

Trying My Hand

A Defence of George Orwell

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As I say, this essay shall be no more than an attempt at a defence of one quite important to me. Upon the personage whom it is directly aimed against, I know it shall fall flat. And upon the personage it shall attempt to defend, I know it shall fall short; for he is dead.

Now, I should like to write this essay in order to refute a thing or two said by a Marxist of sorts. He is called Hakim. He produces not literature, but video-and-audio-delivered essays on the internet. The thing or two he said, which I did not view kindly, were fired at George Orwell—or Eric Blair—an author, literary critic, and so on from the last century.

I should like to establish at once that Hakim, my opponent in this battle, being, what he conceives to be an orthodox Marxist—that is, a Marxist-Leninist—has thus a reason to say an ugly word against Orwell, the latter being known today—whether one thinks deservedly so or not (and we shall see)—as a polemicist who rallied much of his ever-fading vigour and vitality against the ideas which are Hakim’s, or which Hakim anyhow thinks much of.

So that I may not be accused of perverting my adversary’s expressed opinions, views, sabre thrusts, and so on and so forth, I shall lay down all of what he said against Orwel. Upon the flesh of his text, I shall only leave occasional incisions for the sake of clarity and truly necessary refutation. All else shall wait.

All is intentionally so written.—

Hakim’s essay

“Literally 1984. Hi there. Did you know that Orwell was just an all-round horrible human being? Well, he was a worse writer, which really is the major issue with him. If you didn’t know, George Orwell was a snitch, a rapist, a racist, a colonial cop, and a CIA puppet—whether knowingly or unknowingly.” [One may presume that ‘knowingly or unknowingly’ refers only to ‘CIA puppet’; for Orwell would be certain of whether he was the other labels which Hakim has placed upon him.] “His ‘it’s okay to leave your nephew with me’ moustache is only the cherry on top.” [Hakim refers to Orwell’s ‘pencil moustache’, a popular style during the latter’s time.]

“First, about the man himself. The son of a British colonial officer from a wealthy, landed family, he” [Orwell.] “began his career as a British Imperial official in Southeast Asia—basically a colonial cop. He was a little conflicted about his role, but not out of a conviction against the evils of imperialism and colonialism, but because the—and I quote, ‘yellow faces’—as he called them, didn’t look kindly at him.” [Hakim introduces a quote from Orwell’s essay, *Shooting an Elephant*.] “In the end the sneering yellow faces of young men that met me everywhere, the insults hooted at me when I was at a safe distance, got badly on my nerves.’ Who would have guessed that being an occupier wouldn’t get roses rained on you?

“His entire write-up” [Presumably, *Shooting an Elephant*.] “basically drips of hatred for the local Burmese; as well as a backward logic, where imperialism wasn’t bad solely because of the processes that made it up but because the colonised expected a certain attitude of a colonial official that Orwell himself found difficult to fulfil, apparently. Let’s quote the man some more, shall we?

“All I knew was that I was stuck between my hatred of the Empire I served and my rage against the evil spirited little beasts who tried to make my job impossible.” [Hakim again quotes from *Shooting an Elephant*.] He repeats this pattern often: says something incredibly racist but turns around with a ‘oh, but I don’t really like Empire all that much either.’” [Hakim does not state whether Orwell frequently does this within *Shooting an Elephant* or elsewhere. The essay, as its title suggests, chiefly concerns a retelling of a story, in which Orwell shoots a mad elephant, which had killed locals, in Burma. So far as other works, there is little mention of racialism; thus, I do not know what works or writing Hakim refers to here.] “Between uninspired and unconvincing prose about disliking Empire (though he still found it ‘respectable’, whatever that means) he falls with, ‘I thought that the greatest joy in the world would

be to drive a bayonet into a Buddhist priest's guts.'" [Again, *Shooting an Elephant*.] "Hmm, mighty authoritarian of you, Eric." [Eric was Orwell's name.]

"Hold on,'" [Hakim begins, without stating it, in the voice of another—a questioner.] "if he hates the Burmese and uses these terms, then surely a self-proclaimed socialist would have even harsher words for the most notorious fascists of all, right?" Let's have a look."

[Hakim seems to select quotes from Orwell's review of Hitler's *My Struggle*, though part of the text does not appear in Orwell's actual review—that is to say, one must doubt whether the quotes are even Orwell's.] "I should like to put it on record that I have never been able to dislike Hitler." [This latter sentence does not appear in Orwell's review, nor does the next. I cannot find Orwell to have said any of this anywhere. I struggle to put quotes, then, around him. Yet, I do.] [...] "I have reflected that I would certainly kill him if I could get within reach of him, but that I could feel no personal animosity. The fact is that there is something deeply appealing about him..." [Hakim here chooses to employ ellipsis, taking single sentences, leaving out those which come only just after, in which Orwell draws a portrait of Hitler as an extreme, pathetic, dog-faced narcissist. Now, the phenomenon of Hitler's purely rhetorical appeal is widely regarded; that Orwell felt it says nothing about how he felt about his policies or his crimes. Hakim continues with a later quotation from the same text.] "'One feels, as with Napoleon, that he is fighting against destiny, that he *can't* win, and yet that he somehow deserves to.'

"Jesus fucking Christ. The simplest benchmark for any reasonable human being is to have a burning hatred for fascism. But apparently even that's too much for Orwell. Instead, in the height of World War Two, he says the willingness to criticise Russia and Stalin is *the* test of intellectual honesty. Yes, echoing many a reactionary and liberal in red paint we see today. That's not to say that one shouldn't criticise—etcetera, etcetera—but there's a time, place, and format where it's most constructive: If your criticism is good faith to begin with; and the middle of a fascist takeover of Europe and beyond isn't it. See my video on left-wing anti-communism for more about this perspective." [Title of Hakim's essay concerning this 'perspective' is *Left Anticommunism: An Infantile Disorder*.]

"Let's move on to his list-making. Orwell reported on his friends and acquaintances to the Information Research Bureau," [Hakim means to say the Information Research Department, not Bureau.] "a dedicated organisation within the British government, founded in order to publish anti-communist material and fight revolutionary, anti-colonial, and pro-independence movements. This office not only got the rights to Orwell's works" [So far as I can tell, Sonia Orwell, who worked for the IRD, and married Orwell only shortly before his death, promoted the idea that the IRD should distribute select works of Orwell's, though chiefly *Animal Farm*. In a letter, Orwell displays some knowledge of this.] "but also directly translated and published *Animal Farm* and his other garbage works into twenty languages." [Again, the IRD seems to have focused only on *Animal Farm*, enjoying the rights only to the non-English translation of the work. Moreover, the IRD seems to have only committed itself to creating around sixteen translations of *Animal Farm*, and no other works.] "In fact, Orwell's entire literary reputation is due to direct CIA and other anti-communist organisation efforts at popularising his nonsense, which is telling because his work on the face of it really is unimpressive." [Flashed on the screen of Hakim's video during this latter sentence is what seems to be a quote from Wikipedia. He quotes as a source for his claim a work titled *Across the Blocs: Cold War Cultural and Social History*. It should be swiftly mentioned, however, that Orwell enjoyed a literary reputation in Britain during his lifetime.] "Regardless, back to the list. He lists Paul Robeson—arguably one of the most famous people of the past century, airbrushed out of history because of his communist leanings as 'very anti-white; a Wallace supporter,' in his snitch list, with zero evidence either in reality or within his deluded mind, aside from a typical, racist presumption that wanting non-whites to be treated like human beings must mean you hate all whites as well." [Hakim provides no source for this claim or following claims of lists and so on. In reality, Orwell, just before his death, wrote one list which he desired to fall into hands other than his own. In it, he both accuses actual communists of being 'cryptos', i.e., crypto-communists, or fellow travellers, clears others suspected of being as much of being as much, and all in all provides general views, positive and negative, of those he listed. The list was meant to be one made up of names whose owners were

supportive of Stalinism, with the aim of having it being having a list of those to certainly not hire to work for British propaganda. The list, so far as any can say, was not used to covertly arrest, torture, or murder anyone, or even inconvenience any listed upon it, but only keep potential communist spies from working for an anti-communist organisation. The list was based upon notes Orwell made in a personal notebook, in which he attempted to decide who could be trusted as legitimate socialists.] “He diligently notes ‘Jew’ and ‘Jewess’ next to people—many times incorrectly—in a time where European Jews had just faced the Holocaust.” [Hakim begins picking names from Orwell’s list and presenting them.] “‘Deutscher—Polish Jew; Driberg, Tom—English Jew; Chaplin, Charles—Jewish?’ My guy, why is this so important to you? It makes you think. He also kept a paranoid list of names for himself, by the way, with the same weird pattern reproduced.” [To restate, this private list was only an extended version of the list he supplied the Foreign Office, which, again, Orwell used to clear some falsely accused of communist sympathies, or at least nefarious ones, and also used to accuse others.] “Some liberals like to pretend that the lists were only to prevent these people from working for the secret service.” [Again, Hakim provides no source which would suggest anything contrary, or anything at all, was done to any upon Orwell’s list; he fails to even make that claim, aside from in this vague manner.] “But naivete is a liberal pastime and so is absolute faith in nefarious institutions like the IRB, which played a significant role in things as diverse as the Suez Crisis and The Troubles. Why you wouldn’t want people who could sabotage the propaganda efforts of an Empire you supposedly hate so much, I have no idea, but it is telling. You’d also have to be incredibly gullible to think lists of leftists, anti-colonial figures, minorities, etcetera, were done in good faith and for a good purpose. Regardless, as a liberal darling, all of his obvious ignorance and suspicion of Jews, LGBT people, and blacks is skated over without a peep or mention. Had any other post-war leftist made remarks of this kind, you’d for sure know about it and their problematic nature would litter the prefaces of their published works. Yet, no mention. Liberals are *so* intentionally blind that they claim his attempted rape of his adolescent girlfriend was a ‘botched seduction,’ in which she had shouted, screamed, and kicked before running home with a torn skirt and bruised hip. Yes, that’s apparently a botched seduction to liberals: when a 190-centimetres-tall man corners and forces himself onto a tiny, 150-centimetre-tall woman.”

