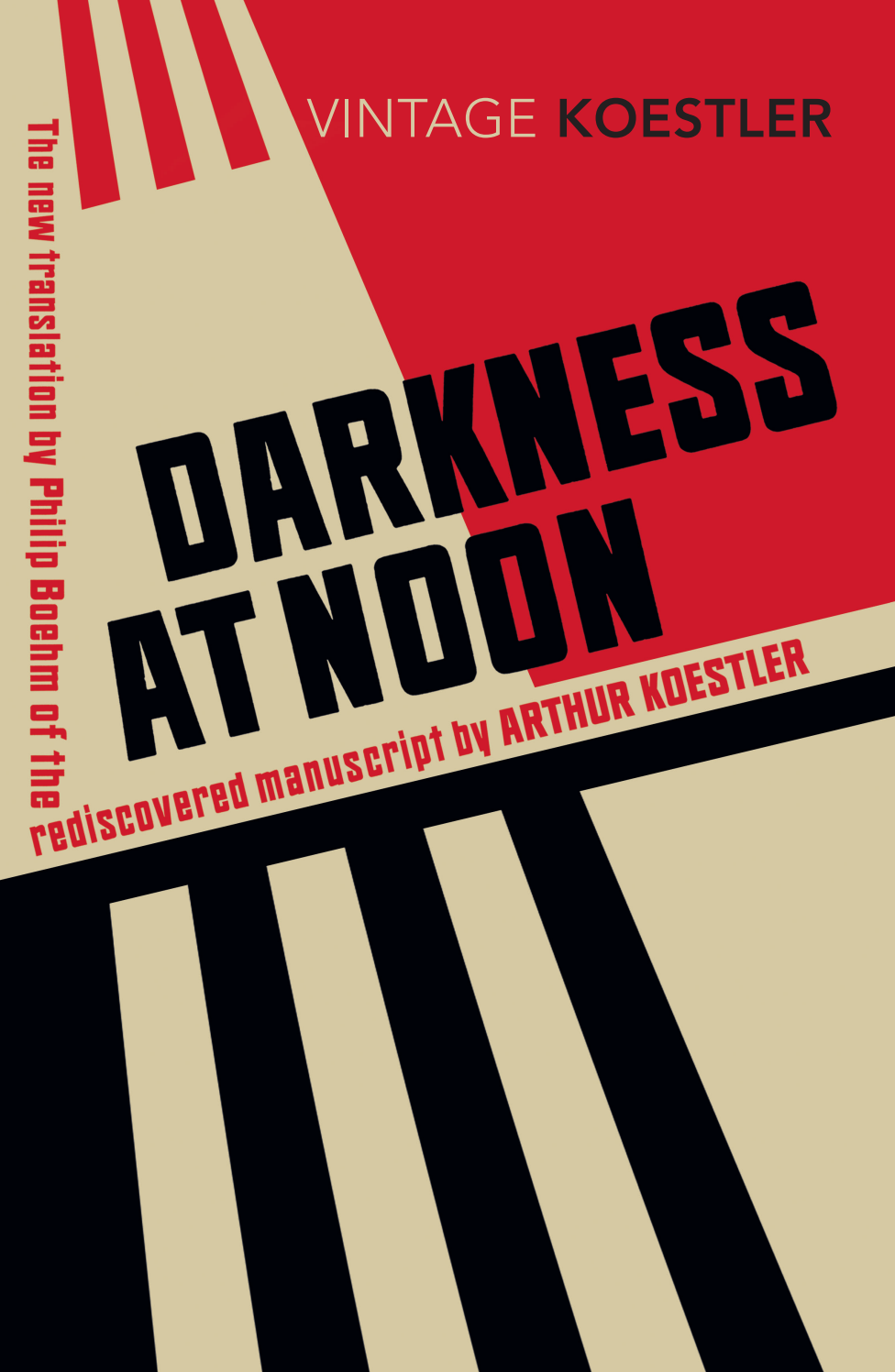
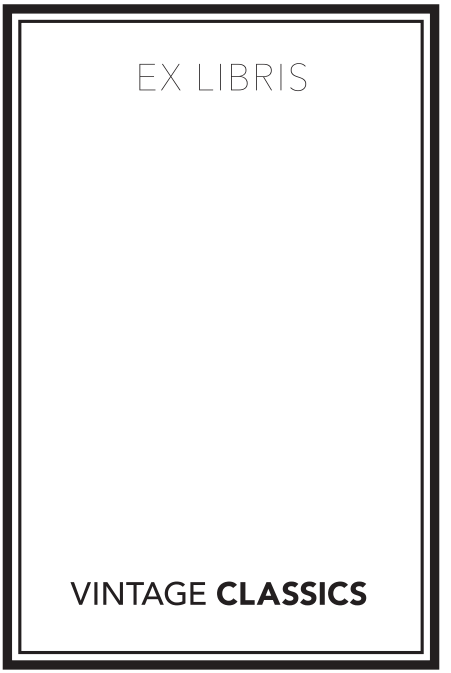

