

THE INSTITUTE FOR ANACYCLOSIS

EXCERPT FROM  
ANIMAL FARM  
BY GEORGE ORWELL

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*Note: This text presents an allegory of Soviet Russia's transition from revolution to despotism. Orwell's description of the animal revolution includes phenomena which accompany revolutions fueled by the rage of subjugated populations: high-minded revolutionary ideals, the euphoria of victory, the repudiation of the old regime, the compromise of revolutionary principles, the hypocrisy of the revolutionary leaders, the resumption of old habits by the ruling class, the growing separation between ruler and ruled, the expulsion of dissidents, a reign of terror, and the despondency which accompanies the realization that the revolution has fallen far short of the hopes which produced it. And, as is often if not always the case in revolutions won on the backs of the lower classes, the animal revolution finally proved to be little more than a regime change, substituting an even worse despotism for the one that preceded it. This conclusion is reminiscent of Crane Brinton's statement in *The Anatomy of Revolution*, reflecting on the futility of the French and Russian revolutions: "The blood of the martyrs seems hardly necessary to establish decimal coinage." But it recognizes that revolutions of the lower class do not in themselves directly achieve much for the lower class. It also reflects a deeper lesson learned by each new generation of disheartened optimists, by the dumb animals on *Animal Farm* and much smarter humans in real life: the successors of intercessors themselves become oppressors. It was seen in France and Russia. But this was even seen following a revolution of the upper class in Rome, with Caius Terentilius Arsa describing the consuls as more oppressive than the kings, and again in England, with the Statute of Labourers thrust upon the people following some of the most revered constitutional milestones in English legal history. But while the power struggles of the upper class or the outbursts of the lower class may from time to time change the prevailing form of oppression, only the independent middle class can sustain a challenge against the continued existence of oppression. Because the members of the independent middle class are moderate, they require their representatives to also be moderate; because they have the luxury to be skeptical, they abide no flatterers; and because they secure their own livelihood, they need no patrons. And that is why proletariat revolutions are so precarious and fleeting: they hinge on something so fragile as the lives and whims of great leaders, subject to no moderating influence and challenged by no skepticism. When the people need champions to secure their livelihood, they are at the mercy of their patrons and of their personalities. And it is never the most temperate and moderate who seek the power and danger of high office in an age of tumult, but the most ambitious and resolute, which also risks them being the most absolute. "For as man is the best of the animals when perfected, so he is the worst of all when sundered from law and justice", said Aristotle (*Politics*, 1253a). It is thus only a thin veneer that separates king from tyrant, or even man from animal, for that matter. So, the next time you read *Animal Farm* and contemplate the failure of the revolution and the quick, almost seamless transition from the despotism of man to the despotism of pigs, always remember this: *Animal Farm* did not have a middle class.*

II

... The work of teaching and organising the others fell naturally upon the pigs, who were generally recognised as being the cleverest of the animals. Pre-eminent among the pigs were two young boars named Snowball and Napoleon.... All the other male pigs on the farm were porkers. The best known among them was a small fat pig named Squealer....

These three had elaborated old Major's teachings into a complete system of thought, to which they gave the name of Animalism. ...

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... On Midsummer's Eve, which was a Saturday, Mr. Jones went into Willingdon and got so drunk at the Red Lion that he did not come back till midday on Sunday. The men had milked the cows in the early morning and then had gone out rabbiting, without bothering to feed the animals. When Mr. Jones got back he immediately went to sleep on the drawing-room sofa ... when evening came, the animals were still unfed. At last they could stand it no longer. One of the cows broke in the door of the store-shed with her horn and all the animals began to help themselves from the bins. It was just then that Mr. Jones woke up. The next moment he and his four men were in the store-shed with whips in their hands, lashing out in all directions. This was more than the hungry animals could bear. With one accord, though nothing of the kind had been planned beforehand, they flung themselves upon their tormentors. Jones and his men suddenly found themselves being butted and kicked from all sides. The situation was quite out of their control. They had never seen animals behave like this before, and this sudden uprising of creatures whom they were used to thrashing and maltreating just as they chose, frightened them almost out of their wits. After only a moment or two they gave up trying to defend themselves and took to their heels. ...

... A little way down the pasture there was a knoll that commanded a view of most of the farm. The animals rushed to the top of it and gazed round them in the clear morning light. Yes, it was theirs — everything that they could see was theirs! In the ecstasy of that thought they gambolled round and round, they hurled themselves into the air in great leaps of excitement. ... Then they filed back to the farm buildings and halted in silence outside the door of the farmhouse. That was theirs too, but they were frightened to go inside. After a moment, however, Snowball and Napoleon butted the door open with their shoulders and the animals entered in single file ... They tiptoed from room to room, afraid to speak above a whisper and gazing with a kind of awe at the unbelievable luxury ...