[Here, Hakim interrupts the essay’s presentation to run an advertisement. He continues by haranguing *Animal Farm*.]

“That’s not it, though. Arguably, his magnum opus, *Animal Farm*, was written in 1943 and forty-four. Yet not a mention, or room in his mind, for condemning fascism, as it was ravaging Europe, with the only power at the time actually kicking Nazi Germany’s teeth in being the Soviet Union, which he spent the entirety of the war, as well as his life, condemning and satirizing. [A few clarifying words concerning this section. And, to state again, all is intentionally so written. I must, thus, apologise for any confusion which may be given a reader by Hakim’s syntax. It would be fair to say that English is not his first language, though that is the one he speaks and writes in. Anyhow, by 1944, the Soviet Union was not the only power kicking Germany’s teeth anywhere. It must be admitted that on the Eastern Front, much of the early spadework was done by the Soviet Union—with spades, and much bread, being kindly and riskily supplied by the liberal powers of the United States and the United Kingdom to the Red power. Concerning not a mention of fascism: That is simply untrue. I do not know whether Hakim is aware or not, but Orwell attempted to join the army and fight, for the second time in his life, against fascism. He was turned down on the account of poor health. Anyhow, he said much about fascism in BBC broadcasts and elsewhere, both in essays and books. It does not take effort to find as much.] “At the same time during the war, the IRD, which he would work for” [Neither during the war nor after it would Orwell officially—i.e., in a manner which would be made clear in any biography—work for what Hakim has previously called the IRB but which he here in the essay calls the IRD. Orwell worked for the BBC during the greater part of the war.] “was making connections with Ukrainian nationalists, of which many directly aided the Nazi Einsatzgruppen as they went about their program of a monoethnic Ukraine without Jews, Poles, Gypsies, and Communists. There’s even evidence to suggest that Orwell

knew and approved of this. To quote a great article you should read, Isaac Asimov also points out a shocking fact that conveniently escapes the myriad disciples of the British author:

“George Orwell spent the peak years of genocidal destruction of World War Two writing a childish story about how evil the Nazi-killing Soviet Union supposedly was.” [Hakim’s source for the latter quote is simply bennorton.com.] “As Azimov points out:” [The source remains the same. Hakim quotes Asimov.]

“Orwell wasn’t much affected, apparently, by the Nazi brand of totalitarianism, for there was no room within him except for his private war with Stalinist Communism. Consequently, when Great Britain was fighting for its life against Nazism, and the Soviet Union fought as an ally in the struggle and contributed rather more than its share in lives lost and resolute courage, Orwell wrote *Animal Farm*, which was a satire of the Russian Revolution and what followed, picturing it in terms of a revolt of barnyard animals against human masters.

“He completed *Animal Farm* in 1944 and had trouble finding a publisher, since it wasn’t a particularly good time for upsetting the Soviets. As soon as the war came to an end, however, the Soviet Union was fair game, and *Animal Farm* was published.’

“In fact, Orwell went out of his way to manufacture a fantasy that couldn’t possibly be mistaken for Nazism. Because, as everyone knows, the people and ideology that materially supported every single genuine liberation and independence movement in existence are the true evil. Of course, not a single line critiquing American genocidal policies globally or their constant warmongering and sabre rattling and their sanctions and bombing of poor, servile countries trying to detach from colonial regimes that had oppressed them for decades, if not centuries. Nothing on the Spanish or French or Portuguese. His only genuine vitriol and whatever passed for criticism, oscillating between childish storytelling and verbose ranting, was exclusively reserved for socialist countries, and specifically the USSR—a country he never visited, never read about, and never interacted with the politics of. This point can’t be understated: Orwell actually knew next to nothing about the USSR; and the misconceptions and ridiculous caricatures he reproduces, both in his writing as well as his commentary, are so easily corrected by the lightest possible research as to essentially solidify the fact that he was simply happy in his ignorance. Or insidious—one or the other. By the way, if you thought *Animal Farm* critiques Stalinism or whatever other made-up concept, it doesn’t. The fundamental thesis of *Animal Farm* is that the working class is stupid and cannot be trusted to lead any sort of independent political existence.

“To quote Jones Manoel, a Brazilian organizer and professor of history:” [Hakim does not list a source. At the end of the following quote, however, he shows on the screen of his video a screen-capture of the article. The title of it is *A Critical Read of Animal Farm*. It was published by RedSails.org. Again, all is recorded intentionally so written, as Hakim reproduced in his video. Thus, a reader shall make note of messy penmanship or poor editing.]

“Orwell spends the entire book describing generations of animals as easily confused, dumb, stupid, illiterate, amnesiac... the entire book!... The main target of this books critiques arent revolutionaries or communism: its the working class.

“George Orwell writes from an aristocratic ethos. “Elite theory” posits the people as incapable of self-governance, without the capacity to constitute themselves as a political subject, and therefore always the object of dispute and manipulation by vying elites... The people lack the capacity for political self-determination, cannot build a political program or engage in autonomous political action. This is George Orwells theory, borne out by his choice of metaphors. [...] *Animal Farm* isnt a critique of revolutionaries; its a critique of workers. Its an aristocratic manifesto against the working class.” [Hakim shifts forward, though continues with the same article.] “[T]his book, *Animal Farm*, is a deeply reactionary book, displaying aristocratic condescension against the people, a book in which the working class appear as imbeciles. It displays all the marks of the bourgeois genre of elite theory. Its historical metaphors for Soviet history whitewash capitalists and imperialists. The USSR is shown as self-sabotaging, whilst enemies are completely absolved. This is George Orwell, and this is why he was so successful.’

“I’ll recommend you read the article. It’s great and full of citations that further bolster the point. I don’t want to subject you to excerpts of *Animal Farm*, after all. By the way, his hatred for the working class was even noticed by the people who fought beside and absolutely hated Orwell in Spain.

“1984, on the other hand, doesn’t even deserve to be commented on. To quote Asimov again—

[Hakim draws from Asimov’s *Review of 1984*. He pulls from two sections. The break between them shall be made clear by the insertion of ellipsis.]

“‘I read it and found myself absolutely astonished at what I read. I wondered how many people who talked about the novel so glibly had ever read it; or if they had, whether they remembered it at all. I felt I would have to write the critique if only to set people straight. [...]

“‘By the time 1984 came out in 1949, the Cold War was at its height. The book therefore proved popular. It was almost a matter of patriotism in the West to buy it and talk about it, and perhaps even to read parts of it, although it is my opinion that more people bought it and talked about it than read it, for it is a dreadfully dull book—didactic, repetitious, and all but motionless.’

“I genuinely recommend you read this entire review as well. The critique is excellent and really goes to show not only how bad the book is, but also how the ‘literally 1984’ types don’t even bother to engage with the book. And, of course, the incredibly ineffectual and childish criticism of vague or otherwise undefined symbols of power. Keep in mind, though, that Asimov himself is a liberal at the end of the day. So, some” [I do not wish to be unfair; thus, on account of Hakim’s audio going low here, I shall insert the two following words: ‘of his.’ Read the sentence, then, as ‘So, some of his politically oriented comments suffer the usual deficits.’ “[of his] politically oriented comments suffer the usual deficits.

“Of course, the elephant in the room—that Orwell would love to shoot—is his supposed leftist convictions. To quote a fantastic article from *Red Sails*—

“‘It is mistaken to imagine that children in the English-speaking world get’” [‘his,’ says the article. Hakim, however, says Orwell.] “Orwell’s ‘work drilled into them like a mantra because, somehow, *genuine* socialists managed to sneak his work past a censor that banishes the likes of Karl Marx and Malcolm X.’

“From the beginning, this supposed socialist had published everything he could in a personal crusade against Marxism, as opposed to his preferred ‘respectable’ English social democracy. This fact did not go unnoticed by the CIA” [the CIA was founded in 1947. By then, Orwell was nearing the end of his life. No even vague contact between Orwell and any agent of the CIA, or indeed America, is known to exist.] “and practically every other anti-communist outlet that existed. To quote—[Hakim quotes from an article from *The Spectator*.]

“‘Between 1952 and 1957, from three sites in West Germany, a CIA operation codenamed ‘Aedinosaur’ launched millions of ten-foot balloons carrying copies of George Orwell’s *Animal Farm*, and dropped them over Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia—whose airforces were ordered to shoot the balloons down.’

“Even the *Animal Farm* film, forcibly shoved down millions of kids’ throats the world over, was entirely financed by the CIA—a secret they kept for decades. It was entirely produced in Britain, too, because the CIA feared that plenty of talented animators wouldn’t go along with such a blatantly anti-communist message. The very script and ending was edited to be even more negative and anti-communist afterwards, as the CIA thought it still seemed too sympathetic.” [Hakim provides a source for this claim. It is a work called *Orwell Subverted: The CIA and the Filming of Animal Farm*.]

“All in all, Orwell was just a garbage person: personally, politically, professionally, the human equivalent of a clogged toilet. To quote Parenti—

“‘Safely ensconced within a virulently anticommunist society, Orwell (with Orwellian doublethink) characterized the condemnation of Communism as a lonely courageous act of defiance. Today his ideological progeny are still at it, offering themselves as intrepid left critics of the Left, waging a valiant struggle against imaginary Marxist-Leninist-Stalinist hordes.’

[Hakim’s final word is spoken to the background image of Orwell’s grave on a sunny day.]

“May he and his ideological progeny rot like their brains often already do.”

My critique

The concluding screen of Hakim's essay is a blazing pit, in which Orwell burns alone, cursed I suppose to a layer deeper than those three great betrayers dreamt of by Dante were in the latter's dream. I understand that Hakim is a follower of one kind of the Islamic religion; thus, I realise he hopes Orwell shall literally burn in eternal hellfire. 'Tis a pity one can be so cruel as that. But such, such are the joys one can expect to find dwelling within the mind of another.

