



## NOT LOST IN TRANSLATION: ORWELL'S *ANIMAL FARM* AMONG REFUGEES AND BEYOND THE IRON CURTAIN

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**A**MONG THE MANY significant anniversaries being commemorated in 2017, the centennial of the Russian Revolution is among the most important, offering an opportunity to reflect on one of the defining political events of the twentieth century. The political allegory *Animal Farm*, its publication history, and reception by the peoples most affected by the Revolution's long-term consequences, present unique perspectives from which to look at dissenting voices to the rise of the Soviet Union and its role in the aftermath of the Second World War. With the recent purchases of this modern classic in a rare Serbian translation, and just this past March, of a unique Russian copy revised in the hand of its translator Gleb Struve, this year also offers us an opportunity to review the several noteworthy editions and translations of the satirical novel held by the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library that were

specifically intended for an Eastern European readership.

In early 1944, Eric Arthur Blair (1903–1950), known better by his pen name George Orwell, completed the manuscript of *Animal Farm* in which he sought to condemn tyranny universally, and particularly to destroy the myth that the Soviet Union was a truly socialist society. He began writing the novel immediately after the Tehran conference in late November 1943. At this strategy meeting between Joseph Stalin, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and Winston Churchill, the Soviet Union gained tentative concessions on Eastern Europe from the United States and Britain. Later, leaders of the 'Big Three'—the United Kingdom, the Soviet Union, and the United States—confirmed these terms at the wartime conferences of Yalta and Potsdam. Orwell leveled his criticism at the two western leaders' compromise with Stalin using animals to represent human vice and folly. The farm, Mr.

Jones, the pigs, and the other animals, stand in for the historical figures and events associated with Russian history since 1917.

*Animal Farm*'s path to publication was not straightforward. Although under contract with Victor Gollancz, Orwell's publisher rejected the manuscript because it was too obviously critical of the Soviet Union, which was a crucial ally in the war against Hitler's Germany. The firm of Nicholson & Watson considered it in 'bad taste to attack the head of an allied government in that manner.' André Deutsch feared risking capital he did not have. T. S. Eliot, a director at Faber & Faber, praised Orwell's style and compared the novel to Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, yet rejected the manuscript because 'we have no conviction that this is the right point of view from which to criticize the political situation at the present time.' Jonathan Cape said yes, but reversed his decision following a visit to Peter Smollett

**OPENING PAGE:** Dust jacket from the first Canadian edition of *Animal Farm*, 1946; Myroslav Hryhoriiiv's cover illustration for the 1947 Ukrainian translation, *Колгосп тварин* (Collective Farm of Animals); title page of the advance copy of the first American edition of *Animal Farm*, 1946. **FACING PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:** 1981 Polish translation, *Folwark zwierzęcy* with cover illustration by Andrzej Krauze; 1984 reprint of 1974 Odnowa edition, originally published in London; two coloured plates from lithographs by Jan Libenstein, printed in the 1985 large format, hardcover edition of *Folwark zwierzęcy*.

(1912–1980), the Head of Soviet Relations at Britain's Ministry of Information, who advised against such an anti-Soviet text. It turns out that Smollett was an operative of the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs (*Narodnyi komissariat vnutrennikh del*/NKVD) recruited by double agent Kim Philby.

Orwell, however, prevailed over British caution and Soviet subterfuge. The publisher Seckler & Warburg accepted the manuscript, and released the first English edition of *Animal Farm* on 17 August 1945 in a small print run of forty-five hundred copies because of severe paper rationing after the war. They published a second impression, of ten thousand copies, in November 1945, and a third, of six thousand copies, in October 1946. The first American edition published by Harcourt, Brace & Co. came out on 26 August 1946 in fifty thousand copies, followed by two impressions, of 430,000 and 110,000 copies, for the Book-of-the-Month Club edition. Two months later, S. J. Reginald Saunders of Toronto, under the leadership of Saunders' widow Ila, produced the first Canadian edition in two thousand copies, which carried on its cover the warning: 'Don't be a parrot. Think! Think for yourself!' By the time Seckler & Warburg released their fiftieth-anniversary edition of *Animal Farm* in 1995, with illustrations by Ralph Steadman (1936–), the book had sold more than twenty million copies in five dozen languages, and had been the subject of several radio, stage, and film adaptations.

