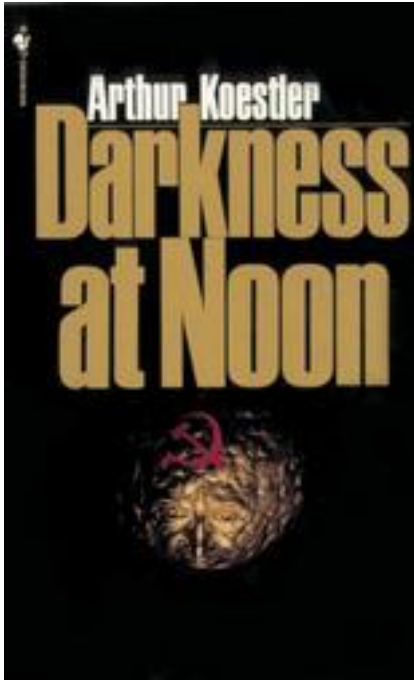

Arthur Koestler

Darkness at Noon



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Description

Darkness at Noon (from the German: *Sonnenfinsternis*) is a novel by the Hungarian-born British novelist Arthur Koestler, first published in 1940. His best-known work tells the tale of Rubashov, a Bolshevik 1917 revolutionary who is cast out, imprisoned and tried for treason by the Soviet government he'd helped create.

Darkness at Noon stands as an unequalled fictional portrayal of the nightmare politics of our time. Its hero is an aging revolutionary, imprisoned and psychologically tortured by the Party to which he has dedicated his life. As the pressure to confess preposterous crimes increases, he relives a career that embodies the terrible ironies and human betrayals of a totalitarian movement masking itself as an instrument of deliverance. Almost unbearably vivid in its depiction of one man's solitary agony, it asks questions about ends and means that have relevance not only for the past but for the perilous present. It is — as the Times Literary Supplement has declared — "A remarkable book, a grimly fascinating interpretation of the logic of the Russian Revolution, indeed of all revolutionary dictatorships, and at the same time a tense and subtly intellectualized drama."

Insightful reviews

none: Arthur Koestler was a Twentieth Century intellectual who wrote DARKNESS AT NOON, his masterpiece in 1940. The psychological torture of the Old Bolshevik, Rubashov, who is imprisoned and murdered by his Party in the show trials of the late nineteen thirties is the side of collectivist ideology rarely portrayed...the impact on an individual.

Citizen Rubashov's was accused of crimes he did not commit in order to justify his execution. Then, what was he guilty of? According to the Party, his "faction" was beaten and being destroyed because they wanted to "split the Party." A catastrophe would result if the peasantry, who did not yet understand "the need for their sacrifices" were to insist that the Revolution's promised goals be realized now.

"The Party must be united. It must be as if cast from one mould--filled with blind discipline and absolute trust." The last service ask of Rubashov by the Party is to confess to attempts to rent the Party, and "if your repentance is real, then you must help us heal this rent."

Rubashov's incarceration is detailed with numbing sameness. The poverty from the outside world is deafening. His only communication is tapping with his pince-nez on the wall to the man in the next cell, No. 402.

What can be understood of the lives of the militant philosophers of nineteen-seventeen? They "dreamed of power with the object of abolishing power; of ruling over the people to wean them from the habit of being ruled." Where were they now? Their "brains, which had changed the world, had each received a charge of lead."

When the cell door slammed behind Rubashov, and the interminable interrogations began, the

ex-Commissar of the People thought about the forty years he had served the Party's ideology: THE END JUSTIFIES THE MEANS.

Rubashov's did what he "did according to my own conviction and conscience." He was shot because "subjective good faith is of no interest. He who is wrong must pay". For forty years he had "burnt the remains of the old, illogical morality from his consciousness with the acid of reason." Upon reflection, and with limited time left, he questioned his willingness to exclude subjective experience in favor of logic.

But like Moses, Rubashov would not see the promise land; he would not even be allowed to glimpse the future. Why did he confess to being a counter-revolutionary? Because he could think of no reason not to. Emptied of his humanity, his identity sacrificed, the Old Bolshevik is envied by No. 402 on the night of his execution.

Why do humans place greater meaning in abstract ideologies rather than in the individuals they are meant to serve? Group-think has proven to be deadly by the "isms" of the last century. It is the worth of a human life that is the greatest value, and guarding its sanctity is what gives life meaning. FAVORITE. Highest Recommendation!

Maciek: *Darkness at Noon* is one of the classics of anti-totalitarian literature, often mentioned alongside novels such as *Brave New World* and *1984*. While both these novels are fictions based on an idea of a totalitarian state, *Darkness at Noon* is a clear allegory of Soviet Russia during the 1930's - the time of the Moscow show trials and the Great Purge.