Now, my own word or two. Please do not guess that I shall make an attempt to write my words to the rhythm of marching music or anything as exciting as that. Caring very much about this matter, I shall remain as humble as I may and without all the pomp I could employ.

Hakim's hypothesis is a rather simple one: Orwell was, as our Marxist essayist says, a garbage human being. Does he prove it? Well, I should like, now, to wade through his dreary river of diatribe and see if Hakim has crafted a theory. The following opening sentences can for the most part be disregarded. Hakim calls Orwell very much. The compass of claims has not been completed till Hakim has called Orwell a racist colonial-cop, a rapist, one possessing the moustache of a paedophile, and a CIA 'puppet'—read, I suppose, as willing anti-communist agent of the CIA. Well, he shall make the attempt to prove most of this. As it is, the first claim Hakim shoulders is that Orwell was a racist colonial-cop. Let us see, then.

When speaking of anything Orwell said or did which Hakim may agree with, the latter seems to have a keen desire to disregard the business as swiftly as he may. Speaking of Orwell's views on colonialism, Hakim tries to represent the penultimate as one concerned more with racialism than colonialism, and that any remarks he may have made against colonial or imperial endeavours were only made to cover up his racism. Well, that simply is not the case when all has been exposed. For Orwell wrote to an overwhelming degree about colonialism and the horrors it produces, dedicating much of his time to write a book denouncing it, in which he painted a veiled portrait of himself, as well as the other white people and colonisers, as an especially ugly bunch that corrupted Burma and caused to raise to the top of society the ugliest characters of the native element.

Most disgusting, perhaps, and dishonest, is Hakim trying to present the views Orwell held as a policeman in Burma—views which, in *Shooting an Elephant*, Orwell presented only as a piece of history, and made no attempt to defend—as those he held in the thirties or forties. But Orwell explains this in the essay, in the same paragraph which Hakim himself included in his essay—the one concluding with the business of the Buddhist Priest. Well, allow me to attach a much greater deal of that paragraph, so that one may understand what Orwell was actually telling the reader, not what Hakim would like one to think.

“Theoretically—and secretly, of course—I was all for the Burmese and all against their oppressors, the British. As for the job I was doing, I hated it more bitterly than I can perhaps make clear. In a job like that you see the dirty work of Empire at close quarters. The wretched prisoners huddling in the stinking cages of the lock-ups, the grey, cowed faces of the long-term convicts, the scarred buttocks of the men who had been Bugged with bamboos—all these oppressed me with an intolerable sense of guilt. But I could get nothing into perspective. I was young and ill-educated and I had had to think out my problems in the utter silence that is imposed on every Englishman in the East. I did not even know that the British Empire is dying, still less did I know that it is a great deal better than the younger empires that are going to supplant it.” [Orwell writes at the time of rapid fascist and Leninist takeover.] “All I knew was that I was stuck between my hatred of the empire I served and my rage against the evil-spirited little beasts who tried to make my job impossible. With one part of my mind I thought of the British Raj as an unbreakable tyranny, as something clamped down, *in saecula saeculorum*, upon the will of prostrate peoples; with another part I thought that the greatest joy in the world would be to drive a bayonet into a Buddhist priest's guts.

Feelings like these are the normal by-products of imperialism; ask any Anglo-Indian official, if you can catch him off duty.”¹

Orwell is, as a matter of fact, saying just what Hakim would rather he not: that imperialism was so terribly dehumanising, upon both the victim of imperialism and the one charged with upholding it, that a young man was taught to hate nearly everything.” One cannot craft Orwell as a sponsor of white-supremacy and imperialism from that. Well, not an honest one could do so much, at the least.

Let us hear another word from Orwell, taken now from *The Road to Wigan Pier*—

“I was in the Indian Police five years, and by the end of that time I hated the imperialism I was serving with a bitterness which I probably cannot make clear. In the free air of England that kind of thing is not fully intelligible. In order to hate imperialism you have got to be part of it. [...] [I]t is not possible to be part of such a system without recognising it as an unjustifiable tyranny.”²

If I may, I shall make but a final point on Hakim’s first accusation. We know, now, what Orwell’s views of himself, of the imperial effort, were both during and after his time in Burma. Hakim knows what they were during Orwell’s time in Burma. But why, Hakim, if he did not change those views, did he write a novel in which he bitterly criticised the British imperial system and left out any sort of hatred for the Burmese? Why, in *Burmese Days*, does Orwell paint what most in his time perceived as an exaggerated portrait of the Anglo-Indian as an entirely tawdry, repulsive, hateful creature and the Burmese as a simple, stoic, repressed one? Why does he paint the chief antagonist of the novel as a Burman who was come over to the Anglo side and has adopted their ways and ugly methods of thinking, of oppressing the natives for the benefit of himself and empire? Why did Orwell do any of this if he only desired to say a petty bad word or two about the Burman or his clergyman?

Far from alone am I in recognising Orwell’s desire to castigate not the natives but his fellow Anglo-Indians. If I may be given leave, I should like to conclude by attaching a word from Malcolm Muggeridge’s 1962 introduction to *Burmese Days*.

“Events have moved so fast since Orwell’s time in Burma that contemporary readers may regard his account of how the English lived and behaved there in the days of British rule as distorted and exaggerated. This is not so. Life in an upcountry station was just as Orwell described it, with the dreary little club, the silly talk about upholding white prestige, the buffoonery following long sessions of tedious drinking, the rows and absurd postures and faraway snobbishness of expatriates, many of whom enjoyed for the first time in their lives the sense of being somebodies, and behaved accordingly. Nowadays, these same people are as eager to ingratiate themselves with Pandit Nehru as once they were to have him shut up. Their arrogance toward ‘natives’ disappeared with British rule, and they have found in the mystique of profit a substitute for the now defunct mystique of empire. Britain’s Indian empire began with trade, and has ended with it too.”³

Well, next comes Hakim’s attempt to suggest Orwell as, if not himself a fascist, a closeted follower of fascism, or anyhow one indifferent to fascism. Hard is it to believe that one indifferent to fascism would run off to Spain in order risk his life fighting it. But let us give things a fuller look. Here is Hakim’s opening proposal, spoken in a question-and-answer sort of format—

“‘Hold on, if he hates the Burmese and uses these terms, then surely a self-proclaimed socialist would have even harsher words for the most notorious fascists of all, right?’”

¹ George Orwell, *Shooting an Elephant*

² George Orwell, *The Road to Wigan Pier*

³ George Orwell, *Burmese Days*

First, I do not see what one hating Burmans (again, Orwell admits to having hated certain Burmans in his youth, not adulthood) would have anything to do with one's negative view of fascism. If anything, one would assume that hating Burmans as a race would cause one to have one point of agreement with racially-minded fascists, such as the Germans—and these latter are the fascists Hakim focuses upon, they, of course, being the most known today. Well, Hakim's answer to his made-up inquirer is to draw sentences *from* Orwell, connected by a perfidious placement of ellipsis, to make him look like a Hitler-admirer. The problem is that Hakim, while claiming to draw from Orwell's 1940 *Review of Hitler's Mein Kampf*, printed by *The New English Weekly*, includes sentences which Orwell did not write—indeed, the damning sentences, those which have Orwell declaring that he has no personal animosity for Hitler, do not appear in the review. I must leave the reader without an answer to where these supposed Orwell quotes come from; for I do not know.

Hakim does include a legitimate line from Orwell's review, and that is—

“One feels, as with Napoleon, that he is fighting against destiny, that he *can't* win, and yet that he somehow deserves to.”⁴

The problem with slashing these quotes—as Hakim possesses a propensity to do—to bits, is that the simple context is removed. Allow me to provide it, then—

“The fact is that there is something deeply appealing about him. One feels it again when one sees his photographs—and I recommend especially the photograph at the beginning of Hurst and Blackett's edition,” [The English translation which Orwell reviews and which he derides as having a pro-Hitler purpose.] “which shows Hitler in his early Brownshirt days. It is a pathetic, dog-like face, the face of a man suffering under intolerable wrongs. In a rather more manly way it reproduces the expression of innumerable pictures of Christ crucified, and there is little doubt that that is how Hitler sees himself. The initial, personal cause of his grievance against the universe can only be guessed at; but at any rate the grievance is here. He is the martyr, the victim, Prometheus chained to the rock, the self-sacrificing hero who fights single-handed against impossible odds. If he were killing a mouse he would know how to make it seem like a dragon. One feels, as with Napoleon, that he is fighting against destiny, that he *can't* win, and yet that he somehow deserves to. The attraction of such a pose is of course enormous; half the films that one sees turn upon some such theme.”⁵

So clear is it made, when one bothers with the entirety of Orwell's thought, that Orwell is speaking not only of the appeal Hitler had upon people—not on Orwell alone, or even Orwell at all, but upon those who devoted themselves, to disastrous consequence, to Hitler—but how Hitler himself, in his crazed narcissism, saw his role on Earth. Allow me to make the point clearer by showing my reader what Orwell thought of Hitler's aims—

“Suppose that Hitler's programme could be put into effect. What he envisages, a hundred years hence, is a continuous state of 250 million Germans with plenty of ‘living room’ (i.e. stretching to Afghanistan or thereabouts), a horrible brainless empire in which, essentially, nothing ever happens except the training of young men for war and the endless breeding of fresh cannon-fodder.”⁶

After Hakim engages in literal doublespeak—that is, after he tries to sell Orwell as saying exactly what he was not—he concludes with a kind word—

⁴ George Orwell, *Review of Hitler's Mein Kampf*

⁵ George Orwell, *Review of Hitler's Mein Kampf*

⁶ George Orwell, *Review of Hitler's Mein Kampf*

“Jesus fucking Christ. The simplest benchmark for any reasonable human being is to have a burning hatred for fascism. But apparently even that’s too much for Orwell.”