Following the publication of *Animal Farm* in English, Orwell encouraged translators to publish the text in as many languages as possible. This suited the 'psywar' needs of the British Information Research Department, and the Office of Policy Coordination within the Central Intelligence Agency, just fine. In the late 1940s, the two government agencies began to use literature by established authors as a way to conduct its propaganda against the threat of Communism. It was Orwell, though, and his literary agent Leonard Moore (d. 1959), who, in their lifetimes, did the most to disseminate the novel across Central and Eastern Europe. By the time Orwell died in 1950, translations had appeared in Polish (London, 1946), Czech (Prague, 1946), Ukrainian (Neu-Ulm, 1947), and Russian (Frankfurt am Main, 1949), along

with other languages of Europe, the Middle East, and parts of Asia, ranging from Danish to Persian and Korean. These appeared at a time when the Soviet Union had successfully promoted communist government takeovers in most eastern European countries. Orwell's premature death cleared the way for western government officials to appropriate his name and work for their own political objectives without fear of protestation from the author. Other translations ensued: Lithuanian (London, 1952), Hungarian (Budapest, 1952–53), Latvian (London, 1954), and Serbian (Munich, 1955). *Animal Farm* also circulated in underground versions across the Iron Curtain well into the 1980s.

Orwell wrote *Animal Farm* as a satire of the Russian Revolution, but also one against any violent conspiratorial revolution that only leads to a change of masters. In a letter to the American editor, critic, and writer Dwight MacDonald (1906–1982), dated 5 December 1946, he stated, 'You can't have a revolution unless you make it for yourself; there is no such thing as a benevolent dictatorship.' His outspokenness against Stalin's politics and Western misconceptions about Soviet communism turned Orwell into one of the most respected representatives of the left by exiles and refugees of Soviet-occupied countries. The author further endeared himself to displaced persons following the Second World War by refusing to accept fees or royalties for translations undertaken by refugee groups. He told his literary agent, Leonard Moore, that 'as in the case of other Russian-occupied countries, where translations can only be made by refugees, I do not want any payment' (21 September 1946). He sympathized with the plight of the displaced persons, hoping that they would not be shipped back to the Soviet Union, and, as he said in a letter to the Hungarian-British writer Arthur Koestler (1905–1983) dated 20 September 1947, he considered them 'a godsend opportunity for breaking down the wall between Russia and the west.'

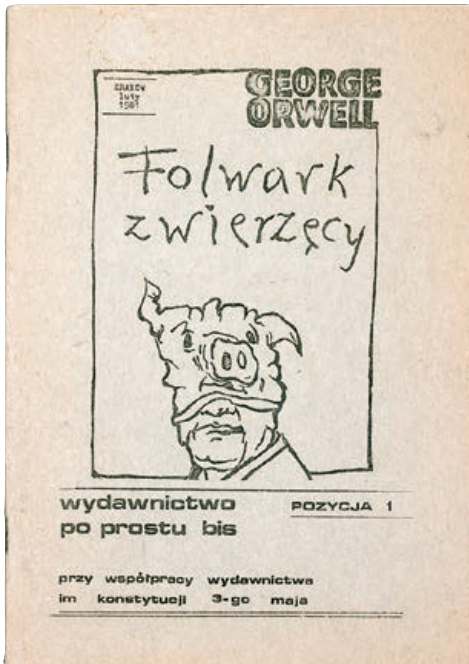
The Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library preserves several translations of *Animal Farm*.

