

Party, and joy in a loyalty acquired through torture by mechanical means. Undoubtedly he was wide awake in his study of the methods of Totalitarian and Communist States. He was an authority on the subject.

How easily the writer obliterates the past. The dead are as if they never were. Nothing is kept to record they ever existed. There is no love, no sentiment, no feeling, when a man is of no further use to the party. Records go the same way. There is no past, no history, therefore it did not happen. If "The Times" made a forecast which proved to be inaccurate, the record was destroyed. By the substitution of what actually happened all Party forecasts were accurate, and true. It is like working a mathematical problem backwards from the answer to the question. The Party is the truth—always right, omnipotent.

Is "1984" science fiction? Science as we understand it is a pursuit of knowledge by experiment, research, investigation and observation. Of these canons research, investigation and observation are more than fulfilled. But to the layman the book is not science but politics. The "telescreen" is a scientific possibility. America already claims a TV camera which will take pictures through a hole little bigger than a key-hole. The "telescreen" is one step further on. Mechanisation and automation continue to progress on every side. The Mechanical Brain performs wonderful feats of calculation. But it is felt that Orwell was not trying to give a scientific exposition, but rather to sound a note of warning. Scientific references are his means to an end.

Orwell had been a political observer for many years. He had made an intensive study of communism. He had seen the effects of the use of propaganda, infiltration and espionage to increase its area of influence. Confessions enforced by the use of torture and intimidation had not escaped his notice. Liquidations or at best banishment to enforced labour camps had not escaped his notice. He did not shout, "Beware lest you lose your democratic parliament, your freedom of speech and enterprise, and your unfettered press." He was more subtle. He wrote "1984."

Astronautics

Members (both of professional and amateur status) who take delight in this the youngest of the technical wonders, will be glad to hear of a new monthly magazine which made its appearance in October. Called "Spaceflight," and sponsored by the British Interplanetary Society it caters for the growing public interest in astronautics. Well produced with articles by experts, "Spaceflight" costs 1/6 and you should be able to obtain it from any bookstall.

DETAIL

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The current choice is

ONE IN THREE HUNDRED

by J. T. MCINTOSH

(Museum Press, 10s. 6d.; SFBC, 5s. 6d.)

George Orwell Competition

REPORT BY

JULIAN SYMONS

Was 1984 Science Fiction? I have an open mind about that myself, partly because I have never seen any exact definition of Science Fiction. Most of the entrants to the competition seem to have felt some doubts, although only one or two, like Peter Dreyer from South Africa, made an attempt at definition. "Science-fiction is imaginative literature dealing with the results of probable technological and scientific advances," he said, adding that "Science fiction of yesterday has become fact." The same point is made by Mrs. C. H. Smith of Harrow, when she says that Science Fiction is about *Believable* extensions of science and