

1992

Ernst Wicher and Herbert Wiesner, eds.: Zensur in der DDR. Geschichte, Praxis und "Ästhetik" der Behinderung von Literatur

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Recommended Citation

Hoffmann, Christine (1992) "Ernst Wicher and Herbert Wiesner, eds.: Zensur in der DDR. Geschichte, Praxis und "Ästhetik" der Behinderung von Literatur," *GDR Bulletin*: Vol. 18: Iss. 1. <https://doi.org/10.4148/gdrb.v18i1.1047>

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Wawrzyn, Lienhard. *Der Blaue: Das Spitzelsystem der DDR*. Verlag Klaus Wagenbach: Berlin, 1990. DM 15.

While Germans as a whole suffered under the 12-year reign of the National Socialists, those living in the later GDR endured another 44 years under the Soviet occupation and its successor. During this time, the existence of the secret police was all-pervasive, whether agents of the Gestapo or the Stasi were physically present or not. Lienhard Wawrzyn contends that one cannot begin to understand life in the GDR until one has investigated the phenomenon of the "Spitzel," the informer, also known as "Der Blaue," a nickname coined from the color of his/her files in the government's record-keeping system. Wawrzyn estimates that altogether some 500,000 informers served the regime at one time or another during the 40 years of its existence, i.e. one out of every 30 men, women, and children.

These agents themselves assumed a second name and with it a second identity, in most cases unknown to others, even close family members and friends. Like almost all citizens of the GDR, they spoke two languages as well: one public, expressing their loyalty to the state, and one private. With the system of the informer, however, one could never be sure when one could employ this private speech. The informer could be anyone, and everyone had to be constantly on guard. The psychology of this informer-system, in Wawrzyn's view, created a climate of distrust among the people, undermined their loyalty to the state, and contributed in the end to the collapse of that state.

In this investigation, which consists of introductory material, a number of case histories and various related items (such as a lexicon of Stasi speech, a description of operations procedures, etc.), Wawrzyn is concerned with three major questions: 1) Who were the informers and what did they experience? 2) What made them work for the Stasi? 3) Who were their superiors and what role did they play? He also divides the informers into four groups: the adventurers, the cunning, the adaptable, and the experts. Many of these people worked in public occupations, such as waiters or cab-drivers, and some, such as physicians, even came from professional areas. They were, for the most part, forced to become informers as a result of threats; others were won over, however, by promises of a better material life.

The process of becoming an informer had been made easier by the educational system, which was aimed from the beginning at the creation of a totally submissive society. No matter what his background or educational experience might be, the informer was, by and large, despised by the very people who directed him, although in time some informers and their superiors in the Stasi did establish a close relationship. In order to alleviate the internal contradictions resulting from their positions, most informers sought to convince themselves that they were serving a noble cause.

In drawing his conclusion, Wawrzyn lists three insights he has gained from this investigation: 1) He finds state spy-systems to be expensive, ineffective and outmoded. 2) He is now aware that people are capable of what he calls the "aufrichtige Lüge." 3) He is convinced that the citizens of the former GDR will never see their files, especially since the eastern political parties were absorbed as blocs, resulting in the presence of former Stasi-agents in the political and governmental systems of the reunited nation. Germans in high places, whether in Bonn or Berlin, have little if any desire to lift the veil of secrecy from the face of the Stasi.

Lest the western German reader feel he is totally free of what he considers to be reprehensible behavior on the part of his former eastern adversary, Wawrzyn reminds his readers of the "Radikalenerlaß" and its poisoning of the atmosphere in the other part of the formerly divided nation, the Federal Republic.

This rather slender volume was quite interesting and provides the general observer of German culture with a good background by way of introduction to the public debate concerning the Stasi and its former members and informers.

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Wichner, Ernst und Herbert Wiesner (Hrsg.). *Zensur in der DDR. Geschichte, Praxis und "Ästhetik" der Behinderung von Literatur. Ausstellungsbuch. Literaturhaus Berlin*, 1991. 200 S.

Die Ausstellung "Zensur in der DDR," die vom 17. März bis 1. Mai 1991 im Literaturhaus Berlin und vom 15. Mai bis 29. Juni 1991 im Literaturhaus Frankfurt a. M. zu sehen bzw. zu lesen war, ist durch ein Ausstellungsbuch vorzüglich dokumentiert worden. Wie Herbert Wiesner, einer der beiden Herausgeber, in seinem Vorwort "Zensiert - Gefördert - Verhindert" anmerkt, ist es mehr "als ein Katalog von Exponaten, [es] zitiert die Dokumente meist ausführlicher und stellt sie in einen gegenüber der Ausstellung erweiterten Kontext aus Quellen und Originalbeiträgen zum Thema der Zensur, die Schriftsteller der ehemaligen DDR für diesen Ausstellungskatalog geschrieben haben" (13).