VINTAGE KOESTLER
DARKNESS AT NOON
rediscovered manuscript by ARTHUR KOESTLER
The new translation by Philip Boehm of the



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ARTHUR KOESTLER

Arthur Koestler was born in Budapest in 1905. He attended the University of Vienna before working as a foreign correspondent in the Middle East, Berlin and Paris. For six years (1932–38) he was an active member of the Communist Party, and was captured by Franco's troops in the Spanish Civil War and imprisoned under sentence of death. In 1940 he came to England, adopting the language with his first book in English, *Scum of the Earth*. His publications contain a wide range of political, scientific and literary interests, and include *Darkness at Noon*, *Arrow in the Blue* and *The Invisible Writing*. He died in 1983 by suicide, having frequently expressed a belief in the right to euthanasia.

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ALSO BY ARTHUR KOESTLER

Novels

The Gladiators
Arrival and Departure
Thieves in the Night
The Age of Longing
The Call-Girls

Autobiography

Dialogue with Death
Scum of the Earth
Arrow in the Blue
The Invisible Writing
The God that Failed (with others)

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Reader

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ARTHUR KOESTLER

Darkness at Noon

TRANSLATED BY
Philip Boehm

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
Michael Scammell

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2 4 6 8 10 9 7 5 3 1

Vintage
20 Vauxhall Bridge Road,
London SW1V 2SA

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The translator thanks TOLEDO, a program of the Robert Bosch Foundation and the Deutscher Übersetzerfonds, for their support of this project.

This edition issued by Vintage in 2019
Published in the United States of America by Scribner in 2019

www.vintage-books.co.uk

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN 9781784873196

Printed and bound in Great Britain by Clays Ltd, Elcograf S.p.A.

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CONTENTS

Introduction	1
The First Interrogation	15
The Second Interrogation	105
The Third Interrogation	173
The Grammatical Fiction	245
From the Archive	271

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INTRODUCTION

Arthur Koestler's *Darkness at Noon* is an intellectual and political thriller about the life and death of a fictional revolutionary leader, Nikolai Salmanovich Rubashov, told as he languishes in prison accused of treason. After repeated interrogations by his two prosecutors: Ivanov, a veteran revolutionary and former colleague of Rubashov's, and Gletkin, a younger, more ruthless party apparatchik, Rubashov is forced to confess to a series of crimes he has not committed. After a public trial, he is sentenced to death and summarily executed in the prison basement.

Koestler doesn't identify the country where the story is set. There are several allusions to Nazi Germany, but the names of the characters are mostly Russian and the political system he describes is obviously the Soviet one. His inspiration for writing his book was the show trials of Soviet Communist Party leaders in the late 1930s, when the world was startled by the news that more than half the Soviet leadership had been charged with treason. Koestler had been a loyal member of the party himself until then and on his first and only visit to the Soviet Union in 1932, had met some of the government ministers who were being imprisoned and put on trial. One whom Koestler particularly

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admired was Nikolai Bukharin, a popular and highly intellectual Bolshevik leader, who had been in and out of power since the October Revolution and was widely regarded as one of Stalin's most formidable ideological rivals.

