

Originalan naučni rad
UDK 323.26/28:316.77:004
Primljeno: 12.11.2016.
Odobreno: 01.12.2016.

Ivana Damnjanović,
Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Belgrade

POLITICAL VIOLENCE, TECHNOLOGY, AND THE BIRTH OF MODERN DYSTOPIA

Abstract

Zamyatin's We, Huxley's Brave New World and Orwell's Nineteen-Eighty Four are considered as the first, and still the most powerful, dystopias of the 20th century. Aim of this paper is to explore their legacy and relevance in the present. This relevance stems, primarily, from the underlying assumption of all three of these dystopian worlds: the extensive use of direct and indirect political violence by the state, enabled by technological development. Contrary to the view that advanced technology is incidental and mostly irrelevant for the utopian and dystopian societies, this paper argues that the coalescence of the technological development and political power – what Lewis Mumford terms the megamachine – is the key element of these seminal works.

Keywords: *political violence, technology, technological determinism, dystopia, Yevgeny Zamyatin, George Orwell, Aldous Huxley*

*If they won't understand that we bring them mathematically infallible happiness, it will be our duty to force them to be happy. (Yevgeny Zamyatin, We)**

* Author would like to thank the members of Lazar Komarčić Science Fiction Association for their valuable inputs. _____

1. INTRODUCTION

Body of work on the relevance of utopian literature for political thought is vast and diverse. But there is a somewhat neglected aspect of the early dystopian novels: *We* by Yevgeny Zamyatin¹, *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley and George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, and that is the gap this paper aims to fill in. Extrapolating certain features and trends in contemporary societies and bringing them to the extremes is commonly asserted as the defining feature of the dystopia. Drawing from such definitions, the main hypothesis of this paper is that those crucial extrapolated features in Zamyatin's, Huxley's and Orwell's work are technological development and its appropriation and abuse by the ruling elites. This abuse of technology manifests in the omnipresent use of direct or indirect political violence by the state.

The paper starts with the brief recapitulation of histories of both utopias and dystopias, their definitions and, most importantly, the way they consistently mirrored the spirit of the times. Next section defines technology and technological determinism, following the argument that modern utopias (and dystopias) are to certain extent based on this, technologically deterministic premise. In the following part of the paper, relationship between political violence and the state will be examined, with emphasis on the role of technology as the power multiplier. The fifth section will present the timeline of the three dystopias in question, and their mutual relationship. After that, synopsis of these works will be outlined, as well as instances of state's use of force and technologies that enable it. Finally, in the last section, the discussion will be summarized and some conclusions drawn.

2. UTOPIAS AND DYSTOPIAS AS THE REFLEXION OF THE *ZEITGEIST*

Quest for, or dream of, the better—possibly ideal—society is as old as human history. According to Sargent, first recorded text that can be considered utopian was found on a Sumerian clay tablet from 2000 BC.² Still, while many works such as *The Birds* by Aristophanes, *True History* by Lucian of Samosata, Plato's *Republic* or Augustine's *City of God* are today considered to be examples of utopian literature, the genre itself was named after Thomas More's famous work *Utopia*.

1 There are different transcriptions/transliterations of Zamyatin's (Евгений Иванович Замы́тин) name in English sources. The one used in this paper is the most common. However, some cited authors use other forms, which were, of course, left as they are in the citations.

2 L. T. Sargent, *Utopianism: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2010.

Features of utopian societies have always been determined by the duality of the meaning postulated by More himself. In his writings, Utopia is at the same time the good place (*eu-topos*) and non-existent place (*ou-topos*).³ The word, thus, refers to a perfect society that does not (and perhaps cannot) exist.

Eventually, an alternative vision emerged: a vision of the “bad place”: “a social structure that is worse than our present social system”.⁴ What name should be given to such place, however, was not entirely clear. Some authors proposed *cacotopia*,⁵ others *counter-utopia*.⁶ *Anti-utopia* was also in circulation,⁷ although lately it usually denotes strong sentiment against realization of utopia.⁸ Finally, the term *dystopia* became prevalent in the 20th century, along with the steady rise of the concept.

When the term *dystopia* was used for the first time is not entirely clear. Sargent claims that it can be traced back to *Utopia: or, Apollo's Golden Days* by Henry Lewis Younger, published in 1747.⁹ Other sources attribute it to John Stuart Mill, who allegedly used it in a speech before Parliament in 1868.¹⁰ Merriam-Webster Dictionary, on the other hand, places the first use as late as 1950s, associating it with the publication of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *Brave New World*.¹¹

One of the most frequently cited common characteristics of dystopias is their goal – to “exaggerate contemporary social trends and in doing so, offer serious social criticism.”¹² This claim, correct as it may be, obscures the fact that the same is true for the utopias as well. For the best part of history, their writers hoped to escape

3 See, for example, L. T. Sargent, *Utopianism: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2010.

4 Erika Gottlieb, *Dystopian Fiction East and West: Universe of Terror and Trial*, McGill-Queen's Press, Montreal, 2001, p. 5

5 Most notably, this term was used by Lewis Mumford, *Story of Utopias*, Boni and Liveright, New York, 1922, and Anthony Burgess, *1985*, Serpent's Tail, London, 2013.

6 Such as Harold Lasswell, *The Future of Political Science*, Greenwood Press, Westport, 1974.

7 See, for example, David Langford, "Anti-Utopia", *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* (John Clute, David Langford, Peter Nicholls and Graham Sleight, eds.), Gollancz, London, updated 10 June 2016; <http://www.sf-encyclopedia.com/entry/anti-utopia>, 19 November 2016

8 See Zorica Đergović-Joksimović, *Utopija – alternativna istorija*, Geopoetika, Beograd, 2009, p. 15

9 L. T. Sargent, *Utopianism: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2010.

10 Brian M Stableford. "Dystopias". *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*, (John Clute, David Langford, Peter Nicholls and Graham Sleight, eds.), Gollancz, London, updated 5 September 2016. <http://www.sf-encyclopedia.com/entry/dystopias>, 19 November 2016.