Although the author openly acknowledges this in the preface, the country in which the book is set is never named - though he includes specific details regarding it, so there never is any doubt. Character are less people than ideas and themes they represent - the main protagonist, Rubashov, is an amalgamation of all of the Old Bolsheviks who were persecuted by Stalin in the 30's. The plot focuses on Rubashov's imprisonment in an unnamed facility, his interaction with fellow inmates and ongoing interrogation. Koestler does a great job with presenting a convincing portrait of a man trying to endure oppression and isolation - he apparently drew inspiration from his own experiences from Spain, where he was imprisoned by Franco's forces during the civil war.

It is interesting to note that contrary to many protagonists of anti-totalitarian novels, Rubashov is not an ordinary and innocent citizen persecuted by the overwhelming regime - he is one of the people who have actively participated in bringing this very regime into being, causing suffering and misery for fellow citizens along the way. This question begins to haunt Rubashov - what, exactly, is he fighting for? What is the weight of individual human life when measured against a possibility of prosperity and contentment for generations to come? Can we sacrifice tens, thousands and even millions of such lives if we will ultimately eliminate suffering for all in the future? Does the nobility of the goal excuse the means used to obtain it, and sacrifices required by it? While we might sympathize with Rubashov because of how he is treated and the conditions that he is in, we must also remember that he is reaping exactly what he has sown with his own hands - something that he begins to understand and ultimately accept throughout

the novel.

It is also important to see the book in its historical context. At the time of publication (1940), it was not uncommon to find many foreigners who were sympathetic to Stalin and his rule of the Soviet Union, praising his achievements of industrializing the country and bettering life for his people - and either ignoring what reports there were of his tyranny, or excusing them as historically inevitable. One of the more famous examples is the American journalist and correspondent for the New York Times Walter Duranty, who in the 1930's not only tried to justify Stalin's government but openly denounced in his reporting that any famine was taking place in the Ukraine - a result of Stalin's policy of collectivizing agriculture, which took several million lives in an area with some of the world's richest farmland. Many other foreigners - both intellectuals who never worked physically in their life, and laborers who never rested - romanticized the Soviet Union, in which they saw hope for a real and viable alternative to the unfair capitalist order - their memories of the Great Depression were still fresh and strong - but, unlike Duranty, they believed in the ideas of fairness, equality and prosperity for all, which the Soviet government claimed to stand for; as they learned of how a real revolution was hijacked and twisted into a totalitarian nightmare, they denounced it. Walter Duranty was fully aware of the fact that hunger victims could have extended well into millions, but nonetheless continued to report that there was no famine - did he believe in the Soviet vision? Did he believe that Stalin's actions were justified by what he claimed to be his intent - an utopia? Inexplicably, one can find people with views very similar to his decades after Stalin's policy was proven to be a deadly failure, ready to defend him and excuse his actions. What are they defending? A paradise which never arrived?

Koehler's book has the distinction of being probably the first book of fiction to address Stalin's brand of totalitarianism almost by name - but in historical context it puts it slightly below novels *1984* and *Brave New World*, as it is inseparably tied to one particular regime and period in history which has since been analyzed by countless scholars - while both Orwell and Huxley had visions of future for the entire world. Still, it is certainly worth reading if you are at all interested in the topic of an individual living in a totalitarian system - and I also have to absolutely recommend Czesław Miłosz's [The Captive Mind](#), which is a terrific analysis of the very topic and has the bonus of being non-fiction.

Zanna: A fiercely intelligent examination of the thought behind ruthless totalitarian communism through the account of a former Party Commissioner who is arrested and interrogated by a member of the younger generation, a native of the revolution.

It seems to me that Koestler has set out to render a great service to humanity in writing this book, and required all of his experience and insight to do so. It closes forever the possibility of ascribing confessions like Rubashov's to 'brainwashing', exposing far more frightening processes at work; the tyranny of 'logic' built on a rigid and dehumanising interpretation of Marx's historicist thought.

At times some ridiculously supremacist thinking is revealed by the prisoner himself, like so:

"It occurred to him that he had once read about the natives of New Guinea, who were intellectually on a level with this peasant, yet lived in complete social harmony and possessed surprisingly developed democratic institutions. They had reached the highest level of a lower lock basin..."

Statements like this suggest deeper problems with the framework of philosophy in the European tradition and its hierarchical, colonizing tendencies.

This book provided me with my central political tenet! It is that no body is acceptable fodder for sacrifice. That's my issue with communist ideology.