The Polish edition, *Folwark zwierzęcy*, was among the first to appear. The World League of Poles Abroad, a pre-war organization of the government-in-exile in London, sponsored the

translation. It was a collaboration between the translator, Teresa Jeleńska (1890–1969), and illustrator, Wojciech Jastrzębowski (1884–1963). Jeleńska was descended from Polish petty gentry and the wife of a diplomat. A frequent visitor to the capitals of Europe where she attended numerous embassy balls and receptions, she took refuge in Britain after the German occupation of Poland. Strapped for money, she turned to journalism and translation to help make ends meet. She read *Animal Farm* in August 1945, and was transfixed by it. Jeleńska dashed off a letter to Orwell asking for authorization to translate it into Polish. The two entered into a five-year correspondence. He offered the translator his help, suggesting that she ring him up should she 'feel in doubt about the meaning of any word or phrase,' and expected that they could understand one another despite him not knowing a word of Polish. The audience for the translation was largely Poles living abroad, and, more narrowly, Anders's Army (Second Polish Corps) in Italy. These were Polish citizens recruited from Soviet forced labour camps during the amnesty offered by Stalin in 1941, who were then passed on to British command.

Bolesław Wierzbiański (1913–2003), acting on behalf of the World League of Poles Abroad, commissioned the designer, painter, and graphic artist Wojciech Jastrzębowski, who was the former vice-chancellor of the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw (1936–1939), and living in London from 1940, to illustrate the Polish edition. Jastrzębowski completed six illustrations, plus a cover, which features a portrait of a pig dressed in military uniform decorated with medals and epaulettes above which a banner proclaims: 'All animals are equal but some animals are more equal than others.' Readers quickly snapped up the five-thousand copies of the illustrated translation—the Polish version vies with the Czech translation as the first illustrated edition of *Animal Farm* in any language—when it appeared in December 1946.

Publishers reprinted Jeleńska's translation for decades, particularly in the late 1970s through to the 1980s, in clandestine editions within Communist Poland. The collection NSZZ 'Solidarność' and Independent Publications from Poland holds three such



editions of *Folwark zwierzęcy*. 'Po Bistu bis' issued one in 1981. This was an independent student-run publishing house whose goal was to break state-controlled censorship and the government's monopoly on information. Supplementing the text are nine illustrations, including those on the cover and back, by the Polish-born British caricaturist Andrzej Krauze (1947–). This edition, and another printed anonymously in 1984, reprint in reduced facsimile the edition published in London by Odnova in 1974. Arkadiusz Kutkowski (1958–), a journalist and historian, supervised the

covert publication of the modest 1984 reprint in Radom, with illustrated wrapper only. He befriended a printer, a Solidarity sympathizer, brought ink for the press, and asked him to print the Orwell translation. The printer photographed the pages, prepared the plates, and printed the book on his 'second' shift.

The Kraków publisher Oficyna Literacka (Literary Press) produced a much more handsome and luxurious edition the following year. The large format, hardcover edition of *Folwark zwierzęcy*, with Jeleńska's interpretation, includes ten coloured plates reproduced from

lithographs by Jan Lebenstein, a distinguished Polish painter and graphic artist. Lebenstein (1930–2000), a graduate of the Warsaw Academy of Fine Arts, received the *Grand Prix* at the First International Biennale of Young Artists in Paris in 1959. He remained in France, where he established close ties with the Polish *émigré* community involved with the Instytut Literacki (Literary Institute) and the journal *Kultura* (Culture). In 1974, he undertook a series of gouaches, paintings, and graphic illustrations in honour of Orwell, many of which he exhibited over the next two years in Paris and Brussels. Lebenstein considered Orwell's story *Animal Farm* 'a Socialist utopia in the form of a cruel fairy tale very appealing.' Lebenstein, in solidarity with supporters of independent culture and underground publishing in Poland, consented to have a selection of the illustrations from his *Animal Farm* cycle reproduced free-of-charge. The independent publisher Oficyna Literacka printed them by rotogravure, and pasted each image onto a separate sheet.

