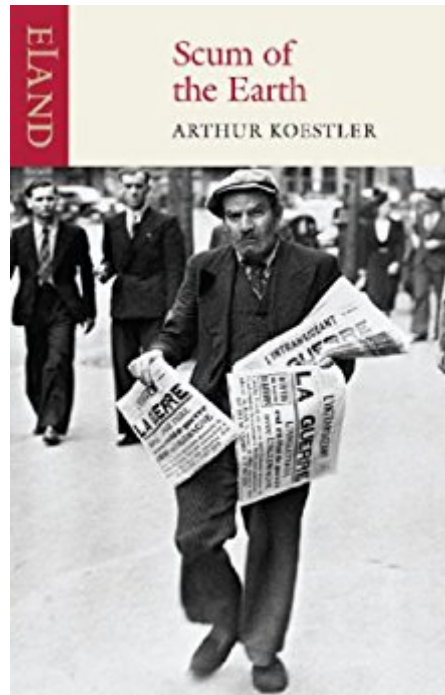




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Scum Of The Earth



Synopsis

At the beginning of the Second World War, Koestler was living in the south of France working on *Darkness at Noon*. After retreating to Paris he was imprisoned by the French as an undesirable alien even though he had been a respected crusader against fascism. Only luck and his passionate energy allowed him to escape the fate of many of the innocent refugees, who were handed over to the Nazis for torture and often execution. *Scum of the Earth* is more than the story of Koestler's survival. His shrewd observation of the collapse of French determination to resist during the summer of 1940 is an illustration of what happens when a nation loses its honour and its pride.

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Customer Reviews

An excellent book. I can recommend it as probably the most frightful one among other honest mirrors of the XX century. No doubts, Orwell is quite frightful too, but, at least, his world is just a would-be fantasy, while "Scum of the Earth" is reality itself. And it wouldn't be that hopeless reality if it would be limited to France-1940 only (though a loathsome picture of even one ex-great nation's total final corruption is tragic enough, of course). Unfortunately, the reality-2013 is much

more sinister, because the past seven decades show that the same cancer of moral degradation is eagerly devouring now all the Western world, from the USA to Australia. Koestler's quote from Maeterlinck's "Life of the Termites" is so eloquent in showing the present-day utter lack of freedom's support (to tell nothing about the elementary human dignity's support) anywhere, be it state institutes, media, church or family bonds: "A planter enters his house after an absence of five or six days; everything is apparently as he left it, nothing seems changed. He sits down on a chair, it collapses. He grabs the table to regain his balance, it falls to pieces under his hands. He leans against the central pillar, which gives way and brings down the roof in a cloud of dust". Exactly so there is no more firm support around us, indeed! The termites have turned into dust all the former defenses of the free society, and (that's probably the worst thing of them all) it's we, it's we ourselves and nobody else, who permitted this overwhelming rot, generously inviting all kinds of termites for a free lunch. Mr. Koestler's book was ridiculed or silenced by termites-friends when his honest narrative of France's collapse could still be fruitfully used as a wise lesson. Now it's only the 100%-true prophecy - but, naturally, it doesn't make "Scum of the Earth" less precious even a tiny bit. The book is really magnificent! Rostislav, Saint-Petersburg, Russia.

Koestler's hair-raising account of his internment as a foreign national in France at the outbreak of WWII. While it's widely known how Nazi Germany treated minorities during this time, it's astonishing to find that the xenophobic French, while falling short of a deliberate program of extermination, were detaining people under similar circumstances. Like "Darkness at Noon" this book belongs on the bucket list of all thoughtful readers.

Koestler is a great writer, the story is sad, because it proves the immense stupidity of the French bureaucracy. It is uplifting because it shows the courage and the moral strength of the antifascists especially the ones who died in their fight against oppression

Outstanding. And while certainly a good book from a history perspective, also has echoes that you can hear today. Highly recommended for students of history, and for anyone interested in how people react in times of crisis.

How was life in a FRENCH concentration camp during the phoney war of 1939 / 40 ? Arthur will tell you. He also spells out the appalling state of French morale when war on Germany was declared.

This must have contributed to them folding so quickly under the Nazi Blitzkrieg. The central theme is that the French Govt, identified, and rounded up threats to national security. Today, threats to National security are streaming in at the rate of 1 million plus per annum, to be welcomed with blankets and food parcels.

This work shows both an amazing understanding of the collective thoughts of the day as well as the individuals struggle to overcome the same.

Despite the author's antiquated leftist views, this is a fascinating and well-written account of a chapter in history not often presented so starkly and honestly.

Great historical memoir.

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