11 Merriam-Webster Dictionary, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/dystopia>, 19 November 2016.

12 G. W. Burnett & L. Rollin, “Anti-leisure in dystopian fiction: the literature of leisure in the worst of all possible worlds”, *Leisure Studies*, 19(2), 2000, pp. 77–90.

the state (or church) censorship, and concealed their political thought as accounts from unknown islands, far future, or dreams.¹³Frequently, the features of utopia were precisely the opposite to those of the societies their writers lived in. For example, Bacon, official in Elizabethan England, where he was expected to support himself charging fees and accepting gifts, praises the Bensalem practices of paying state salaries to officials and scorning those who accept gifts as “twice paid”.¹⁴

While utopia is mostly didactic, and refers simply to “an imaginary community in which human relations are organized more perfectly than in the authors community,”¹⁵most dystopian societies share certain common, usually totalitarian, features.

Consistently, utopias followed the path prescribed by the *Zeitgeist*, reflecting the key ideas or the key problems of their time. During 17th and 18th century, they conveyed the ideas of security, equality, affluence, and, more often than not, strict Christian morality and utter obedience to the State. In the 19th century, the genre reaches its peak popularity. According to Mumford, this is the period when two thirds of all utopias were published. The main reason for this Mumford sees in the growing discrepancy between expectations, both technical and social, and grim realities of everyday life.¹⁶ The 20th century eventually witnessed the complete eclipse of utopian works, and the domination of dystopias.

Many notable authors, including Karl Manheim, Zygmunt Bauman, Fred Polak and Herbert Marcuse argued that the utopian impulse was lost in the 20th century.¹⁷This process was beautifully described by Clayes: “...we emerge from the hopeful, dream-like state of Victorian optimism to pass through what H. G. Wells called the age of confusion into a nightmarish twentieth century, soon powerfully symbolized by the grotesque slaughter of the First World War. Enlightenment optimism respecting the progress of reason and science was now displaced by a sense of the incapacity of humanity to restrain its newly created destructive pow-

13 See, for example, Žan Servije, *Istorija utopije*, Clio, Beograd, 2001, p. 149

14 See Frances Bacon, *The New Atlantis*, Project Gutenberg, <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/2434/2434-h/2434-h.htm>, 15 October 2016; Julian Martin, *Francis Bacon, the State, and the Reform of Natural Philosophy*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 1992. p. 54

15 Darko Suvin, *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction*, Yale UP, New Haven, 1979; cited in W. H. Hardesty, “Mapping the Future: Extrapolation in Utopian/Dystopian and Science Fiction”, *Utopian Studies*, (1), 1987, p. 160

16 Lewis Mumford, *Story of Utopias*, Boni and Liveright, New York, 1922

17 See Ruth Levitas, “Dystopian times? The impact of the death of progress on utopian thinking”, *Theory, Culture & Society* 1 (1), 1982, pp. 53-64; Gregory Clayes, “The origins of dystopia: Wells, Huxley and Orwell” in *The Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature* (Gregory Clayes, ed.), Cambridge University Press, London, 2010

ers.”¹⁸The rise (and fall) of totalitarian collectivist regimes throughout Europe further contributed to this turn dystopia.

3. TECHNOLOGY AND TECHNOLOGICAL DETERMINISM

There is no universally accepted definition of technology in contemporary social science. Reasons are numerous and diverse, but can be broadly classified in two categories. Firstly, there are the problems that stem from the features of the phenomenon itself: its broadness, complexity, its historical development. Secondly, there are problems related to terminology and its use. These issues, however, are tightly intertwined.

For the most part of human history, technological development was slow and gradual, and therefore didn't draw much of scholars' attention. Only after the First Industrial Revolution technology became a worthy subject of philosophical, and later scientific, inquiry. During next two centuries study of technology fell almost exclusively into domain of economics, and even then it was treated mostly as a given.¹⁹In the 20th and 21st century technological development became so fast, and its influence everyday life so obvious, that social science could not avoid the subject any more.

But even then, no one referred to it by the name we use today. Thinkers such as Bacon, Hobbes, and Marx, wrote about inventions, tools, machines, mechanisms or machinery. Even as late as 1958, terms *technology* and *engineering* were often used as synonyms.²⁰Furthermore, most authors who wrote about this phenomenon before 1970s used the term *technics* – Lewis Mumford and Jacques Ellul being perhaps the most prominent among them.²¹

18 Gregory Clayes, “The origins of dystopia: Wells, Huxley and Orwell” in *The Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature* (Gregory Clayes, ed.), Cambridge University Press, London, 2010, p. 107

19 See John Kenneth Galbraith, *The New Industrial State*, Princeton University Press, Princeton/Oxford, 2007.

20 Thomas Hughes, *Human-built World: How to Think about Technology and Culture*, Chicago University Press, Chicago, 2004, pp. 2-3

21 Mumford devoted most of his career to the study of technology and its relationship with society. Most notable among his works on this topic are *Technics and Civilization* (2010) and *The Myth of the Machine* (1967, 1970). Jacques Ellul in his *Technological society* insists on the term *Technique*, claiming that *technology* suggests “an isolated fact in society”, which is exactly the opposite of his central claim. (Ellul, 1964) Interestingly, Aldous Huxley was the very person who recommended this book for publication in USA.

Etymological definition is not very helpful in unraveling the complex features of technology, since it brings us back to *techne* – which was used in Ancient Greek to denote arts and crafts, as well as the skills needed to produce something. These meanings are relevant for today's notion of technology, but not sufficient to bring us to the true understanding. Other part of the word is even more misleading, coming from *logos*, which today, as a suffix, usually refers to “science of” something.

