

1981

Journal Notes

various authors

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CONFERENCES

"THE GDR UNDER HONECKER: 1971-81"

A conference will take place from Friday, September 11, to Sunday, September 13, 1981 at the University of Dundee, Scotland.

The program will include the following papers: "Political Developments in the GDR under Honecker": David Childs; "Kulturpolitik in the GDR under Honecker": Alexander Stephan; "Bahro's *Die Alternative*": Jürgen Tomaneck; "Volker Braun's Works of the 1970s": Ian Wallace; "GDR Social Policy under Honecker": Martin McCauley. The following discussion groups are also planned: "Sozialistische Nationalliteratur der DDR-- The Division of German Literature?" and Politics/Society Discussion Group. (Offers of papers are invited.) Papers should not exceed 20 to 25 minutes in length and should offer a basis for discussion. Inquiries may be sent to: -
GDR Monitor
1 Richmond Terrace
Dundee DD2 1BQ
Scotland

ANNUAL EUROPEAN STUDIES CONFERENCE

From October 8 through October 10 an interdisciplinary meeting (with sessions devoted to current research, research techniques, teaching methodologies, as well as traditional topics) will be held in Omaha, Nebraska. Abstracts of papers and suggestions for panels should be submitted by May 1, 1981. Address: Dr. Patricia Kolasa (Dept. of Educ. Foundations) or Dr. Bernard Kolasa (Dept. of Political Science) University of Nebraska at Omaha
Omaha, NE 68182

COLLOQUIUM ON MODERN LITERATURE

COLLOQUIUM ON MODERN LITERATURE "HUMOR IN MODERN LITERATURE AND FILM"

The Session will take place from September 17 through September 19, 1981 under the auspices of the Department of Foreign Languages at West Virginia University, in cooperation with related departments. No categories have yet been finalized so possibilities are numerous. (The Colloquium will also need 20-30 discussion group leaders to chair sessions.) All papers should be approximately 20 minutes in length. A one-page abstract should be forwarded by May 1, 1981. Inquiries and abstracts should be sent to:
Joseph Prentiss
Colloquium Director
Dept. of Foreign Languages
Chitwood Hall,
West Virginia University
Morgantown, WV 26506

JOURNAL NOTES

The most recent issue of *Deutsche Bücher* (Vol. X, 1980 Heft 3), published in Amsterdam, contains a "Gespräch mit Günter Kunert" (p. 165-180). The "Gespräch" is based on correspondence with Marieluise de Waijer-Wilke rather than on the usual interview techniques and focuses particularly on questions of form-content relationship, contemporary reception of classical German literature, fantasy and realism, skepticism and pessimism.

Kürbiskern. 3/80, 4/80, 1/81.

"Autoren, die Grund zum Optimismus haben und so, wie Anna Seghers oder Bruno Apitz oder Hermann Kant, durch die Resultate ihrer Arbeit jederzeit davor geschützt gewesen sind, in Skeptizismus zu verfallen" - thus does Dieter Noll define the common ground between himself and the authors named. Two of these, Anna Seghers and Hermann Kant, as well as Noll himself are the subjects of articles in recent issues of *Kürbiskern* (Dammitz-Verlag, Munich). We are thus in a position to examine this statement more closely.

The pre-election issue "Lieb Vaterland" (3/80) contains an interview Dieter Noll gave Oskar Neumann, the Frankfurt Book Fair issue "Weltsprache Literatur" (4/80) devotes some fourteen pages to an interview with Hermann Kant by Elvira Högemann-Ledwohn and the first issue for 1981, which is entitled "Geschichtsbilder" (1/81), contains a series of reflections on the work of Anna Seghers by Ursula Püschel (DDR) entitled "Das heftige Gebrauchtwagen", written in celebration of Seghers' recent 80th birthday.