Well, that was not too much for Orwell. To prove as much, I shall gladly arrest my reader from both my own shoddy prose and Hakim’s and allow Orwell to say a legitimate word or two of his own on Hitler and fascism. I shall hope to allow the quotes to come and go in rolling order, so that I shall only make it clear that a new quote is being commenced. Once or twice, though, I shall add a clarifying word.

From *The Lion and the Unicorn: Socialism and the English Genius*—

“Hitler’s real self is in *Mein Kampf*, and in his actions. He has never persecuted the rich, except when they were Jews or when they tried actively to oppose him. He stands for a centralised economy which robs the capitalist of most of his power but leaves the structure of society much as before. The State controls industry, but there are still rich and poor, masters and men. Therefore, as against genuine Socialism, the moneyed class have always been on his side. This was crystal clear at the time of the Spanish civil war, and clear again at the time when France surrendered. Hitler’s puppet government are not working men, but a gang of bankers, gaga generals and corrupt right wing politicians.”⁷

Another from the same—

“During the last six months there has been much talk of “the Fifth Column. From time to time obscure lunatics have been jailed for making speeches in favour of Hitler.”⁸

If Orwell truly admired Hitler, he surely would not label one dedicating a speech to *der Führer und Reichskanzler* as a ‘lunatic.’

A word from *Inside the Whale*—

“To me, murder is something to be avoided. So it is to any ordinary person. The Hitlers and Stalins find murder necessary, but they don’t advertise their callousness, and they don’t speak of it as murder; it is ‘liquidation’, ‘elimination’, or some other soothing phrase.”⁹

Another from *The Lion and the Unicorn: Socialism and the English Genius*, in which Orwell speaks of the British ruling class—

“They could not struggle against Nazism or Fascism, because they could not understand them. Neither could they have struggled against Communism, if Communism had been a serious force in western Europe. To understand Fascism they would have had to study the theory of Socialism, which would have forced them to realize that the economic system by which they lived was unjust, inefficient and out-of-date. But it was exactly this fact that they had trained themselves never to face. They dealt with Fascism as the cavalry generals of 1914 dealt with the machine-guns—by ignoring it. After years of aggression and massacres, they had grasped only one fact, that Hitler and Mussolini were hostile to Communism. Therefore, it was argued, they *must* be friendly to the British dividend-drawer. Hence the truly frightening spectacle of Conservative M.P.s wildly cheering the news that British ships, bringing food to the Spanish Republican government, had been bombed by Italian aeroplanes. Even when they had begun to grasp that Fascism was dangerous, its essentially revolutionary nature, the huge military effort it was capable of making, the sort of tactics it would use, were quite beyond their comprehension.”¹⁰

⁷ George Orwell, *The Lion and the Unicorn: Socialism and the English Genius*

⁸ George Orwell, *The Lion and the Unicorn: Socialism and the English Genius*

⁹ George Orwell, *Inside the Whale*

¹⁰ George Orwell, *The Lion and the Unicorn: Socialism and the English Genius*

Yet another from *The Lion and the Unicorn: Socialism and the English Genius*—

“But the idea underlying Fascism is irreconcilably different from that which underlies Socialism. Socialism aims, ultimately, at a world-state of free and equal human beings. It takes the equality of human rights for granted. Nazism assumes just the opposite. The driving force behind the Nazi movement is the belief in human *inequality*, the superiority of Germans to all other races, the right of Germany to rule the world.”

A word from *Wells, Hitler and the World State*—

“Hitler is a criminal lunatic, and Hitler has an army of millions of men, aeroplanes in thousands, tanks in tens of thousands.”¹¹

A final word, from *James Burnham and the Managerial Revolution*—

“[T]o refrain from admiring Hitler or Stalin—that, too, should not require an enormous intellectual effort.”¹²

After Hakim completes his attempt to paint Orwell as a Hitlerite, he concludes—

“Jesus fucking Christ. The simplest benchmark for any reasonable human being is to have a burning hatred for fascism. But apparently even that’s too much for Orwell. Instead, in the height of World War Two, he says the willingness to criticize Russia and Stalin is *the* test of intellectual honesty.”

Well, we have read by now of what Orwell thought. Thus, we see that the accusation that Orwell did not say a bad word about fascism is either an intentionally or unintentionally ignorant one. Let us be happy to only conclude that it is indeed an ignorant one. But I shall anyhow include a word or two penned by Orwell which speeds in the direction of anti-fascism, rather than simply anti-Hitlerism. First, though, I would like to say that Orwell, rather than committing himself to writing a book against fascism—as he did with Leninism—simply took his courage in his hand and shipped himself off to Spain. Now, Hakim may choose to criticise Orwell for not having served directly for the Republican government, but he anyhow fought against fascism in Spain. He was obliged for so doing with a bullet to his throat and various other wounds and ailments which, in his latter-days, surely did no good deed on his health. After, he wrote a work about his time in Spain. Within the body of that text, one shall find several deleterious remarks against fascism.

Now, let me take a word or two from *The Road to Wigan Pier*, and point out, first, that one honest reading of it would clear up a fair deal of Hakim’s complaints. Now, the quote, in which Orwell speaks of the Marxist conception of fascism—where they are right, where wrong.

“Discussing the widely held theory—which in one sense is certainly true—that Fascism is a product of Communism, Mr N. A. Holdaway, one of the ablest Marxist writers we possess, writes as follows:

“‘The hoary legend of Communism leading to Fascism ... The element of truth in it is this: that the appearance of Communist activity warns the ruling class that democratic Labour Parties are no longer capable of holding the working class in check, and that capitalist dictatorship must assume another form if it is to survive.’

“You see here the defects of the method. Because he has detected the underlying economic cause of Fascism, he tacitly assumes that the spiritual side of it is of no importance. Fascism

¹¹ George Orwell, *The Lion and the Unicorn: Socialism and the English Genius*

¹² George Orwell, *Wells, Hitler and the World State*

is written off as a manoeuvre of the ‘ruling class’, which at bottom it is. But this in itself would only explain why Fascism appeals to capitalists. What about the millions who are not capitalists, who in a material sense have nothing to gain from Fascism and are often aware of it, and who, nevertheless, are Fascists? Obviously their approach has been purely along the ideological line. They could only be stampeded into Fascism because Communism attacked or seemed to attack certain things (patriotism, religion, etc.) which lay deeper than the economic motive; and in *that* sense it is perfectly true that Communism leads to Fascism. It is a pity that Marxists nearly always concentrate on letting economic cats out of ideological bags; it does in one sense reveal the truth, but with this penalty, that most of their propaganda misses its mark.”¹³

If he is a fascist, why does Orwell attempt a fuller explanation of fascism’s cause and lament only that the Marxists’ anti-fascist propaganda is not doing a good enough job?

Another quote, now drawn from *Fascism and Democracy*, a pamphlet in which Orwell draws up pro and anti-democracy arguments, and ultimately comes down on the latter side with his support.

“When the real English socialist movement appears—it must appear if we are not to be defeated, and the basis for it is already there in the conversations in a million pubs and air-raid shelters—it will cut across the existing party divisions. It will be both revolutionary and democratic. It will aim at the most fundamental changes and be perfectly willing to use violence if necessary. But also it will recognize that not all cultures are the same, that national sentiments and traditions have to be respected if revolutions are not to fail, that England is not Russia—or China, or India. It will realise that British Democracy is *not* altogether a sham, *not* simply ‘superstructure’, that on the contrary it is something extremely valuable which must be preserved and extended, and above all, must not be insulted. That is why I have spent so much space above in answering the familiar arguments against ‘bourgeois’ Democracy. Bourgeois Democracy is not enough, but it is very much better than Fascism, and to work against it is to saw off the branch you are sitting on. The common people know this, even if the intellectuals do not. They will cling very firmly to the ‘illusion’ of Democracy and the Western conception of honesty and common decency.”¹⁴

I must plead with our fabulist Hakim again, asking why Orwell-the-fascist writes—ecstatically hopeful—of a coming socialist revolution in England, a revolution which shall replace, and be much better than, a system which itself is already, according to him, leagues better than fascism? Should he not, as a fascist, wish to reverse things?

We are finished with that business now. Next, Hakim commits himself to exposing Orwell as a so-called snitch. He says—

“Let’s move on to his list-making. Orwell reported on his friends and acquaintances to the Information Research Bureau.”

I pointed it out in the body of Hakim’s text, but I shall say it again: the latter means to say the ‘Information Research Department.’ I do not mean to sound as petty as I may; I should only like a reader to suppose how much authority Hakim has to say anything if he commits such silly mistakes as these.

Anyway, Hakim tries to present Orwell as one who nearly tired his hand in writing endless lists. Well, concerning the lists, I should like to draw only the words from one who was upon the official list—the ‘Orwell List’—and gave Orwell at least one excuse for having penned it. All is from an article from *The Guardian*. The article, though retired from print for more than twenty years by now, does all

¹³ George Orwell, *James Burnham and the Managerial Revolution*

¹⁴ George Orwell, *The Road to Wigan Pier*

needed to refute much of what Hakim claims. Once the line infantry has done its work, I shall despatch to the field of battle but one charge of Hussars and finish the affair posthaste.

Peter Mackenzie, who appeared on Orwell's list, and who was a member of the British Communist Party till 1943, said of Orwell and his latter-day list-making—

“[It is] the sort of tittle-tattle you often heard in Red Lion Square... It's a very shaky list. He was definitely right about Peter Smollett (aka Smolka, who worked for the Daily Express) and Commander Edgar Young, both of whom were nasty shits, but he is wildly off the mark elsewhere.

“Tubercular people often could get very strange towards the end. I'm an Orwell man, I agreed with him on the Soviet Union, but he went partly ga-ga I think. He let his dislike of the New Statesman crowd, of what he saw as leftish, dilettante, sentimental socialists who covered up for the Popular Front in Spain [after it became communist-controlled] get the better of him.

