

Ways of expressing freedom of thought, expression and information - national facts

Task:

Read the drama "*Leben des Galilei*" ("Life of Galilei") by Bertolt Brecht and "*Der aufhaltsame Aufstieg des Arturo Ui*" ("The resistable rise of Arturo Ui").

Both works deal with the restriction of free opinion and the manipulation of opinion in certain historical periods. Here the author is obviously trying to come to terms with the past, specifically with the darkest chapter of German history, and to attempt to draw conclusions from historical mistakes, in order to prevent them from ever happening again.

Already at this stage it became apparent that censorship and persecution existed, that writers had to seek refuge in other countries and to fight from there against the unjust political regime, while others stayed in Germany without being able to have their work published. Besides those there were other authors, who served the new ideology by publishing apologetic texts.



Brecht's drama was written in times of exile in Finland, which Brecht was forced to leave, when the German troops went on occupying one country after the other. So he applied for a visa to the USA, where he went via Leningrad, Moskow and finally on a Swedish boat from Wladiwostok.

The first public performance of the play didn't take place before 1959 when it was produced for the Theater am Schiffbauerdamm in the eastern part of Berlin, at the time still part of the GDR. As Brecht had died in 1953, the first performance had to be realised by his students.

In a satirical way Brecht doesn't only make the dictator look extremely ridiculous and absurd, but also the blindness of the people who supported his

rise to power. At the same time he reveals the decisive role of the conservative politicians and the rich capitalists for Hitler's way to absolute power.

A key scene of the drama is the 7th scene, in which an actor teaches Arturo Ui how to behave in public. Here Brecht refers to the speech of Antonius in Shakespeare's "Julius Cesar", which shows the rhetorical devices and psychological tricks demagogues use on large crowds of people to reach their aims. To be able to recognize and to avoid this for the future is the educational effect that Brecht wanted to evoke.

Only he who recognizes how freedom can be restricted and how the mind can be manipulated is protected from following such kinds of demagogues. To teach our students this is a duty that our German history has put on our shoulders.