A unanimous resolution was passed on the spot that the farmhouse should be preserved as a museum. All were agreed that no animal must ever live there. ... Napoleon sent for pots of black and white paint and led the way down to the five-barred gate that gave on to the main road. Then Snowball ... took a brush between the two knuckles of his trotter, painted out MANOR FARM from the top bar of the gate and in its place painted ANIMAL FARM. This was to be the name of the farm from now onwards. After this they went back to the farm buildings, where Snowball and Napoleon sent for a ladder which they caused to be set against the end wall of the big barn. They explained that by their studies of the past three months the pigs had succeeded in reducing the principles of Animalism to Seven Commandments. These Seven Commandments would now be inscribed on the wall; they would form an unalterable law by which all the animals on Animal Farm must live for ever after. ... The Commandments were written on the tarred wall in great white letters that could be read thirty yards away. They ran thus:

#### THE SEVEN COMMANDMENTS

- 1. Whatever goes upon two legs is an enemy.*
- 2. Whatever goes upon four legs, or has wings, is a friend.*
- 3. No animal shall wear clothes.*
- 4. No animal shall sleep in a bed.*
- 5. No animal shall drink alcohol.*
- 6. No animal shall kill any other animal.*
- 7. All animals are equal.*

#### III

... The pigs had set aside the harness-room as a headquarters for themselves. ... Snowball ... busied himself with organising the other animals into what he called Animal Committees. ...

... Napoleon took no interest in Snowball's committees. He said that the education of the young was more important than anything that could be done for those who were already grown up. It happened that Jessie and Bluebell had both whelped soon after the hay harvest, giving birth between them to nine sturdy puppies. As soon as they were weaned, Napoleon took them away from their mothers, saying that he would make himself responsible for their education. He took them up into a loft which could only be reached by a ladder from the harness-room, and there kept them in such seclusion that the rest of the farm soon forgot their existence. ...

V

... It had come to be accepted that the pigs, who were manifestly cleverer than the other animals, should decide all questions of farm policy, though their decisions had to be ratified by a majority vote. This arrangement would have worked well enough if it had not been for the disputes between Snowball and Napoleon. These two disagreed at every point where disagreement was possible. ... But of all their controversies, none was so bitter as the one that took place over the windmill.

... At the Meeting on the following Sunday the question of whether or not to begin work on the windmill was to be put to the vote. When the animals had assembled in the big barn, Snowball stood up and... set forth his reasons for advocating the building of the windmill. Then Napoleon stood up to reply. He said very quietly that the windmill was nonsense and that he advised nobody to vote for it, and promptly sat down again; he had spoken for barely thirty seconds, and seemed almost indifferent as to the effect he produced. At this Snowball sprang to his feet, and shouting down the sheep, who had begun bleating again, broke into a passionate appeal in favour of the windmill. Until now the animals had been about equally divided in their sympathies, but in a moment Snowball's eloquence had carried them away. ... By the time he had finished speaking, there was no doubt as to which way the vote would go. But just at this moment Napoleon stood up and, casting a peculiar sidelong look at Snowball, uttered a high-pitched whimper of a kind no one had ever heard him utter before.

At this there was a terrible baying sound outside, and nine enormous dogs wearing brass-studded collars came bounding into the barn. They dashed straight for Snowball, who only sprang from his place just in time to escape their snapping jaws. In a moment he was out of the door and they were after him. Too amazed and frightened to speak, all the animals crowded through the door to watch the chase. ...

Silent and terrified, the animals crept back into the barn. In a moment the dogs came bounding back. At first no one had been able to imagine where these creatures came from, but the problem was soon solved: they were the puppies whom Napoleon had taken away from their mothers and reared privately. ...

Napoleon, with the dogs following him, now mounted on to the raised portion of the floor where Major had previously stood to deliver his speech. He announced that from now on the Sunday-morning Meetings would come to an end. ... there would be no more debates. ...

X

Years passed. The seasons came and went, the short animal lives fled by. A time came when there was no one who remembered the old days before the Rebellion, except Clover, Benjamin, Moses the raven, and a number of the pigs.

... Snowball was forgotten. Boxer was forgotten, except by the few who had known him. Clover was an old stout mare now, stiff in the joints and with a tendency to rheumy eyes. ... Napoleon was now a mature boar of twenty-four stone. ...

... The farm was more prosperous now, and better organised: it had even been enlarged by two fields which had been bought from Mr. Pilkington. ... Somehow it seemed as though the farm had grown richer without making the animals themselves any richer — except, of course, for the pigs and the 49 dogs. ... neither pigs nor dogs produced any food by their own labour; and there were very many of them, and their appetites were always good. As for the others, their life, so far as they knew, was as it had always been. They were generally hungry, they slept on straw, they drank from the pool, they laboured in the fields; in winter they were troubled by the cold, and in summer by the flies.

... the terrified neighing of a horse sounded from the yard. Startled, the animals stopped in their tracks. It was Clover's voice. She neighed again, and all the animals broke into a gallop and rushed into the yard. Then they saw what Clover had seen.

