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Erhard Schermer and Peter Rother, eds.: Depesche an meine zukünftigen Eltern. Texte für den Frieden

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state can only become strong when the masses know everything, and can act consciously on the basis of informed judgment. And this is indeed what East German theorists call for: the broad dissemination of information, a healthy, critical exchange of ideas, leading to rational and balanced decision-making by the Party. Few readers of Zagatta's book will be surprised that the reality of the GDR is different.

The major part of his study is given over to a discussion of models and theories of communication in the GDR. Journalism is seen by theorists as the link that binds together the public with the political leadership, giving the former a measure of participation in the governmental process. On the other hand the mass media are acknowledged to be a powerful means of manipulation: "the fastest-reacting and tactically most mobile, ideological and political weapons of the party." Sensitive, new information is first aired among the SED cadres, not in the newspapers, and these party functionaries then disseminate it as uneventfully as possible.

Zagatta's final and most interesting chapter represents a case study of how the introduction of pre-military instruction into the school curriculum broke all the rules on open government that theoretically exist in the GDR. The praesidium of the Council of Ministers apparently adopted the measure on 21 October 1976. There followed various confidential directives, culminating in a detailed edict of 1 February 1978, which declared Wehrunterricht obligatory for all 9th and 10th grade pupils. The public remained completely in the dark, however, until Evangelical church leaders caught word during May 1978 of what was afoot. The Education Ministry had clearly reckoned on opposition, having prepared a form letter to be sent to objecting parents, and opposition there was! Yet the concerns were heard only in the church press. The SED-controlled press contained almost no reference to any difference of

opinion on the subject between church and state. Zagatta concludes that the SED hinders its own effectiveness by not permitting an independent press, because it only receives a skewed picture of public opinion through its own official channels.

It is difficult to see the point of a book that condemns the GDR for not having a free press. No communist country has one nor is likely to, and no amount of exhortation from the West is going to change that. That is rather well known, and this dry, though mercifully brief, monograph was not necessary to reveal the fact. If it did anything to increase this reviewer's understanding of the GDR, it was in reinforcing the valuable role played by the church as the nagging conscience of society. The overall tone of the book is rather patronizing in a way which most scholars in the East and West will not find helpful or welcome.

Geoffrey J. Giles
University of Florida

Depesche an meine zukünftigen Eltern: Texte für den Frieden. Ed. by Erhard Schermer, assisted by Peter Rother. Berlin: Neues Leben, 1984. 210 pp.

Upon reading the editor's foreword written by Erhard Schermer, one is led to believe that this volume is an anthology of poetry which demonstrates how prominent poets throughout the ages have protested against the horrors of war and pleaded for the cause of peace. The young GDR poets whose work is featured in this book are merely continuing in this long tradition. Unfortunately this description is totally inadequate, for much of this volume amounts to nothing more than old-fashioned, unimaginative, simplistic Communist propaganda, the tone of which is reminiscent of the Cold War era of the

1950s. Schermer sets the tone in his editor's foreword, dated 12 January 1984, by bitterly attacking US actions in Lebanon, Nicaragua, and Grenada, and then highly lauding all the Soviet peace proposals. Although Schermer at one point in his foreword does call upon all peoples of the world to work actively for peace, in his concluding remarks he restricts his appeal primarily to Socialists.

In the anthology itself every effort has been made to cast the Capitalist warmongers in the worst possible light. Frequent graphic illustrations are used (43 in all); some are very powerful depictions of the horrors of nuclear war, but most are clearly aimed at the West and against NATO. Among the poems, we find some such as Hans Dieter Schütt's "NBC News (1)" and "NBC News (2)" which are clearly included in this volume because of the strongly anti-American sentiment expressed and not because of any intrinsic literary merit. Moreover, the further one reads, the stronger the propaganda gets in tone. It is clear that by the end of the book the reader is to be left with a feeling of revulsion against the evils of Capitalism.

The authors who have been selected for inclusion in this anthology also clearly demonstrate this pro-Socialist bias. (All selections from non-German poets have been translated into German.) American literature is represented by one short selection from the works of Walt Whitman, whereas Pablo Neruda, a current favorite of the GDR literary establishment, has three selections from his work included. One also discovers a selection entitled "An die Herren der Kriege" from the pen of that very remarkable and profound poet Bob Dylan. This poem is a veritable litany of complaints against the evils of Capitalism.

