

**Cristina BOSÎ**

lector universitar, doctorandă,

Universitatea de Stat din Moldova

## **TOTALITARIANISM AND THE DICTATORSHIP OF IDEA IN ANIMAL FARM BY GEORGE ORWELL**

Articolul propus conține o cercetare succintă a fenomenului totalitarismului și a dictaturii ideii descrise în romanul *Ferma Animalelor* de George Orwell. Au fost menționate elementele esențiale ale regimului totalitar atacate aspru de către scriitorul englez și consecințele negative ale acestei guvernări. De asemenea s-a făcut o revizuire a satirei politice, inclusiv a personajelor și acțiunilor acestora, prin prisma cărora Orwell a prezentat puterea de manipulare a dictaturii totalitare.

**Cuvinte cheie:** stat, societate, dictatura, totalitarism, satira politica, revoluție, egalitate.

The article contains a concise research of the phenomenon of totalitarianism and the dictatorship of idea described in the novel *Animal Farm* by George Orwell. There were outlined the essential elements of the totalitarian regime which were harshly attacked by the English author as well as the negative consequences of this government. There was also revised the political satire, including its characters and their actions, through which Orwell illustrated the power of manipulation of the totalitarian dictatorship.

**Key - words:** state, society, dictatorship, totalitarianism, political satire, revolution, equality.

George Orwell, alias Eric Arthur Blair published his political work of fiction *Animal Farm* more than half a century ago, yet, it remains one of most popular best-sellers, an integral part of study programme throughout the English-speaking world and an “in vogue” literary masterpiece read all over the world. Its gloomy messages of state repression still manage to evoke public distrust in the motives of ideological revolutions, resentment against invasions of individual privacy by governments and the association of any invasion of privacy or restrictions on freedom of expression with totalitarian regimes.

In fact, George Orwell’s works, *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighteen-Four* are more than cautionary fictions or parables to keep us virtuous; they have provided intellectual plans for the functioning of totalitarian societies which represent the twentieth century’s major contribution to development of human societies. These two novels also provide a series of mental tests meant to measure the political health of a society.

In his brilliant novel, the author realized a courageous allegorical satire of Marxism, Communism and the Russian Revolution. Here animals are used to symbolize different factions or groups of individuals in Russian society at that time. After an ideological revolution equivalent to Communism is begun on Manor Farm, called Animalism, the human occupiers are expelled by force and the pigs, representing the Bolsheviks, take over power. They are led by a brutal dictator called Napoleon who is a caricature of Stalin. Another pig called

Snowball, a caricature of Trotsky, flees after a power struggle with Napoleon, and is forever afterwards portrayed as Enemy Number One, responsible for any failings of the regime. Ever increasingly the pigs under Napoleon betray the original ideology of the revolution until it comes full circle, restoring the same system as before with different rulers.

Orwell manifested great courage indeed in the choice of the setting and characters, as he used actual historical events to construct his story, just rearranging them to fit his plot. Manor Farm is Russia, Mr Jones the Tsar, the pigs the Bolsheviks who led the revolution. The humans represent the ruling class, the animals the workers and peasants. Old Major, the white boar who inspires the rebellion in the first chapter, stands for a combination of Marx, the chief theorist, and Lenin, the actual leader. The novelist depicts Old Major as a character whose motives are pure and idealistic, to emphasise the positive goals of the revolution, and makes him die before the rebellion itself. In actuality Lenin died in 1924, well after the revolution. Lenin himself set up the machinery of political terror which Stalin took over. The power struggle between Stalin and Trotsky, satirised by Orwell in chapter happened after Lenin's death, not immediately after the revolution, as Orwell's account suggests.

