

How Chickens Overran the Ostriches

by [Robert Gear](#) (August 2024)



To Work (Nina Fedotova, 2023)

One advantage the omniscient narrator has within the world he creates is relative impunity. His critics can praise or savage his words, but to oppose the truth value of his imaginary creation is a solecism. His description of the world is the one you must accept—assuming you read on. Who is to say that his words are mistaken? His creation is true to him and may bring insights to the reader too. The following account is a

case in point:

Ostriches do *not* in fact bury their heads in the sand. That is a fiction. Readers may be even more surprised to know that human beings can and occasionally do perform such maneuvers. A little-known example is that of an isolated group in New Guinea—only some of whom are intellectuals. In preparation for unwelcome intrusion by a neighboring tribe (or indeed after subjection has been accomplished) these people perform such a ritual. Anthropologists concur that each member will dig a hole large enough to receive his own head just outside the communal palm-roofed hut. Then bending quite over each will stick his head in this hole in the ground—an act of submission anthropologically curious if not altogether redeemed by any clear benefit to the performer—except perhaps that of exciting a feeling of having done the right thing. Intrepid explorers have observed such antics elsewhere in dark lands as yet unexposed to the benefits of cultures whose head-burying has taken on a less literal approach.

These facts are true enough as they stand and may resonate with those who have the imagination to value such thoughts.

This account opens in an era which will go on forever and will no doubt endure until the 'last light breaking.' It is the story of ostriches and chickens and fools led by the blind and their confounders—a shrewd, tumescing tribe of sometimes villainous seekers after blood, loot and subjection. Their victims may suffer from poor eyesight, but the villains possess nictating eyes which unsettle those they come against. They strut around with a noisy desire to put their flock first, and will squabble amongst themselves as all families will when not engaged purely with the task of overcoming unbelievers.

Our own ostriches—the ones we are describing here at least—are the beneficiaries of a large moat dug for them by geological perturbations of eons ago. This posed difficulties for enemies

of the large flightless birds, and gave them a sense of invincibility which with few exceptions stood the test of time and aggression. But they muddled through and finally reached a level of freedom and security which some of the more far seeing amongst them (having spent less time at institutes of higher education) saw was a prelude to cultural collapse. Clearly the ostriches, had not read their Gibbon. They gave themselves to dubious living arrangements and wokist assumptions under the conviction that no harm could interrupt their absurd and complacent fiddling. For example, some of their more inventive policies involved hiring and firing ostriches on the basis of the color of their plumage. Similar tyrannies had arisen and declined in a long series of attempts to improve welfare for the seeming good of others—and to manage their own feelings.

But the moat was only as good as those guarding it.

And then came the chickens, arriving on small boats in the dead of night or in the distracting melee of international airports.

I might add that the chickens (egged on, as they say, by their leading roosters) were doing only what they do more or less by instinct. They could not have reached such an extraordinary fulfillment without the help of ostrich quislings, those who had little or no in-group loyalty. They believed that anyone or anything that *was not of their own species* was in some way better than their own. And I don't just mean in culinary matters. This was a particular kind of mindset deeply brooded on through generations of denial, the need to signal to others and of pretending that reality would just go away. Perhaps they did not want to be cured; their illusions were far too dear to them.

And by the way, ostriches are far stronger, faster than any rooster known to science. They are the heaviest and largest living birds, with adults weighing anywhere between 63.5 and

145 kilograms. They also have much bigger feet and, they could—if they wished—trample chickens underfoot. According to online ornithologists, you shouldn't challenge an ostrich to a fight since they can kick up to 2,000 pounds per square inch, a force which can fell dogs and even lions. According to the best scientific evidence, that's twice as powerful as the best human boxers, let alone chickens. Also these giant birds have sharp talons that are approximately 4 inches long—longer than those sported by our most ardent followers of fashion. It was never an equal fight, and so our current dilemma is on the face of it hard to understand.

So how did the chickens take over? I posed this question to a respected elder statesman—a descendent of the founder. Getting access to his coop required a stubborn persistence on my part. As a respected member of the journalistic trade, and not to mention a fictional omniscience, I had connections in different departments of state. This included the Department of Incoherence, now led by a motley assemblage of elected officials whose pedigree was culturally ambiguous or who had offered themselves as traitors or pawns in the great unwinding.

So how did they take over? "Well" squawked my interlocutor, "In two ways: first gradually, then suddenly."

I recognized the quotation, having myself perused a library of Indexed books. It was from Ernest Hemingway's unintended prescience about his own final days. As he wrote: 'first gradually, then suddenly.' Or perhaps it was taken from some Bolsheviki writings that attempted to 'uncover the laws' that would lead to their approaching *coups d'etat*.

This wisdom reminded me of how ice forms and melts. Water becomes cold and then colder and then in a seeming instant becomes ice. And as the ambient temperature warms the ice turns into liquid seemingly in an instant. Everything is gradual—and then sudden.

I thought of a train journey from Vladivostok to Moscow, crossing the endless tedium of the Siberian steppes. The vastness of the tundra interspersed with villages, small agglomerations of peasant dereliction and a few hard-scrabble fields briefly arrest the traveler's attention. From the station platforms of larger towns such as Irkutsk or Krasnoyarsk you may view the tedium of Soviet era housing constructions. These may enliven your thoughts—if not the journey itself. Such monuments to Soviet thralldom mark a determination, real or at least declared, to improve or change the lot of life's unfortunates *in the worst possible way*; a period of time stretched endlessly under a carnivorously wicked regime. And then you observe a short span of more densely concentrated buildings which ends with a squeal of brakes.

I questioned him further. "Please enlighten me. My readers will be interested."

He replied, "Well, it's a long story indeed. I cast my mind back to the immediate postwar era of Islamoeurope. Then it was a struggling part of the Dar al Harb. The moat of the island had been breached but not fully weakened. Further south and east bodies of water and mountain ramparts helped isolate regions of cultivated fields, varied and flamboyant lifestyles and astonishing inventiveness. True, the Hungarian Plain had been temporarily overrun once, but that was about four hundred years ago, and after that the tribes of complacent ostriches sat back and continued to wage their own internal struggles. Most had never heard of Roosterism, and those who pointed out that other ways did exist *and had not necessarily their interests at heart*, were mocked, cancelled, and imprisoned in a savage reenactment of mostly forgotten inquisitions."

Then he added:

"And then all of sudden, poof, a frozen continent."

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