Terminological confusion is further complicated by the colloquial usage of the word “technology”. Neglecting the nuances of the meaning, it is frequently reduced to denoting exclusively the latest generation of technologies. For example, up to the 1950s it used to mean “heavy machinery”, while today it is usually used a synonym for everything related to computers or gadgets.

Most definitions of technology that are found in contemporary literature are either too narrow – limiting it to artifacts and tools, or, less often, too specialized knowledge – or too wide, equating it with human activity in general. Rare are those definitions that manage to be operational enough to enable empirical research and comprehensive enough to encompass all essentially important features of this phenomenon.

It is, therefore, not very surprising that sometimes technology was compared to another concept that notoriously defies definition – politics. This parallel was most directly drawn by Hughes²², who argues that “[d]efining technology in its complexity is as difficult as grasping the essence of politics.” This problem can, however, be resolved by abandoning the quest for short definition. Winner's definition of technology as a system consisting of *apparatus* (hardware), *techniques* (knowledge, methods, procedures) and *organization* (social arrangements and relations)²³ is, at the same time, operational and comprehensive, thus providing solid foundation for further research.

Technological change, with its ever accelerating pace, influenced another important feature of thinking about technology and society. While the first thinkers used to describe technology as *instrument*, means to an end and therefore essentially neutral,²⁴ the 1850s witnessed the birth of another point of view – technological determinism. Underlying assumptions of this outlook are 1) that technological development is autonomous and 2) that technological change determines social change. In its various iterations, technological determinism is present in the works of such

22 Thomas Hughes, *Human-built World: How to Think about Technology and Culture*, Chicago University Press, Chicago, 2004, p. 2

23 Langdon Winner, *Autonomous technology*, MIT Press, Cambridge/London, 1977, p. 233

24 This view, which can be labeled as *instrumentalism*, is still common in the works of those social scientists who are only marginally interested in technology (see for example Dahl, 1989; Fukuyama, 2006).

notable authors as Karl Marx, Benjamin Franklin, Max Weber, Max Horkheimer, Jürgen Habermas, Lewis Mumford and Jacques Ellul. Despite well-grounded criticisms, it is still very influential in social thought, as well as in general public discourse.

Technological determinism was also implicit in most of the utopias. Williams, in his classification, cites technological transformation as one type of road to utopia or dystopia: “It is the new technology which, for good or ill, has made the new life. As more generally in technological determinism, this has little or no social agency, though it is commonly described as having certain ‘inevitable’ social consequences.”²⁵ Similarly, Hardesty claims that “utopian or dystopian work need not be founded in scientific or technological extrapolation – although, of course, it may be.”²⁶ He further argues that technological achievements, in such works, can “help in the creation of the ‘feel’ of the future society” but are otherwise without intrinsic importance.²⁷

However, connection between utopias and technology seems to be much more common, almost ubiquitous. As it was argued elsewhere²⁸, from the very beginning, perfect society always benefited from some sort of advanced technology. Thus, even in More’s *Utopia*, which was much more concerned with morals than with technology, there were artificial hatcheries. In Servier’s words, utopia means acknowledging that there are two overlapping meanings of progress: a path towards the just city, and human development by perfecting technological knowledge.²⁹ Yet, with growing skepticism towards new technologies and their increasing social influences, technological development became inspiration of many dystopias. As Williams puts it, “[m]ost direct extrapolation of our own conditions and forms – social and political but also immanently material – has been in effect or in intention dystopian: atomic war, famine, overpopulation, electronic surveillance have written 1984 into millennia of possible dates.”³⁰ Furthermore, as this paper

25 Others being *the paradise/the hell* (where utopia/dystopia is simply another place), *the externally altered world* (where social change is consequence of a catastrophic event), and *the willed transformation* (where it is a consequence of conscious decision). Raymond Williams, “Utopia and Science Fiction”, *Science Fiction Studies* 5 (3), 1978, pp. 204-205

26 William H. Hardesty, “Mapping the Future: Extrapolation in Utopian/Dystopian and Science Fiction”, *Utopian Studies*, (1), 1987, p. 160

27 One should have in mind that the main concern of both authors is delineation between utopian literature and science fiction, which obviously affects their conclusions.

28 Ivana Damnjanović, “Tehnologija između utopije i distopije (Technology between utopia and dystopia)”, *Godišnjak Fakulteta političkih nauka*, 8 (11), 2014, pp. 9-22

29 Žan Servije, *Istorija utopije*, Clio, Beograd, 2001, p. 278

30 Raymond Williams, “Utopia and Science Fiction”, *Science Fiction Studies* 5 (3), 1978, p. 212

aims to show, new technologies and their (ab)use by the ruling elites are, perhaps, crucial for understanding the greatest utopias of 20th century.

4. POLITICAL VIOLENCE AND THE STATE

Study of political violence was always closely linked to the study of the state. Many definitions, for example, determine *political* character of the violence in its relation to the state: either as the violence perpetrated *by* the state, or as the violence *against* the state. This tendency can, of course, be related with broader conception of the politics as the activity of the state. Although mostly abandoned in modern political thought, this view is certainly still influencing thinking about political phenomena. Perpetrators of political violence, defined as the direct or indirect, latent use of force in the political sphere³¹, could be (and, historically, have been) both state and non-state actors. The very classification of violence as *state* and *non-state* violence is somewhat out of date, and is more appropriately reframed as the distinction between *institutional* and *non-institutional* violence. Institutional violence, obviously, includes state violence as its most prominent form, but is not limited to it. Given that practically all forms of violence can have an institutionalized form, and that institutionalized violence is far more dangerous and deadly, state use of violence does merit some further discussion.³²

Weber famously defined the state as “[a] compulsory political organization with continuous operations” whose “administrative staff successfully upholds the claim to the *monopoly* of the *legitimate* use of physical force in the enforcement of its order.”³³ Ever since, the use of force was evoked as its defining feature. However, sometimes authors tend to overlook the fact that, according to Weber’s definition, the state *does not* have the complete monopoly of violence in a society, just the monopoly of its *legitimate* use. The state can only hope to achieve such level of control over its citizens that unsanctioned violence among them does not occur at all.

