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Stefan Berger, Norman LaPorte, eds. *The Other Germany: Perceptions and Influences in British-East German Relations, 1945-1990.* Augsburg: WiÃ?ner-Verlag, 2005. 343 pp. $53.00 (paper), ISBN 978-3-89639-485-9.

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Britain's East Germany and East Germany's Britain

This collection of twenty-three essays serves as a highly readable and informative introduction to East German and British perspectives of each other. The book's strengths far outweigh its minor weaknesses for both specialists as well as advanced students. If there is one overarching concern, it is the very subject matter of the book: how can one write a history of the various levels of interaction between East Germany and Great Britain without simultaneously referring to the other German state, namely West Germany? West and East German history are intertwined in so many ways and the GDR-Great Britain relationship cannot be fully understood while excluding West Germany. The editors and more specifically two of the contributors, Arnd BauerkÃ¤mper and Detlev Nakath, engage this triangular relationship. Still, developing this theme more fully would have exceeded the limits of a single volume and might be a useful point of departure for further research. After a brief review of the volume's construction, this review refers to essays that are particularly interesting.

Stefan Berger and Norman LaPorte's excellent introductory chapter guides the reader through the main themes of this volume. The book is divided into four main parts. The first section examines the broader Cold War context, including the British Left's view of eastern Europe, as well as the unfolding of the triangular East and West German and British dynamic, followed by the impact of the "Celtic Fringe," namely Northern Irishness and "Scottishness," upon the East German-British context. The second section of the book explores the various interactions between the "British Left and the GDR," focusing on the Labour Party, trade unions, peace movement and official anti-communism as contrasted with latent sympathies for East Germany as an underdog. This section also includes an essay on the "Christian-Marxist Dialogue and Cold War Politics in Britain and the GDR." Part 3 shines light on the cultural dimensions of East German and British interaction. Given that the GDR was of interest mainly for the British Left, contributions in this section focus on the exchanges between GDR and left-leaning British artists, cultural functionaries and scholars. Finally, part 4 contains the memoirs of individuals from Britain and the GDR who spent prolonged periods of time on the other side.

It is refreshing to encounter individuals from a variety of backgrounds and persuasions. For example, Stanley Forman, born in 1921 to a Jewish family with a German, Russian, and Polish background, found an intellectual and cultural home in the communist movement. While critical of the oppressive nature of the Soviet Union and its East German satellite, Forman remained committed to the ideals of his youth and the hopes for a renewed Marxism, as a guide to a post-capitalist society of justice and equality. Without downplaying the dictatorial features of East Germany, he reminds us of his anti-fascist aspirations: "[w]hen I first visited the GDR, it was not a paradise, there were clearly acute shortages, but what made me feel happy was that I felt they were making serious attempts to get rid of the Nazis in all spheres of life" (p. 295). In another part of the fourth segment

of the book, Peter Johnson recollects his experiences as a BBC and Reuters correspondent in the GDR between 1965-1970. Johnson is equally frank about his ideological leanings: "[o]f course, we were putting out an anti-communist programme on behalf of the British government, which paid our wages. Some people would call it propaganda. But in criticising the communist regime we were seeking to tell the truth about it" (p. 301). Despite Johnson's plain rejection of the GDR and its socialist project, his account is nuanced, especially when he describes East German socialists who combined their fundamental loyalty to the GDR with criticisms of its frequently narrow-minded leadership. A case in point is Johnson's exposure to writers Stefan Heym and Stephan Hermlin. Johnson wrote critical pieces about East Germany's multitude of shortcomings for his British readers, including articles on how the SED regime handled dissident scientist Robert Havemann, whom Johnson rightly views as a key figure in challenging the GDR's socialist pretensions. In a curious orthographical oversight, however, Johnson refers to East Germany's perhaps most famous dissident as "Robber Havemann," which discloses the spirit of how former East German propagandists still regard the chemist, whom they sought to isolate from society by shadowing him with a larger police and secret service escort than most visiting foreign dignitaries were afforded by the regime.[1]

As a counterweight to those British perspectives, the editors of this volume also decided to include Reiner Oschmann's "Recollections of a GDR Correspondent in London during the Thatcher Years." Among Oschmann's many interesting observations is his remark that East German foreign correspondents in Margaret Thatcher's Britain had more leeway than in FranÃ§ois Mitterrand's France, in terms of what East Berlin's censors allowed them to publish. The Erich Honecker government was more optimistic about improving relations with the socialist French government than with Britain's conservative "Iron Lady." Thus East Berlin frequently went out of its way to not offend French sensibilities through critical newspaper articles.

