

Pressemitteilung

Universität Kassel

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10.08.2015

<http://idw-online.de/de/news635833>

Buntes aus der Wissenschaft, Forschungsergebnisse
Kulturwissenschaften, Sprache / Literatur
überregional

U N I K A S S E L
V E R S I T Ä T

Long missing original manuscript of the novel "Darkness at Noon" by Koestler has been found

A doctoral candidate at the University of Kassel has discovered the German language original manuscript of the novel "Darkness at Noon" ("Sonnenfinsternis") which was thought to be lost. Until now, only the English language version of the novel by Arthur Koestler (1905 - 1983) and a translation from this version back into German were known to exist. The original German text lets new conclusions be drawn about exactly how the international bestseller came to be written.

The German studies student Matthias Weßel (32) from Kassel discovered the manuscript in the Zürich Central Library while conducting research for his doctoral thesis. The files of the publisher "Europa Verlag" are part of the library's collection; Koestler, an Austro-Hungarian writer, published works with the Europa Verlag for a short time in the 1930s.

In "Darkness at Noon"/ "Sonnenfinsternis" – his best known work – Koestler deals with the subject of communism. He wrote the text originally in German while in exile in France. Until now it had been assumed that the original text was permanently lost during the time when Koestler fled from France in 1940 under hazardous circumstances as the Nazis invaded. Prior to this, Koestler had had an English translation of the work done and had published it in London. Under the title "Darkness at Noon", the work became a bestseller particularly in English speaking countries. The German version of the novel first appeared in 1946 based on a translation from the English version back into German that was done by Koestler. Koestler became one of the most successful and, in his later years, most controversial English language authors of his time.

The document that has now surfaced is a typewritten text with handwritten corrections and additions made by Koestler. It had been stored in the archive under the title "Rubaschow: Roman" and was dated March 1940. Rubaschow is the name of the main protagonist of "Darkness at Noon". How the document found its way to the publisher and ultimately came to be in the archive is still unclear.

"It is interesting that approximately half of the presumably retranslated German text is identical with the original manuscript," reports Weßel. "Only in the second half of the novel does the text diverge from the original and certain terms change their meaning slightly in the English and then in the German. That means that Koestler must have still had some portion of the original text, contrary to his own account."

According to Weßel, the original German text has an "added aesthetic value" in comparison to the retranslated German version as it has a more unified and integrated quality. On the basis of the complete text, particularly German literary scholars will be better able to understand the genesis of the novel and the creative ideas of the author and to acknowledge the work as part of German literature. Prof. Dr. Peter Seibert, Weßel's doctoral supervisor and a retired professor at the University of Kassel, describes Darkness at Noon as a "key text of exile in many senses which has in turn led to a struggle about how it is to be interpreted. That makes it all the more important that the original version has finally been found. Now the novel's stages of development up to the published edition and those of the translations can

be better understood."

Central Library Zürich, Ms. Oprecht T 204.

In the collection catalogue of the "Verlagsarchiv Oprecht/Europa-Verlag", the text is labelled with the following entry:
"Koestler, Arthur. Rubaschow : Roman. Typoskript, März 1940, 326 pages."

Photo of Matthias Weßel (photo: Uni Kassel) at

<http://www.uni-kassel.de/uni/fileadmin/datas/uni/presse/anhaenge/2015/Wessel2.jpg>

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Matthias Weßel.
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