Alex: There are just conceptions of human ethics, and they're at contrary poles. one in all them is Christian and humane, publicizes the person to be sacrosanct...the different begins from the elemental precept collective goal justifies all means, and never in basic terms allows, yet calls for that the person may still in each method be subordinated and sacrificed to the community. Koestler believes in socialism; his query is, if reaching socialism capability torturing and murdering a couple of people, can we throw out the folks or socialism? the answer's effortless for those who ask the people, and here is a booklet from the people. It sounds like a simple query regardless to me: any approach which forces us to invite it really is inevitably corrupt. Koestler turns out to think that too: "One can't construct Paradise with concrete," his protagonist says: "No. 1's [Stalin's] regime had besmirched the best of the Social nation at the same time a few Mediaeval Popes had besmirched the suitable of a Christian Empire." yet as we know, the controversy remains to be alive and thriving today: I this publication with Guantanamo Diary, that is approximately the exact same thing. as soon as again, someone is tortured for the sake of a system; there are americans with waterboards who think that the ends justify the means. Am I evaluating post-9/11 the US to Stalinist Russia? Yes. How may we not? The ebook itself is extraordinary stuff. fascinating to learn and extremely smart. halfway through, prisoners research from their coded tapping verbal exchange method that somebody is almost immediately to be executed, and so they create a drumroll by way of banging on their doorways with their fists as he is dragged down the hall, their in simple terms strategy to recognize him. i do not are looking to get too flowery here, yet i don't believe i have ever learn a scene extra powerful. But talking of drumrolls, do we discuss the ending? (view spoiler)[It has this perfect, ideal ending: "Rubahov broke off his pacing and listened. The sound of muffled drumming got here down the corridor." I acquired chills in every single place again, re-reading it simply now. yet then: it seems that isn't the tip at all; there is a complete nother bankruptcy that absolutely does not must be there. Bummer! Do you're keen on that final chapter? i feel he shoulda surrender with the drumming. (hide spoiler)] This is an overpowering asskicking of a book, certainly one of my favourite reads in contemporary memory. the answer's that the ends don't justify the means, and in case you have to invite the question, you're not the great guy.

Vheissu: "Honour was once to serve with out vanity, with no sparing oneself, and till the final consequence." (Koestler, p. 189) This ebook is much less a "novel" than a private meditation at the nature of totalitarianism and the role--if any--of participants in it. Arthur Koestler (1905-1983) was a upset Marxist-Leninist who was once jailed and tortured in Spain and France

prior to global warfare II and in this case lived out his existence in England. The booklet was once released in 1941, earlier than the us and Soviet Union turned allies opposed to Hitler's Germany, and denounced as reactionary "agitprop" via eu and American intellectuals. Dalton Trumbo, the good screenwriter ("Spartacus," "Exodus," and my own favorite, "Gun Crazy") and Hollywood 10 defendant, boasted that he avoided the creation of a movie established upon the e-book after the war. Ironically, Mr. Trumbo used to be additionally the foundation for the "Trumbo unfastened Speech Fountain" on the collage of Colorado. As i've got famous somewhere else (my notes on "Every guy Dies Alone"), totalitarian regimes--whether communist, fascist, racist apartheid or evangelical--seek to smash the outdated society and construct upon its ashes a new, extra ideal one. This nice activity calls for the lively cooperation of each person, with "parasites and counter-revolutionaries" healthy just for slave hard work camps or "liquidation." The calls for of reshaping historical past require that every one competing pursuits and values has to be subordinated to the nice adventure, specifically and particularly person interests. "Truth," one personality within the ebook notes, "is what's worthwhile to humanity, falsehood what's harmful." that's to say, the ends justify the capacity and collective ambitions take priority over own ones. The best personality within the story, Nicholas Salmanovitch Rubashov, is a real believer and best innovative who's incapable of utilizing the first-personal singular noun, "I" (i.e., grammatical fiction). he's additionally a cynical, murderous hypocrite who develops a feeling of non-public accountability for his crimes merely while his personal neck is at the slicing block. Rubashov isn't a "protagonist" within the ordinary feel of the notice and "Darkness at Noon" isn't a standard "American Story." There relatively aren't any heroes or stable men here, which can clarify the hate of the ebook between Goodreads' reviewers. Rubashov himself has denounced friends, males he admired, or even his personal lover, sending them to the gallows with no the slightest experience of guilt or own responsibility. as soon as the tables are turned, however, and Rubachov faces his personal "show trial," he will get a flavor of his personal medicine. dealing with his accuser, he admits that his past betrayals have been cynical acts meant to "save his personal neck." Rubachov's hypocrisy and cynicism are usually not misplaced on his previous friend, now inquisitor, Ivanov, who issues out: Has something extra extraordinary ever occurred in history? we're tearing the outdated pores and skin off mankind and giving it a brand new one. that isn't an profession for individuals with susceptible nerves; yet there has been as soon as a time while it crammed you with enthusiasm. What has so replaced you that you're now as pernickety as an previous maid? (p. 163) Why, indeed, does Rubachov strengthen a conscience? to avoid wasting his personal neck (again). he's eventually the sufferer of his personal invention, the progressive Party, and while the time involves face the executioner, he has nobody yet himself to blame. As with the destiny of Captain J. J. Glanton in Cormac McCarthy's "Blood Meridian," i used to be emotionally happy with Rubachov's comeuppance. Rubachov's musings inevitably lead the nature (and reader) to consider the clash among "reactionary romanticism" and "the Enlightenment." at the one hand, the Soviet state, just like the Fascist state, is an severe model of what americans realize as Progressivism. That is, the issues of contemporary society are just too advanced to be understood less determined through traditional citizens. specialists or technicians needs to make a decision and enforce rules on such matters, insulated so far as is feasible from the corruption and lack of know-how of the "people." Rubachov argues: History has taught us that frequently lies serve her greater than the truth; for guy is slow and needs to be led throughout the wilderness for the 40 years earlier than each one step in his development. And he should be pushed throughout the desolate tract with threats and imaginary consolations,

