

Neubert, Werner. Skrupel, Reue und Chancen des Kritikers: Beiträge zur Literaturkritik in der DDR. Halle-Leipzig: Mitteldt.-Vlg., 1979. Der praktische Teil des Bandes bietet Rezensionen und Kritiken u.a. zu Werken von A. Seghers, E. Strittmatter, H. Kant, B. Apitz und U. Plenzdorf.

Rephael, Max. Arbeiter, Kunst und Künstler: Beiträge zu einer marxistischen Kunsthistorie. Dresden: Verlag der Kunst, 1978.

Schlendstedt, Dieter. Wirkungästhetische Analysen: Poetologie und Prosa in der neueren DDR-Literatur. Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1979.

Sozialistische Kulturen - Wechselbeziehungen und gegenseitige Bereicherung. Hreg.: Akademie für Gesellschaftswissenschaften beim ZK der SED. Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1980.

Der sozialistische Realismus in der Literatur. Von einem Autorenkollektiv unter Leitung von H. Jünger. Leipzig: VEB Bibliograph. Institut, 1979.

Zur Tradition der deutschen sozialistischen Literatur: Eine Auswahl von Dokumenten. Bd. 1-4. Hrg.: Akademie der Künste der DDR, Abt. Geschichte der sozialistischen Literatur. Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 1979. Diese Auswahl von Texten aus den Jahren 1926-1949 dokumentiert den Weg der deutschen sozialistischen Literaturbewegung.

## BOOK REVIEWS

Cyankali von Friedrich Wolf: Eine Dokumentation. Ed. by Emmi Wolf and Klaus Hammer. Berlin & Weimar: Aufbau Verlag, 1978. 501 pp. M 14.-

The reissue of Friedrich Wolf's drama Cyankali, originally published in 1929, is a welcome occasion. The play attacks the infamous paragraph 218 of the German Civil Code of Laws which prohibits abortion under penalty of up to 5 years in the penitentiary for all parties involved. It created both a literary and a politi-

tical sensation at the time and has lost none of its power nor its topicality in the fifty years since then.

First produced at the Lessing Theater in Berlin by a semi-professional "Group of Young Actors" on September 6, 1929, the play experienced over one hundred sold-out performances by January of 1930. These were followed by a tour of the original cast through Germany, Switzerland, Austria, and the USSR. Performances in other German-speaking theaters followed in the next two years, as well as translations into Polish, Czech, Hungarian, Danish, Swedish, French, Russian, Japanese, Bulgarian, and English, with highly successful--though controversial--productions throughout the world. It was also made into a film in 1931, although Wolf himself objected to the cinematic version as "petit-bourgeois drama," whereas his play was written from a proletarian, socialist perspective.

The impact of this work is understandable in view of the fact that, according to the 45th Annual German Physicians' Congress in Eisenach in 1926, between 500,000 and 800,000 illegal abortions were performed annually in Germany, resulting in 10,000 to 20,000 deaths, some 50,000 serious illnesses (including about 20,000 cases of sterility), and leading to approximately 5000 convictions and imprisonments. Nor has the situation changed substantially since then. It is true that in the GDR abortions are legally available today; ironically, however, paragraph 218 was not abolished until 1972, almost twenty years after Wolf's death, even though the German Communist Party had proposed its abolition in a bill submitted to the Reichstag as early as 1928. In the Federal Republic of Germany, a majority of the Bundestag voted in 1974 to permit abortions between the 14th day and the third month; the CDU challenged the constitutionality of this law and the Bundesverfassungsgericht upheld the appeal in 1975. Today, an estimated one million abortions are performed in West Germany each year, resulting in hundreds of deaths. Only some 200 to 300 cases are brought to court, with usually no more than pro-forma fines. Similar figures apply to Austria and Switzerland.