While it is generally accepted that democratic states are less prone to use direct, physical violence, possibility of its use is the feature of every state authority. Giving up such possibility would be equal to denying oneself as authority.³⁴ However, almost until 20th century, most of the material bases of violence – primarily weapons – were relatively simple and accessible to both state and non-state actors. The

31 Dragan Simeunović, *Političko nasilje*, Radnička štampa, Beograd, 1989.

32 See Dragan Simeunović, *Političko nasilje*, Radnička štampa, Beograd, 1989.

33 Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, University of California Press, Berkley, 1978, p. 54

34 Dragan Simeunović, *Političko nasilje*, Radnička štampa, Beograd, 1989.

First World War had dramatically changed that balance in favor of the states. One reason for this is the fact that during this conflict the violence became industrialized, both in scale and in scope. Another was the invention and first deployment of many technologically advanced weapons – such as poison gas, tanks, machine guns etc. Both developments had led to unprecedented concentration of instruments of violence in the hands of the state governments, and that trend continued to the present day. That very same trend – technological development and appropriation of its fruits by the state – has, on the other hand, reduced the need for the use of direct, physical violence in favor of its more indirect forms.

5. THE BIRTH OF MODERN DYSTOPIAS: ZAMYATIN, ORWELL AND HUXLEY

It is still contested what can be considered the first dystopian work. Some authors³⁵ date beginnings of the genre to the end of the 16th century, while others³⁶ find it in the work of Jonathan Swift at the early 1700s. H.G. Wells is another writer considered as the father of dystopia.³⁷ Some of his work, such as *The Time Machine*, *The Island of Doctor Moreau*, and *When the Sleeper Awakes* certainly do have some traits that would later be seen as distinctly dystopian. His writing also influenced Yevgeny Zamyatin, who was overseeing the translations of Wells's, as well as Jack London's, work. Zamyatin's only novel, *We*, along with Huxley's *Brave New World* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* by George Orwell is today considered as the part of "big three" of dystopian literature, both in terms of precedence and of influence on both later writers and social and political thought.

Written in 1920 or 1921, Zamyatin's only novel, *We* was first published in English in 1924. First Russian edition was published more than 20 years later, in 1952, in New York. The novel was not published in the USSR until 1988, although allegedly there were samizdat copies produced and circulated by the Czechs.³⁸

While Zamyatin may have got some of his ideas from Wells and, more generally, from the long tradition of dystopian tropes in European literature, his work is in

35 Appelbaum, Robert (2013). "Utopia and Utopianism". In Hadfield, Andrew. *The Oxford Handbook of English Prose 1500-1640*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

36 Žan Servije, *Istorija utopije*, Clio, Beograd, 2001

37 See Gregory Claeys, "The origins of dystopia: Wells, Huxley and Orwell" in Gregory Claeys, *The Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2010, pp. 107-131

38 Bruce Sterling, "Foreword: Madmen, Hermits, Heretics, Dreamers, Rebels, and Skeptics", in Yevgeny Zamyatin, *We*, Modern Library, New York, 2007 (ebook)

many ways unique. As Bruce Sterling puts it, “Yevgeny Zamyatin is orbiting in a literary space all his own with this one. It is a work without real ancestry, and its descendants have rarely matched its visionary daring.”³⁹

Aldous Huxley claimed that his *Brave New World*, published in 1932, was influenced mainly by Wells’s ideas and, according to his own words, written well before he had even heard of Zamyatin’s work.⁴⁰ However, some similarities between two novels are striking – both describe the world state, as well as pseudo-religion based on the Taylorism and Fordism and altering of human mind by conditioning and medical means. It is not surprising that Orwell, in his review of *We*, wrote: “The first thing anyone would notice about *We* is the fact—never pointed out, I believe—that Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World* must be partly derived from it. Both books deal with the rebellion of the primitive human spirit against a rationalised, mechanised, painless world, and both stories are supposed to take place about six hundred years hence. The atmosphere of the two books is similar, and it is roughly speaking the same kind of society that is being described, though Huxley’s book shows less political awareness and is more influenced by recent biological and psychological theories.”⁴¹

Obviously, Orwell was well aware of the existence of *We*, and his own *Nineteen Eighty-Four* was definitely influenced by it. His review was published in the *Tribune* in January 1946, a year before he wrote *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. However, some of his key ideas were present at least two years earlier. In a letter to Noel Willmet, he writes: “Already history has in a sense ceased to exist, i.e. there is no such thing as a history of our own times which could be universally accepted, and the exact sciences are endangered as soon as military necessity ceases to keep people up to the mark. Hitler can say that the Jews started the war, and if he survives that will become official history. He can’t say that two and two are five, because for the purposes of, say, ballistics they have to make four. But if the sort of world that I am afraid of arrives, a world of two or three great superstates which are unable to conquer one another, two and two could become five if the fuhrer wished it. That, so far as I can see, is the direction in which we are actually moving, though, of course, the process is reversible.”⁴²

39 Bruce Sterling, “Foreword: Madmen, Hermits, Heretics, Dreamers, Rebels, and Skeptics”, in Yevgeny Zamyatin, *We*, Modern Library, New York, 2007 (ebook)

40 Robert Russell, *Zamiatin’s We*, Bristol Classical Press, Bristol, 1999, p. 13

41 George Orwell, *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell*, Vol. IV, In Front of Your Nose, 1945-1950, Secker & Warburg, London, 1968, pp. 72-73

42 Colin Marshall, *George Orwell Explains in a Revealing 1944 Letter Why He’d Write 1984*, <http://www.openculture.com/2014/01/george-orwell-explains-in-a-revealing-1944-letter-why-hed-write-1984.html>, Accessed November 5th 2016

