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The Farm

The desire to be free is a basic human instinct. Unfortunately, there are many examples throughout history of people who are not free and who must fight for the most basic rights. In North Korea, ordinary citizens suffer while the ruling classes live well. In China, speaking out against the government usually ends in arrest or execution. During the twentieth century, Joseph Stalin squelched all dissent in the Soviet Union with trumped up charges and quick executions. Alarmed by Stalin's behavior, the British author George Orwell wrote *Animal Farm*, a commentary about Stalin and other leaders who use their power to oppress their people. Though Orwell's animal rebellion begins with pure intentions, it quickly devolves into the same tyrannical conditions that appear in human societies. Written in 1945, George Orwell's novella *Animal Farm* is still relevant today.

In North Korea, Kim Jong-Il and now Kim Jong-Un oppress the citizenry in order to promote their own positions of power. In *Animal Farm*, Orwell shows us that oppressive rulers have a tendency to give themselves luxuries that ordinary citizens are denied. The same situation is true in North Korea. Reporter Sarah Wang travelled to North Korea in 2009 and discovered great disparities in wealth, especially on the train where, "well-dressed North Koreans took up the majority of seats...they were the only fat North Koreans that I saw on the trip"(Wang). Economic inequality is one way that oppressive leaders maintain control. Wang also recalls a picture that she took with two school boys, "I could clearly feel their ribs when I put my hands on their backs." When people spend their energy thinking about their next meal, then they don't have the energy to stand up against the government. By the time the pigs are in full control of

the farm, the other animals are suffering, “sometimes the long hours on insufficient food were hard to bear” (Orwell 120). The animals on Orwell’s farm received nothing in return for their constant loyalty, not even adequate food. The animals just lived while the rulers thrived. In North Korea today, average citizens have limited options while their leaders live a lavish lifestyle. Just like on Animal Farm, those lavish lifestyles are made possible by the sweat and labor of the people.

Echoes of Orwell’s farm are also present in modern day, communist China. In 1989, college students protesting in Tiananman Square were shot on sight. A famous picture of these events shows a lone student standing in front of military tanks. Those tanks ultimately ran the student over. When Napoleon feared that animal rebellion on the farm would hurt his position of leadership, he ordered a public trial and execution of four uppity pigs, “When they had finished their confession, the dogs promptly tore their throats out” (Orwell 93). The animals who witnessed the event were demoralized, confused, and frightened. Napoleon’s actions were swift and irreversible. The animals’ desire to rebel against their leaders died away. Likewise in China, the government continues to oppress its people by restricting the speech and behavior of its citizens, “China’s Communist Party has honed its response to the unwelcome anniversary by detaining and silencing dissidents...” (Mullany and Buckley). Just like in Orwell’s novella, the voice of the people is squelched in order to protect the position of those in charge.

Sadly, George Orwell’s novella, *Animal Farm*, is just as relevant today as it was when it was first published nearly 70 years ago. North Korean citizens struggle to survive while their rulers live well. If Chinese citizens dare to speak out against their government they will be arrested. Orwell’s tale of talking animals that behave like humans not only recorded history, but also predicted it.

Works Cited

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