

1984
by Alison Jaworski

In politics, the truth regularly gets stretched to benefit the individual politician or government rather than to correctly inform the people. Although the information you hear through the media and in speeches is not usually a blatant lie, it has often been changed so much that it may as well be. Abuses of this kind are in no way new to government, however. In 1984, George Orwell cautions society as to the potential problems that might arise if government took complete control over all aspects of life and constantly force-fed lies to the public, especially about war. George Bush, a concrete modern-day example, altered the truth to keep people supportive of him and his policies. He often used deceptive language to rationalize military action to American citizens. His calling of the 1990 invasion of Panama “Operation Just Cause” is similar to how the Party deceives the citizens of Oceania into thinking war is necessary, when in reality, it is only necessary to keep their totalitarian regime strong.

George Bush is a prime example of how politicians often use language to mislead the people. Sometimes it is easy to recognize; more often, however, it affects your ideas in a more subconscious way. You could be slightly brainwashed without ever realizing it. One example of a blatant use of deceptive language is Bush’s name for the 1990 invasion of Panama. Rather than incite resistance from Americans disagreeing with war, he called it “Operation Just Cause”. The name itself immediately makes people think that it is necessary – that we were going in for good reasons and that it could not be

avoided. Although many people are very politically aware and not easily swayed, many Americans are quite ignorant of the political world around them. They do not know what is truly going on, only what they see on TV or hear on the radio. When they are spoon-fed this information, they often believe it all, and think they know everything about it. It is for this reason that it was, and still is, easy for politicians to cleverly deceive the common American citizen. By calling the invasion “Operation Just Cause”, Bush assured that that would be heard on the news, and that is what Americans would believe. The invasion would then become more justified to them, simply because of those few words.

The reasons *why* George Bush deceived people about the nature of the invasion of Panama are just as numerous as the ways *how*. The main reason was to not threaten the popularity or good reputation of his government. Nobody likes war. Even fewer people like war without just cause. Thus, to invade Panama was a bold move on the part of the government. In order to keep people content and submissive, they needed a way to rationalize the invasion to the everyday citizen. Long, drawn out speeches or articles detailing the full issue at hand would never work, as the average person would not watch or read them. Instead, they often used, and still use, short, catchy phrases such as “Operation Just Cause”. It is simple enough so that people would hear it and repeat it, and it would spread like gossip. Although people were often ignorant about *why* this operation was a “just cause”, it was important to the power of the government that they believed it and did not protest the invasion. Without simple deceptions such as this, the government could possibly become threatened and lose power or crumble.

In a similar fashion, the Party members of George Orwell's 1984 use deceptive language and outright false information to make war seem absolutely necessary. They conveyed much of this information through propaganda – mostly Party-generated newspapers and telescreen programs. They brainwashed the citizens of Oceania into hating their enemies, whoever they might be on any given day, and believing that they must attack whenever possible. The citizens lived in constant fear of war and in the constant pursuit of victory. In reality, the war was mostly superficial, created by the governments for the governments, with no end in sight. Orwell writes, “It is like the battles between certain ruminant animals whose horns are set at such an angle that they are incapable of hurting one another.” (164) The parties of not only Oceania, but of Eurasia and Eastasia as well, kept the war going indefinitely on purpose. If there was a lull in action, they would bomb certain districts of their own country to make people believe it was still going strong. Using various methods, the Party deceived its citizens into believing in the war and fearing its consequences.

The Party, similar to today's government in America, felt they needed to deceive people to keep their power. They realized that by keeping their citizens fearful and ignorant, they took away the possibility that they would ever get the chance to rebel. These easily brainwashed people had no idea what was going on and were blindly submissive to the Party. The Party slogan “War is Peace” shows how they took constant warfare as a positive sign, since it kept the general population exceedingly fearful and ignorant of the truth. The Party, founded in perpetual lies, thought nothing of this. They did not give a second thought to saying they were at war because they *needed* to be at war to survive, when the war was, in fact, absolutely unnecessary. Stretching the truth,

fabricating fact, and telling outright lies about the war was crucial to the stability of their government.

The fictional government in George Orwell's 1984 has a disturbingly large number of similarities to our government today. Both governments are often dishonest when it comes to the true nature and motives for war, and although it is not considered 'right' by our standards, politicians sometimes feel the need to deceive people anyway. This, ultimately, is a matter of control over the people. In Oceania, it keeps people fearful, subordinate, and ignorant; in our society, it misinforms people so they are not always capable of making their own conscious decisions. The warnings that Orwell lays out in 1984 are still appropriate today, and we must heed them by always being aware of what is going on in our world and making our own decisions. The government may try to persuade people with a clever use of deceptive language, but a certain amount of control is left to the people – and it is our responsibility to make the most of it.