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Doug Gilbert: Little Giant in the World of Sport: Sports Comparison Study GDR-Canada — Eberhard Bock et al.: A Wonderful Experience: Spartakiad Games in the GDR

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Krumpel, Heinz. Lebensprozeß und Moral.
Berlin: Vlg. d. Wissenschaften, 1977.

Auf welcher Grundlage entsteht moralisches Bewußtsein, wie wirkt es auf den materiellen Lebensprozeß der Menschen? Welche Verbindungen gibt es andererseits zwischen der jeweiligen ökonomischen Grundlage der Gesellschaft und der Herausbildung bestimmter Moralvorstellungen? Auf diese und andere Fragen gibt die Schrift Antwort.

Mensch -- Wissenschaft -- Technik. Versuch einer marxistischen Analyse der wissenschaftlich-technischen Revolution. Hrsg.: M. Buhr und G. Kröber. Berlin: Akademie, 1977.

BOOK REVIEWS

Divided Heaven. Christa Wolf. Translated by Joan Becker. Introduction and bibliography by Jack Zipes. New York: Adler's Foreign Books, 1976. 265 pages.

One recurrent problem western, even Marxist Western readers and reviewers have with GDR literature is a misconception of what constitutes a genuine "political reading" of a novel or play. Through our training and ideological modification we tend to look at those literary works as somewhat shallow, easy-to-decode "messages" from the other side of the Berlin wall: how much criticism and dissent is explicit, how much more is implicit and ambiguous? Thus we reduce a novel such as Divided Heaven to a rather feeble attempt at voicing some opposition against the negative aspects of the East German regime and by doing so we often ignore the real political scope of the work. (The lucid analysis of Robbe-Grillet by the Goldmann student Jacques Lenhardt, "Lecture politique du roman," could serve as a helpful model for anyone trying to understand literature from the socialist countries.)

Rereading Christa Wolf's Divided Heaven after about eight years made me realize how quickly I had categorized it then as a veiled protest novel, a cautious "roman à thèse" which essentially said all the things we in the west had of course known for years. That is precisely why a renewed reading comes as a shock, for this novel about the dual German reality and its human implications is much more than a substitute for a humanist socialist pamphlet. Christa Wolf did not need to resort to a lit-

erary medium to express exactly how she felt about certain theories and practices in her country. This novel deals with those situations as well, but only in the way a novel incorporates and reshapes reality to transcend it, to open up new possibilities and new experiments in human living.

Rita, the main character of the novel, is not blind to the shortcomings of the society she lives in, as she is confronted with them at almost every stage of her life, at home, at school and on the job. But she disagrees with Manfred's decision to leave the GDR for a more fundamental reason: "He had not gone away out of protest, but had just given up. This going to the west was not a new experiment but the end of all experiments...It did not matter any more what he did."

The background for this judgement is clearly summarized in the introductory essay by Jack Zipes, "Christa Wolf: Moralist as Marxist." Zipes puts the work in its proper socio-historical context and stresses its significance both for the development of Christa Wolf's own philosophical position and for the growing self-awareness and self-criticism of her generation of writers in the GDR. In this light the simple plot, the "Republikflucht" of Manfred and the resulting separation of the couple, becomes merely a symptom of the more fundamental contradictions facing this particular transitional society. At the end of the novel Rita feels that these contradictions can be overcome, even if she has no clear idea of the future, her future and that of her country: "But she was not afraid." It is a very open-ended work, which seems to throw the search for a solution back at the reader in the GDR and, indirectly, in the West. "The curtain closed and all the questions open," as Brecht would say.

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Little Giant in the World of Sport: Sports Comparison Study GDR -- Canada. By Doug Gilbert et al. Toronto: Kontakt Presse, 1976. 64 pages.

A Wonderful Experience: Spartakiad Games in the GDR. By Eberhard Bock et al. Dresden: Verlag Zeit im Bild DDR, 1975. 30 pages.