Teresa Jeleńska's role in the translation and dissemination of *Animal Farm* did not end with the Polish language. She also acted as an intermediary between Orwell and a young Polish-born Ukrainian scholar and journalist named Ihor Ševčenko (1922–2009), the eventual Dumbarton Oaks Professor of Byzantine History and Literature at Harvard University. In 1945 and 1946, Ševčenko worked for *Dziennik Żołnierza* (Soldier's Daily), a newspaper published by General Stanisław Maczek's Polish First Armoured Division. One of the co-editors of the newspaper was Teresa's son, Konstanty 'Kot' Jeleński (1922–1987). Ševčenko's assignment was to survey the British press, and he soon discovered Orwell's column 'As I Please' among the pages of the *Tribune*. He went on to read *Animal Farm* in mid-February 1946 and immediately seized upon the idea that 'a translation into Ukrainian would be of great value to my countrymen.' He was motivated by the desire to convince fellow refugees that among the British there were left-leaning intellectuals who 'knew the truth' about the Soviet state and its institutions. Jeleński contacted his mother who, on behalf of Ševčenko, broached the question of a Ukrainian translation with Orwell. The writer not only agreed, but also wrote a unique preface to the edition—for decades the only published introduction—and refused any royalties.

The small *émigré* publishing house Prometheus issued the Ukrainian translation as *Колгосп тварин* (Collective Farm

**BELOW:** Kazys Dargis's 1952 cover illustration for *Gyvulių ūkis*.

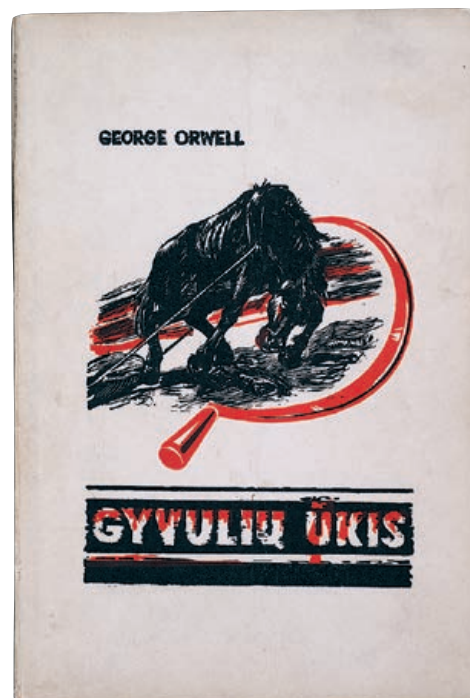
of Animals) in November 1947. Ševčenko masked his identity behind the pseudonym Ivan Cherniatynskyi—a combination of his father's first name and his mother's maiden name. The edition carried a cover illustration by Myroslav Hryhoriiiv (1911–2000), an editor and contributor of articles and illustrations to Czech and Ukrainian press, a designer of book covers, and the author of books on the methods of Soviet propaganda. The cover depicts, in the foreground, the pig Napoleon with a whip overseeing, in the background, Boxer the carthorse drudging a heavy load of boulders uphill, while a hen watches overhead. About two thousand to three thousand copies of *Колгосп тварин* were distributed to Ukrainian refugees living in displaced persons' camps inside the American Zone of allied-occupied Germany. Unfortunately, American soldiers stopped and searched a truck carrying the rest, and confiscated the remaining half of the print run. They handed the copies over to the Soviet repatriation authorities who destroyed them. Two copies, carried among the personal belongings of refugees immigrating to Canada, are in the Fisher's John Luczkiw Collection of D. P. Publications, 1945–1954.

After Orwell's death in January 1950, *Animal Farm* came out in Lithuanian and Serbian.

