

Orwellian geography

The Urth list — 3 messages, 2 voices, 29 Jul 2002

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/3378>

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Michael Andre-Driussi — 29 Jul 2002, 13:44

Josh Geller wrote:

And, in fact, Oceania is Great Britain/America in the 1984 world, and
Ascias is North America to the Commonwealth's South America on Urth.

In general, yes.

But in details, hmmm.

I have this theory that most published pieces on NINETEEN EIGHTY-FOUR (and many readers) see its geopolitical set up as being "World War Two carried on for decades" and basically the USA is the location of the command/control structure, or "America is on top, just like during the Cold War era." (Not that Josh Geller has said this, mind you -- just that this is one of those things that I've been mulling over for years now.)

While there are threads of textual truth to this viewpoint, still it is clear to me that: North America is scarred by the atomic war to a degree greater than Europe was scarred by WWII; the name "Oceania" is not a poetic one (for a sea power superstate) is a geographical one (like the names of the other two superstates) that in this case describes the area of Australia, New Zealand, and islands around there -- Australasia -- and this is the location of the command/control structure.

The former USA is a battered, poisoned province, less well off than Airstrip One.

And Big Brother is an Aussie.

=mantis=

Adam Stephanides — 31 Jul 2002, 13:37 · follows Michael Andre-Driussi

on 7/29/02 8:44 AM, Michael Andre-Driussi at mantis at siriusfiction.com wrote:

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I don't think so; "the book" says that "With the absorption of Europe by Russia and _the British Empire by the United States_ [my emphasis], two of the three existing powers, Eurasia and

Oceania, were already effectively in being." (Part Two, Chapter IX; p. 153 of the Signet Classic paperback). But I'd be interested to hear your reasons.

--Adam

Michael Andre-Driussi — 31 Jul 2002, 20:22 · follows Adam Stephanides

Adam Stephanides quoted me and wrote:

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But Adam, the passage you quote refers quite specifically to 1949! The sentence before says before mid-century; the sentence after says that Eastasia only emerged after another decade of fighting (i.e., 1959); the next paragraph says that these three superstates have been fighting for 25 years (1984-1959 = 25 years).

The atomic war was in the 1950s and left scars that had still not been cleaned up in 1984. Presumably this war was between the two superstates (i.e., exactly like the Cold War situation of US/USSR).

Again, my main argument is one of the geographical terms: Eurasia, Eastasia, and Oceania.

Another point, tangential and interpretive: Airstrip One, bedraggled, rationed, WWII-era Airstrip One, is nevertheless the third most populous of the provinces of Oceania (p. 7). (If we use 1950 population numbers for England/Wales, that is 44 million.) How would you interpret that, given that the other provinces include North America, South America, Western Africa and Southern Africa (but nothing in geographical Oceania, since that, I argue, is the core area)? Personally I think it tricky to envision entire continents as "provinces," but that might be an easy solution: North America as most populous (1950 around 200 million), South America as second most populous (1950 around 135 million), and then Airstrip One. But if the provinces are smaller, and realistically closer to national boundaries (or fractions of former nations), I think it gets more difficult unless, say, full scale atomic war has run its truly awful course and caused serious population decreases in the bombed areas.

=mantis=

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