

## Trump's Misinformation and its similarities to Stalin

George Orwell's treatment of the negative consequences of power in *Animal Farm* is an accurate representation of how the United States is handling the Covid-19 situation. *Animal Farm* is based on the events from the Bolshevik Revolution and implements these into an allegorical fable: Orwell demonstrates how the animals develop their own society, but the pigs eventually receive the entirety of the credit and use this power to cause corruption. Before the Bolshevik Revolution occurred, Tsar Nicholas II was the monarch of Russia. In 1914, World War I began after Archduke Ferdinand of Austria was shot and killed in Bosnia. Austria-Hungary, Germany, and the Ottoman Empire fought against the British Empire and Russia, events that had a detrimental impact on the Russian economy. The labor productivity and the amount of food and fuel were decreasing; consequently, Russians expressed their frustration over the economic fall. Then, during a time where Russia appeared to be slowly collapsing, communist revolutionary Vladimir Lenin organized a coup d'état to kill the entire royal family. This would initiate the Russian Civil War between the White Russians, or the anti-communists, and the Communists for the next several years; eventually, the Communists would be in control of the government, but their leader, Vladimir Lenin, died on January 12th, 1924 following a hemorrhagic stroke.

Lenin's death would be the start of Joseph Stalin's rise to power, as he became the leader of the Communist Party and the Soviet Union itself. Vladimir Lenin's second in command, Leon Trotsky, decided not to take Lenin's position because he did not want to initiate disagreement on who should control the country and thus, decided not to remove Stalin from power. When Stalin

officially came into power, he took advantage of his position. He successfully executed this after terrorizing and manipulating people who would oppose his decisions. For instance, Joseph Stalin presented a five-year plan in the 1920s to develop an industrial economy in the Soviet Union: his plans stated that the government would have total control over the economy, which included the farms. As millions of farmers refused to cooperate with Stalin, the dictator ordered them to be immediately executed, and as a result, a famine would rapidly spread across Russia which killed millions of citizens. However, despite the deaths that negatively impacted the economy, Stalin was constantly portrayed by the media as “Great,” “Bold,” “Genius,” and “Inspirer,” to cover the truth behind the Soviet Union.

Similarly, the United States’ 45th president Donald Trump has declared statements relating to the coronavirus that demonstrate his motives to maintain his position as president. Trump offers the media false information about the pandemic to fit his own narrative. He stated in February, “[W]hen we get into April, in the warmer weather-that has a very negative effect on that, and that type of a virus.” However, statistics show that the United States has 11.5 million coronavirus cases as of November 18th, 2020, one of the largest number of coronavirus cases in proportion to the population out of all countries. In comparison, South Korea, New Zealand, and Germany have 29,111, 2,008, and 844,000 confirmed coronavirus cases of which 25,973, 1,919, and 537,000 patients recovered respectively. This contradicts another one of Trump’s statements, “Coronavirus numbers are looking MUCH better, going down almost everywhere.” Furthermore, Trump implied his desire to remain as the president, “But a permanent shutdown would no longer be the answer at all. A small shutdown of certain areas-but we don’t want to do that-small shutdowns can be very helpful, but not for long periods of time.” This is similar to Stalin, as the

famine during the 1920s is comparable to the current coronavirus pandemic. Stalin manipulated and terrorized those who decided not to believe him. Similarly, Trump manipulates the public into thinking that the coronavirus cases in the United States are slowly decreasing, which according to statistics is not true. Even though he is not revealing the truth, his supporters now believe that the United States is handling this pandemic well. Although countries like South Korea implemented strict rules to decrease the number of coronavirus cases, which include enforcing visitors from other countries to remain quarantined for two weeks (visitors' location is tracked during the entire quarantine to ensure that they are staying in their homes/hotels, etc.) and entering a full lockdown for nearly four months, Trump did not use this effective route. Trump knows that if he issues a full lockdown in the United States, he could lose votes, as many Americans will lose their jobs, be unable to pay their rent, etc. This explains why Trump states that shutdowns for shorter periods of time "can be very helpful" because he cares about receiving votes rather than the health of the public.

Furthermore, Rick Bright, a former top vaccine official, was moved to a less important role after bringing up concerns for the safety and health of the public for a potential cure to the coronavirus. This cure was pressured by Trump to be released in America. As one of the health officials, Bright attempted to inform the public about the dangers of the coronavirus in early January. After discovering the deadly effects of this virus, he called for a quick development of vaccines and ordered N-95 masks to be stored. Bright also showed to the public copies of a mail sent to the Trump administration about obtaining samples of the virus as soon as possible for the development of vaccines. However, these were ignored by top officials because this "virus" did not appear as a potential threat. During this time, Trump claimed that chloroquine and

hydroxychloroquine could cure the coronavirus and promoted them through Twitter and the White House Podium. On the other hand, Bright explained that these drugs were not thoroughly tested and could be harmful to the public; hence, he resisted this pressure from the Trump administration and the United States Department of Health and Human Services to provide worldwide access to a drug that was not confirmed to cure the virus. After a few months, Bright was fired and claims that this is because he was “[prioritizing] science and safety over political expediency”, which implicitly demonstrates the emphasis Trump puts on expedient politics - to the detriment of good science and public safety concerns. On August 28th, 2020, four people at the RNC tested positive for the coronavirus, while White House chief of staff Mark Meadows dismissed concerns about the pandemic. In this event, there were nearly 1500 people that were neither social-distancing nor wearing masks, two of the CDC’s (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) guidelines for slowing the spread of the virus. Since nearly every audience member disregarded these safety guidelines, the event is being regarded as a “super-spreader”. In the 1920s, Stalin’s approach killed off millions of farmers which ultimately led to a famine. Similarly, Trump’s approach of handling this pandemic led to approximately 3.5% of America’s population to be infected with the coronavirus. For comparison, 1.01% of Germany’s population was infected and almost 0.00056% of Korea’s population was infected.