In 1952, the Lithuanian House Association in London published a translation under the title *Gyvulių ūkis: fantastinė apysaka*, featuring the original subtitle of 'A Fairy Story.' Ginutis Procuta (1933–), a native of Lithuania living in Canada, and a frequent and generous donor to the University of Toronto Libraries and the Vilnius University Library, donated a copy to the Fisher Library. It, along with the original 1947 Polish translation donated by the estate of Alexander Frejzsmidt (1930–2012), and the recently purchased Russian edition, are now part of the Claude Bissell Collection. Fabijonas Neveravičius (1900–1981) served as the translator. He studied at the Faculty of Theology and Philosophy at the Lithuanian University in Kaunas, and then joined the Lithuanian Army during the Polish-Lithuanian War, 1919–1920. Afterwards, he returned to Kaunas and worked at the Military School there until 1934, when, for political reasons, he quit and began to work as a writer and journalist. Neveravičius participated in the anti-Nazi resistance during the Second World War, but by 1944 left for Western Europe. He eventually settled in England, where he edited the journal *Santarvė*

(Concord, 1953–1958), wrote historical novels and short stories about the Lithuanian-Polish Commonwealth, and translated works by Stefan Żeromski (1864–1925), Władysław Stanisław Reymont (1867–1925), and Leo Tolstoy (1828–1910), among others.

The cover to *Gyvulių ūkis* was illustrated by Kazys Dargis (1917–1977), an artist trained at the Academy of Art in Vilnius, who at the end of the Second World War traveled to Denmark and then to England. The cover features Boxer the carthorse dragging a boulder, encircled by



a sickle, a symbol of the Soviet Union. As a curious aside, Dargis's wife, Bodil (née Rønnow, 1925–1988), was an accomplished Danish animator who worked on the CIA-funded British animated film, *Animal Farm*, by John Halas and Joy Batchelor (1954). Orwell was clearly a family affair.

A translation of *Animal Farm* into Serbian followed in 1955, although there had been earlier attempts to publish one in Yugoslavia in late 1946 or early 1947. A Mr. A. G. Avakumović wrote to Orwell on 21 September 1946 suggesting a translation into Serbian, and then met personally with the author later that winter, hoping to convince both Orwell and the publisher Fredric Warburg (1898–1981) that an edition in Roman script, produced in England, in about five thousand copies, could feasibly be smuggled into Yugoslavia. The individual

was Aleksandar G. Avakumović (1896–1954), the Yugoslav ambassador to Romania in 1941, and then to Sweden, until his retirement in October 1944. He fiercely opposed the Communists' rise to power, and refused to return to Yugoslavia after the war was over. His son, Ivan (1926–2013), eventually immigrated to Canada, where he published a number of studies on the Doukhobors, on socialism and the Communist Party in Canada, and on the Canadian political thinker and literary critic George Woodcock (1912–1995).

It is difficult to say what role Avakumović or his son played in the eventual publication of *Animal Farm* in Serbian. Nonetheless, the translation by Slobodan A. Stanković, *Farma životinja: savremena basna*, appeared a few years later under the imprint of Iskra publishing house in Munich. Stanković, later a research analyst of Yugoslav affairs for Radio Free Europe, included a preface and afterword in which he explained that his people, Yugoslavs, who read Orwell's *Animal Farm*, will have 'a picture of Tito's Yugoslavia,' and that in the satire, they will find everything that their Fatherland has undergone and is currently experiencing. He continued to stress that everything that transpires in Orwell's satire, as a rule takes place in all countries where Communists hold power. Although they promise 'a paradise on earth,' they do nothing but deceive and mislead people and societies. This Serbian edition is a bit of a rarity, and difficult to find in libraries across North America and Europe, although the Belgrade University Library and the Matica Srpska Library in Novi Sad hold a copy each. The Fisher Library purchased its copy from local antiquarian bookseller, David Mason, in 2015.

Given the obvious direct criticism of the Russian Revolution and Stalin's policies, and the implied criticism of dictatorships in general, it is no surprise that George Orwell's *Animal Farm* found a broad audience among *émigrés* and refugees from Eastern Europe, and that clandestine copies smuggled across the Iron Curtain found eager readers in the Soviet bloc countries. Although libraries often forego collecting translations from English into foreign languages, the example of *Animal Farm* suggests that in some cases it is well worth our while, especially when they are expressions of intellectual bravery.