All three of these novels, according to Gottlieb, were written as political satires, and the major impetus was the writers' fear of rising totalitarianism in their own societies. This feature she sees as characteristic for western dystopias, but decidedly places Zamyatin's work within the same framework: "Although written in Russia, Zamyatin's *We* also belongs to this tradition by virtue of its undeniable influence on Orwell and the likelihood of its direct or indirect influence on Huxley. Written in 1920, only three years after the revolution and almost a decade before the Stalinist consolidation of terror, *We* also projects its writer's fear of a fully totalitarian rule almost ten years ahead of its realization; undoubtedly, at the time of writing the novel Zamyatin still believed he could warn his contemporaries that such a system could take hold in the future."⁴³

Common features of dystopian societies described by the three authors include suppression of individuality and omnipresent state control. This control is, as will be shown in the following section, achieved by harnessing technological achievements. Without advanced technologies, the totalitarian state would not be possible, or at least it would not be so efficient. So efficient, in fact, that every attempt of rebellion inevitably ends in "the protagonist's trial, followed by retribution tantamount to his destruction or, even more horrifying, to his sinister transformation."⁴⁴

Another frequently mentioned property of these dystopias, which is sometimes considered as part of the very definition of dystopian society, is the notion that they are utopias gone wrong. These "seeds of a utopian dream" were "articulated by the ruling elite's original promise when its new system was implemented, a promise that then miscarried (in *We*); was betrayed (in *Nineteen Eighty-four*); or was fulfilled in ways that show up the unexpected shortcomings of the dream (in *Brave New World*)."⁴⁵ There are also views that utopian impulse is in itself necessarily totalitarian.⁴⁶

43 Erika Gottlieb, *Dystopian Fiction East and West: Universe of Terror and Trial*, McGill-Queen's Press, Montreal, 2001, pp. 7-8

44 Erika Gottlieb, *Dystopian Fiction East and West: Universe of Terror and Trial*, McGill-Queen's Press, Montreal, 2001, p. 5

45 Erika Gottlieb, *Dystopian Fiction East and West: Universe of Terror and Trial*, McGill-Queen's Press, Montreal, 2001, p. 8

46 For further discussion of this issue see Gregory Claeys, "The origins of dystopia: Wells, Huxley and Orwell" in Gregory Claeys, *The Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2010, pp. 107-131

6. POLITICAL VIOLENCE AND TECHNOLOGY IN *WE*, *NINETEEN EIGHTY-FOUR*, AND *BRAVE NEW WORLD*

Totalitarian state envisioned by Zamyatin, Huxley and Orwell is made possible by technology. It is, as Terlizzese puts it, “the technical state”, or the “technological Leviathan”.⁴⁷ Technology (or, more precisely, technologies) is used to fulfill basic needs, but also to achieve complete social control. This control relies on the use of institutionalized political violence, which can be classified as either direct or indirect.

We describe the One State, where citizens are almost completely stripped of their individuality – they have numbers instead of names, their time is almost entirely organized, apart from two “Personal Hours” which are “specially reserved for unforeseeable circumstances”. Everyone is dressed in the identical *unifs* and every action is performed in the prescribed time and the precisely prescribed manner. It is ruled by the Benefactor, who is publicly and unanimously re-elected.

Political violence is built into the very foundations of the One State: it emerged from the Two-Hundred-Year war, which only 0.2 percent of Earth population had survived. It is a completely urbanized society. This was also made possible by technological means – the invention of petroleum-based food and construction of the Green Wall that separates the State from the wilderness. Technological character of the One State is easily visible from the protagonist’s testimony: “we have channeled all the forces of nature – there cannot be any future catastrophes.”

The same level of technological development enables the total control of the state through use of political violence. The One State is very adept in applying both indirect and direct political violence to this end. Omnipresence of the surveillance is the critical instance of indirect violence.

The surveillance is carried out by a peculiar mix of low-tech and high-tech means. Instead of Bentham’s *panopticon*,⁴⁸ the architecture of the One State is made entirely of glass. This omnipresent transparency and almost complete lack of privacy⁴⁹ act as an efficient deterrent of any undesirable behavior. In addition to this basic setup, there are membranes that listen in on street conversations, as well as the secret police, the Guardians, “invisibly present somewhere here, in our rows”. There is also an obligation of every number to report on illicit behavior within 48

47 Lawrence J. Terlizzese, *Hope in the Thought of Jacques Ellul*, Wipf and Stock Publishers, Eugene, 2005, p. 100

48 See Jeremy Bentham, *The Panopticon Writings*, (ed. Miran Bozovic), Verso, London, 1995.

49 Almost complete, because the apartments are equipped with blinds which can be lowered during sexual activities, which are also regulated by the State.

hours of witnessing it. The mail is read twice: first by Controllers and then by the Guardians, before it's delivered.

Citizens of the One State are conditioned to accept this state of affairs not only as normal, but as desirable. The Guardians are compared with "guardian angels of old", and the protagonist, D-503, muses: "How pleasant it was to feel someone's vigilant eye lovingly protecting you from the slightest mistake, from the slightest misstep."

But direct, physical violence, equally abounds. It is highly organized, and both instrumental and symbolic. A special division of the government, called Operation Room, and staffed with the best doctors, uses various torture devices to extract information from the political prisoners. The most important among these instruments is the Gas Bell – where the prisoner is locked inside the bell and different gasses are applied, or all air was pumped out of it. During the time described in the novel, a surgical procedure was developed that successfully removes imagination and "soul" from the brain of (potential) dissidents, eerily predicting Stalin's later treatment of political opposition as a mental disorder.⁵⁰

Direct violence culminates in carefully staged public tortures and executions, which are directly compared to religious ceremonies. Executions are performed by the Machine – the huge metallic statue of Benefactor, preceded by the reading of poetry that describes the crime. The condemned are dissolved into the puddle of "chemically pure water". Attendance is mandatory, and children are watching from the first row. The effect is, or is supposed to be, cathartic: "there was something of the ancient religions, something as purifying as thunderstorms and gales, about the whole celebration."

