Mustapha Mond. Mond is the controller of Western Europe and uses his power to censor many forms of media and chooses what his people are allowed to access in the society.

Aldous Huxley showed how he felt about totalitarianism through Mustapha Mond's banning of the bible in the story. Mond bans the bible to keep people from becoming attached to religion. Mond fears that if people followed religion they would become attached and spend more effort and time learning religion than working. In the *BNW* when Mustapha Mond is talking to John about why he has banned the bible he says "Call it the fault of civilization. God isn't compatible with machinery and scientific medicine and universal happiness. You must make your choice. Our civilization has chosen machinery and medicine and happiness. That's why I have to keep these books locked up in the safe." (Huxley 234.) As shown in this quote Mustapha Mond has enough power to completely ban an entire religion and does it to keep the people in his society working and happy. He says that because happiness, machinery and god don't mix that he locked up the bible and gave no one the ability to read it. He had the power to do this because of the totalitarian government, and used it to keep people doing what he wanted them to do. This is just one of many examples of Mustapha Mond using his power to manipulate people through media.

"Call it the fault of civilization. God isn't compatible with machinery and scientific medicine and universal happiness. You must make your choice. Our civilization has chosen machinery and medicine and happiness."



Cover art for the recording of a 1956 radio play of Brave New World. This image shows a large man holding a baby which I think could possibly be Mustapha Mond the world controller holding or controlling society which is represented by the baby
Source: Sampsonia Way

during his conversation with John, Bernard, and Helmholtz Mustapha Mond explains how his banning of Shakespeare was needed to keep society from wanting to keep old things. He talked about how since Shakespeare was a tragedy, the people would not be able to understand it due to the fact that they had never experienced sadness, anger or tragedy. He says to John and the others that "Beauty's attractive, and we don't want people to be attracted by old things. We want them to like the new ones." Here it can be clearly seen that Mustapha Mond is using the massive amount of power he has as dictator to ban the people of western Europe from having access to Shakespeare, which is an art form that he has deemed as harmful and unneeded in their society. He uses his position to censor people from a certain media to keep them thinking and feeling how Mond wants them to. He is able to control the people's minds through censorship in media because he has enough power to ban any book, movie, or other form of expression he wants.

Huxley showed how he feared totalitarian governments could hurt the world and why they are bad. His fears were prophecies that came true from the time he wrote the book to the present day. Some examples throughout this time that have been clear examples of why Huxley had fears of totalitarian governments and why his novel *BNW* was prophetic were Stalin in the USSR, Hitler in Germany, and Kim Jong Un in North Korea. In all three of these different places, the government structure was the same: give one person all the power and let them control the society. In all of these places dictators censored and restricted access to some media for the purpose of controlling the minds of their people. Although the forms of media are different in each place, they all aim to change or manage the minds of society. Huxley's extremely accurate prediction of totalitarian government has me personally scared for the future of society and hoping that I never have to live under a ruler like Mustapha Mond



Source: Institute Of Modern Russia

Sources

History.com
The Wall Street Journal
Brave new world
BBC news
The Washington Post