At the 1976 Olympics the GDR placed second in the gold medal standing and third overall. Such a strong showing has given rise to much

comment on the GDR's sports program and on the role of sport in society generally. Each of these two pamphlets contributes to a particular aspect of the discussion. The first is a reprint of a series of articles published in December 1973. It also includes three further pieces, one of which is also a reprint, and a medal count, by nation, of the Montreal games. The factors seen by Gilbert as most relevant to the GDR's athletic success are its mass sports base coupled with efficient administration of the program. Less emphasis is put on what Voigt in his Soziologie in der DDR refers to as "systemimmanente Bedingungen in der Motivation." The favorable effects of mass participation on the quality of performance at the elite level are evident in the US experience in swimming, where the program is similarly structured (of 26 gold medals in swimming awarded at Montreal, 12 went to US men and 11 to GDR women). Gilbert's intent was not so much a critique of the GDR's program or indeed even a systematic description; rather, he wanted to "view with alarm" the deficiencies of Canada's own athletic program and suggest remedies based on the GDR's approach. But since the articles date from 1973, the impressive achievement of the GDR in Montreal is not covered at all. Recent developments in Canada are also left unmentioned. Thus a prime journalistic desideratum, "Aktualität", is lacking.

The second pamphlet combines general information on the Spartakiad program with illustrative vignettes and anecdotes. It includes extracts of relevant documents and tables on the number of participants. But with no table of contents it is not easily consulted for quick information. The anecdotes are too general to impart an impression of the specific nature of GDR sports. There are some inconsistencies, as when the 4,000 Berliners who helped lodge athletes for the 1975 Spartakiad are first characterized as "Spartakiad Aunties" and later referred to as 4,000 families. The English is not always idiomatic, e.g. "doing sport", apparently for "Sport treiben." The name of Werner Seelenbinder appears several times without explanation of his significance. The 16 pages of color illustrations are well chosen and reproduced, but lack captions, and so are little more than decorative.

The target group for this pamphlet appears to be youth, since much of it is written in a tone of naive earnestness such as Spartakiad Auntie herself might use. So, while it has some informational value, I would hesitate to use it in the classroom simply because of its pious prose. A more straightforward and better organized presentation of sports in the GDR, including the Spartakiads, can be found in an-

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other pamphlet, "Fun -- Health -- Fitness" by Gitter and Wilk in the series "First-hand information", published by Panorama DDR, Berlin, 1974. Both these pamphlets, as well as sample copies of the magazine GDR Sport, in English or German, can be obtained from the Embassy of the GDR in Washington, D.C.

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Schriftsteller der DDR. Hrsg. von Günter Albrecht, Kurt Böttcher, Herbert Greiner-Mai, Paul Günter Krohn. Meyers Taschenlexikon. Leipzig: VEB Bibliographisches Institut, 1974. 656 S. DM 19,80.

Das hier zur Besprechung vorliegende Exemplar dieses Schriftstellerlexikons entstammt der ersten Auflage von 25 000 Exemplaren, die zum 25jährigen Bestehen der DDR herausgegeben wurde und für den Vertrieb innerhalb der DDR vorgesehen war. Eine zweite, unveränderte Auflage folgte schon 1975. Diese zweite Auflage ist im internationalen Buchhandel erhältlich und ist von vielen größeren amerikanischen Universitätsbibliotheken angekauft worden. So lautete jedenfalls das Ergebnis einer telefonischen Umfrage.

In Gestaltung, Format und Aufbau ähnelt Schriftsteller der DDR dem Lennartz. In alphabetischer Folge geben ungefähr 700 Einzeldarstellungen möglichst vollständige Angaben bio- und bibliographisch wichtiger Daten von Persönlichkeiten, die durch das Wort das literarische Leben der DDR während der letzten 28 Jahre beeinflusst haben. Aufgenommen sind daher neben Verfassern schöner Literatur auch Literaturwissenschaftler, Publizisten, Übersetzer, Biographen, Dramaturgen und Verfasser von Reportagen, Sachbüchern und Kinderbüchern; d.h. diejenigen, "die mit dem Wort arbeiten, um Haltung, Meinungen und Kenntnisse zu vermitteln." Neben den Angaben über Geburtsort und -jahr, gesellschaftlicher Herkunft, Auszeichnungen und Ehrungen, Mitgliedschaft in literarischen und politischen Verbänden geben die einzelnen Artikel eine Darstellung des Werdegangs und der Stoffkreise des Schriftstellers durch kurze Beschreibungen der wichtigsten Werke und ihrer gesellschaftlichen Wirkung, wobei auch häufig kurze positive oder negative Stimmen der Kritik angeführt werden. In einem zweiten Teil werden in Kleindruck die Literaturhinweise vervollständigt. Auf eine Auswahl aus der Sekundärliteratur wurde verzichtet. Die letzten 15 Seiten des Lexikons enthalten eine Aufzählung der Literaturpreise der DDR und ihrer Freisträger, die durch die Fußnote "soweit sie