

A mű eredeti cime Arthur Koestler: Darkness at Noon © Jonathan Cape, 1940

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E könyv szereplői képzeletbeli személyek. A történelmi viszonyok azonban, melyek tetteiket meghatározták, valóságosak. N. Sz. Rubasov élete sokak életének szintézise, akik áldozatul estek az úgynevezett moszkvai pereknek. Közülük számosan személyes ismerősei voltak a szerzőnek. Könyvét az ő emléküknek ajánlja.

Párizs 1938. október-1940. április

Nem sokkal ezelőtt főbe lőtték legfőbb mezőgazdasági szakértőnket, B.-t és harminc munkatársát, mert kitartott nézetei mellett, miszerint a nitrátműtrágya jobb, mint a káliműtrágya. A Nagy Egyes a káliműtrágya hive, B.-t és a többi harmincat következésképp mint szabotőröket végezték ki. Egy központosított mezőgazdaságú országban természetesen óriási jelentősége van annak, hogy a nitrát- vagy a káliműtrágya mellett döntenek-e; könnyen lehet, hogy emiatt fog kitörni a következő háború. Ha a Nagy Egyesnek igaza volt a műtrágya kérdésében, akkor a történelem fel fogja oldozni őt, és akkor ennek a harmincegy embernek a kivégzése semmiségnek fog tűnni utólag. Ha viszont tévedett

Csak ez az egy számít: objektíve kínek van igaza. A krikett-mo-

MELLÉKLET!

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DARKNESS AT NOON

their anachronism. That is why we will in the end be absolved by history; but not they....

Yet for the moment we are thinking and acting on credit. As we have thrown overboard all conventions and rules of cricket-morality, our sole guiding principle is that of consequent logic. We are under the terrible compulsion to follow our thought down to its final consequence and to act in accordance to it. We are sailing without ballast; therefore each touch on the helm is a matter of life or death.

A short time ago, our leading agriculturist, B., was shot with thirty of his collaborators because he maintained the opinion that nitrate artificial manure was superior to potash. No. 1 is all for potash; therefore B. and the thirty had to be liquidated as saboteurs. In a nationally centralized agriculture, the alternative of nitrate or potash is of enormous importance: it can decide the issue of the next war. If No. 1 was in the right, history will absolve him, and the execution of the thirty-one men will be a mere bagatelle. If he was wrong....

It is that alone that matters: who is objectively in the right. The cricket-moralists are agitated by quite another problem: whether B. was subjectively in good faith when he recommended nitrogen. If he was not, according to their ethics he should be shot, even if it should subsequently be shown that nitrogen would have been better after all. If he was in good faith, then he should be acquitted and allowed to continue making propaganda for nitrate, even if the country should be ruined by it....

That is, of course, complete nonsense. For us the question of subjective good faith is of no interest. He who is in the wrong must pay; he who is in the right will be absolved. That is the law of historical credit; it was our law.

History has taught us that often lies serve her better than the truth; for man is sluggish and has to be led through the desert for forty years before each step in his development. And he has to be driven through the desert with threats and promises, by imaginary terrors and imaginary consolations, so that he should not sit down prematurely to rest and divert himself by worshipping golden calves.