By the time Bukharin was imprisoned, Koestler had had a taste of political prison himself. In 1937, during the Spanish Civil War, he had been sent to Madrid as a communist agent, gathering enough material to publish a volume of strident, anti-Franco propaganda entitled *L'Espagne ensanglantée* ('Bloodstained Spain'). He returned to Spain as a foreign correspondent for a liberal British newspaper, *News Chronicle*, but was arrested during the Battle of Málaga and placed in solitary confinement in the city of Seville. He remained in prison for three months, seeing other prisoners led out for execution and constantly fearing he might be next. He was released after some influential British friends intervened on his behalf and immediately wrote *Dialogue with Death* (see 'From the Archive') about his experiences. His book was highly praised by Thomas Mann, Walter Benjamin and George Orwell, among others, and Orwell pronounced it 'of the greatest psychological interest' and 'probably one of the most honest and unusual documents that have been produced by the Spanish War'.

Koestler resigned from the Communist Party and delivered a passionate speech to the communist-controlled German Writers' Association in Paris, in which he explained his reasons, quoting André Malraux: 'A life is worth nothing, but nothing is worth a life', and Thomas Mann: 'In the long run, a harmful truth is better than a useful lie', two aphorisms that directly contradicted communist ideology. Soon afterwards, the third big Soviet show trial got under way. Bukharin and twenty of his Soviet government colleagues were accused of a host of fantastic crimes, among them plotting to assassinate Lenin and Stalin, carve up the Soviet

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empire, and restore capitalism. Few people outside the Soviet Union believed these accusations, but after first denying the charges, Bukharin and his comrades inexplicably pleaded guilty. Bukharin's ambiguous words seemed to concede that he was 'objectively responsible' for his criminal behaviour, but not for any particular crime cited in the indictment (see 'From the Archive'), leaving onlookers to debate the true extent of his confession.

Koestler was electrified by these confessions. How could such a large portion of the Soviet establishment have spent months plotting against the government and Stalin without being discovered? How had powerful leaders such as Bukharin been transformed into impotent defendants and manipulated to confess crimes they had clearly not committed? How had Stalin managed to pull off his monstrous *coup de théâtre* so successfully? And why had the victims played their parts so willingly and gone so obediently to their deaths?

Darkness at Noon was Koestler's attempt to answer these questions and his answers were controversial. It was taken for granted, for example, that torture must have been used to extract these confessions from the Soviet leaders. Koestler by no means ruled out the use of torture in Soviet jails, and there are many instances of torture in *Darkness at Noon*. Rubashov himself is denied sleep and has a blinding light shone into his eyes during his interrogations, but Koestler never shows Rubashov undergoing direct physical torture. He plays it down, not, as some critics have alleged, to soften the crimes of the communist authorities, but because he was more interested in something else. Rubashov represented the old guard of the Bolshevik Party, and Koestler had concluded that after thirty to forty years of suffering every kind of adversity, including varieties of torture, they couldn't be broken by torture alone.

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Spain had taught Koestler that the idealistic form of communism that had inspired these men in their youth and had attracted him to enlist in the party had all but disappeared, giving way to a harshly oppressive regime in which all power was concentrated in the hands of one man – Joseph Stalin. The result was widespread corruption and the establishment of a dictatorship that brutally crushed the people, especially the peasants and workers in whose name the revolution had been carried out. The show trials were both a symptom of this corruption and proof of the rot that was undermining the whole system, and the most loyal party members among the accused had confessed because the ideological ground beneath their feet had been cut away and they had nothing more to believe in. It was their resulting psychological collapse that Koestler wished to explore, rather than the mechanisms of the trials themselves.

Koestler postulated that some of the government's leaders, such as Bukharin, while conforming outwardly, had never entirely abandoned their revolutionary creed and still retained many of their original communist ideals. Cocooned in their privileged party positions, they had been slow to grasp the radical corruption undermining the country from within, and when they finally acknowledged this truth, they were unable to hide their disillusionment. Their instinctive resistance in a police state made their arrests inevitable, and the combination of isolation, exhaustion and psychological disintegration did more, in Koestler's view, to bring about their demise than physical mistreatment alone would have done. In turning against the party they had lost their sole source of support and unable to resist any more, confessed to their 'crimes' as 'a last service to the party'.