“[The list] represents everything he hated about the New Statesman—that it was full of fluffy-headed fellow travellers and that it was intellectually dishonest, which is probably true.”¹⁵

Well, what more is to be said? Orwell, dying and deathly afraid of Stalinism coming to Britain before a democratic-socialist revolution struck, wrote a list of those he thought unlikely to be of any help—indeed, those who may have been quite unhelpful—in penning pro-West propaganda. He did not write a Nazi-esque apprehension and kill list, nor did he write a list of those whose flats should have been witness to an irregularly high police presence. He was rather bitter, dying, and perhaps somewhat paranoid: He wrote one list, then, for the Foreign Office. History would contradict any claim that the list influenced the actions of the Labour government of Orwell's dying days in grappling with Stalinism and, more importantly, those suspected of being Stalinists.

Accompanying the fantasy of Orwell as a CIA or MI5 man, Hakim descends to abusing him as an antisemite. Actually, Hakim seems much more interested in what Orwell's list may say of his prejudices than what it was—namely, innocuous.

I shall inspect a few of Hakim's claims.

“He diligently notes ‘Jew’ and ‘Jewess’ next to people. [...] My guy, why is this so important to you? It makes you think. He also kept a paranoid list of names for himself, by the way, with the same weird pattern reproduced.”

First, please let Hakim's charge of antisemitism be turned to ash. All I shall do to complete the task is quote from a 1945 essay by Orwell, titled *Antisemitism in Britain*. One shall get a view, be sure, of a man not antisemitic, but rather concerned with antisemitism, which in no fashion ceased to be in Europe after Hitler had shot himself and the camps had been closed up.

From Orwell, documenting the rise of antisemitism in Britain—

“Here are some samples of antisemitic remarks that have been made to me during the past year or two:

“Middle-aged office employee: ‘I generally come to work by bus. It takes longer, but I don't care about using the Underground from Golders Green nowadays. There's too many of the Chosen Race travelling on that line.’

“Tobacconist (woman): ‘No, I've got no matches for you. I should try the lady down the street. *She's* always got matches. One of the Chosen Race, you see.’

¹⁵ George Orwell, *Fascism and Democracy*

“Young intellectual, Communist or near-Communist: ‘No, I do *not* like Jews. I’ve never made any secret of that. I can’t stick them. Mind you, I’m not antisemitic, of course.’

“Middle-class woman: ‘Well, no one could call me antisemitic, but I do think the way these Jews behave is too absolutely stinking. The way they push their way to the head of queues, and so on. They’re so abominably selfish. I think they’re responsible for a lot of what happens to them.’

“Milk roundsman: ‘A Jew don’t do no work, not the same as what an Englishman does. ‘E’s too clever. We work with this ‘ere’ (flexes his biceps). ‘They work with that there’ (taps his forehead).”¹⁶

Not only does a picture of Orwell’s lack of antisemitism begin to take shape, but another charge of Hakim’s, that he peculiarly labels people—for some nefarious, prejudiced, reason, of course, Hakim believes—is put on display and cannot be said to have been included by Orwell out of any hope to be prejudiced. Orwell continues—

“I could fill pages with similar remarks, but these will do to go on with. Two facts emerge from them. One—which is very important and which I must return to in a moment—is that above a certain intellectual level people are ashamed of being antisemitic and are careful to draw a distinction between ‘antisemitism’ and ‘disliking Jews’. The other is that antisemitism is an irrational thing. The Jews are accused of specific offences (for instance, bad behaviour in food queues) which the person speaking feels strongly about, but it is obvious that these accusations merely rationalise some deep-rooted prejudice.”¹⁷

Later—

“[O]ne of the marks of antisemitism is an ability to believe stories that could not possibly be true.”¹⁸

Speaking of Britain’s unique antisemitism—

“[T]hirty years ago it was accepted more or less as a law of nature that a Jew was a figure of fun and—though superior in intelligence—slightly deficient in ‘character’. In theory a Jew suffered from no legal disabilities, but in effect he was debarred from certain professions. He would probably not have been accepted as an officer in the navy, for instance, nor in what is called a ‘smart’ regiment in the army. A Jewish boy at a public school almost invariably had a bad time. He could, of course, live down his Jewishness if he was exceptionally charming or athletic, but it was an initial disability comparable to a stammer or a birthmark.”¹⁹

One final note from Orwell—

“It seems to me a safe assumption that the disease loosely called nationalism is now almost universal. Antisemitism is only one manifestation of nationalism, and not everyone will have the disease in that particular form. A Jew, for example, would not be antisemitic: but then many Zionist Jews seem to me to be merely antisemites turned upside-down, just as many Indians and Negroes display the normal colour prejudices in an inverted form. The point is that something, some psychological vitamin, is lacking in modern civilisation, and as a result we are all more or less subject to this lunacy of believing that whole races or nations are mysteriously good or mysteriously evil.”²⁰

¹⁶ Blacklisted writer says illness clouded Orwell’s judgement. <www.theguardian.com/uk/2003/jun/24/highereducation.books>

¹⁷ George Orwell, *Antisemitism in Britain*

¹⁸ George Orwell, *Antisemitism in Britain*

¹⁹ George Orwell, *Antisemitism in Britain*

²⁰ George Orwell, *Antisemitism in Britain*

I could be pleased to fill up more space with Orwell's own words on antisemitism; but by now the point, I should think, has been proved to all but those not willing to change their minds.

Another perplexing word from Hakim—

“Regardless, as a liberal darling, all of [Orwell's] obvious ignorance and suspicion of Jews, LGBT people, and blacks is skated over without a peep or mention. Had any other post-war leftist made remarks of this kind, you'd for sure know about it and their problematic nature would litter the prefaces of their published works.”

What to say of this latter accusation? Well, Stalin was a postwar leftist, yet prefaces of his writings, as well as all those of other postwar leftists who bought into nonsense such as the Doctor's Plot or 'Borderless Cosmopolitanism', are not littered with mentions of any of that. Stalin's decision to recriminalize homosexuality cannot be found recounted in the prefaces of his works, nor can his ethnic cleansings of the Chechens, Koreans, and so on, be found, nor can his successful efforts to keep Vasily Grossman and Ilya Ehrenburg from publishing *The Black Book of Soviet Jewry*. Further, neither the introductions nor prefaces to any of the works of the French Marxist philosopher Sartre—at least, those I own, which are from diverse publishers—include descriptions of plausible, if not wholly proven, sexual misconduct claims made against him. How about Asimov, from whom Hakim gladly quotes throughout his essay? Is Asimov's intensely boyish, disgusting sexual harassment towards ladies and lady-peers noted in prefaces to his works? No, 'tis not.

One must, I think, ask from where has Hakim retrieved the idea that to be recognised as one of considerable literary talent, one must be an entirely ethical person? For that is certainly not the case.

I will not bother mentioning his name, but it was not long ago that the Nobel Prize for Literature fell into the paws of a man who denies the established fact that Milosevic committed genocide during his fascistic conquest. What of another? Yukio Mishima does not cease to be a beautiful writer because he was so extreme a reactionary that he committed ceremonial suicide on the half-deposed emperor's behalf—he cannot cease to be the former.

It is perfectly regular that faults are often left out of an artist's own portrait: It is not common practice, Hakim, to find denunciations of an artist 'littering' prefaces or introductions to their works. I can think of one or two—Knut Hamsun, for one—who in editions of works I own of his is described as he was, namely so extremely right-wing that he penned a solemn eulogy for Hitler, and so on. The practice is nevertheless uncommon, however.

We direct ourselves at once to a fresh charge against Orwell. Sayeth Hakim—

“Liberals” [I must interrupt for but a moment. I desire only to say that 'liberal' seems to be a pejorative favoured by Hakim. Well, he may legitimately believe that there is but one political divide: Marxism-Leninism and Liberalism. This is not so rare, of course. One need not apply oneself to find Marxists claiming anarchism, anarchism-communism, and fascism to be liberal ideologies. His overuse of the label may be thus explained.] “are *so* intentionally blind that they claim his attempted rape of his adolescent girlfriend was a 'botched seduction,' in which she had shouted, screamed, and kicked before running home with a torn skirt and bruised hip. Yes, that's apparently a botched seduction to liberals: when a 190-centimetres-tall man corners and forces himself onto a tiny, 150-centimetre-tall woman.”

Hakim finally hits upon something which may not give way under the influence of a feather. But I must anyhow say a clarifying word or two. I suppose the chief word one could provide in defence of Orwell is that neither the victim of his supposed sexual assault— but, if true, veritable harassment and disgusting, improper behaviour—nor any other who knew of it, held that it was, as Hakim suggests, a rape, or an attempt at it.

Hakim says of the so-called rape, or, as he has liberals say, 'botched seduction'—

“Yes, that’s apparently a botched seduction to liberals: when a 190-centimetres-tall man corners and forces himself onto a tiny, 150-centimetre-tall woman.”

Well, you make an antithetical point there, Hakim. Orwell could have overwhelmed her; he intentionally failed to, though. Going as far as he allegedly—and, I really must say allegedly, there being no evidence either way—did is, as I say, disgusting behaviour.

Ultimately, the situation surrounding the incident is quite vague—there is no evidence, as it is, only an accusation made by one and levelled upon another who had died decades earlier, and who had, according to the penultimate, attempted what Hakim calls the terrible deed some fifty years earlier.

Anyhow, even if true and worse than what the victim of the incident supposed it to have been, it is not a reason to write off all of one’s life. If true, it is a disgusting blot. Anyhow, his accuser seems to have found it in her heart to forgive Orwell. They conversed through pen and telephone near the end of the latter’s life. When the unfortunate event arrived, she attended his funeral.

