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Whither the GDR Bulletin

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GDR BULLETIN

NEWSLETTER FOR LITERATURE AND CULTURE IN THE GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

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GDR Bulletin

Published four times a year. Correspondence should be addressed to: Patricia Herminhouse, editor, Dept. of Germanic Languages and Literatures, Box 1104, Washington University, St. Louis, Mo.

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NOTE TO READERS ABROAD

In recent months, the number of readers outside the United States who have asked to be included on the Bulletin mailing list has increased considerably. Although it is encouraging to think of this as enlarging the Bulletin's range of usefulness, the financial implications of sending so many copies at international rather than

bulk mailing rates is discouraging. Therefore we are asking readers abroad to contribute the equivalent of \$3.00 in international postal coupons (no foreign currency, please!) if they wish to receive the Bulletin by air mail, \$1.50 for surface mail.

WHITHER THE GDR BULLETIN?

In attempting to determine whether the Bulletin in its present format meets the needs of its readers in 1977 with its policies, which were formulated in 1975, the editorial board surveyed contributing editors for their opinions. Below, we reprint an abbreviated form of one of the responses, submitted as an open letter to readers of the Bulletin. Your responses and comments are invited:

"The Bulletin, as it stands, is an informative, well received, and seriously considered "service" publication. Its major strength is unquestionably its role as a vehicle for persons interested in GDR topics to stay in touch with a rapidly growing number of like-minded people, with a burgeoning body of knowledge, and with unpredictably fluctuating cultural-political developments in the GDR. These strengths should continue to be developed within the present scope and format of the publication.

"A nominal subscription rate of two or three dollars per year seems ultimately necessary in the future. This is, after all, a "special interest" publication, and I see no reason why each one of us should not be able and willing to support our special interest to such a nominal degree. This might also be a test balloon, the first step toward "upgrading" the Bulletin into a full-fledged academic publication, which, while still solidly based on the noted service functions, might expand its critical content beyond short reports and reviews to include some more detailed and serious essays on the literary, cultural, and socio-political developments in the GDR....If the response 1

to a nominal subscription fee is positive, it would indicate our collective interest in letting the Bulletin develop gradually into a serious journal. The time for us to test the need for such an open forum has arrived.

"Many of us have been toiling away at "legitimizing" the study of GDR literature in our schools, colleges, and universities for a number of years. We have worked hard and successfully to gain a forum at the annual MJA conventions and other area meetings....Facing the spring of 1977, and looking back over many winters of our discontent and hard work, we now see that GDR literature has become an accepted integral part of many graduate programs, and not a few undergraduate curricula, here and there, if not quite everywhere. But we must go on. "....The subject, thanks to all of our efforts, is academically sound and relatively secured. Enervating as it is to all of us, the current wave of political repression and denial of human rights in Eastern Europe, but especially in the Soviet Union and the GDR, should motivate each of us to reconsider our perspective on the subject. It is clear that we still don't come close to understanding the cultural political game in the GDR, its rules, its functional parts, its range of flexibility. A year ago, when Heiner Müller and others were freely and candidly discussing the potential of GDR culture with us on our campuses, most of us would have predicted a much different, much "better" scenario for the GDR's cultural arena than the abject reality with which we are faced today. This indicates to me that we, as an academic group, are still very weak in two major areas. First, we must do much better in gathering and distributing pertinent information, and second, we must develop more incisive methodologies, particularly in the sociology of literature, to come to terms with GDR literature and cultural policy. We must learn to understand and explain the rules and functions of the GDR's particular game much more conclusively than we have done. If we don't, we will again be forced to sit silently and dumbfounded in the face of every unexpected policy shift in the GDR.

"The Bulletin has been a workhorse for us, moving steadily in the desirable direction. It has been a valuable tool, not unlike a club in the hands of prehistoric men and women. But now that our own prehistoric

period, as GDR scholars in American

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academe has opened onto a new, more progressive era, we should consider our faithful club carefully, and organize to sharpen it into an even more productive instrument for the more complicated tasks ahead of us."

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University of Southern
California

FORTHCOMING CONFERENCES

1977 MLA CONVENTION--SPECIAL SEMINAR: GDR PROSE

Because of the interest shown in Special Session 148 on GDR Prose at the 1976 MLA Convention, the seminar is to be continued in 1977. Papers are invited on the topic of: "GDR Prose: Short Fiction." Papers discussing a specific work of short prose fiction should relate structurally to a coherent system of aesthetic-critical categories (e.g., a sociological or a Marxist approach). MLA members who would like to speak on this topic are asked to contribute a brief paper (4-5 pages in length, double-spaced) by April 1 to either of the co-chairmen: Richard Zipser, Department of German, Oberlin College, Oberlin, Ohio 44074 or to Juergen Hoegl, Program in Comparative Lit., University of Illinois, Urbana, Illinois 61801. From the papers submitted, the three which promise to stimulate the most fruitful and interesting discussion will be selected in April. At the seminar next December, the three contributors will read their papers; after each presentation, there will be a very brief response by Juergen Hoegl, then the floor will be open for questions and discussion. If you plan to attend the GDR Prose seminar and would like to have a copy of the papers in advance (at the cost of one dollar for all three), please write to Richard Zipser at Oberlin College.