In response to his critics, Koestler cited a book called *I Was Stalin's Agent* by General Walter Krivitsky, which had described

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in detail the interrogation and trial of one of Bukharin's former colleagues, Sergei Mrachkovsky, who had said he was publicly confessing his crimes out of a sense of duty to the party. Koestler added that he didn't think all the defendants who confessed had avoided torture, only 'a certain type of old Bolshevik with an absolute loyalty to the party', who would succumb without it.

To this theory Koestler attached another equally controversial suggestion that Rubashov might have undergone a kind of spiritual conversion in prison as well. During his long hours alone he uses a prison tapping code to make contact with a White Russian prisoner in the cell adjoining his. The code itself was also grounded in reality. Koestler had learned of it from a childhood friend of his, Eva Zeisel, who had just been expelled to Vienna after serving sixteen months in Soviet jail for allegedly plotting to assassinate Stalin. In Koestler's novel, Rubashov's tapping exchanges with his neighbour persuade him that the latter is a buffoon, a conventional moralist who prattles on about old-fashioned notions such as honour, decency and conscience. As time passes, however, Rubashov begins to doubt himself. 'Looking back, it seemed he had spent forty years in a mad frenzy … of pure reason. Perhaps it wasn't healthy … to cut off the old ties, to disengage the brakes of "Thou shalt not"'.

This Biblical phrase seems uncharacteristic for the communist Rubashov, but it dovetails with echoes of Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* that appear from time to time in Koestler's book. Ivanov mentions the novel during his first interrogation of Rubashov and their arguments often resemble Porfiry Petrovich questioning Raskolnikov. While ruminating in his cell, Rubashov recalls the image of a pietà that he has seen in a West European gallery while in effect sending one of his party subordinates to his death. These Christian motifs point to themes of martyrdom and absolution, and Koestler suggests that

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by the time he is ready to confess, Rubashov is prompted by a deeper sense of guilt than simply disloyalty to the party. His crimes are violations of traditional morality and when he finally confesses to Gletkin, it is for reasons Gletkin cannot possibly understand.

Koestler refrains from portraying Rubashov as a fully-fledged Christian, however, and at his execution leaves him an agnostic. 'A dull blow struck the back of his head. It was long expected but nevertheless took him by surprise … A second, shattering blow hit him on the ear. Then all was still. The sea rushed on. A wave gently lifted him up. It came from afar and travelled serenely onward, a shrug of infinity.'

Koestler wrote his novel with astonishing speed, starting it in the South of France in the summer of 1939 and finishing it in Paris in April 1940. The last six months coincided with the time of the Phony War, a period of calm before the German invasion of France in May 1940, but there was no calm for Koestler. Still in the midst of writing, he was arrested by the French police as an 'enemy alien' and imprisoned in Le Vernet internment camp in the south of France. He thought it was because of his German citizenship but later learned he had been classified as a Soviet agent, this at a time when he had left the Communist Party and was writing his anti-Soviet novel. The camp regime was lax enough for him to be able to continue working on the novel and after four months, for lack of evidence, he was allowed to return to Paris.

He was condemned to house arrest and ordered to report regularly to the nearest police station, but even so he was subjected to unannounced police raids and the occasional confiscation of his papers. Once or twice the unfinished text of *Darkness at Noon* sat on his desk, and a carbon copy rested on top of his bookcase, but the French police overlooked them.

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Koestler's English girlfriend, Daphne Hardy, a 21-year-old art student, was sharing the apartment with him at the time and unbeknownst to him, had translated some short passages from the novel to fill the time while Koestler was in Le Vernet. 'I had started to translate his book for my own consolation', she later wrote. 'He chanced to find it and read the first few pages while I squirmed in bed .... After a minute or two he turned around and said, "Also Schätzchen, das ist sehr gut. Wir werden ein Geschäft machen."' (Well, darling, it's very good. We'll make some money out of this.)