One must ask oneself in reading this volume whether or not this type of confrontational propaganda is not in fact self-defeating in furthering the cause of peace. Today more than ever it seems quite apparent that representa-

tives from many different lands and of differing political views must work together to find areas of mutual understanding if we are to establish a sound basis for world peace. Strong propaganda attacks upon persons holding political views which differ from our own and against other forms of society and government only work to emphasize differences and make cooperation difficult, if not impossible.

Once the discerning reader, however, goes beyond the propaganda, he will discover that this anthology does provide excellent samples of work by young GDR poets. The List of Authors (pp. 198-201) reveals that many were born in the 1950s and some even in the 1960s. These fledgling poets frequently display a dazzling mastery of poetic forms and enormous talent. Any reader will undoubtedly find something to fit his taste as he leafs through the volume. It might be, for example, the simple poem "Friedensspiele" by Peter Schütt in which he points out that even children know how to play war, but how does one go about teaching people to play peace? Ingeburg Branoner, in a very moving poem entitled simply "Nachkriegskinder," describes the terrible times that she experienced after World War II and concludes: "ich will nicht, daß unsre Kinder/Vorkriegskinder werden."

The impact of these poems is frequently very powerful. Many of these poets express their great fear of a nuclear holocaust. They fear for themselves, their loved ones, and for the future of the human race, and plead for all people to work together for world peace. Love and understanding are usually the most important themes in these poems. The conciliatory tone of these works stands in stark contrast to the strident confrontational tone of much of the propaganda.

On balance, then, this book could have been much better than it is. It takes some real effort to separate the wheat (poetry) from the chaff (propaganda). This book should prove to

be most appealing to those scholars who are interested in getting an overview of modern poetry in the GDR and who are interested in young East German poets, many of whom are still relatively unknown.

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Der Holzwurm und der König: Märchenhaftes und Wundersames für Erwachsene. Ed. Klaus Hammer. Halle and Leipzig: Mitteldeutscher Verlag, 1985. 324 pages. M 13.50.

Following decades of neglect in favor of more realistic, i.e., more socio-politically oriented works for children, fairytales in the late 60s and 70s finally enjoyed widespread acceptance in the GDR. The resurgence of fairytales is particularly strong today, in part because of the pioneering work of such well respected authors as Franz Fühmann and Jurij Brezan; in addition, the dedication of younger writers such as Rainer Kirsch or Dieter Mücke was essential if the form were to continue to thrive, as it indeed has. One indication of the fairytale's current popularity and official recognition is the government's national commemoration of the Grimm brothers in 1985-1986.

With both traditional tales from Germany's past and contemporary tales by the GDR's own authors now in vogue, the present collection of twenty-six modern fairytales by twenty-five of the country's finest authors comes as little surprise. Fully half of the collection's works, in fact, have previously appeared elsewhere in print. Still the collection is a welcome one, since it is one of the first to bring traditionalists in the genre such as Franz Fühmann (Der Drache und der Schmetterling) and

Gardiner, Erhard Schermer and Peter Rother, eds.: Depesche aus dem zukünftigen Brezan (Gerechtigkeit) together with talented writers of children's literature such as Manfred Jendryschik (Die Königskinder) or Helga Schubert (Das Märchen von den glücklichen traurigen Menschen). Included as well are several authors normally thought to write primarily, if not exclusively, for adults: Peter Hacks (Armer Ritter and Der Wichtelprinz), Christoph Hein (Wie Schnauz der Esel mit dem Clochard nach Paris reiste, um Professor zu werden), Rainer Kirsch (Der geschenkte Tag oder Der kleine lila Nebel), and Irmtraud Morgner (Die Heiratsschwindlerin oder -- Warum muß Barbara auf ihren Prozeß warten).

From a thematic point of view, the collection is too diverse to permit easy categorization. Rather, the stories run the gamut of human experience in their treatment of such universal themes as self-identity, social integration, love, and death -- themes that are of timeless concern to both children and adults. It is this fact which perhaps prompted the editor to subtitle the collection "Märchenhaftes und Wundersames für Erwachsene." For although children are clearly the primary target of these stories, grownups too will derive enjoyment and insight from this varied collection.

Thomas Di Napoli
Louisiana State University

Einmal war Frost in die Blüten gefallen. Von Hildegard Zander, Hinstorff Verlag, 1984. 277 Seiten. Keine Preisangabe.

Hinter diesem sentimental klingenden Titel verbirgt sich eine Geschichte, die sich zwar zum überwiegenden Teil in der trockenen Arbeitswelt eines DDR Fahrzeug-Betriebes abspielt, aber vor allem von den Emotionen Christines, einer jungen Frau in den ersten Ehejahren, handelt.