Stefan Pannen: Die Weiterleiter. Funktion und Selbstverständnis ostdeutscher Journalisten

Ralph Ley
Rutgers University

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"Junges Deutschland" despite some heroic attempts
to render that literature readable in today's context.

Reading the latter part of his book, some may feel
that the author himself is somewhat bemused by the
commitment of the writers to the state even when
they opposed that state as did Kunert, Kunze,
Biermann, and others, all of whom are quoted and
referred to often. Even their opposition made the
political a central part of their literary oeuvre. If the
book stimulates its readers to engage with the
question about the actual nature of the ideological
and its concomitant political formulations in the
realm of literature it will have served an even more
useful purpose than being another western
representation of the awful GDR.

Duncan Smith
Brown University
who were not allowed to tell the truth, their existential plight worsened with the worsening political and economic conditions and the concomitant tightening of the censorship. Why then did the media persons not participate in the protests against the regime, even in the final days? From his interviews Pannen came up with a host of reasons, among them the proverbial German "Untertanengeist" (much more prevalent in the GDR that refused to recognize a Nazi past then in the FRG), a reluctance to give up the privileges of a prestigious position, true-believership, a cynicism beyond any sort of caring, the hope of better days, the fear of jeopardizing the future of one's children, and just plain greed. A considerable number of journalists turned to alcohol and some to the ultimate solution (the windows of the upper stories of the offices of *Neues Deutschland* were barred after a colleague plunged to his death).

In GDR fiction media people were, for some two decades, depicted as loyal and practically flawless servants of the state. With the internalization of the literature of the early seventies, they began to be presented as three-dimensional human beings in conflict between job and family. This emphasis on the personal failings of individuals received its most explicit portrayal in Hermann Kant's novel of 1972, *Das Impressum*, whose journalist-hero, David Groth, is the Weiter- and An-leiter par excellence. The novel was given the green light by the censors because Hermann Kant was, after all, Hermann Kant and because he simply described, keeping all value judgments to himself. The culminating point in the fiction critical of the media came just one year before the wall came down, in Axel Oelschlegel's *Das Pseudonym*, in which for the first time the entire communication system as such was brought under attack (by this time the literary censors had relaxed their grip considerably and besides, the author was the good friend and ex-brother-in-law of Hermann Kant.)

In a concluding chapter we learn from the interviews how the "Weiterleiter" are faring in the new Germany. The jury, so to speak, is still out on the survivors, the sixty percent who have not lost their jobs because they are too old, too compromised, too unqualified, or because the newspaper they work for has not yet gone under.

Skillfully combining the technique of the political scientist, the literary scholar, and the journalist, Pannen has fashioned a solid contribution to a heretofore much neglected aspect of GDR political culture.

Ralph Ley
Rutgers University