The story tells how the livestock and working animals at Manor Farm are given an account of a dream by Old Major, a prize Middle White Boar: a dream of the earth as it will be when Man has vanished. Major predicts an uprising of the animals against their owner, Mr Jones, and this happens three months later. Meanwhile the leading pigs, Napoleon and Snowball, and their spokesman Squealer, elaborate Major's ideas into a system of thought which they call 'Animalism', based on the principles of equality among the animals, and avoidance of the vices of humankind. After the overthrow of Jones, the animals run the farm cooperatively, but gradually the pigs take more and more tyrannical control and assume the vices of humanity; they deprive the other animals of proper sustenance, and of a say in the running of the farm; they engage in foolish grandiose projects, principally the building of a windmill, they trade and consort with human beings; they kill. At the end the pigs have become men, the other animals are in their customary state of oppressed deprivation.

Following the story the readers notice that each animal stands for a precise figure or representative type. The pigs, who can read and write and organize, are the Bolshevik intellectuals who came to dominate the vast Soviet bureaucracy. Napoleon is Stalin, the select group around him the Politburo, Snowball is Trotsky, and Squealer represents the propagandists of the regime. The pigs enjoy the privileges of belonging to the new ruling class (special food, shorter working hours), but also suffer the consequences of questioning Napoleon's policies.

In such a way, the beast-fable is not only a device that allows Orwell's serious message to be intelligible on two levels; the use of animal to represent man is basic to his whole theme. We can readily catch that animals are oppressed and feel it is wrong to exploit them and betray their trust. Orwell counts on our common assumptions about particular species to suggest his meaning. The sheep and their bleating are perfect metaphors for a gullible public, ever ready to accept policies and repeat gossips as truth. We commonly believe pigs are greedy and savage, even to the point of devouring their young. Orwell also uses the natural animosity of cats to sparrows, dogs to rats in order to suggest the social and ethnic conflicts which belie Marx's dictum that workers' common interests outweigh differences of race and nationhood. And, most central to his theme, their 'short animal lives' suggests the book's tragic vision: that the passivity and ignorance of ordinary people allows an evil leadership to stay in power.

As a harsh opponent of totalitarianism, Orwell aimed that his central figure would typify the modern dictator, whose lust for power is pathological and inhuman. Napoleon's swift, secret cruelty makes the other animals seem all too human in comparison. The animals make enormous sacrifices to complete the Windmill, only to find that it is used to grind corn (for trade), not to make their lives easier, as Snowball had promised. Napoleon "denounced such ideas as contrary to the spirit of Animalism. The truest happiness, he said, lay in working hard and living frugally" [1, p.129].

*Animal Farm* is subtitled 'A Fairy Story'. Since the book does not tell of fairies, nor yet of the magical, this description seems hardly appropriate. Still it does suggest one intention of the book, which is to tell a story directly and simply. In this respect Orwell's purpose is a characteristic one, namely the vigorous sweeping aside of jargon, cant and hypocrisy and the presenting of issues clearly and intelligibly. But this sort of intention always has its attendant dangers and, in the telling of his fairy story Orwell has succumbed to them. His account of revolution is greatly oversimplified; it is too obvious, too facile, and too easy. For whatever we may think of the Russian revolution or, for that matter of any revolution, we cannot but be aware that the crises of a society are much more complex than Orwell is here able to suggest.

George Orwell once expressed the idea that every line of serious work that he had written since 1936 has been against totalitarianism. In this regard *Animal Farm* is a representative illustrative example. Totalitarianism is a form of government in which the state seeks to control every facet of life, from economics and politics to the each individual's ideas and beliefs. Different totalitarian states have different justifications for their rule. For instance, Mr. Jones runs Manor Farm based on the idea that human domination of animals is the natural order of things, while Napoleon and the pigs run *Animal Farm* with the claim that they are fighting for animals against evil humans.

This fight and common “project” to reach freedom, equality and peace turns into the same, typically human, dictatorial attitude formulated in the wonderful “excuse” motto: “All animal are equal, but there some animals are more equal than others” [1, p. 134].

**Referințe bibliografice:**

1. Orwell, George, *Animal Farm*, New York: Signet Classics, 1996