The inclusion of Oschmann's piece, as one East German voice among four British ones, points to a strength and weakness in the overall structure of the book. Interactions between East Germany and Britain are probed from a variety of perspectives, yet despite considerable efforts to find balance, the specifically East German lens and its imbeddedness within the Soviet orbit and perspective is somewhat underrepresented. A case in point is BauerkÃ¤mper's otherwise excellent contribution on the triangular British, East German and West German relationship. BauerkÃ¤mper looks at the interaction from the point of view of three main contexts: the German-German context, the European context and the global context. But his overarching outlook is the British and West German point of view, more so than the East German. Perhaps future research has to look into how East Germany's perspective on Britain was also shaped by a variety of contexts, foremost its competition with West Germany but also, via its Soviet protector, with Russian ideas, perceptions and misunderstandings of Britishness. In addition, a numerically small but influential group of East German politicians, scholars and artists had spent the Nazi years in British exile. Key to this group are individuals such as powerful Politburo member Kurt Hager, as well as the historian and public intellectual *par excellence* JÃ¼rgen Kuczynski.[2] An ever-growing literature on German exiles in Britain, including those who settled in the GDR, is appearing. Future research should integrate this literature and the light it sheds on the dynamic of East German attitudes toward Britain.

BauerkÃ¤mper's judicious essay explores not only the political but the economic and cultural contexts of this triangular relationship. He points out how British attitudes toward the GDR oscillated between Cold War anti-communism and acceptance of West Germany's Hallstein Doctrine on the one hand and a sense of solidarity with East Germany as an underdog on the other, within the context of real and perceived British decline in the second half of the twentieth century. In addition, Bauerkaemper also alerts us to the fact that "[o]ccasionally, even a genuine belief in the superiority of East German state socialism" was evident in Britain's response to the GDR within the context of the triangular relationship (p. 44). Of course, this more positive notion of the GDR, as the "better German state," was subject to the ever-changing dynamic of East Germany as either the socially progressive alternative to a re-arming and potentially expansionist West Germany or the throwback to German and Prussian militancy and oppression. Ultimately, Britain sided with its West German ally and viewed the GDR through the dual prism of Cold War anti-communism and deeply entrenched anti-German stereotypes. Given that Britain's communist party had only marginal influence, East Germany's best hope for partners lay within the Labour Party and the trade unions. While some Labour politicians, as well as some union leaders, viewed the GDR with sympathy, most stuck to the official line and did not recognize the GDR. Britain's official relationship with East Germany improved not so

much in response to East German efforts, or those among parts of the British Left, but according to changing West German attitudes. As West Germany relaxed its rejection of the GDR as a sovereign state, as early as the Konrad Adenauer years in the late 1950s, 1960s but especially with the Willy Brandt government of the early 1970s, it eventually arrived at *de facto* recognition. East Germany, of course, sought leverage by drawing on British fears of resurgent nationalism and chauvinism in West Germany as well as the waning of Britain's relative economic and political position in the post-World War II world. The rearming of West German troops, combined with the rise of far right-wing and openly neo-Nazi parties, gave some advantage to the GDR. Yet, even as the fears of a nazified West Germany turned out to be exaggerated, East Germany could still bank on its image as the underdog of the two states and thus be able to somewhat exploit Britain's traditional balance of power approach to European affairs. Yet all of this material was ultimately of marginal significance when compared to West German influence on British views.

Another very interesting piece is Anthony Glees's contribution regarding Stasi activities in Britain. Glee provides many intriguing details. Despite Stasi efforts to destroy its immense intelligence-gathering holdings, a huge amount of material has survived, including the military intelligence files, which are almost two hundred kilometers long. Glee points out that East Germany's secret services had stepped in for the Soviet KGB in Britain since the 1970s, when the latter's operations were increasingly compromised by British counter-intelligence activities. Over 50 percent of East German reconnaissance work was forwarded to the Soviet Union. GDR military intelligence operations in Britain avoided detection by MI5. Glee points out the modeling of East Germany's Military Intelligence Service on the GRU. Strangely absent from his account is one of the most enigmatic agents and high-impact of the twentieth century, the East German Ruth Werner. The chief flaw in Glees's essay is its deep indebtedness to Cold War language. While no serious historian disputes the oppressive nature of East Germany, Glees's overly moralistic language adds little to our understanding of the GDR's dynamics of power. Scholars like Konrad Jarausch, with his concept of a paternalistic dictatorship, have provided analytical categories that provide a more fruitful point of departure.[3] Future efforts will have to probe their usefulness in understanding the GDR's more overtly repressive structures.