Huxley's World State operates under the slogan "Community, Identity, Stability" in the time when Ford's teachings were elevated to the religion. It is also born in the aftermath of a very bloody war – although it lasted only nine years. The ideal – society where happiness, consumerism and promiscuity are the norms – is achieved, again, by technological means, but used mostly for indirect violence. That, however, was not the first choice. New order was, firstly, introduced by direct, and lethal, use of force: "Eight hundred Simple Lifers were mowed down by machine guns at Golders Green. [...] Then came the famous British Museum Massacre. Two thousand culture fans gassed with dichlorethylsulphide." Only after these methods proved to be ineffective and costly, the future ruling elite decided that "the force was no good" and that "slower but infinitely surer methods" are

⁵⁰ See, for example, Working Group on the Internment of Dissenters in Mental Hospitals, *Soviet Political Psychiatry: The Story of the Opposition*, International Association on the Political Use of Psychiatry, London, 1983

more useful. In other words, “Government’s an affair of sitting, not hitting. You rule with the brains and the buttocks, never with the fists.”

One of the basic maxims of the World State is that “every one belongs to every one else”, thus sanctioning variety of sexual, but not emotional, relationships. Widespread availability of sex is at least partially consequence of another technological development: it is completely disjointed from reproduction. Humans are produced, not born. Technologies such as Bokanovsky’s Process, “a major instrument of social stability”, and Podsnap’s Technique allow for creation of “standard men and women; in uniform batches.” Not only that there are numerous clones (although Huxley does not use that term), but they are modified during gestation process in order to reduce their physical and, more importantly, mental capacities. This is done by reducing the amount of oxygen the embryos are getting, by injecting them with alcohol and exposing them to other unfavorable conditions. The result is a strictly divided cast society, where everyone does what they are fit to do – precisely as it is intended: “that is the secret of happiness and virtue—liking what you’ve got to do. All conditioning aims at that: making people like their un-escapable social destiny.”

The cast system is further strengthened by the upbringing, which consists mostly of neo-pavlovian conditioning and hypnopaedia. This provides willful compliance with social norms: “... at last the child’s mind is these suggestions, and the sum of the suggestions is the child’s mind. And not the child’s mind only. The adult’s mind too—all his life long. The mind that judges and desires and decides—made up of these suggestions. But all these suggestions are our suggestions! [...] Suggestions from the State.”

Another invention that enables social stability is the perfect drug: *soma*, which is dispensed to everyone for free. It is “euphoric, narcotic, pleasantly hallucinant”, and most importantly, it has no ill effects: people can “take a holiday from reality” whenever they like, “and come back without so much as a headache or a mythology.”

With these three components, social stability is assured. There is “no offence so heinous as unorthodoxy of behaviour. [...] Unorthodoxy threatens more than the life of a mere individual; it strikes at Society itself.” The offenders are, however, not treated too harshly – they are either reconditioned, or banished to the islands where they can pursue their unorthodoxies. Even the police use weapons that disperse soma and soothing music rather than more lethal varieties.

However benevolent this dictatorship might seem, the threat of direct violence is never too far away. The Controllers don’t have distaste for direct use of force, they just see it as not sufficiently effective. During the establishment of the World State,

for example, as part of the campaign against history, historical monuments were blown up. The conditioning in the early childhood is implemented using, among other means, electric shocks. Controllers at one point conducted a social experiment that ended with 19,000 victims. The treatment of embryos destined for lower casts can also be classified as direct violence. Gas bombs were used in reservations, in order to tame the savages who live there. Finally, as one of the Controllers says, "It's lucky that there are such a lot of islands in the world. I don't know what we should do without them. Put you all in the lethal chamber, I suppose."

Science and technology are crucial to the survival of the social system. Their triumph is explicit: "What man has joined, nature is powerless to put asunder." Civilization was spread all over the world, except for those parts where the effort was unprofitable, and which were preserved as reservations for savages. And yet, scientific research is strictly limited to those topics that are of immediate social concern, and heavily censored. So, while technology does provide means to rule the society, either through direct or indirect use of force, it is also ruled by the social norms.

If the World State is a place of abundance and ignorant pleasures, Orwell's Oceania is a place of poverty and fear. The ruling Party uses every form of both direct and indirect violence without reign or hesitation. Not only that it is made possible by technology, but technological development is made only in those fields that can directly contribute to state violence.

Nineteen Eighty-Four is a too perfect example of practically every possible variety and the form of political violence. One very conspicuous form of indirect violence is widespread structural violence. While majority of population lives in poverty and squalor, 2% of them, six million members of the Inner Party live much more luxurious life. Among the underclass – the *proles*, crime flourishes. There is "a whole world-within-a-world of thieves, bandits, prostitutes, drug-peddlers and racketeers of every description; but since it all happened among the *proles* themselves, it was of no importance."

The *proles* are, at least, spared the strict sexual purity and ideological discipline demanded from the Outer Party members. Their entertainment is saturated with propaganda and images of most gruesome physical violence. History is constantly rewritten to reflect the present.

Surveillance is omnipresent. It mostly takes the form of telescreens – probably the most famous piece of fictional technology – two-way screens that cannot be turned off (except briefly if you are a member of the Inner Party) and are constantly transmitting propaganda as well as enable the authorities to watch every citizen at every moment. There is the effect of panopticon again – one never knows if

he is being watched at any particular moment, so they must assume that they are always watched. But the state surveillance apparatus is much more diverse: there are hidden microphones even in the countryside, there are, of course, informants, and the children are indoctrinated to report on their parents. The secret police – Thought Police – is invisible, always vigilant and dreaded.