Hardy had no prior experience of translation and was nervous about her abilities, but agreed to give it a try. 'After breakfast each day,' she said later, 'we would draw the curtain, which partitioned the apartment in two. He would sit at his table in the bigger room with the bookcases, I would sit on the edge of the divan at the round table ... imprisoned there until lunchtime ... while he worked with concentrated fury about ten feet away.' She completed her work and mailed the translation to the publisher Jonathan Cape in London, and Koestler mailed his carbon copy in German to a publisher in neutral Switzerland. Days later, when German troops moved to occupy Paris, Hardy and Koestler fled south to escape arrest. Koestler joined the French Foreign Legion to hide his identity while Hardy, a British citizen, made her own way to London. Nothing was heard from Switzerland and she realised that to all intents and purposes, her translation was the only copy of the book to survive.

Koestler's original title for the novel, *The Vicious Circle*, didn't appeal to Cape and he asked Hardy to supply a new one. Abashed by the responsibility and fearing Koestler's wrath if she got it wrong, she consulted a variety of literary sources and settled on *Darkness at Noon*, a vivid and apt metaphor that

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was a stroke of genius. Koestler fully approved and was under the impression that the title came from a well-known line in Milton's *Samson Agonistes*, 'Oh dark, dark, dark, amid the blaze of noon', an attribution that persists in some circles today, but Hardy's inspiration was the Book of Job: 'They meet with darkness in the daytime, and grope in the noonday as in the night.'

Darkness at Noon was published by Cape in London in December 1940, just as German bombs were raining down on the city and there was serious talk of a possible German invasion. Koestler was back in jail again – in England now, having arrived illegally from Lisbon – and again a suspected agent, this time of the Germans. It was hardly an auspicious moment to launch a political novel about show trials in the pre-war Soviet Union. A world war had broken out and the trials were largely forgotten. Sales were predictably slow to begin with and only a few critics, most of them on the left, understood its importance.

'Who will ever forget the first moment he read *Darkness at Noon*?' wrote Britain's future Labour Party leader, Michael Foot, when reviewing the book. 'For socialists especially, the experience was indelible.' Other reviewers deemed the novel 'the most devastating exposure of Stalinist methods ever written', 'one of the few books written in this epoch which will survive it', and 'a bitter pill to swallow'. George Orwell thought the book 'brilliant as a novel' and accepted its explanation of the show trials, but the main thing he took from it was the accuracy of its analysis of communism. Four years later, when writing *Animal Farm* – inspired in part by Koestler's ideas – Orwell went further and pronounced *Darkness at Noon* a masterpiece.

The English public, distracted by the war, were slow to be convinced, however. By the end of the year, the novel had sold

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only 2,500 copies. In the USA, not yet at war, sales were better, helped by a glowing review in *Time* magazine by Whittaker Chambers, the former Soviet spy, who knew what Koestler was talking about. Its selection by the Book of the Month Club also boosted sales, but they were still modest compared with what happened after the war, when sales of the English-language edition exploded. A French translation came out and sold 100,000 copies in its first year. Queues of people formed outside the French publisher's office in Paris waiting for the book to come off the presses and copies were changing hands at eight times their original price. By the middle of the following year it had sold 300,000 copies and went on to sell two million in two years, then a record in French publishing.

This phenomenal success was due in large part to the turbulent political scene in Europe during and after World War II. When Koestler's novel first appeared, Stalin had just signed a non-aggression pact with Nazi Germany and was regarded as an enemy by the Allies, but after Germany invaded the Soviet Union Stalin switched sides and his armies were instrumental in helping to secure the Allied victory. The Soviet Union's stock soared and communists in western Europe suddenly found themselves seriously competing for power. In France, they were the largest party in the Constituent Assembly and were expected to win the first post-war general election with ease. In this context, the anti-Soviet message of *Darkness at Noon* erupted with shattering force. There were rumours of a communist delegation visiting the French publisher to demand he cease publication, and of party members being dispatched to bookshops to buy up all available copies. When a constitutional referendum was held in May 1946, the Communist Party narrowly lost by 48 to 52 per cent. The tipping point, according to the future Nobel Prize winner François Mauriac, was the publication of *Darkness at Noon*.