What has Hakim to say next? He begins upon literary criticism. Well, he begins by trying and convicting Orwell as a fascist again. But he moves on swift enough, soon recruiting Asimov as his literary authority. Hakim—

“At the same time” [when Orwell, though mostly working on matters of professional writing, as well as his work with the BBC, wrote *Animal Farm*] “during the war, the IRD, which he would work for was making connections with Ukrainian nationalists, of which many directly aided the Nazi Einsatzgruppen as they went about their program of a monoethnic Ukraine without Jews, Poles, Gypsies, and Communists. There’s even evidence to suggest that Orwell knew and approved of this. To quote a great article you should read, Isaac Asimov also points out a shocking fact that conveniently escapes the myriad disciples of the British author:

“‘George Orwell spent the peak years of genocidal destruction of World War Two writing a childish story about how evil the Nazi-killing Soviet Union supposedly was.’”

And so on, goes Azimov, who tries his hand much like Hakim in posthumously granting Orwell the Iron Cross with Oak Leaves.

There is in the body of the latter quote a few words I must clear up. One is that Orwell worked for the IRD. All Orwell ever did in relation to the IRD was provide a lady who worked for them a list of thirty-eight names. We have retired questions surrounding that list by now. Truly, and notwithstanding what Hakim and Azimov suggest, Orwell was not salaried by the IRD, nor ever had much contact with them.

Now, the second claim of Hakim’s which I must write off, before we advance to a delicious attempt by comrades Hakim and Azimov at literary criticism, is that Orwell very much approved of supposed attempts by the IRD to, as Hakim would like one to think, specifically recruit the most sadistic, brutal, and reactionary men of Ukraine, probably more than half of which were proud Einsatzgruppen men and murdered, gladly, many a Jew.

This accusation nearly touches the edge of the universe, so outlandish is it. First, Hakim gets wrong a rather crucial fact to his argument, namely that Orwell worked for the IRD. Again, he provided one lady who worked there a list, which was probably used for no greater purpose than fulfilling a day of deskwork for some one or other. Anyhow, Hakim claims that the IRD, which Orwell would “later work for,” was encouraging Ukrainian nationalism. Hakim claims, then, that Orwell was very enthusiastic about the Ukrainian nationalist endeavours—

“There’s even evidence to suggest that Orwell knew and approved of this.”

Hakim tries to sell the quite fantastic idea that Orwell knew that the IRD was contacting SS men who had slaughtered masses of Jews and so on in Ukraine. Indeed, Hakim almost seems to suggest Orwell,

being, of course, so highly ranked within the IRD (which he did not work for) did not approve of the endeavour, but *approved* it. I am afraid to say that, in inspecting a copy of Orwell's complete letters, one can only find one letter, penned the twentieth of September 1947, to Arthur Koestler, in which Orwell makes a mention of Ukrainians. He does not, however, bring up the IRD and does not mention any Ukrainian fascists. Orwell suggests that the displaced Ukrainians, and other displaced peoples, may be useful for anti-Stalinist ventures. Nowhere in the letter, however, does he give support for former SS men either existing or carrying out any clandestine activities on behalf of the British government. He mentions that a Ukrainian is interested in translating Koestler's works, and Orwell asks, in a way, for permission on this Ukrainian's behalf. Orwell does say that translated copies of *Animal Farm* were being given over to the displaced persons awaiting Soviet repatriation. Far from a multi-agency, fascist plot against Stalin, however, Orwell suggests that the Americans had seized a great deal of the copies before they had reached the hands of the Ukrainians and others and had thereafter not allowed them to be given over. Orwell expresses only, as he sees it, a kind-hearted concern for peoples displaced by war—peoples who would soon have to return to lands they did not wish to. He does not give tacit—not expressing a knowledge of it—support, even, to just retired SS Jew-killers, as Hakim indeed tacitly suggests.

Now, the first injury Hakim attempts to place upon Orwell's literary reputation is not concerned with syntax—well, really, the first critique of Hakim's has naught to do with writing at all. But let us allow Hakim his own voice:

“To quote a great article you should read, Isaac Asimov also points out a shocking fact that conveniently escapes the myriad disciples of the British author: George Orwell spent the peak years of genocidal destruction of World War Two writing a childish story about how evil the Nazi killing Soviet Union supposedly was. As Azimov points out:

“Orwell wasn't much affected, apparently, by the Nazi brand of totalitarianism, for there was no room within him except for his private war with Stalinist Communism. Consequently, when Great Britain was fighting for its life against Nazism, and the Soviet Union fought as an ally in the struggle and contributed rather more than its share and lives lost and resolute courage, Orwell wrote *Animal Farm*.”

What word shall we first parry the stab with. Well, let it be repeated that Orwell spent much of the war working for the BBC, and during that time wrote and said much about the evils of fascism in essay and other print. Perhaps neither Hakim nor Asimov discovered such writings. Who can say?

Now, critiquing one actor in a war is not to necessarily support the other side, or one of the other sides. Orwell does not become a Nazi because, during the war, he wrote a critique of one of the Nazi's enemies, while himself remaining another of them. Marxists do not suddenly become supporters of the crimes Saddam Hussein committed against the Kurdish people when those named Marxists criticise the American war effort in Iraq. Hakim and Azimov, as it is, would like if this were not true, would like it, rather, to be true that critiquing one side of the war makes you an ally of the other; for if that were indeed true, Orwell would, by critiquing the beloved Union of Soviets, have been a Nazi. Alas! for them, 'tis far from true.

Hakim continues—

“In fact, Orwell went out of his way to manufacture a fantasy that couldn't possibly be mistaken for Nazism. Because, as everyone knows, the people and ideology that materially supported every single genuine liberation and independence movement in existence are the true evil. Of course, not a single line critiquing American genocidal policies globally or their constant warmongering and sabre rattling and their sanctions and bombing of poor, servile countries trying to detach from colonial regimes that had oppressed them for decades, if not centuries. Nothing on the Spanish or French or Portuguese. His only genuine vitriol and

whatever passed for criticism, oscillating between childish storytelling and verbose ranting, was exclusively reserved for socialist countries, and specifically the USSR—a country he never visited, never read about, and never interacted with the politics of.”

I shall now advance through the paragraph and strike down the nonsense.

That the USSR was supporting independence movements, especially during Orwell’s time, makes less than no sense. Perhaps Hakim views the capture of Eastern Europe by the Soviet Union, the installation of a puppet-regime in Korea, and the support of one side of the Chinese *civil war*, as Stalin supporting the Soviet Union. Perhaps, though—and, judging by what Hakim says next, I believe this the right line—Hakim forgets that Orwell died before Stalin. Orwell having died during Stalin’s rule means that during Orwell’s life, the USSR did not widely support, in any capacity other than rhetorical, independence movements—genuine independence movements, that is, in which a state’s right to determine the future is respected, not decided for it. If one views the Korean War as an independence movement which the USSR supported, one cannot observe Orwell saying a thing about it; for he died before a shell was loosed from a gun in Korea. Egypt, Vietnam, Cuba, and so on—the support the USSR gave these nations occurred after Orwell’s death. One does not know, even, what Orwell would have thought of Khrushchev? Hardly can one imagine him lamenting The Thaw, however.

Does Hakim mean supposed American genocidal policies in the Second World War, or elsewhere? Again, Orwell died well before the United States, saving only in distant, provincial South America, really got its start in the terror which Hakim rightly hates—before it ever started on those bombing campaigns which Hakim mentions. How could Orwell have said a word about any of that, then? One need only read 1984 to understand Orwell was not clairvoyant—and thankfully may one reflect thus.

“Nothing on the Spanish...” My fellow! He wrote a book about Spain, if you would care to read it. In it, he criticised the fascists, the Republican government, the British right for supporting Franco, and the British left for supporting only the Republican government, the Soviet Union’s ally, and cursing the anarchists, who were fighting shoulder to shoulder with the Republicans against the fascists.

The case with the French and Portuguese is much the same as with the United States. The fire of the decolonisation battle and the horrors which accompanied it did not come to know the territories of France or Portugal—Algeria, Vietnam, Angola, and so on—till after Orwell’s death.

So, we see now why Orwell said so very much about the USSR and Germany during the forties—there were not so many other options!

Let us say, too, to contradict Hakim’s praise of the USSR as the only liberator, that the Nazis supported plenty of independence movements. Norwegian fascists saw the efforts of the Nazis as efforts aimed at overthrowing British-imperial domination of Norway and, soon, they expected, all other non-aligned nations. You may suggest that is nonsense, as a reasonable person may. Nevertheless, that is true. You only fail to mention those efforts because those seeking independence were far-right ideologues supported by Nazi Germany. That does not mean they were not ostensibly seeking independence from imperialism, however. The same is true of the Indians: one cannot deny that the Indians— notwithstanding the fact that the Nazis chiefly supported their independence movement in an attempt to break British hegemony—appreciated Nazi support before and during the Second World War.

Hakim tries to dismiss Orwell’s critiques of the Soviet Union on the basis of three pillars, namely that he never visited the country, never read about it, and never interacted with it. Shall we see what may be said about these claims?

1st: Well, Orwell knew plenty of people who had been to the Soviet Union. But, for contrast, let it be suggested that only fools would say that one must travel to a Nazi country to know that what that country is doing, based solely upon what those within the country—dissidents and supporters alike—say they are doing, is not good.

2d: Hakim cites no source which claims Orwell read nothing about the Soviet Union. But it is so odd and petty a claim that it hardly needs to be addressed. What does Hakim think Orwell did for the final twenty or so years of his life? Not read? He worked in literature, as an editor of papers in Britain,

and as a journalist. Never have I heard of one working in any three of those fields who has not read anything about what they are speaking about, writing about, and so on. Finally, quotes of Lenin and others of now mostly forgotten Soviet and Marxist history can be found within Orwell's essays.

3d: I suppose this third is bundling the first two together and restating them. What is interacting with it other than visiting or reading about the Soviet Union? Was Orwell supposed to secure a call with Stalin? Would the latter have told Orwell what he wanted to tell the critic, or the truth? What did Stalin and others say to Western journalists who were given the privilege? They did not quite talk about the trials, the forced displacement and migration of ethnic and religious minorities, the human failures in farm collectivisation, and so on. They altogether said they were dizzy with success, having always in some distant past suffered a minor hiccup or two, but no more.