Perpetual state of war, which started as the Second World War, continued through decades of revolutions and civil wars, the formation of three super-states, nuclear war among them, and then low intensity wars, contributes to constant feeling of insecurity. Although the majority of battles are fought around the Equator and the North Pole, cruising missiles are regularly, though not very frequently, exploding through London. The Ministry of Love, which is supposed to maintain law and order, is actually the house of torture, where every imaginable technique of psychological and physical abuse is inflicted on political prisoners – including beatings, food deprivation, application of drugs and, in the room 101, “the worst thing in the world” – torture specifically designed to correspond to the subject’s worst phobia.

Among the Party members, constant fear of physical violence gives way to fantasies of violence, which are channeled to hatred towards Party enemies, both internal and external, “war-fever and leader-worship”. Foreigners are dehumanized, since they can only be seen as enemy soldiers or prisoners of war, and travel is impossible.

Summarily, Oceania is a perfect system of terror, where population is kept in constant fear and insecurity. There are no laws, nothing is explicitly forbidden, but strict following of the Party line is expected. Every reaction, especially unconscious, is monitored and can be seen as a sign of disobedience. The Party is much more concerned with thoughts than with actions. Its violence is, ultimately, the violence against reality. Since reality, according to the Party, exist only inside human mind, that is where their interest lay.

Orwell discusses in detail the role of technology in the rise of the totalitarian regime. Such regimes, argument goes, became necessary in order to prevent equality among people, which was made possible by machine production: “The earthly paradise had been discredited at exactly the moment when it became realisable.” The everlasting war is the key instrument in solving the crisis of hyperproduction. It is also the reason for stagnation, even regression of science and technology. But technologies of violence continued to thrive: “The scientist of today is either a mixture of psychologist and inquisitor, studying with extraordinary minuteness the meaning of facial expressions, gestures and tones of voice, and testing the truth-producing effects of drugs, shock therapy, hypnosis and physical torture; or he is chemist, physicist or biologist concerned only with such branches of his

special subject as are relevant to the taking of life.” Finally, it was the possibility of constant surveillance and propaganda, and not any new weapon, that made the system of terror possible.

7. CONCLUSIONS

At the time when dystopian societies once again dominate imagination of writers and film-makers, the birthplace of dystopia it is worth revisiting. It could be traced to Zamyatin’s novel *We*, which set the tone for the following visions of dystopian society. These societies were invariably made possible by development of specific technologies, their appropriation by the ruling elite, and their application as part of state violence.

This violence is both indirect and direct, both psychological and physical. But it is always omnipresent and permanent. Violence perpetrated by dystopian states may vary, from mostly indirect repression of *Brave New World* to very direct system of terror of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, but it is always for the purpose of achieving compliance and, more generally, social stability.

All three novels have by now become common tropes. They influenced not only later authors, but social thinkers as well. Perhaps most interesting in this regard is the striking similarity between some features of these first dystopias, and technological pessimism of Mumford and Ellul. Deep pessimism and hopelessness when faced with the powerful and omnipresent system – be it the State or the Technology – pervades all of the works mentioned.

Description of the *megamachine*, achieved through concentration of technological, military and political power is one of Mumford’s most powerful works. It is strangely reminiscent of the final words of Orwell’s review of *We*: “It is in effect a study of the Machine, the genie that man has thoughtlessly let out of its bottle and cannot put back again.”⁵¹

Huxley was, on the other hand, cited by Ellul, and was instrumental in publishing Ellul’s work in English. Some of his ideas echo Huxley – for example the comparison between modern states and concentration camps. The real Nazi concentration camps, he argues, were only a crude, imperfect version, hence their reliance of physical violence. Truly advanced state technique would have no need for such primitive measures. It will achieve its goals through surveillance and propaganda, not through direct use of force. Similarities are obvious, and Huxley even elaborated this point in his letter to Orwell: “The philosophy of the ruling minority

51 George Orwell, *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell*, Vol. IV, In Front of Your Nose, 1945-1950, Secker & Warburg, London, 1968, p. 75

in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is a sadism which has been carried to its logical conclusion by going beyond sex and denying it. Whether in actual fact the policy of the boot-on-the-face can go on indefinitely seems doubtful. My own belief is that the ruling oligarchy will find less arduous and wasteful ways of governing and of satisfying its lust for power, and these ways will resemble those which I described in *Brave New World*.”

Orwell’s view of technology is very nuanced, but equally pessimistic. Technology is potentially liberating, but can be perverted and used exclusively for violence, and its development ultimately succumbs to political will.

Modern societies have not yet slipped into dystopia. However, use of torture by the same states who signed international conventions against it, massive surveillance programs described by Edward Snowden and others, as well as widespread use of gamification and other “nudging” techniques⁵² in all fields of human action, do frequently evoke dystopian tropes. The fears of Zamyatin, Huxley and Orwell are still, it seems, very relevant.

References:

Appelbaum, Robert), “Utopia and Utopianism” in *The Oxford Handbook of English Prose 1500-1640* (ed. Andrew Hadfield), Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2013.

Bacon Frances, *The New Atlantis*, Project Gutenberg, <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/2434/2434-h/2434-h.htm>, 15 October 2016

Bentham Jeremy, *The Panopticon Writings*, (ed. Miran Bozovic), Verso, London, 1995.

Bruce Sterling, “Foreword: Madmen, Hermits, Heretics, Dreamers, Rebels, and Skeptics”, in Yevgeny Zamyatin, *We*, Modern Library, New York, 2007 (ebook)

Burgess Anthony, *1985*, Serpent’s Tail, London, 2013.

Clayes Gregory, “The origins of dystopia: Wells, Huxley and Orwell” in *The Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature* (Gregory Clayes, ed.), Cambridge University Press, London, 2010, pp. 107-131

Dahl Robert, *Democracy and Its Critics*, Yale University Press, Yale, 1989.