The final essay of this outstanding collection is Toby Thacker's " 'Something Different from the Hampstead Perspective': An Outline of Selected Musical Transactions between the British Left and the GDR." Thacker's excellent piece treats the cultural and political ramifications of musical exchanges between Britain and East Germany. Music, especially classical, offered a small opening through which the GDR could present itself as a responsible, cultured custodian of the classical heritage of central European composers. Socialism's promise, after all, was to make the high culture of previous epochs available to the masses, and music was to play a key role in the conceptualization and construction of a more humane society. In return, Britain could be somewhat dissociated from U.S. imperialism in Europe, as an ancient society with a progressive musical heritage. The focal point of those efforts was seventeenth- and eighteenth-century music, particularly the compositions of George Frideric Handel. Handel's German background and English career made him an ideal figure to connect German and British sensibilities. The GDR, acutely aware of how Handel had been used by the Nazis, was keen on showcasing the difference between its own more historically accurate approach to Handel and how the composer and his music were still used in West Germany. West German performances were, at least originally, more influenced by how German nationalists and even the Nazis had utilized the composer and his music.

In addition to Handel, Thacker centers his piece on another important figure that bridged Germany and Britain in his personal life, East Germany's influential musical historian and composer Ernst Hermann Meyer. A Jewish-German Communist, Meyer had fled from Nazi rule to Britain. There he continued his long-standing affiliation with working-class choral music and made a name for himself as a prolific composer, mainly of wartime film music, and as a musicologist. It was in Britain that Meyer wrote his famous book *English Chamber Music* (1946). Meyer, who developed what can arguably be called the GDR's most seriously considered Marxist approach to musical history, returned to Germany in 1948, where he taught as a professor at Humboldt University in Berlin and served as an academic administrator, as well as composing the well-known *Mansfelder Oratorium* in 1950. He even became a member of the SED's Central Committee. The *Oratorium* celebrates almost eight hundred years of mining and class struggle. While Thacker alludes to the curiosity of how Meyer formulated his guiding Marxist ideas to musical history in Britain, he does not systematically develop the interaction between Meyer's pre-Nazi German aca-

demic and aesthetic training to his British experiences. In a similar light, Thacker notes that Meyer, despite his cosmopolitan background and sensibility, became one of the most notorious supporters of the dogmatic assertions of Soviet ideologue Andrei Zhdanov. Zhdanov only allowed for music that conformed to his decidedly antimodernist criteria of simplicity, lyricality and overt connection to national folk music. Curiously, Meyer first seriously considered Zhdanov's Stalinist cultural policies while in Britain. When he arrived in East Berlin in 1948, Meyer had already convinced himself, after a long and painful internal struggle, of the soundness of Zhdanov's approach. Yet, Thacker leaves the matter of how the experiences and insecurities of exile in Britain may have impacted his struggle with and ultimate acceptance of Zhdanovism unexplored. Meyer, of course, never became a mere ideologue and remained a refreshing example of what Thacker quite aptly calls "quiet and subtle internationalism" in East Germany (p. 222). All of these interactions between Britain and the GDR are extremely interesting, yet one has to agree with Thacker's conclusion that they also illustrate that Britain was much more important to the GDR than the GDR was to Britain. East Germany's impact on Britain's musical culture was minute.

Overall, this collection of essays on British-East German relations between 1945 and 1990 is of much value to both experts and more general readers interested in the subject matter. The coming together of German and British (and even one Dutch) scholars in this volume has led to a productive multiplicity of view points. While most articles are in English, the inclusion of three essays in German underscores the multinational nature of this project. I highly recommend this book.

Notes

[1]. See Robert Allertz, ed. *SÃ¤nger und Souffleur. Biermann, Havemann und die DDR* (Berlin: edition ost - Das Neue Berlin Verlagsgesellschaft, 2006).

[2]. Kuczynski, for example, lived in Britain with his family between 1936 and 1944. While he and his wife Marguerite as well as their three children relocated to a budding East Germany, his parents as well as all but one of his sisters remained in Britain. Among Kuczynski's voluminous works are several texts dealing with British matters, such as *Gestalten und Werke. Soziologische Studien zur englischsprachigen und franzÃ¶sischen Literatur* (Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 1971). This book showcases, among other things, Kuczynski's approach to English literature and society. At this point, we know very little about whether and how this and similar books impacted East German images of Britain.

[3]. Konrad H. Jarausch, "Care and Coercion: The GDR as Welfare Dictatorship," in *Dictatorship as Experience: Towards a Socio-cultural History of the GDR*, Konrad H. Jarausch, ed. (New York: Berghahn Books, 1999), 47-69.