

Chapter VII

Summary

In the bitter cold of winter, the animals struggle to rebuild the windmill. In January, they fall short of food, a fact that they work to conceal from the human farmers around them, lest Animal Farm be perceived to be failing. The humans refuse to believe that Snowball caused the destruction of the windmill, saying that the windmill's walls simply weren't thick enough. The animals deem this explanation false, but they nevertheless decide to build the walls twice as thick this time. Squealer gives ennobling speeches on the glory of sacrifice, but the other animals acquire their real inspiration from the example of Boxer, who works harder than ever. In order to feed the animals, Napoleon contracts to sell four hundred eggs a week. The other animals react with shock—one of Old Major's original complaints about humans focused on the cruelty of egg selling, or so they remember. The hens rebel, and Napoleon responds by cutting their rations entirely. Nine hens die before the others give in to Napoleon's demands.

Soon afterward, the animals hear, to their extreme dismay, that Snowball has been visiting the farm at night, in secret, and sabotaging the animals' efforts. Napoleon says that he can detect Snowball's presence everywhere, and whenever something appears to go wrong by chance, Snowball receives the blame. One day, Squealer announces that Snowball has sold himself to Mr. Frederick's farm, Pinchfield, and that the treacherous pig has been in league with Mr. Jones from the start. He recalls Snowball's attempts at the Battle of the Cowshed to have the ani-

mals defeated. The animals hear these words in stupefied astonishment. They remember Snowball's heroism and recall that he received a medal. Boxer, in particular, is completely baffled. But Napoleon and Squealer convince the others that Snowball's apparent bravery simply constituted part of his treacherous plot. They also work to convince the animals of Napoleon's superior bravery during that battle. So vividly does Squealer describe Napoleon's alleged heroic actions that the animals are almost able to remember them.

Four days later, Napoleon convenes all of the animals in the yard. With his nine huge dogs ringed about him and growling, he stages an inquisition and a purge: he forces certain animals to confess to their participation in a conspiracy with Snowball and then has the dogs tear out these supposed traitors' throats. The dogs, apparently without orders, even attack Boxer, who effortlessly knocks them away with his huge hooves. But four pigs and numerous other animals meet their deaths, including the hens who rebelled at the proposal to sell their eggs. The terrible bloodshed leaves the animals deeply shaken and confused. After Napoleon leaves, Boxer says that he would never have believed that such a thing could happen on Animal Farm. He adds that the tragedy must owe to some fault in the animals themselves; thus, he commits to working even harder. Clover looks out over the farm, wondering how such a glorious rebellion as theirs could have come to its current state. Some of the animals begin to sing "Beasts of England," but Squealer appears and explains that "Beasts of England" may no longer be sung. It applied only to the Rebellion, he says, and now there is no more need for rebellion. Squealer gives the animals a replacement song, written by Minimus, the poet pig. The new song expresses profound patriotism and glorifies Animal Farm, but it does not inspire the animals as "Beasts

of England” once did.

Analysis

The humans react with relief when the windmill topples because its failure seems to justify their contempt for the animals and their belief in their own superiority. Similarly, Soviet Russia struggled against a largely justified reputation for industrial incompetence, famine, and poor management. Stalin’s vaunted Five-Year Plans for agriculture resulted in the starvation of millions of people, and industrial production lagged far behind the capitalist West. But the Soviets were determined to mask their problems and keep them from the eyes of the rest of the world. Correspondingly, the pigs of Animal Farm devise elaborate schemes to keep the human farmers from learning about their difficulties. The windmill becomes an important measure of the farm’s competence, and its collapse deals a major blow to the pigs’ prestige as equals in the community of farms—just as Soviet Russia’s industrial setbacks threatened its position as an equal to the leading nations of the world and as a viable model of communist revolution.

Chapter VII joins Chapter VI in focusing primarily on the violent tactics employed by oppressive governments—again explored through the behavior of the pigs—to maintain the docility and obedience of the populace even as their economic and political systems falter and grow corrupt. In Soviet Russia, these tactics led to a massive class division in a supposedly egalitarian society. Orwell suggests that as long as a leadership claims a monopoly on logic, it will be able to justify its monopoly on resources, while the common people suffer and grow hungry. Simi-

larly, as life on Animal Farm grows leaner and leaner for most of the animals, the pigs live in increasing luxury.

Napoleon's transformation of the exiled Snowball into a despicable enemy to all who care about the good of Animal Farm mirrors Stalin's abuse of the exiled Trotsky. Those animals who show even a glimmering of disapproval toward Napoleon, such as the hens who oppose the selling of their eggs, meet a swift death. Similarly, after forcing Trotsky's exile from Russia, Stalin continued to claim the existence of Trotskyist plots throughout Soviet society. During the 1930s, he staged a number of infamous "purges," show trials during which Stalin and his allies essentially forced government members and citizens to "confess" their complicity with Trotskyist or other anti-Stalinist conspiracies. In many cases, the purge victims would admit to activities in which they had never engaged, simply to put a stop to their torture. But after confessing, the alleged conspirators were executed as "enemies of the people." Stalin used his purges to eliminate any dissident elements in his government, provide his people with a common enemy to despise, and keep both the populace and his staff in a state of fear for their own safety, making them far less likely to disobey orders or challenge his rule in any way.

Just as the pigs rewrite history, they manipulate statistics in their favor, claiming that every important aspect of life on the farm has improved statistically since the Rebellion: animals live longer, eat more, have more offspring, work fewer hours, and so forth. In this way, the pigs produce a false vision of reality. Then, by ensuring that this reality is the only one to which the other animals have access and by establishing an effective death penalty for any animal who questions it, they render

their dictatorship indestructible. Fear makes the animals inclined to believe the pigs' propaganda, and by allowing themselves to believe in the comforting lies, the animals find what may be their only safe haven from violence and terror.