



German Writers in Soviet Exile, 1933-1945

David Pike

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German Writers in Soviet Exile, 1933-1945 explores the lives and work of several dozen German Communist writers and cultural functionaries who were given asylum in Stalin's Russia when Hitler came to power in Germany. Based on extensive research in the archives of Moscow, East Berlin, and Budapest, and on interviews with survivors of the German Communist emigration to the USSR, David Pikes' account of the life of political exiles during the Stalin years describes the conditions under which German Communists were compelled to live and their pubic and private feelings toward thier "second fatherland." He discusses Soviet immigration policy and the travel restrictions placed on the Germans, takes an inside look at the German Section of the Soviet Writers' Union, and provides the first full account of the arrest of thousands of German Communists during the Stalinist purges.

Other chapters center on the exiles' involvement in the Communist International's efforts to mobilize a particular form of pro-Soviet antifascism (and the effect upon it of the Moscow show trials), the Communists' perception of National Socialism, and the quality of their opposition to it. In this context Pike uses the nature of their commitment to Hitler's overthrow to question the motives, attitudes, and and ambitions of men whose outlook had been molded by their Soviet experience when they returned in 1945 to assume proxy control of East Germany.

Another important chapter adds significantly to our knowledge of Soviet literary politics under Stalin. Drawing on unpublished material, as well as on the contemporary Soviet daily and periodical press, Pike examines the evolution of Georg Lukacs's literary and cultural-political theories in their relation to Soviet socialist realism. He shows for the first time how the realism debates of 1937 to 1939 between Lukacs, Bertolt Brecht, Hanns Eisler, Walter Benjamin, Ernst Bloch, and others were manipulated in Moscow, and he suggests reasons for the downfall of the Lukacs-Lifshits "Trend" in Soviet literary criticism.

Twenty-five eventful years are drawn together in this study. Because Pike sets his subject matter within a broad political and historical context, his book must be regarded as a meaningful contribution to several disciplines -- Soviet and German history, Communist studies in general, Soviet Russian literary politics, German exile studies, and the prehistory of the German Democratic Republic.

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