Die mehr oder weniger subtilen Mechanismen der "Druckgenehmigungspraxis," die Maßregelung von Autoren, der Entzug des Reiseprivilegs, Einschränkung oder Verbot der Buchwerbung, Rückstufung von Ausstattungsqualität und Auflagenhöhe bis hin zu bestellten Rezensionenhalten und die mit drohendem Unterton nahegelegten Verhaltensanweisungen mit westdeutschen Interviewern zeigen das Netz der kulturpolitischen Lenkung, das u.a. auf einer irrationalen Angst vor dem gedruckten Wort basiert. Wie auch immer geartete, sogar konstruktive Kritik an den bestehenden Verhältnissen konnte ja "vom Klassenfeind gegen den Sozialismus" verwendet werden.

Auf dem X. Schriftstellerkongreß vom 24. - 27. November 1987 wurden von Günter de Bruyn und Christoph Hein scharfe Reden gegen die im offiziellen Sprachgebrauch niemals "Zensur" genannten "Druckgenehmigungsverfahren" gehalten—Hein sprach über ihre Überlebensfähigkeit, Nutzlosigkeit, Paradoxie, Menschen- und Volksfeindlichkeit, Ungesetzlichkeit und Strafbarkeit (34). Nichtsdestoweniger hatte z. B. Therese Hörnigks Christa Wolf- Monographie zum 60. Geburtstag der Schriftstellerin (2 Jahre nach dem Schriftstellerkongreß!) Probleme zu erscheinen, was nicht zum Ruhm des Verlages Volk und Wissen beiträgt, der selbst auch zu den zensierten Zensoren (75ff.) gehörte.

Was die Zensurmechanismen bei vielen Autoren bewirkten, beschreiben Joachim Seyppel mit dem Begriff "Porzellanhund" (25) und Joachim Walther mit der Paraphrase "Jacken, die ich in den Text gehängt hatte" (26)—Selbstdisziplinierung, Selbstzensur, eine Schere im Kopf, die schon vorher die "gefährlichen Stellen" wegschnitt, Ablenkungsmanöver, um die Aufmerksamkeit der Zensoren auf plakative "Frechheiten"

zu lenken, um andere, besser "verpackte," "durchzubekommen."

Wie vielschichtig die Beziehungen zwischen Zensoren und Zensierten waren, beschreibt Bernd Wagner: "Natürlich waren die Hauptschurken bekannt, und die Verführung ist jetzt groß, sich selbst ausschließlich als Opfer zu sehen, aber im Grunde dominierte das Gefühl, daß alle im gleichen Boot saßen. Und jeder hatte Verantwortung für den Kurs, den dieses Boot nahm. [...] Keine Zensur, nur eine Art kollektiver Verantwortung, die das gesamte soziale Leben beherrschte und verhinderte, daß der einzelne wirklich Verantwortung übernimmt. Und für die Literatur die Verhinderung dessen, was Schiller vom Dichter fordert: sich so früh wie möglich zu kompromittieren" (28).

Zwischen diesen Erscheinungen und dem totalen Verweigern des Sich-Eingliederns in den offiziellen Literatur-Betrieb, wie es die Herausgeber der "Malerbücher" (189ff.) praktizierten, zeigt das Ausstellungsbuch eine ganze Bandbreite von Verhaltensweisen bei Zensoren und Zensierten durch 40 Jahre DDR.

Bekannte Spitzen des Eisgebirges sind die Diskussionen um *Nachdenken über Christa T.* (85f.), die langen "Erscheinungsgeschichten" von Volker Brauns Büchern (151ff.), die Schriftsteller, die auswanderten oder ausgewandert wurden (125ff.).

Die Funktion des Schriftstellerverbandes und seiner Präsidenten (9) wird beleuchtet, was besonders interessant erscheint im Zusammenhang mit dem Brief Hermann Kants, der im *GDR-Bulletin* (Spring 1990) abgedruckt wurde.

