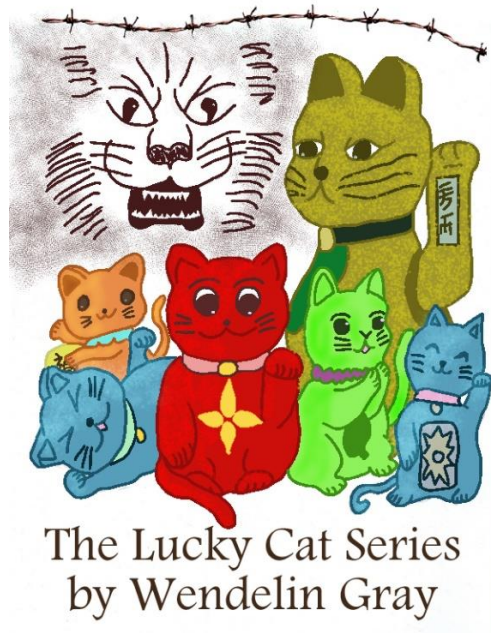


THE LUCKY CAT SERIES FACEBOOK HISTORY LESSONS ON TOTALITARIANISM

By

Wendelin Gray



This is a study guide I put together from the series of history lessons from recent headlines that I posted to my Facebook page in the Summer of 2019 to go with the release of the four volumes in this novella series. I have substituted new sources for dead links where necessary.

Lesson #1 – The Soviet Union

Since the Lucky Cat series that I'm working on and will be releasing two more volumes in by 2020 is a meditation on state violence and totalitarianism using elements of fantasy, noir and classic horror, I thought it would be appropriate to post recent news items relating to 20th century historical antecedents. Of course, my formal academic training is in Russian language and literature with a side certification in the philosophical and historical situation in the former Soviet Union, so it's only right to begin this series with a memorial to the victims of Stalin:

<https://www.npr.org/2019/07/08/739037704/amid-quiet-rehabilitation-of-stalin-some-russians-honor-the-memory-of-his-victim>

Lesson # 2 - Brazil

I read yesterday that the new president of Brazil praised the dictatorship who ruled the country in the 20th century, but I was unfamiliar with their history, and the article referenced a few older articles detailing their crimes to fill in the blanks:

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/may/11/ernesto-geisel-brazil-cia-memo-torture-executions>

and

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/dec/10/brazil-president-weeps-report-military-dictatorship-abuses>

Lesson # 3 – El Salvador & Argentina

A lesser known example of state violence comes up in this very good article comparing the biographies of Oscar Romero and Pope Francis, which touches on the civil war in El Salvador and the “Dirty War” in Argentina:

<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2018/11/the-martyr-and-the-pope/570835/>

Lesson # 4 – North Korea

A recent article covered the plight of women suffering from sexual violence in North Korea :

<https://www.dw.com/en/rights-group-north-korean-women-face-rampant-sexual-abuse/a-46116942>

and the full report with interviews is here (reader discretion):

<https://www.hrw.org/report/2018/11/01/you-cry-night-dont-know-why/sexual-violence-against-women-north-korea>

Lesson # 5 – The Soviet Union/Russia

Unfortunately, I didn’t make it to this local presentation, but Masha Gessen’s book *The Future Is History: How Totalitarianism Reclaimed Russia* is definitely on my list of things I want to read. The author explains here a little about the psychology that develops in the citizenry under such states. She uses the term “mafia state” here, but on some level, totalitarianism is like the mafia, so it’s just a different way of analyzing what are basically the same social features.