Ah, now we finally come to a critique of *Animal Farm* itself!

Hakim proclaims—

“[I]f you thought *Animal Farm* critiques Stalinism or whatever other made-up concept, it doesn't. The fundamental thesis of *Animal Farm* is that the working class is stupid and cannot be trusted to lead any sort of independent political existence.”

Hakim from here on relies upon criticism penned by another, one Jones Manoel, a Brazilian communist. The latter paints *Animal Farm* as a work informed by “Elite Theory”, and as a work devoted to entirely sabring the working class while defending or inventing aristocratic purity.

I must suggest that I am unsure of whether Hakim or his Brazilian comrade have read *The Road to Wigan Pier* or *Down and Out in Paris and London*, or indeed several of Orwell's political essays. It is not clear how one who has read those works can craft an image of an author who hates those of the lower class.

Perhaps they interpret attacks against ugly individuals of the lower class as attacks against the whole of the latter.

Anyhow, *Animal Farm* does not read as an endless critique of the labouring class. One may suppose that it reads as an oddly allegorical version of Trotsky's *Revolution Betrayed*. Perhaps the latter, and indeed the former, may be found listed within the Marxist-Leninist *Index Librorum Prohibitorum*, though, cursed to waste away there as but another piece of ‘fascist’ or ‘reactionary’ literature. Thus, Hakim would know nothing about it; and this is perhaps why he said he would not oblige his listeners with any quotations from the book—he was prohibited from so doing.

A quote from Hakim and our Brazilian comrade, printed as Hakim produced it—

“Orwell spends the entire book describing generations of animals as easily confused, dumb, stupid, illiterate, and amnesiac... the entire book!... The main target of this books critiques arent revolutionaries or communism: its the working class.”

Well, no he does not. Now, some animals are represented as craftier than others. Some animals are represented as more gullible than others. Orwell points out the great influence which religion had upon the pre-revolutionary peoples of what would become the Soviet Union. If masses of the peasantry (for, remember, the masses were not, in 1917, proletarian—i.e., the labouring, industrialised class—but were of the peasantry) are not duped by religion, reactionary politics, including the so-called ‘culture war’, and so on, why do they not revolt? Orwell simply represents the peasantry as they were—as Lenin said they were—without revolutionary education, without having been agitated, namely backwards, reactionary, uneducated not by choice but by the decree of the ruling class, and so on. Now, one can find very kindly, brotherly descriptions of the working class in *The Road to Wigan Pier*, *Down and Out in Paris and London*, and several of Orwell's essays, as we have established before. Indeed, Orwell contrasts the working class over and over in his works as a pure sort of bunch who only care to live as they please and do not care how one pronounces ‘h’, about aristocratic schooling, about the trivialities and the nuance of religious belief which converts and scholars do, and so on. The reading of *Animal*

Farm promoted by Hakim is entirely selective and, I must say, foolish. But it is not Hakim's direct critique—he only repeats it and fails to offer a counter-opinion.

If I may, I should like to represent Orwell's authentic feelings about the working class, and its relation to socialism—or, rather, socialists relations to it—by including a rather dense quote from *The Road to Wigan Pier*—

“The first thing that must strike any outside observer is that Socialism in its developed form is a theory confined entirely to the middle class. The typical Socialist is not, as tremulous old ladies imagine, a ferocious-looking working man with greasy overalls and a raucous voice. He is either a youthful snob-Bolshevik who in five years' time will quite probably have made a wealthy marriage and been converted to Roman Catholicism; or, still more typically, a prim little man with a white-collar job, usually a secret teetotaler and often with vegetarian leanings, with a history of Nonconformity behind him, and, above all, with a social position which he has no intention of forfeiting. This last type is surprisingly common in Socialist parties of every shade; it has perhaps been taken over *en bloc* from the old Liberal Party. In addition to this there is the horrible—the really disquieting—prevalence of cranks wherever Socialists are gathered together. One sometimes gets the impression that the mere words ‘Socialism’ and ‘Communism’ draw towards them with magnetic force every fruit-juice drinker, nudist, sandal-wearer, sex-maniac, Quaker, ‘Nature Cure’ quack, pacifist and feminist in England. One day this summer I was riding through Letchworth when the bus stopped and two dreadful-looking old men got on to it. They were both about sixty, both very short, pink and chubby, and both hatless. One of them was obscenely bald, the other had long grey hair bobbed in Lloyd George style. They were dressed in pistachio-coloured shirts and khaki shorts into which their huge bottoms were crammed so tightly that you could study every dimple. Their appearance created a mild stir of horror on top of the bus. The man next to me, a commercial traveller I should say, glanced at me, at them, and back again at me, and murmured, ‘Socialists’, as who should say, ‘Red Indians’. He was probably right—the I.L.P. were holding their summer school at Letchworth. But the point is that to him, as an ordinary man, a crank meant a Socialist and a Socialist meant a crank. Any Socialist, he probably felt, could be counted on to have *something* eccentric about him. And some such notion seems to exist even among Socialists themselves. For instance, I have here a prospectus from another summer school which states its terms per week and then asks me to say ‘whether my diet is ordinary or vegetarian.’ They take it for granted, you aww, that it is necessary to ask this question. This kind of thing is by itself sufficient to alienate plenty of decent people. And their instinct is perfectly sound, for the food-crank is by definition a person willing to cut himself off from human society in hopes of adding five years on to the life of his carcase; that is, a person out of touch with common humanity.

“To this you have got to add the ugly fact that most middle-class Socialists, while theoretically pining for a classless society, cling like glue to their miserable fragments of social prestige. I remember my sensations of horror on first attending an I.L.P. branch meeting in London. (It might have been rather different in the North, where the bourgeoisie are less thickly scattered.) Are *these* mingy little beasts, I thought, the champions of the working class? For every person there, male and female, bore the worst stigmata of sniffish middle-class superiority. If a real working man, a miner dirty from the pit, for instance, had suddenly walked into their midst, they would have been embarrassed, angry, and disgusted; some, I should think, would have fled holding their noses. You can see the same tendency in Socialist literature, which, even when it is not openly written *de haut en bas*, is always completely removed from the working class in idiom and manner of thought. The Coles, Webbs, Strachays, etc., are not *exactly* proletarian writers. It is doubtful whether anything describable as proletarian literature now exists—even the *Daily Worker* is written in standard South

English—but a good music-hall comedian comes nearer to producing it than any Socialist writer I can think of. As for the technical jargon of the Communists, it is as far removed from the common speech as the language of a mathematical textbook. I remember hearing a professional Communist speaker address a working-class audience. His speech was the usual bookish stuff, full of long sentences and parentheses and ‘Notwithstanding’ and ‘Be that as it may’, besides the usual jargon of ‘ideology’ and ‘class-consciousness’ and ‘proletarian solidarity’ and all the rest of it. After him a Lancashire working man got up and spoke to the crowd in their own broad lingo. There was not much doubt which of the two was nearer to his audience, but I do not suppose for a moment that the Lancashire working man was an orthodox Communist.

“For it must be remembered that a working man, so long as he remains a genuine working man, is seldom or never a Socialist in the complete, logically consistent sense. Very likely he votes Labour, or even Communist if he gets the chance, but his conception of Socialism is quite different from that of the book-trained Socialist higher up. To the ordinary working man, the sort you would meet in any pub on Saturday night, Socialism does not mean much more than better wages and shorter hours and nobody bossing you about.” [...] “[S]o far as my experience goes, no genuine working man grasps the deeper implications of Socialism. Often, in my opinion, he is a truer Socialist than the Orthodox Marxist, because he does remember, what the other so often forgets, that Socialism means justice and common decency.”²¹

I would like to allow Orwell to go on for some time yet; yet I should not like to keep the reader occupied from breakfast till dinner.

But where in this excerpt may one find a snobbish aristocrat with only disdain for the working person? Where is the Orwell which Hakim believes in?

One cannot say of Orwell that he was misrepresenting the working class—he was representing them as they were. Perhaps it is inconvenient—certainly, it is—for the Leninist parties of today, and indeed then, that the working class do not wholly conform to Marxist principles. But those parties cannot be mad with Orwell for not propagandising the proletariat at large—the proletariat in its less than radicalised form, even—as a heroic, genius group which upholds all Marxist values and never disagrees with the party. There would be no need for a ‘vanguard’ if that were the case.

It is my belief that a reader, around this time, if he has taken in a thing or two from this perhaps garrulous or, anyhow, long work has begun to wonder at Hakim’s intentions, has begun to wonder just why he proclaimed—

“I don’t want to subject you to excerpts of *Animal Farm*, after all.”

Hakim says, ‘just take it from me, comrades.’

But let us advance to another line from Hakim, spoken just after the official latter—

“By the way, his hatred for the working class was even noticed by the people who fought beside and absolutely hated Orwell in Spain.”

Hakim provides no source for this. As it is, and perhaps anarchists and Trotskyists (or ites! i.e., not those I should think Hakim, an orthodox Marxist-Leninist, would place much trust in, unless it would benefit him, of course) would quite like to say otherwise, war, so far as one officially uncultured in its workings can tell, may foster comradeship but does not promise to do likewise with friendship and, indeed, absolute harmony. Just like a more mundane workplace, there are friendships and hatreds. Why can we not simply take Orwell’s words as they are? Why must we always be working them around, supplanting

²¹ George Orwell, *The Road to Wigan Pier*

them for those of flashy science-fiction writers, random Brazilian communists, and unnamed, perhaps entirely ethereal Trotskyists and anarchists whom once upon a time fought beside Orwell in Spain?

We move to Hakim's critique of *1984*. And I should say that we are nearing the end now. Hakim offers no true critique—if one may count as critiques what he and those he has quoted from have said of *Animal Farm* and soon *1984* as critiques—of any other of Orwell's works.

