

Das Bibliothekswesen in der Sowjetischen Besatzungszone Deutschlands. By Martin Thilo. (Bonner Berichte aus Mittel- und Ostdeutschland). Bonn/Berlin: Bundesministerium für Gesamtdeutsche Fragen, 1965. 243p.

"In the future (library) holdings may be increased only by literature purchased in bookstores authorized in the German Democratic Republic. The acquisition of used books is not authorized regardless of whether they are lent or presented as gifts. The loan, sale, or any other form of disposal of literature removed from holdings is not authorized. . . . The German Democratic Republic is a truly democratic state . . ." (pp. 238, 186).

These two excerpts from official East German pronouncements presented in the book are symptomatic of promulgations and practice by which not only the average inhabitant of the "zone," but also, of course, professional people, in this case, librarians, continuously are harassed and badgered.

A revision of the edition of 1964, this West German official publication devotes more attention to certain individual zonal libraries, training of personnel, and comparative statistics. The author's intention was to provide a kind of "documentary" by quoting pertinent professional journals, functionaries, or official regulations of the Soviet Occupation Zone in Germany (as indicated in the title, the author consistently refers to East Germany as SBZ—Soviet Occupation Zone—SOZ) and thus letting the facts speak for themselves. He succeeds, although the style, suffering at times from repetitiousness, poor organization, and prolix sentences, may bubble into a bibliopolical bouillabaisse.

Some 179 pages of text are supplemented by 59 pages of appendices containing zonal edicts concerning libraries. There is also a list of sources.

Through experience with the "Third Reich," Germans are, the author says, aware of the extent to which libraries may be misused as a political tool. From the beginning of the zonal occupation the model of the USSR has been unmistakable. In that country libraries are an important factor in public life and receive strong, official

support. Lenin's statement to the effect that libraries are an index to the condition of culture is frequently quoted in the SOZ. Accordingly the role of books, reading, and public libraries as moulders of attitudes is highly esteemed and frequently overestimated.

Continuing, the author states that although initially all libraries were directed by a centralized administration emphasizing general accessibility to the public and the "great, common task of influencing our people" (p. 11), by 1951 the professional libraries were reorganized under the state secretariat for universities, while public libraries were placed in 1954 under the ministry of culture.

Among professional libraries in the SOZ the Deutsche Bücherei in Leipzig and the Deutsche Staatsbibliothek in Berlin are treated in some detail. The first, with some three million books, still collects all books printed in Germany and German language publications and translations of German publications produced abroad. It is also a special repository for German music, art, and patent literature, as well as German literary phonograph records. The author points out that the Deutsche Bücherei can fulfill its function of collecting all books produced by German publishers only if certain requirements are met. One prerequisite, that each publisher furnish copies of his books, has been generally complied with. However this relationship will be jeopardized if: (1) books from West Germany are not made accessible to the public in the Leipzig Deutsche Bücherei; and, (2) if this library does not discontinue the practice of supplying incomplete and therefore inaccurate information in its "abbreviated" bibliographies, examples of which political coloration are offered (p. 27).

Comparably, the Deutsche Staatsbibliothek with holdings of two million titles also collects German publications and foreign literature. It has a special medical collection and publishes a number of bibliographies. Another specialty is Soviet and satellite country scientific literature. Finally, this library specializes in union cataloging.

Among specialized libraries the Thüringische Landesbibliothek in Weimar is mentioned. With six hundred thousand volumes

this institution has a large collection of older works from the period of German classicism.

Other types of libraries discussed are general, technical, specialized, peoples, district, rural, labor union, school, "Pioneer House," and children's. As to children's libraries the writer remarks that the obvious goal is to indoctrinate the child as early as possible and quotes: "We must exploit all available means and resources to develop our holdings in such a manner that they attain maximum effectiveness, *i.e.*, that they are active helpers in the training and education of our children as socialist personalities" (p. 101). ("Socialist" is of course the common euphemism for "communist.")

Commenting on labor union libraries, Dr. Thilo quotes statements which somehow have a familiar ring: "Labor unions have a particularly noble task of bringing the book to the masses via the factory library which is worthy of the great goal of serving as schools for socialism . . ." (p. 108). In a similar vein he cites further:

To increase the knowledge of workers concerning the problems . . . of socialism, they are to be familiarized particularly with the works of marxism and leninism. By belletristic literature in which the establishment of socialism in our republic, in the Soviet Union, and the other countries of the socialist camp is presented artistically, their ties to and love for their socialist home are strengthened. They are spurred on to new work achievements in socialist competition.

To educate the workers to awareness and hatred of the enemies of peace and socialism, to increase their class consciousness and their willingness to defend the power of the workers and farmers and our socialist achievements, literature must be presented which unmasks the criminal machinations and objectives of the imperialists and militarists. To this end that literature which tells of the revolutionary struggles of the working class in the past and present and particularly of the antifascist resistance is of great significance (p. 231).

Considerable history of the vicissitudes of the zonal library system is incorporated in the exposition. Thus losses, dislocation, confiscation, proscription, and denazification of holdings due to war and occupation are

discussed. However, unlike measures undertaken in the West, says the author, denazification was never consistently carried out in the SOZ. Likewise the SOZ has never dared to promulgate a complete, definitive list of proscribed books, but rather prefers ambiguous declarations. Particularly from the viewpoint of a librarian the consequences may be uncertainty, confusion, and frustration. In addition to his regular duties, a librarian in the SOZ must belong to and participate in various party organizations, many of whose evening meetings make heavy demands upon his time. Training programs for library personnel are organized along practical, technical, and political lines. Thus, the "socialist library system" is subjected to continuous official pressure for "improvement" of holdings in the face of restrictions imposed concerning party-approved books and personnel.

Some people in the West may think that zonal party policies do not affect professional libraries. This is not true, continues Dr. Thilo. Let no one imagine that zonal authorities regard the professional libraries as oases of pure science immune to politics. In fact, there are functionaries who are primarily party flunkies in every professional library of the SOZ. Due to their positions they exercise a decisive influence on the operations of libraries.

One ray of light in this bleak picture according to the author is the functioning, at least formally, of interlibrary loan between the Federal Republic and the SOZ. Without denying some technical improvement in SOZ libraries, the author stresses the fact that according to his sources of information any such changes are dictated first and foremost by zonal politics.

Finally, he says, it is difficult to perceive how any meaningful cooperation can be worked out between West German and SOZ libraries as long as walls, barbed wire, and mine fields constitute a "frontier" through Germany and around Berlin.

This book affords a rather penetrating analysis of the history and development of zonal libraries. It is also a perceptive indictment of fetters on the minds of men.—
Wayne Wonderley, University of Kentucky.

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