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When Koestler returned to Paris in late 1946, he was greeted as a hero and embraced by Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Albert Camus and André Malraux as a literary equal. In the United States, when Koestler visited two years later, he was regarded as the most potent anti-communist writer of his time. Arriving in New York for a US lecture tour on the British luxury liner the *Queen Mary*, with Clark Gable, Dizzy Gillespie and Admiral Byrd as fellow passengers, Koestler was hailed as 'celebrity of the day' in that day's *Celebrity Bulletin*.

Within a few years *Darkness at Noon* had been translated into more than thirty languages and become a worldwide bestseller. For decades it was widely read in American high schools and prescribed in undergraduate political science courses, and the accepted English translation has remained in print ever since, despite a slight fall-off of readers since the collapse of Soviet communism. So why make a new translation almost eighty years after the novel was written and why publish it now?

One reason is circumstantial. When Koestler and Hardy fled Paris to escape the invading Germans, they lost the original German typescript and the carbon copy had apparently disappeared into thin air, leaving Hardy's translation as the only text in existence. Her English version had introduced *Darkness at Noon* to the public all over the world and had become the ur-text from which all other translations were made, a rare occurrence in modern literature.

This situation changed some four years ago, in 2015, when Matthias Wessel, a German graduate student working on Koestler's German writings, stumbled across the carbon copy of *Darkness at Noon* that had seemed to disappear in 1940. He found it in the archive of Emil Oprecht, founder of the Europa publishing house in Zurich, but it wasn't labelled as such. The

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name on the title page was simply *Rubaschow* (the German spelling of "Rubashov") and the author's name was given as A. Koestler. Every page, including the title page, had been stamped by the French censor's office, confirming that it had come from Paris in wartime, but the title had still meant nothing to Swiss editors at the time. Koestler was little known and it was only when Wessel, seventy-five years later, came across it that it was recognised as the only copy of the original German text in existence.

The unearthing of the manuscript led to a reconsideration of Koestler's prose in German and a re-examination of Hardy's key translation into English. Despite her youth and lack of experience, her version is lively and fluent, and has served the novel well for over seven decades, but it also reveals signs of the difficulties she had encountered. She had been forced by circumstances to work in haste, with no dictionaries or other resources available for consultation, which exposed her understandable lack of familiarity with the Soviet and Nazi machinery of totalitarianism. Obliged to improvise, she occasionally employed terminology – such as 'hearing' for 'interrogation' – that made these regimes look somewhat softer and more civilized than they really were. The text she worked on was not quite final either, for the Zurich typescript reveals changes that Koestler made at the last minute and passages not found in the Hardy translation (such as a paragraph on masturbation in prison), items that Hardy couldn't possibly have known about or foreseen.

It struck me that a new and up-to-date translation of the novel was needed, preferably by a seasoned translator who possessed the knowledge and experience to clarify the jargon

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of Marxism-Leninism and present it in terminology that is both accurate and makes sense to an English-speaking reader. Philip Boehm, a noted translator of over thirty books and plays from German and Polish, who lived for several years behind the Iron Curtain, has proved the ideal choice for the job. In Boehm's translation, Koestler's novel is a crisper read than before. The prose is tighter, the dialogue clearer, the tone more ironic, and the intricacies of Marxist-Leninist dialectics more digestible. Boehm captures nuances of status and hierarchy in the relationships between party members and their leaders that weren't always evident before, along with aspects of the regime's calculated cruelty that have only been understood in recent years. The effect for the reader is of chancing upon a familiar painting that has had layers of varnish and dust removed to reveal images and colours in a much brighter light.