We return to Hakim and Asimov—

“By the time *1984* came out in 1949, the Cold War was at its height. The book therefore proved popular. It was almost a matter of patriotism in the West to buy it and talk about it, and perhaps even to read parts of it, although it is my opinion that more people bought it and talked about it than read it, for it is a dreadfully dull book—didactic, repetitious, and all but motionless.”

Hakim finishes up for Asimov—

“I genuinely recommend you read this entire review as well. The critique is excellent and really goes to show not only how bad the book is, but also how the ‘literally 1984’ types don’t even bother to engage with the book.”

Well, I think I may declare for at least myself, but I think almost certainly Orwell, too, that I am in some agreement with Hakim here. I think Orwell and I, and indeed most who are at all literary-minded, agree that *1984* does not deserve as much praise, or at least attention, that it receives. I am recalling to memory from Orwell's letters the latter's own thoughts on the book. In several of them, penned to friends before he death, he described it as—to not directly quote him, but get near enough—really quite horrible, the product of his tubercular struggles, and so on. A pity it is that the attention *1984* gets does not extend to, or is not replaced by, attention given to those undeniably shining, magical works such as *Homage to Catalonia*, *Keep the Aspidistra Flying*, and *Coming Up for Air*.

Now, a second point of agreement is concerning those ‘literally 1984’ types whom Hakim chides. I shall admit to not entirely grasping what Hakim means, or whether he references some esoteric Marxist joke, and thus shall assume only that he is speaking of those on the right and left who go on about *1984* and say we are presently living in it and so on. If I am correct on that—that is, if these are those Hakim critiques—I agree wholeheartedly that they are fools who, as Asimov suggests, have probably never read the book, or perhaps have read parts of it, and have certainly not read any of Orwell's valuable works.

Sad am I to descend at once back to the depths of disagreement, now that Hakim and I have certainly found something to agree upon. But such is the case.

Hakim, concluding, claims that Orwell, in *1984*, commits himself to “incredibly ineffectual and childish criticism of vague or otherwise undefined symbols of power.” I do not think this is the case. Allow me to try to prove it.

What is, in *1984*, a crucial piece of Big Brother's authoritarian puzzle? The *Ministry of Truth*. Rest easy, Hakim, for that ministry is not based upon anything to do with Stalin's USSR—which, after all, Orwell apparently knew nothing about—but is based upon Orwell's wartime experiences with the BBC and wartime organisations and various propaganda departments which viciously censored writings during the war. Far from vague, though, are these references if one has simply read what Orwell has said about them.

Now, I shall produce a fresh word or two from Hakim, who for the next section quotes from *Red Sails* in an attempt to write Orwell off as a faux-revolutionary or faux-Socialist, even, as well as a lackey of the CIA, which had hardly got itself up and running by the time Orwell lamentably ceased to be more than one belonging to history and its supreme but alterable say.

I shall provide Hakim and his *Red Sails* fellows' words—

“‘It is mistaken to imagine that children in the English-speaking world get’” [‘his,’ says the article. Hakim, however, says Orwell.] “Orwell’s ‘work drilled into them like a mantra because, somehow, *genuine* socialists managed to sneak his work past a censor that banishes the likes of Karl Marx and Malcolm X.’

“From the beginning, this supposed socialist had published everything he could in a personal crusade against Marxism, as opposed to his preferred ‘respectable’ English social democracy. This fact did not go unnoticed by the CIA and practically every other anti-communist outlet that existed. To quote” [from *The Spectator*]—

“‘Between 1952 and 1957, from three sites in West Germany, a CIA operation codenamed ‘Aedinosaur’ launched millions of ten-foot balloons carrying copies of George Orwell’s *Animal Farm*, and dropped them over Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia—whose airforces were ordered to shoot the balloons down.’

“Even the *Animal Farm* film, forcibly shoved down millions of kids’ throats the world over, was entirely financed by the CIA—a secret they kept for decades. It was entirely produced in Britain, too, because the CIA feared that plenty of talented animators wouldn’t go along with such a blatantly anti-communist message. The very script and ending was edited to be even more negative and anti-communist afterwards as the CIA thought it still seemed too sympathetic.”

How to topple this inflatable mountain... Well, I suppose I shall proceed as I have, walking slowly along the aisle of argument till I have reached its end and met a fresh door or corridor of unwelcome curses.

Now, concerning the supposed peculiarity of certain parts of Orwell being taught, and others not, I find it only peculiar that our socialist fellows find *that* a peculiar fact. For I wonder why it is a contradiction in Hakim and his comrades’ view of the world that a socialist author should only have certain works of his promoted by anti-socialists, while the majority of the works, which are undeniably pro-socialist, are ignored. Let us sketch an example: If you ask one who happened to read *1984* in school or upon the vain suggestion of another what they think of Orwell’s socialistic writings, that one shalt surely blink dumbly at you. And how about yet another example: How many schoolchildren know of London’s works *White Fang* or *The Call of the Wild* ? Very man children know of those works—were taught them and taught their merits. Now, how many schoolchildren know of London’s *People of the Abyss* or *The Iron Heel* ? Hardly any have ever heard of those writings. Is that not capitalist hegemony doing what it does best, Hakim & Co.? ’Tis certainly.

Next, I should only like to quickly wonder. For struck with wonderment was I to read the assertion that somehow, while Orwell’s socialism was not socialism at all but only some imitation, both Marx and Malcolm X are seen by Hakim as entirely orthodox, and thus self-same, socialists. Well, I shall only say that one need read very little from each to see that the ideas of those men, stitched as steadily to history’s carpet as is Orwell, are not quite homogenous.

Anyhow, on we thrust.

Hakim suggests much about Orwell’s socialism, in an attempt, of course, to make Orwell not a socialist but a reactionary aristocrat who he can then spit upon as he may be pleased to. Well, one must arm oneself with a sturdy spade to crack at that soil; for Orwell’s socialism is not so debatable a subject: that is, Orwell was a socialist—a socialist who devoted the greater part of his adult life to write about the coming joys, the benefits, the truth, as he saw it, of socialism. Undebatable, moreover, is that Orwell was not, contrary to Hakim’s demand, a social democrat. One need read only one essay in which Orwell expounds his political and economic views to discover that he was indeed very much more than a social democrat, respectable or not.

Hakim now returns to his earlier goings-on about Orwell and the CIA and anti-communism and a great mess, of which Orwell, though most regrettably retired to the grave by 1950, was the mastermind of.

Well, let us say only this: Hakim, we cannot blame Orwell for what has occurred after his death—after he obviously ceased to control the rights to his works. We cannot help what propaganda was stirred up, what ugly little films were produced, in Orwell's name. Hakim, you yourself admit that Orwell's work was edited, for the purpose of that dreary old film, in order to display a message which he neither penned nor endorsed.

Now, we know from letters that Orwell knew of what some British actors were doing with *Animal Farm*; but we also know that the Americans did not approve, and seized copies of the book before it could be handed to potential dissidents. But is giving away a more or less innocuous book to soon to be repatriated Soviet citizens such a crime? Anyhow, had the copies reached them, the peoples—knowing of course that *Animal Farm* was, according to Hakim and his comrades, nothing more than an attack on its very readers—would have tossed it aside or burned it during a winter day.

Hakim retires himself for but a moment to insulting Orwell. He is drawing near his conclusion. But he first introduces a quote by Michael Parenti, reproduced here—

“‘Safely ensconced within a virulently anticommunist society, Orwell (with Orwellian double-think) characterized the condemnation of Communism as a lonely courageous act of defiance. Today his ideological progeny are still at it, offering themselves as intrepid left critics of the Left, waging a valiant struggle against imaginary Marxist-Leninist-Stalinist hordes.’”

Context matters not, sayeth Hakim and Parenti. The lonely courageous act of defiance for a civilian British Socialist was to not condemn Communism (now, I know well that both Parenti and Hakim, keeping with orthodoxy, see the two as inseparable) but to condemn Stalinism. He was not telling an Italian partisan, a man of the Royal Navy, or indeed a soldier of the Red Army, that the only really courageous thing he could do with his life was denounce ‘Communism’ over and over. To suggest so much as that is to disgustingly warp Orwell's proclamation.

As for the latter claim, I have never met this ideological progeniture of Orwell's. But I have not met so many people, as it is. Anyhow, if they do, they are the product only of a propagandised version of Orwell which has been sold to them.

Well, Hakim does no more but insult Orwell again, and this time Orwell's readers, too. I do not judge it worthwhile to say much about that now.

So, that is mostly all.

I should only like to address Hakim once more, and that is to say a word or two regarding his demand that Orwell produced no more than ‘garbage’ works. Well, Hakim, it is entirely your right—and hardly do I need to tell you that—to dislike Orwell's prose. But just like those who deny the fact of evolution by natural selection, you are setting yourself quite firmly against those in the literary world who, though I am sure are infected by overwhelming bourgeois sentiments, know a thing or two about literature.

Laying aside all political concerns, it is not widely disputed within the literary establishment that Orwell's more or less apolitical works, such as *The Clergyman's Daughter* (the work is not wholly apolitical, though the only political remarks I can at the moment recall are a few remarks directed against the jingoistic method of teaching British history to children, and perhaps a few lines on more conventional matters), *Keep the Aspidistra Flying*, and so on for a while, are amongst the greatest works produced during the dramatic last century of ours.

Again, you may dislike Orwell's prose if you are pleased to. But to freely state that it is garbage, useless, and so on, is hardly enough. The burden is with you to explain why Orwell's prose is objectively garbage, as you uncreatively call it.

Well, I mean this only half-facetiously: Hakim, if you believe Orwell's writing to be pure garbage—useless, tawdry filth—please apply your hand to the pen. You will be the greatest writer of this present

age; and, thus, with your hand may convert many to one of your apparently congruent camps, that is, either Islamic or Marxist.

A further conclusion would be naught be fluff.

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Trygve Owen Rasmussen
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