It was a pig walking on his hind legs.

Yes, it was Squealer. A little awkwardly, as though not quite used to supporting his considerable bulk in that position, but with perfect balance, he was strolling across the yard. And a moment later, out from the door of the farmhouse came a long file of pigs, all walking on their hind legs. Some did it better than others, one or two were even a trifle unsteady and looked as though they would have liked the support of a stick, but every one of them made his way right round the yard successfully. And finally there was a tremendous baying of dogs and a shrill crowing from the black cockerel, and out came Napoleon himself, majestically upright, casting haughty glances from side to side, and with his dogs gambolling round him.

He carried a whip in his trotter.

... It was as though the world had turned upside-down. Then there came a moment when the first shock had worn off and when, in spite of everything — in spite of their terror of the dogs, and of the habit, developed through long years, of never complaining, never criticising, no matter what happened — they might have uttered some word of protest. But just at that moment, as though at a signal, all the sheep burst out into a tremendous bleating ... And by the time the sheep had quieted down, the chance to utter any protest had passed, for the pigs had marched back into the farmhouse.

Benjamin felt a nose nuzzling at his shoulder. He looked round. It was Clover. Her old eyes looked dimmer than ever. Without saying anything, she tugged gently at his mane and led him round to the end of the big barn, where the Seven Commandments were written. For a minute or two they stood gazing at the tatted wall with its white lettering.

'My sight is failing,' she said finally. ... Are the Seven Commandments the same as they used to be, Benjamin?' For once Benjamin consented to break his rule, and he read out to her what was written on the wall. There was nothing there now except a single Commandment. It ran:

ALL ANIMALS ARE EQUAL  
BUT SOME ANIMALS ARE MORE EQUAL THAN OTHERS

After that it did not seem strange when next day the pigs who were supervising the work of the farm all carried whips in their trotters. ... It did not seem strange when Napoleon was seen strolling in the farmhouse garden with a pipe in his mouth — no, not even when the pigs took Mr. Jones's clothes out of the wardrobes and put them on ...

A week later, in the afternoon, a number of dogcarts drove up to the farm. A deputation of neighbouring farmers had been invited to make a tour of inspection. ...

That evening loud laughter and bursts of singing came from the farmhouse. And suddenly, at the sound of the mingled voices, the animals were stricken with curiosity. What could be happening in there, now that for the first time animals and human beings were meeting on terms of equality? ... They tiptoed up to the house, and such animals as were tall enough peered in at the dining-room window. There, round the long table, sat half a dozen farmers and half a dozen of the more eminent pigs, Napoleon himself occupying the seat of honour at the head of the table. ...

Mr. Pilkington, of Foxwood, had stood up, his mug in his hand. In a moment, he said, he would ask the present company to drink a toast. But before doing so, there were a few words that he felt it incumbent upon him to say.

... He would end his remarks, he said, by emphasising once again the friendly feelings that subsisted, and ought to subsist, between Animal Farm and its neighbours. Between pigs and human beings there was not, and there need not be, any clash of interests whatever. Their struggles and their difficulties were one. Was not the labour problem the same everywhere? ... 'If you have your lower animals to contend with,' he said, 'we have our lower classes!' ...

And now, he said finally, he would ask the company to rise to their feet and make certain that their glasses were full. 'Gentlemen,' concluded Mr. Pilkington, 'gentlemen, I give you a toast: To the prosperity of Animal Farm!'

... Napoleon, who had remained on his feet, intimated that he too had a few words to say. ... He had only one criticism, he said, to make of Mr. Pilkington's excellent and neighbourly speech. Mr. Pilkington had referred throughout to 'Animal Farm.' He could not of course know — for he, Napoleon, was only now for the first time announcing it — that the name 'Animal Farm' had been abolished. Henceforward the farm was to be known as 'The Manor Farm' — which, he believed, was its correct and original name.

'Gentlemen,' concluded Napoleon, 'I will give you the same toast as before, but in a different form. Fill your glasses to the brim. Gentlemen, here is my toast: To the prosperity of The Manor Farm!'

... as the animals outside gazed at the scene, it seemed to them that some strange thing was happening. What was it that had altered in the faces of the pigs? Clover's old dim eyes flitted from one face to another. Some of them had five chins, some had four, some had three.

But what was it that seemed to be melting and changing? Then, the applause having come to an end, the company took up their cards and continued the game that had been interrupted, and the animals crept silently away. But they had not gone twenty yards when they stopped short. An uproar of voices was coming from the farmhouse. They rushed back and looked through the window again. Yes, a violent quarrel was in progress. There were shoutings, bangings on the table, sharp suspicious glances, furious denials. The source of the trouble appeared to be that Napoleon and Mr. Pilkington had each played an ace of spades simultaneously.

Twelve voices were shouting in anger, and they were all alike. No question, now, what had happened to the faces of the pigs. The creatures outside looked from pig to man, and from man to pig, and from pig to man again; but already it was impossible to say which was which.

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