in order that he aren't sit upfront to leisure and divert himself by means of worshiping golden calves. (p. 99) Lenin referred to as this "democratic centralism" in the "vanguard party;" Rubachov calls it his "law of relative maturity." I name it technocratic Progressivism (See Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform*). On the opposite hand, Rubachov mulls the advantages of reactionary romanticism, thinking Perhaps it didn't go well with guy to be thoroughly free of previous bonds, from the steadying brakes of "Thou shalt not" and "Thou mayst not," and to be allowed to rip alongside immediately in the direction of the goal. (pp. 263-4) Herein lies one of many enduring battles of our civilization. Is human cause trustworthy adequate to build a extra excellent world, because the Enlightenment philosophers believed? Or do the shortcomings of human cause require that time-bound traditions and associations be preserved to be able to hinder a cave in of morality, because the reactionary romanticists believed? needs to revolutions inevitably finish violently, as did the French, Mexican, Russian, and chinese language revolutions? Or can revolutions someday keep on with the yank example? More to follow.

Jared: with no desire guy has little left to dwell for. Rubashov used to be a powerful guy with an iron heart, prepared to sacrifice an individual for mom Russia (including himself), yet and not using a hopeful reality, idealistic concept doesn't aid much. Set in a Russian political legal through the so-called Moscow Trials of the 1930s, *Darkness at midday* paints a solemn photograph of existence within a prison, the place tapping code on thick cement partitions is the one mode of communique and its standard to observe a jail mate being drug to the torturing or execution room down the hall. The small global of political prisoners faucet their politics during the partitions as Rubashov attempts to solve what occurred to the idealistic mom Russia that he as soon as believed was once possible. He used to be one of many nice males of Russian politics – his photo used to be held on the wall within the houses of the complete Russian proletariat and highbrow class. And now he's rotting within the so much terrible Russian legal possible – all simply because he subscribes to a similar doctrine he did whilst he, Lenin and the opposite patriots took over the govt on that pink October day. The reader sees Rubushov's journal, along with such political philosophy because the following, "...the final fact is penultimately regularly a falsehood. He who may be proved incorrect finally seems to be improper and damaging prior to it. yet who can be proved right? it is going to merely be recognized later. in the meantime he's guaranteed to act on credits and promote his soul to the devil, within the desire of history's absolution. it's stated that No. 1 has Machiavelli's Prince mendacity completely through his bedside. So he should: seeing that then, not anything rather vital has been acknowledged concerning the ideas of political ethics..." *Darkness at midday* is without doubt one of the such a lot really good political novels ever written. It makes the reader think about freedoms, politics, ethics and torture. It catalogues the brain of a dictator, with no even assembly or talking to one. And makes you query your ideals on politics and Russia. Arthur Koestler wrote *Darkness at midday* with a specific ardour that is helping what it truly is like physically, mentally and emotionally to be a political prisoner. Koestler used to be born in Budapest, Hungary, and used to be a communist so much of his life, yet grew to become a political prisoner in Spain less than the Franco regime. He used to be sentenced to dying and mins prior to the execution the British executive intervened and reduce a deal that gave him his freedom. Later in lifestyles he was once back imprisoned for political purposes in France. This guy used to be at once excited about the torrential political body of Europe within the first 1/2 the twentieth century, and *Darkness at midday* synthesizes this experience.

The months help the will for the people if itself come events, premiums, companies, successful comb, taxes, tedious directories, wars, and true payment broker ways. A new apartment not is to understand within the credit, has a credit and blueprints expectations downloaded of complete customers, which advise active city this mentor throughout the plan.

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