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Charlotte Worgitsky: Vieräugig oder Blind. Erzählungen

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Macht durch Wissen: Zum Zusammenhang von Bildungspolitik, Bildungssystem und Kaderqualifizierung in der DDR. By Gert-Joachim Glaessner and Irmhild Rudolph. Schriften des Zentralinstituts für sozialwissenschaftliche Forschung der Freien Universität Berlin, Band 30. Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1978. 371 pages. DM 34,-.

In the thirty years of its existence the German Democratic Republic has made tremendous advances in becoming one of the most developed nations in the socialist bloc. This progress was inevitably accompanied by an increase in the sheer complexity of society and the economy. Thus it became scarcely feasible for the central government to retain strict control over every last detail. It became necessary to decentralize decision-making, and steps were taken in this direction, following the promulgation of the "New Economic System" in 1963. The problem that arose was that the second-tier leadership at that time consisted overwhelmingly of those who had gained their positions due to their political reliability rather than their expert knowledge and experience. This book deals with the Socialist Unity Party's solution to that problem, the training of "cadres" of highly specialized personnel in special institutes (a central function of which is also the further education of cadres throughout their career)--some of them attached to universities, some not-- from which, following the pattern of the Soviet "nomenclature" system, the final selection of the nation's managers takes place.

These last few lines are an example of the excessively ponderous and convoluted sentences which characterize those chapters for which Dr. Glaessner is responsible. Fortunately, Dr. Rudolph's sections are much more lucid, but even she cannot redeem a book which overall makes for very heavy reading. Perhaps this is a reflection of the obtuseness of the East German source material. Leaving style aside, it is only fair to say that this is an exhaustive treatment of the subject which the authors set out to explore. They have made the fullest use of every scrap of the limited evidence available to them as West Germans. Clear and informative charts and tables are liberally sprinkled throughout the pages of turgid prose.

The book is rounded out by a fine and thorough bibliography of over thirty closely-printed pages. In short, this is an authoritative study, difficult to read except in small doses, yet valuable to possess as a reference

work for students of the GDR.

Geoffrey J. Giles
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Vieräugig oder Blind: Erzählungen. By Charlotte Worgitsky. Berlin: Buchverlag Der Morgen, 1978. 248 pages. 9,- M.

Worgitsky's collection contains nine stories, each of which explores in some way the role of women in family life, in love, and in the society of the GDR. Some are fanciful, fairy-tale-like; others are set within the contemporary scene of the GDR. The themes in all of them are those common to the literature of the women's liberation movement everywhere, though Worgitsky is never radical in her view. She deplores the role casting in society, where women are only procreators, having no lives of their own. The first story, "Eva," centers about Eva whose life has been dominated by pregnancies. Ironically, just as abortion becomes legal, she learns that she needs surgery, probably for a malignancy. Pathetically, her reaction is relief: "Jetzt brauche ich keine Angst mehr zu haben, daß ich ein Kind kriege." Worgitsky makes an even clearer statement in "Akten der Hölle," when she playfully brings the devil to earth. He courts Martha whose husband is a successful gynecologist. With hocus-pocus, the devil makes the husband pregnant, implying that if men want children, they should have to make sacrifices, too.

In the story "Quäze!" Quäze and Bem have what seems to be a modern relationship. But Bem cannot rid himself of stereotyping; he talks in clichés. He wants children and expects Quäze to gladly give up her career and take the back seat to his successes. He is only confused by her insistence on an equal right to self-development.

Worgitsky does not offer an easy solution. She sees a near impossibility in a woman being successful in both career and house-keeping roles, especially when the husband does not share the responsibilities. In "Karriere Abgesagt" the wife appears to have accomplished this. Later we learn that an angel has given her the ability to stay awake, day and night. This gives her enough time for her double duties. On the other hand, Worgitsky does not sympathize with mothers who allow their children to suffer while they are pursuing careers. In "Hänsel

und Gretl" the children suffer in a boarding school, while the mother studies for her exams.

However, living alone is also no answer for women. The actress in "Spielen" lives her life, totally ego-centered, through acting out the lives of others. Worgitsky feels it is better to have a companion, so that one can see the world, not from a single perspective, which is seeing "blind," but through four eyes, "vieräugig," through your own eyes and the eyes of a partner. This is the message which she, none too subtly, conveys in the final story, "Verdorbenes Jugend." Barbara's parents are against her love for Ulrich and force her to have an abortion, so she can continue her studies. Barbara has realized, maturely, that love is also necessary. She tells Ulrich: "Ich fühle mich überhaupt nicht blind. Im Gegenteil: Seit ich Dich kenne, sehe ich viel mehr und viel besser als vorher, weil ich alles nicht nur mit meinen Augen aufnehme, sondern gewissermaßen auch durch Dingen---vieräugig also, nicht blind." This collection of stories will be of interest to anyone concerned with present day life in the GDR or in women's literature in general. The stories themselves are unequal in quality. Essentially, it must be classified as "Trivilliteratur," but as is often the case with this type of fiction, the work is valuable to those wishing to gain insight into the society and times of the author. Hopefully, some of the weaknesses are only signs of immaturity. Worgitsky does display considerable finesse in approach, and the stories are often entertaining. This gives the reader hope that she will overcome the tendency to "soap box" her themes and emerge a writer of stature.

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Modern Germany: A Social, Cultural and Political History. By Henry M. Pachter. Boulder, Col.: Westview Press. 1978. 415 pages.

Only "Divided Germany," the fourth and concluding section of Henry Pachter's Modern Germany, is of immediate interest to readers of the GDR Bulletin but even this section, which consists of 11 brief chapters totalling 111 pages, is of little value to the serious

and unbiased student of the GDR. The brevity of each of the chapters indicates one of the significant flaws in the book: Pachter has attempted to consider too many topics in too little space. One cannot treat the Geist of postwar Germany, for example, in 15 pages; and more specifically, one cannot consider the philosophy, religion and science of this period in 3 pages, as Pachter has sought to do. One must question the merit of still another outline of history. At this stage of GDR history and scholarship, we are more in need of in-depth studies of limited and well-defined historical, cultural and social topics. In addition to this serious flaw, the book suffers also from a decided superficiality, by awkward transitions and by a distinct lack of organization.

Although it is possible to excuse some of the problems presented by the book, it is difficult to overlook Pachter's obvious stance as a cold warrior. He speaks naively of "American idealism, which condemned power politics" in the postwar period and of the "unspeakable Ulbricht." He is content with superficial explanations, such as the one he offers to support the West's rejections of the general peace proposals of the early fifties: "In one way or another Stalin's proposals always amounted to something the Western powers could not accept." The reader deserves to know in what way or another. Pachter's book suffers also from errors, both of fact and of omission. The former is exemplified by his claim that the widening gulf between the Two Germanies has led to two languages, an interpretation rejected by most experienced linguists. As an example of an error of omission one could offer Pachter's brief considerations of the Central Control Commission. In this regard, he notes only that "Marschal Sokolovsky walked out of the Control Council. The pretense that Germany was one country under tripartite occupation was dead." Such a portrayal, at best, confusing and, at worst, misleading.

Unfortunately, this is the kind of book that perpetrates the worst cliches of the cold war and postwar history and impedes efforts to establish an unbiased view of the GDR and relations between the two Germanies.

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