Taking as her starting point a number of quotations from Seghers herself, Püschel centers her attention largely on political and literary aspects of the two "DDR-Romane", *Die Entscheidung* and *Das Vertrauen*, whose theme is defined as "nichts Geringeres als die Macht der Arbeiterklasse, der Herrschaftswechsel zwischen Bourgeoisie und Proletariat in Deutschland, genauer: BRD und DDR, vorgeführt in der entscheidenden, der ökonomischen Sphäre". In this context Püschel defends particularly Seghers' portrayal of Stalin in *Das Vertrauen* against the strictures of Western critics such as Reich-Ranicki ("Schamlos scheint mir die Liebe der alten Anna Seghers zu Stalin zu sein") situating it against the background of her long-standing membership in the Communist Party, her espousal of the ideals of the October Revolution and the contribution of her work to the mobilization of the masses, which according to Brecht (as quoted by Püschel) is the necessary prerequisite to the elimination of Stalinism: "Zu den Leistungen der Anna Seghers zählt, daß sie in einem Ensemble von Personen mit ihren Schicksalen und Haltungen die Politik als einen organischen Teil des Menschenlebens dargestellt hat." In Oskar Neumann's view, Dieter Noll's best-selling novel *Kippenberg* (the first DDR-Edition ran to 110,000 copies) "richtet sich gegen den...Trend zum Kulturpessimismus, zur Dämonisierung, wenn nicht schon Verfehlung des wissenschaftlich-technischen Fortschritts". This novel, pointedly recommended to East German readers by Klaus Kropcke at the 1979 Leipzig Book Fair, is concerned to demonstrate, so Noll tells us, that the manifold problems of the contemporary world cannot be understood without some insight into developments in natural science and technology. Noll, sharing none of the Western concern for the possible effects of new technologies and convinced that a planned socialist economy -

freed of the capitalist profit motive - will be well able to increase energy production "möglichst umweltfreundlich" has written his novel "gegen einheimische Selbstzufriedenheit und gegen den Import pessimistischer und auch zweckpessimistischer Prognosen von der Einheitlichkeit der Entfremdungs- und Zerstörungsprozesse in der 'modernen Industriegesellschaft'". Elvira Högemann-Ledwohn's interesting interview with Hermann Kant surveys many aspects of Kant's career: his early years in journalism, the lessons to be drawn from the publication difficulties of Das Impressum (which Kant now confesses to finding "nicht so besonders"), the reception of Der Aufenthalt, the progress of a new novel, the author's view on "Nationalliteratur" and - inevitably - his position as President of the Schriftstellerverband on the recent "Konfliktfälle" involving members of the Verband, which may usefully be compared with his more formal, less conciliatory formulation in his acceptance speech on receiving an honorary doctorate from the University of Greifswald (published under the title "Schreiber, Leser und Verbände" in Sinn und Form, 5/80, pp. 987-999). In a recent issue of Die Zeit (Nr. 4, 16.1.81) Fritz Raddatz writes: "Was beiden Deutschland noch gemeinsam ist, das führt heute am ehesten noch die Literatur vor" - which is a typical example of a West German critic's reluctance to accept the notion of a separate East German socialist "Nationalliteratur". This theme - German literature bridging the political differences between the two Germanies and so ensuring the continuity of an "einheitliche deutsche Kultur" - is taken up both by Noll and by Kant in response to specific questions from their interviewers. Dieter Noll categorically opposes any notion of an undivided German literature. For him the literary scene in the BRD is characterized by the dualism of "Dreck und Schund und Belanglosigkeit für die Massen, echte Literatur für eine Elite" and that in the DDR by the responsibility the writer bears to his readers. Thus: "Als Schriftsteller dort und hier bleibt uns gar nichts übrig, als uns entsprechend den unterschiedlichen gesellschaftlichen Entwicklungen heftig auseinandersetzen zu schreiben". Hermann Kant, more cautious in his approach and unwilling to have himself thought "ein Hersteller von Nationalliteratur", is, however, no less firm when it comes to the theory of the Kultur: "Daß sich da angeblich über alle Divergenzen der Gesellschaft hinweg, wachsend aus Traditionen und hinwachsend zu höheren Verpflichtungen, eine Literatur baut, die zwar nicht die Unterschiede übersehen kann, aber sich über diesen Unterschieden zu einigen weiß, an die man sich halten kann, wenn einen die Unterschiede so stören. Das ist ein eindeutiger Versuch, die Verpflichtungen, die sich - für den Westen - aus den realpolitischen Tatbeständen ergeben, zu umlaufen".