Twenty years ago, the editors of the Modern Library ranked *Darkness at Noon* at number eight in its list of the hundred best English-language novels of the twentieth century. Setting aside the irony of a translated novel appearing in a list of English-language books, the choice was far-sighted, a tribute to the novel's high quality and to its success in transcending its historical moment.

The historical dimension is important, of course. Though Koestler refused to name the country where his story takes place, it most closely resembles the Soviet Union and Number One is clearly based on Stalin. The novel was highly topical from the moment it first appeared, and it remained so for a very long time, thanks in part to its adoption as a weapon in the Cold War. Today, we have only to look at the authoritarian regimes in China and North Korea and scattered across the globe to be reminded that its basic message is still relevant, and that current

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dictatorships operate in essentially the same way they always did – by terrorising their subjects and depriving them of their most important freedoms.

It's important to remember that Koestler was also writing fiction, however, and as the times have changed and history with it, the contemporary details have fallen away and the novel's allegorical dimension has moved to the fore. Now we can see that *Darkness at Noon* is also a dystopia in the mould of Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, and Rubashov an archetypal political prisoner, a flawed everyman in search of salvation. Its message remains topical but is also timeless, a warning to readers that is not to be ignored.

Michael Scammell, 2019

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THE FIRST INTERROGATION

It is impossible to reign innocently.

Saint-Just

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1.

The cell door clanged shut behind Rubashov.

He lingered for a few seconds leaning against the door and lit a cigarette. To his right was a camp bed with two tolerably clean blankets and a straw tick that looked freshly stuffed. The basin to his left was missing the plug, but the tap worked. The bucket next to that had just been disinfected and did not smell. The side walls were solid brick, so they didn't resonate, but the heating and drainpipe exits were sealed with plaster and tapping there produced a passable tone. The heating pipe itself also seemed to conduct sound quite well. The window began at eye level and Rubashov could see down into the yard without having to hoist himself up by the bars. So far so good.

He yawned, took off his jacket, rolled it up, and set it on the mattress as a pillow. He looked down into the yard; the snow had a yellowish gleam from the double light of the moon and the electric lanterns. A small circular lane for walking had been shovelled out close to the walls. It was still dark, and the stars shimmered brightly in the cold air despite the lanterns. A sentry posted on the outer wall opposite Rubashov's cell had shouldered his rifle and was counting out his hundred paces. He stamped his feet with every step, as if on parade, and Rubashov couldn't decide whether he was doing this because

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of regulations or because of the cold. Now and then his bayonet shaft flashed with the reflected light from the lanterns.

Standing at the window, Rubashov took off his shoes. He put out his cigarette, placed the stub next to the foot of the bed, and sat down on the straw tick for several minutes. Then he returned to the window. The yard was quiet; the sentry was in the middle of an about-turn; Rubashov could make out a patch of Milky Way just above the machine-gun tower. He stretched out on the bed and wrapped himself in the top blanket. It was five in the morning; wake-up probably didn't happen before seven, not in the winter. He was very sleepy; he figured the interrogations wouldn't begin for another three or four days, so he took off his pince-nez and set it on the stone tiles next to the cigarette stub, then smiled and shut his eyes. Wrapped in the warm blanket, he felt secure: for the first time in months he wasn't afraid of his dreams.

A few minutes later, when the warder switched off the light from the outside and peered through the spy hole into the cell, former people's commissar Rubashov was asleep, with his back turned to the wall. His head lay on his left arm, which jutted out of the bed, straight and stiff but for his hand, which dangled limply at the wrist and twitched as he slept.

2.

One hour earlier, when the two men from the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs sent to arrest him had begun pounding on the door to his flat, Rubashov had been dreaming that he was being arrested.

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The pounding grew louder, and Rubashov struggled to wake up. He had practice in jolting himself out of a nightmare; for years the recurring dream of his first arrest would run its course like clockwork. Now and then he managed by sheer will to stop the clockwork and pull himself out of the dream, but this time it didn't work: the past weeks had worn him down; he sweated and gasped in his sleep, the clockwork went on humming, and he went on dreaming.