<https://pittsburghcurrent.com/russian-american-journalist-masha-gessen-will-speak-at-carnegie-music-hall/>

Here is a description of the book:

https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1594634548/ref=db_s_a_def_rwt_bibl_vppi_i1

Lesson # 6 - Iran

This recent article on Iran touches on some of the themes we've been exploring with the Lucky Cat series:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/14/opinion/iran-forty-years-revolution-moderate.html>

The article makes the point by referencing an old article about memoirs that came out detailing the regime's crimes:

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/iran/1321090/Khomeini-fatwa-led-to-killing-of-30000-in-Iran.html>

Lesson # 7 - Argentina

I saw another article yesterday on the topic of totalitarianism, again related to Argentina: "Argentina: Bodies of 600 disappeared wait to be identified". I suppose that country is in the news a lot these days because the Dirty War was fairly recent compared to some of the state violence perpetrated in the 20th century.

<https://www.apnews.com/30b0ffc6d3e74b94b7511bafd04fce23>

As in many countries, the state later formed a commission to report on what had been happening.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Commission_on_the_Disappearance_of_Persons

Here are the actual interviews collected by the commission investigating what happened during that era (reader discretion). The first link is the intro page, and the second link is the actual report:

http://www.desaparecidos.org/nuncamas/web/english/library/nevagain/nevagain_000.htm

http://www.desaparecidos.org/nuncamas/web/english/library/nevagain/nevagain_001.htm

Lesson # 8 – Global Victims

Of course, no study of state violence and totalitarianism would be complete without looking at the victims of 20th century communist states. While the Jewish community has been very vocal about keeping the memory of the Nazi era and Holocaust alive, many victims of communist countries have not been as organized or not been homogenous enough to keep their experiences in the public eye. Sometimes this is due to a peculiarity of the victim groups' cultural dispositions that emphasize silence and shame over truth or an assumption that people will just naturally remember the horrible events that took place instead of the reality that communities want to bury this kind of problem. The default position is always forgetting. Here is a website that has taken the lead in collecting some of that oral history:

<https://www.victimsofcommunism.org/witness>

Lesson # 9 – The Nazi Era

Next in the series, I wanted to look further back at the Nazi era, which is far more well-known than many of these other countries' tribulations in the 20th century. I primarily had this more obscure resistance movement in mind because I chose a white rose motif for volume 3 in the Lucky Cat series, though I use it much more literally in story. The White Rose Movement was a student revolt that ended in a number of their members' executions. I thought it would provide a useful context to my fantasy-horror series, and this site has a lot of historical documentation. The first link gives the basic situation and leading figures of the movement, while the second actually publishes some of their leaflets:

<http://www.holocaustresearchproject.org/revolt/whiterose.html>

<http://www.holocaustresearchproject.org/revolt/wrleaflets.html>

Lesson # 10 – Global Victims

Yesterday I saw a very good column by the popular legal blogger from Volokh Conspiracy, Ilya Somin, that fits the Lucky Cat Series History Lesson theme.

<https://reason.com/2019/05/01/victims-of-communism-day-2019/>

The links in the article are really good, too, and I especially thought this one was helpful.

<http://volokh.com/2009/11/08/why-the-neglect-of-communist-crimes-matters/>

and

https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/volokh-conspiracy/wp/2017/11/07/lessons-from-a-century-of-communism/?utm_term=.49b0c31a8263

Lesson # 11 – The Nazi Era

Here is a particularly ugly chapter in our parade of horrors I've been documenting in these lessons to provide context for my fantasy-horror novel series. I think the Red Orchestra is not that widely known, and I know I sure never heard of it. The retaliation against them by Hitler, using their remains as scientific specimens instead of giving them a proper burial, is certainly a macabre twist and really horrible:

<https://www.thelocal.de/.../remains-of-nazi-prisoners-to-be-b...>

Since I didn't know anything about them and found the details in today's articles sketchy, here is more background on the group:

<https://www.gdw-berlin.de/.../re.../topics/14-the-red-orchestra/>

Plus, I found a really good, full-length documentary "Wisconsin's Nazi Resistance: The Mildred Fish-Harnack Story" on the only American killed in the Red Orchestra incident. It's such a moving story and well-done video:

<https://wpt.org/nazi-resistance/main>