

Mittag, Günter. *Um jeden Preis: Im Spannungsfeld zweier Systeme*. Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 1991. 384 pp.

In his book *Um jeden Preis*, Günter Mittag, economist and member of the Politburo, provides a thorough description of the economic situation of the Ex-GDR. In economic context he discusses the founding and development of the GDR, its sometimes damaging relationship with the former USSR, its ambivalent relationship with the Federal Republic of Germany as well as its difficult position between two economic systems. His ultimate conclusion is that, if unification had not occurred, the whole country would have eventually collapsed in financial ruin, which would have been "an economic catastrophe with immense social consequences." In other words, the GDR had little chance for survival if it had continued on the course it maintained throughout the 70s and 80s.

Mittag discusses several variables that contributed to the GDR's economic ruin. Those over which the government had no control include the sharp rise in oil prices and cutbacks in oil deliveries from the Soviet Union in the late 70s and early 80s, the decline in chemical prices (a chief export of the former GDR), and the Cocom-embargo that limited the GDR's access to advanced technology. These realities had grave consequences for a state whose government policy was to increase its population's standard of living "at any price." When Honecker came to power, reforms adopted in 1963 (but not really implemented) under the "New Economic System" (NÖS) were abandoned for a strategy that combined social and economic policy, as it turns out, to the utter detriment of economic development.

Mittag continually laments the lack of economic thinking among his former colleagues for whom social policy far outweighed financial concerns in importance. According to Mittag, leaders in the governing body of the GDR were rather prudish when it came to discussing money, increased worker productivity, business with the West, realistic exchange rates, converting the "Mark der DDR," or cutting back subsidies to control spending. These elements of economic activity smacked of capitalist concerns. Only Mittag appears to have understood the importance of strategies that would have increased economic stability and brought the growing debt under control. Lack of economic reasoning manifested itself in various ways. The GDR began accumulating debt in the early 80s but did not use the 8-10 billion DM it borrowed annually to modernize industry and improve production.

Instead it purchased consumer goods and sold them to the population at subsidized prices. After NÖS there was no talk of allowing the individual *Kombinate* the freedom to manage their own affairs. Economic growth was measured according to pieces produced and not net production. Thus, costs such as raw materials, energy and labor never entered production calculations and consequently increased beyond profitable levels. Mittag labels this manner of doing business the *Tonnenideologie*, where quantity was more important than quality, the cost of production was ignored, the market was irrelevant, and emphasis was placed on that which was easiest to produce. The damaging effects of the *Tonnenideologie* were exacerbated by the *Gießkannenprinzip*. Without analyzing the merit or profitability of individual assets, the GDR had 32,000 separate areas of investment going simultaneously. Most *Betriebe* received something but not enough to improve production qualitatively or quantitatively. There were also areas, indiscriminately funded by the government, that absorbed tremendous amounts of resources with no economic return. These included the massive Free German Youth events, the military, the Ministry for State Security, maintenance of the border and athletic programs. These entities were charged with protecting and/or representing the state but all had serious encumbering effects on its economic growth.

The eighth Party Congress of 1971 was the sounding of NÖS's death knell, whose economic strategies were not considered again until the Planning Commission under Günter Kleiber suggested similar reforms in 1989. Mittag's premise: far too little that came much too late. Mittag claims that, had the GDR earnestly implemented the reforms of NÖS, it would not have fallen so far behind the West in economic output and would have remained more or less debt-free. (He does not openly speculate, however, that economic success would have averted the revolution of 1989.) The trend under Honecker was marked by increased consumption that far outpaced economic growth. For Mittag, therefore, the bad guys are those Politburo members, Krenz, Stoph, Mielke, Hager, Krolkowski, Schabowski and others, who supported Honecker in the illusion of reaching a standard of living on par with the West while doing nothing about consistently low productivity.

Mittag wrote his book for public judgment, but not without a healthy dose of positive testimony about his conduct during the years he served on the Central Committee (1962-1973 and 1976-October 1989). He excuses his own involvement annoyingly

often and on two occasions refers to himself as a "Rufer in der Wüste." I counted 63 praises (average one every 5.5 pages--I subtract the last 25 pages, which included a typescript of Gorbachev's meeting with Honecker and the Politburo, October 7, 1989) of his own foresight, his heroic actions that averted even greater economic disaster, his unwaning and singular crusade against the narrow-mindedness in a never-ending struggle for economic reform, his openness to the West, and his political correctness. Apart from the self praise, it is a credible account of the economic problems that plagued the GDR by one of its leading insiders.

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Papenfuß-Gorek, Bert. *LED SAUDAUS. notdichtung karrendichtung*. Berlin: Janus Press, 1991. 109 S.

Dieser 1991 veröffentlichte Band besteht aus zwei Teilen: aus der vor der Wende entstandenen "Notdichtung" und der 1990 entstandenen "Karrendichtung". Beide Kapitel schöpfen noch vorrangig aus dem Erlebnisbereich des realen Sozialismus, wobei der zweite Teil ein reflektierendes Umkreisen der Frage nach einem neuen Selbstverständnis erkennen läßt. Der Titel eines Gedichtes, "wohl weiß ich sehr wohl; was ich bin, runtergemetert obwohl" (56), weist auf ein solches Nachdenken über dichterische Selbstverwirklichung - "bin ich nicht ... nachdichter ... vordichter ... kein scheuer shouter, kein zagebart ... lyrische vorhut trotz allem dazutun nicht" -, das im spielerischen Ton vorgetragen wird und in folgendes Fazit mündet: "nicht so wichtig/ bin ich". Angesichts der nun deregionalisierten Kunst des Prenzlauer Bergs und des Ansprechens neuer Leserzielgruppen in der freien Marktwirtschaft im vereinigten Deutschland suggeriert letzteres Statement wohl auch den Gedanken eines Neubeginns und einer Neudefinition von Opposition und Integration.

Niemand wird bestreiten, daß Papenfuß-Gorek zu DDR-Zeiten unter den "kwehrdeutsch"-Lyrikern des Prenzlauer Bergs einer der originärsten und originellsten war. Wohl kaum einer der jungen Sprachzertrümmerer hat das Potential semantischer Ambiguitäten so radikal ausgeschöpft wie er. Die Demontage der Machtsprache wurde in der "Szene" als einzig mögliche Aktion innerhalb verfestigter Strukturen empfunden. In den 98 Texten des Bandes *LED SAUDAUS* demonstriert Papenfuß-Gorek mit einer Vielfalt sprachsezierender Möglichkeiten, "daß der begriff wahrheit wie kein anderer/ gegen jedwede andere begriffe austauschbar sei/ schraubenzieher, liebe, mörderapps, minne, gebrauchsanweisung usw." (17). In der Tat liest sich der gesamte Band wie ein summierender Rückblick auf die Ausdrucksformen seiner zertrümmernden "Außenseitersprache" innerhalb der Szene des Prenzlauer Bergs. Die Grenzen zwischen Dekonstruktion und Konstruktion auflösend, treibt Papenfuß-Gorek "umfug" (43), d.h. er "fügt" - zumeist assoziativ - Wortfelder "um", löst sie auf und arrangiert sie als Neologismen neu; er untersucht Spannungen zwischen Homonymen und Homophonen und nutzt sie sprachschöpferisch; er tauscht Buchstaben aus, verballhornt, wirbelt Versatzstücke aus deutschem Kulturgut, aus Fremd- und Sondersprachen durcheinander: "mein sprach-spiel ist ein leben/ das ich schüttele" (92). In vielen Gedichten geht es im Spiegel der Sprachzersetzung um die Exponierung eines