Damnjanović Ivana, “Tehnologija između utopije i distopije (Technology between utopia and dystopia)”, *Godišnjak Fakulteta političkih nauka*, 8 (11), 2014, pp. 9-22

⁵² For further discussion of these issues see, for example, Evgeny Morozov, *To Save Everything, Click Here: The Folly of Technological Solutionism*, PublicAffairs, New York, 2014

Dergović-Joksimović Zorica, *Utopija – alternativnaistorija*, Geopoetika, Beograd, 2009.

Ellul Jacques, *The Technological Society*, Vintage Books, New York, 1964.

Fukuyama Francis, *The End of History and the Last Man*, Simon and Schuster, New York, 2006.

G. W. Burnett & L. Rollin, "Anti-leisure in dystopian fiction: the literature of leisure in the worst of all possible worlds", *Leisure Studies*, 19(2), 2000, pp. 77–90.

Galbraith John Kenneth, *The New Industrial State*, Princeton University Press, Princeton/Oxford, 2007.

Gottlieb Erika, *Dystopian Fiction East and West: Universe of Terror and Trial*, McGill-Queen's Press, Montreal, 2001.

Hardesty William H., "Mapping the Future: Extrapolation in Utopian/Dystopian and Science Fiction", *Utopian Studies*, (1), 1987, pp. 160-172

Hughes Thomas, *Human-built World: How to Think about Technology and Culture*, Chicago University Press, Chicago, 2004.

Huxley Aldous, *Brave New World*, Rosetta Books, New York, 2010 (ebook).

Langford David, "Anti-Utopia", *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* (John Clute, David Langford, Peter Nicholls and Graham Sleight, eds.), Gollancz, London, updated 10 June 2016; <http://www.sf-encyclopedia.com/entry/anti-utopia>, 19 November 2016

Lasswell Harold, *The Future of Political Science*, Greenwood Press, Westport, 1974.

Levitas Ruth, "Dystopian times? The impact of the death of progress on utopian thinking", *Theory, Culture & Society* 1 (1), 1982, pp. 53-64

Marshall Colin, *George Orwell Explains in a Revealing 1944 Letter Why He'd Write 1984*, <http://www.openculture.com/2014/01/george-orwell-explains-in-a-revealing-1944-letter-why-hed-write-1984.html>, Accessed November 5th 2016

Martin Julian, *Francis Bacon, the State, and the Reform of Natural Philosophy*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 1992.

Merriam-Webster Dictionary, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/dystopia>, 19 November 2016

Morozov Evgeny, *To Save Everything, Click Here: The Folly of Technological Solutionism*, PublicAffairs, New York, 2014.

Mumford Lewis .*The Myth of the Machine: The Pentagon of Power*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, New York, 1970.

Mumford Lewis, *Story of Utopias*, Boni and Liveright, New York, 1922.

Mumford Lewis, *Technics and Civilization*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2010.

Mumford Lewis, *The Myth of the Machine: Technics and Human Development*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, New York, 1967.

Orwell George, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Penguin Books, London, 2003.

Orwell George, *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell*, Vol. IV, In Front of Your Nose, 1945-1950, Secker&Warburg, London, 1968.

Russell Robert, *Zamiatin's We*, Bristol Classical Press, Bristol, 1999.

Sargent L. T., *Utopianism: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2010.

Servije Žan, *Istorijautopije*, Clio, Beograd, 2001.

Simeunović Dragan, *Političkonasilje*, Radničkaštampa, Beograd, 1989.

Stableford Brian M. "Dystopias", *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*, (John Clute, David Langford, Peter Nicholls and Graham Sleight, eds.), Gollancz, London, updated 5 September 2016. <http://www.sf-encyclopedia.com/entry/dystopias>, 19 November 2016

Sterling Bruce, "Foreword: Madmen, Hermits, Heretics, Dreamers, Rebels, and Skeptics", in Yevgeny Zamyatin, *We*, Modern Library, New York, 2007 (ebook)

Terlizzese Lawrence J., *Hope in the Thought of Jacques Ellul*, Wipf and Stock Publishers, Eugene, 2005.

Weber Max, *Economy and Society*, University of California Press, Berkley, 1978.

Williams Raymond, "Utopia and Science Fiction", *Science Fiction Studies* 5 (3), 1978, pp. 203-214

Winner Langdon, *Autonomous technology*, MIT Press, Cambridge/London, 1977.

Working Group on the Internment of Dissenters in Mental Hospitals, *Soviet Political Psychiatry: The Story of the Opposition*, International Association on the Political Use of Psychiatry, London, 1983.

Zamyatin Yevgeny, *We*, Modern Library, New York, 2007 (ebook).

POLITIČKO NASILJE, TEHNOLOGIJA I RAĐANJE MODERNE DISTOPIJE

Apstrakt

Zamjatinov roman Mi, Hakslijev Vrlinovisveti Orvelova 1984. smatraju se prvim, idalje najsnažnijim, distopijama 20. veka. Cilj ovog rada je da istraži njihovo nasleđe i relevantnost za sadašnjicu. Ova relevantnost proističe, na prvom mestu, iz pretpostavke na kojoj počivaju sva tri distopijska sveta: široke upotrebe direktnog i indirektnog političkog nasilja od strane države, što je omogućeno tehnološkim razvojem. Nasuprot stavu da je tehnološki razvoj sporedan i uglavnom nevažan za postojanje utopijaskih i distopijskih društava, u radu se tvrdi da je susret tehnološkog razvoja i političke moći – koji Luis Mamford naziva mega mašinom – ključni element ovih pionirskih dela.

Ključne reči: *političko nasilje, tehnologija, tehnološki determinizam, distopija, Jevgenij Zamjatin, Džordž Orvel, Oldos Haksli*