As quoted above, Noll believes that the authors discussed - realist writers contributing to the building of a socialist society - have good reason for optimism. On the evidence of the Kürbiskern articles, this may be perceived as lying for Seghers in the solidarity with her readers (what Püschel calls "das Füreinander-Eintreten") which proceeds from her ability to give contemporary problems artistic expression, for Noll himself in his conviction that in a socialist society literature has "eine bewußtseinsbildende Rolle und Wirkung... jetzt und hier" and for Hermann Kant both in the dialogue between writer and reader and (in his capacity as President of the Schriftstellerverband) in the following statement: "Ich bin ja in diesem Verband, der ein riesiges Stück meiner Zeit und meiner Kraft frißt, deswegen aktiv, weil ich glaube, man muß sich kümmern, muß Verständnis verbreiten nach allen Seiten und Unverständnis bekämpfen, wo immer es antrifft". And in recent years that task must have sorely taxed the optimism even of Hermann Kant.

Geoffrey V. Davis
University of Aachen

Weimarer Beiträge Vol. XXVI, Nr. 8-10.

Weimarer Beiträge Vol. XXVI, Nr. 8 includes several essays of particular interest to students of GDR literature. In the lead article entitled "Wirklichkeitsdarstellung in der DDR-Literatur," Klaus Schumann discusses a (wide) range of contemporary authors against the background of his thesis that GDR literature is increasingly characterized by a concern for the role of the individual in society, in place of the older class struggle literature; this, he contends, reflects the objective development of GDR society. Authors discussed include: Hacks, Fühmann, Braun, Wolf, Kant, Schulz, de Bruyn and others. In addition, sections of the report from the Leipzig colloquium on contemporary literature of the GDR and the USSR treat important issues: Natalja Grosnowa discusses tradition and Erbe (including Weimann) in relation to Russian literature, and Antonina Pezold compares Plenzdorf's Neue Leiden with a very similar Hungarian work, Akos Kertesz', Das verschenkte Leben des Ferenc Makera.

Vol. XXVI, Nr. 9 is devoted nearly exclusively to literatures of the Third World. The single exception is the collection of five short laudatory comments on Stephan Hermlin's memoirs Abendlicht. The contributors remark on the apparent paradox of Hermlin's bourgeois background: see for example Jürgen Kuczynski's interpretation of Hermlin's provocative self-characterization as a "spätbürgerlicher Schriftsteller." (p. 130)

Vol. XXVI, Nr. 10 presents papers and discussions from a conference sponsored by Weimarer Beiträge on the topic of literary valuation (Wertung), particularly in relationship to socialist society. Klaus Jarmatz comments on the significance of the issue for East German literary criticism. Winfried Schröder's review of a West German anthology on Wertung suggest the philosophical basis of the problem from an East German perspective.

Russell A. Berman
Stanford University

The Paris journal Connaissance de la RDA (Novembre 1980, Numéro 11) has published a "spécial Plenzdorf," including an interview conducted by Susanne Felz (Berlin, September 1980) and an analysis by Ewald Lang of the Akademie der Wissenschaften der DDR, "Die Sprache Edgar Wibeaus: Gestus, Stil, Fingierter Jargon" (p. 61-92). The Plenzdorf special concludes with a bibliography of primary and secondary literature. In addition to the completion of the running chronology of GDR history (here, 1971-1979) which opens the issue, Numéro 11 also includes a brief article and expansive reproduction of documentation on "Freizeit und Freizeitverhalten" by Helmut Hanke. Of particular interest is a satirical little notice "Ohne Kommentar" (p. 135-138) by Lutz Rathenow, who was recently imprisoned for publishing in the West without authorization. "Ohne Kommentar" is an excerpt from his volume Mit dem Schlimmsten wurde schon gerechnet, which is to appear immanently in Ullstein Verlag.