Facts such as these, however, are difficult to dig out of the unsystematic "documentation" which constitutes all but 60 pages of this volume and which consists mainly of excerpts from reviews of various performances from 1929 to 1932, in the immediate post-war years of 1947-

49, and revivals from 1973-77 (plus more than 60 unnumbered pages of photographs). One would have liked to see a lot more. Three other plays written about the same topic around this time (Hans Rehfisch, Frauenarzt, 1927; Carl Credé-Hördör, Paragraph 218, 1929; Alfred Döblin, Ehe, 1930) are barely mentioned, but not analyzed. Most unfortunate is the absence of all biographical information about Wolf himself his social backrcund, his dual careers as a physician and a dramatist. His arrest and trial in 1931 on trumped-up charges of "abortion for commercial gain" are dealt with much too briefly and summarily. With adequate documentation, this could have been an invaluable contribution to literary and social history and to the "Year of the Woman." As it is, the text of the play alone still makes it highly worth while.

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Der Gaukler. By Harry Thürk. Berlin: Verlag Das Neue Berlin, 1979. 2 vols., 284/316 pages. 12.80 M each.

Harry Thürk's work has been called a "political adventure novel" by Wolfgang Predel (NDL, 7/79, p. 139). It is a spy thriller pitting the CIA against Russian communism; at the same time, it is a roman à clef in which the protagonist Wetrow, a Russian novelist and the "Gaukler," is modeled on Aleksandr I. Solzhenitsyn, and the West German novelist Bortinger, aiding in Wetrow's flight from Russia, stands for Heinrich Böll. The author himself prefaces his work with the statement, "Sollte der Leser in diesem Werk der Fiktion Parallelen zu ihm bekannten lebenden Personen entdecken, so wäre lediglich er selbst für einen derartigen Vergleich verantwortlich. Da der Autor jedoch Respektlosigkeit und Spürsinn gleichermaßen schätzt, versichert er jedem Leser, der im Zusammenhang mit Büchern solche Eigenschaften entwickelt, seine volle Sympathie."

Thürk portrays the ruthless CIA, assisted by Harvard experts, fighting against a Russia secure in the knowledge of its eventual victory over the imperialistic countries. The emphasis of the novel is placed on the development of the action, alternating at locations in the United States, Russia, and West Germany. The plot with an extensive cast of characters is developed by means of dialogue and interior monologue.

For the most part, Thürk peoples his novel with Americans and Russians. The Americans affiliated with the CIA are villains, and the Russians with the single exception of Wetrow and his very small circle of supporters--mostly misguided women, victims of his calculated exploitations--are good, honest people. Between the two camps the author places two Americans: a French born, attractive young woman, Cathérine Laborde, who is Harvard-educated and becomes the unwitting CIA tool of her admired Professor Sef Kartstein. It is her task to guide the dissident Wetrow in becoming a prominent witness against communism. She and her American journalist lover with sympathy for communism are destroyed by the CIA. Professor Kartstein ends in insanity, but the bright young men of the CIA continue their campaign against communism, whose eventual triumph is assured over the decadence of Western imperialism. Lack of purpose, drugs, alcohol, sexual depravity, racism, crime, and manipulations are the hallmarks of life in the United States while optimism based on integrity, honesty and ideological convictions prevails in the Soviet Union. There are no dissents to speak of except a few calculating, amoral, and asocial elements of no influence and consequence in their own country. Wetrow is one of the few, but thanks to the machinations of the CIA he becomes a tool of Western imperialism in its ideological struggle with the Soviets. Thürk knows how to tell a story; he keeps his readers in suspense in spite of his emphasis on the political message. He has no literary ambition other than supplying his readers with a well constructed thriller asserting that all is well for communism and its future in the world.

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"Deutsche Demokratische Republik" von Rainer Nägele. In: Geschichte der politischen Lyrik in Deutschland. Hrsg. v. Walter Hinderer. Stuttgart: Reclam, 1978. S. 332-360.

Rainer Nägele beginnt seinen Beitrag zur Geschichte der politischen Lyrik in Deutschland mit dem Hinweis auf die Schwierigkeit, die "bald dreißigjährige Geschichte der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik und ihrer Kulturpolitik auf wenigen Seiten zu summieren..." Den-