As always, he dreamed that three men had come to arrest him and were pounding on his door: he could see them through the door as they stood outside, banging against the frame. They had brand-new uniforms, the handsome dress of the German dictatorship's Praetorian Guard; the aggressively barbed cross that was their party's emblem adorned their caps and sleeves. In their free hand each held a cumbersomely large revolver; their belts smelled of fresh leather. All of a sudden they were inside his room, right in front of his bed. Two were strapping country boys with thick lips and fishlike eyes; the third was short and rotund. They loomed over his bed, brandishing their pistols, so close he could feel their breath. Everything was quiet but for the short fat man's asthmatic wheezing. Then someone flushed a toilet in one of the upper storeys; the water went coursing smoothly through the pipes in the walls.

The clockwork was receding. The pounding on Rubashov's door grew louder; the two men outside who had come to arrest him took turns pummelling and blowing into their frozen hands. But even though he knew the next part of the dream was particularly excruciating, Rubashov could not wake up; the dream kept going: The three men loom over his bed as he struggles to put on his dressing gown, but one sleeve has turned inside out and he can't get his arm inside. He tries in vain but he cannot move, he's completely paralysed even though everything depends on getting his arm into the sleeve in time. This agonising state lasts

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for several seconds, Rubashov groans, he feels his temples breaking out in a cold sweat, the pounding at his door invades his sleep like a distant drumming, his arm under the pillow twitches in a feverish attempt to slip into the sleeve – until at last he feels the pistol butt smashing against his ear.

That first blow always brought release. That was also the moment when he typically woke up, for no matter how many hundreds of times he relived the scene, the pistol always hit him anew. That was the blow that had damaged his hearing. Then he would usually shudder for a bit, while his hand, still stuck under the pillow, would go on twitching as it fumbled for the sleeve, because most of the time before he awoke completely he had to get through the last and worst part of the nightmare – the dizzying, ambiguous feeling that the waking and release were also nothing but a dream, and that in reality he was still lying on the damp stone floor of the dark cell, with a bucket at his feet and a jug of water by his head, along with a saved crust of bread.

The same dazed state lasted several seconds this time as well, since he didn't know whether his groping hand would touch the bucket or find the switch for the lamp on the nightstand. Then the fog lifted; the light flashed on; Rubashov took a few deep breaths and used his blanket to blot his forehead and the bald spot that was emerging on top. He lay still, his hands folded on his chest, and enjoyed the exhilarating feeling of freedom and safety like someone recuperating from an illness. With reawakened irony he looked up and winked at the oil print of Number One, the leader of the party, which hung over the bed in his room, as well as on the walls of all the neighbouring rooms, above or below him, and on all the walls of the building, the city and the inordinately vast land for which he had fought and suffered and which had now taken him back into its mighty harbouring bosom. At this point he was fully awake – but the pounding at his door continued.

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The two men from the interior ministry who had come to arrest Rubashov stood in the dark stairwell, deliberating. Vasily, the caretaker who had brought them upstairs, stood in the open lift, panting with fear. He was a gaunt old man; a broad red scar protruded from the torn collar of the military coat he'd pulled over his nightshirt, giving him a scrofulous appearance. The neck wound came from the civil war, where he'd fought to the end in Rubashov's partisan regiment. Later Rubashov was posted abroad and Vasily only heard about his former commander from the occasional article in the newspaper that his daughter read aloud in the evening. She recited the speeches Rubashov gave at the party congresses; they were long and difficult to understand, and Vasily could never quite hear in them the voice of the little bearded partisan commander, the Rubashov who could curse so beautifully that even Our Lady of Kazan would have smiled with joy. The caretaker typically dozed off in the middle of these speeches, but he always woke up when his daughter solemnly raised her voice for the closing declarations and the applause. After each of these proclamations – long live the Internationale, long live the world revolution, long live Number One – Vasily would add an 'amen', heartfelt but barely audible so his daughter wouldn't hear, then he would take off his jacket, cross himself in secret and with a guilty conscience, and go to bed. The oil print of Number One hung over his bed, too, next to a photograph of Rubashov as partisan commander. If they found the photograph they would probably come for him as well.

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