The CDC was also required to abruptly change the federal guidelines for coronavirus testing according to the Trump administration’s orders. Dr. Anthony Fauci, the nation’s leading infectious disease expert, was under anesthesia when he heard about the changes: “I was under general anesthesia...and was not part of any discussion or deliberation regarding the new testing recommendations”. Fauci also explains his concern for recommendations that cause people to

believe that asymptomatic patients are not as liable to spread the illness as those who display the obvious symptoms of disease. The United States Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Assistant Secretary Brett Giroir is also concerned that the public will interpret the “less testing” as meaning that the government is purposefully restricting the public’s access to much-needed tests. Giroir explains that the initial focus was to do “appropriate” testing rather than limiting access. Donald Trump has contributed to the narrative of the United States doing less testing and falling behind other countries. This originated from his motive of lowering the official number of cases of the coronavirus, which he can then use to support the claim that the United States is handling the pandemic masterfully. However, this is not truthful because it conceals the fact that the United States has the highest number of coronavirus cases in the world. Trump is demonstrating that by twisting the actual facts to fit his narrative, he could increase his popularity and improve his chances for presidential re-election. To further emphasize the concerns, Dr. Carlos del Rio, an infectious disease specialist and associate dean of Emory University School of Medicine, supports Fauci: “I mean, the evidence that I’m aware of as of today is that close to 40% of the cases of the infections are asymptomatic and asymptomatic people transmit the infection”. In addition, del Rio states that if someone has been in contact with an infected person for nearly 50 minutes or longer, then it would be best for that person to test if they have the coronavirus or not. This situation happens often in the household when one family member tests positive and everyone else in the family also tests positive. She even expresses her opinion that “the guidelines baffle me and I really don’t understand them.”

As Trump promotes hydroxychloroquine, he brainwashes the public by spreading false information about this cure. Even though the Trump administration continues to support the fact

that hydroxychloroquine is effective against the coronavirus, top vaccine officials such as Fauci have major disagreements. For instance, Trump uses the social media platform Twitter to support the contention that hydroxychloroquine is a suitable replacement for mask-wearing. He also posts videos of Dr. Stella Immanuel, a physician from Houston who claims that sex with spirits could lead to miscarriages and believes that hydroxychloroquine cures the coronavirus. Trump defends her by stating, "I was very impressed with her and other doctors that stood with her. I think she made sense, but I know nothing about her." The spreading of disinformation became prevalent to the point where Fauci had to intervene in the situation. Fauci entreated the public to follow all of the science-based studies instead of the baseless news and rumors floating about: "But right now today, the cumulative scientific data that has been put together and done over...different studies has shown no efficacy." This indicates that currently, there is no formal evidence supporting the fact that hydroxychloroquine cures the coronavirus and more testing must be done. Furthermore, Republican Representative Louie Gohmert of Texas contracted the disease after refusing to wear a mask. Instead of using this opportunity to spread awareness about the dangers behind this virus, Gohmert took the time to support not wearing masks. He asked his constituents through a video, "I don't know about everybody, when I have a mask on I'm moving it to make it comfortable and I can't help but wonder if that you know puts some germs in the mask." Since Trump and Gohmert are well-known political figures, their political supporters believe anything that they declare. On the other hand, for medical researchers who do not have that same platform are not as successful in spreading their message. As the media shedded positive light on Stalin by using words such as "Great" to describe him, the "physician" from Houston employs similar methods. The information that she reveals is completely false and scientifically untenable, but Trump shares this

“news” with his supporters, which further spreads misinformation to the detriment of public health safety.

In sum, Stalin’s five-year plan in the 1920’s that caused a nationwide famine is similar in various aspects to President Donald Trump's approach for handling this coronavirus pandemic. Throughout this pandemic, Trump has consistently spread false information on the United States’ situation regarding the virus. He claims that the cases have been significantly decreasing and that the United States has one of the lowest mortality rates, despite the fact that the country actually has one of the highest. He also does not consider the successful paths that other countries have taken to slow down the increase in cases and fails to work out a solid plan. This is because he is focused on being re-elected as president and wants to avoid the negative publicity. Furthermore, he completely ignores the scientists’ warnings about this pandemic even though they are a very credible source. He tarnishes their reputation by casting doubts on their work and continues to promote his own “vaccine”, hydroxychloroquine. As Trump has gained a massive amount of supporters, his promotion of hydroxychloroquine influences them to try it despite the fact that numerous, well-known doctors explicitly stated that there are no benefits. Overall, Trump’s failure of leadership during the coronavirus pandemic demonstrates how he avoids the dire warnings of history and spreads misinformation, as his primary focus is getting re-elected rather than actually handling the ongoing pandemic.

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