Meiner Meinung nach ist dieses Buch ein gelungener Versuch, die Verletzungen, die durch die Zensurpraxis bei den Autoren und den entmündigten Lesern entstanden sind, zu diagnostizieren. Ob dadurch eine Heilung eintritt, bleibt abzuwarten. Neue Wunden brechen auf, wie etwa die vermutliche Stasi-Mitarbeit Sascha Andersons (*Spiegel* 52, 1991, S. 28f.), die den Gedanken nahelegt, daß eine ganze Szene von der Stasi gelenkt und kontrolliert wurde. So bleiben Empörung, Trauer und Wut die Wegbegleiter in den "Fünf Neuen Bundesländern."

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Zeplin, Rosemarie. *Der Maulwurf oder Fatales Beispiel weiblicher Gradlinigkeit*. Berlin und Weimar: Aufbau, 1990. 181 pp.

The intriguing title of Rosemarie Zeplin's latest work lets the reader know that *Der Maulwurf* does not share the utopian vision of much of the *Frauenliteratur* of the former GDR. As Eva Kaufmann has indicated, Zeplin's writing is not motivated by a sense of mission, but rather by the desire to depict "dessen was ist." (See *GDR Bulletin*, Fall 1991 and *Women in German Yearbook* 7.)

Completed during the summer of 1989, *Der Maulwurf* includes a number of references to Christa Wolf's *Sommerstück* and to Sarah Kirsch's *Allerlei-Raub*. Indeed, one could read the work as Zeplin's own "summer-piece": It focuses on a group of intellectuals who form their own salon at a summer house in Mecklenburg. Like Kirsch, Zeplin describes her work

as a chronicle. One sees Wolf's influence on Zeplin—already evident in the title the latter's first work, a collection of short stories entitled *Der Schattenriß eines Liebhabers* (1981)—in the often ironic use of such images as "der blinde Fleck," "der Selbstversuch," and "der Maulwurf."

Yet one cannot view Zeplin as an imitator of her better known counterparts, for her work serves as a challenge to their more idealistic perspectives. As in "Die kleine Sejungfrau," from the *Schattenriß* collection, *Der Maulwurf* deals with the situation of women in GDR society. Judith, a single mother, finds her life divided into a number of irreconcilable roles. Characterized by "Zielstrebigkeit," Judith's sense of responsibility towards her son, Timmi, creates a situation in which there is no "Basis für Verständigung" between her and those around her. Timmi's alarm clock, a gift from Judith's "Lebensgefährte" Albrecht (in whose life there is always "Spielraum für Entschlüsse"), represents the manner in which Judith's life is organized around her son. Trapped in a situation which leaves her few alternatives, Judith's "weibliche Gradlinigkeit" leads to the "tragedy" at the end of the work.

As in her novel, *Alpträume aus der Provinz* (1984), Zeplin is interested in more than the theme of women in society. The depiction of intellectuals and their relationship to the working-class is another central aspect of *Der Maulwurf*. Fascinated by Burghard, who appears to be a member of an alien species, Albrecht invites this *Arbeiter* to join the salon. Ironically, it is Burghard, and not the intellectuals with whom he is surrounded, who continues to believe in the value of the classics of Marxist ideology and in literature in general. His digressions on Marx earn him a "Redeverbot" in the salon, and his postcards with quotes from works of literature find their place next to a telephone book.

Burghard receives his nickname, "the mole," following a postcard with a quote from Hegel which describes the "Geist" as "ein wackerer Maulwurf, [denn] der Geist gräbt oft wie ein Maulwurf unter die Erde fort und vollendet sein Werk." Burghard thus becomes the bearer of the tidings of German idealism. But like the mole which appears in Wolf's *Sommerstück*, this spirit is half decayed, and its call for change is drowned out by the necessities of everyday life. When Burghard decides to distribute flyers calling for a revolution, Judith, whose primary interest is her child, is forced to report him to the authorities in order to keep her job.

Despite this outcome, Zeplin avoids all pathos in the narration of her chronicle, turning instead to irony. It is with this irony that she depicts her characters, male-female relationships, and the role of *die [alternative] Szene* in GDR society. This technique relieves the work of its occasionally tedious insistence on realistic depiction. More importantly, it leads the reader to a deeper understanding of the subtleties of human interaction in the former GDR. Finally, it is out of this irony that questions arise regarding the new German state: In what ways do women continue to be entangled in a network which forces them to choose "Gradlinigkeit" over "das Spielerische"? What role will the intellectual play in the new German state? What role, if any can and should literature play? Hopefully, Zeplin will provide us with further works in which she examines these questions.

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