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5432 BROADSIDE RECORDS BRS 432

BENTLEY ON BIERMANN

Songs and Poems of Wolf Biermann
Translated and Performed by Eric Bentley

ACCOMPANIMENTS BY ALLAN MILLER



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DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

SIDE I: Songs

- Band 1: The Song of the Worst Thing
- Band 2: Ballad on the Poet François Villon
- Band 3: Ballad of the Letter-Carrier William L. Moore
- Band 4: The Barlach Song
- Band 5: Nothing to it!
- Band 6: Comrade Julián Grimau
- Band 7: Ballad of the Man
- Band 8: Legend of the Soldier in World War III

SIDE II: Songs and Poems

- Band 1: Ballad of Fredi Rohsmeisl
- Band 2: Do not Wait for Better Times!
- Band 3: Early Morning
- Band 4: The Singer's Inaugural Address
- Band 5: Toys
- Band 6: To the Old Comrades
- Band 7: Reckless Abuse
- Band 8: German: A Winter's Tale
- Band 9: December 1965
Question and Answer and Question
Morning Dictum of Vice-President Ky
Vice-President Ky's Dream
- Band 10: Soldatenmelodie

COVER DESIGN BY RONALD CLYNE

BENTLEY ON BIERMANN

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performed by Eric Bentley
Accompaniments by Allan Miller

Guitar accompaniments by Allan Miller. Piano
accompaniments to The Barlach Song and Nothing to
it! by Allan Miller. The piano accompaniment to
Soldatenmelodie is played by Eric Bentley, and the
music itself is Eric Bentley's interpretation of what
Biermann plays for this song on his guitar. All tunes
are by Wolf Biermann.

WOLF BIERMANN

Of Jewish background, Wolf Biermann was
born in Hamburg in 1936. His father, a worker and
a Communist, was killed by the Nazis. A sympathiser
with the German Democratic Republic which had been
established in 1949, Biermann went to live there in
1953. For about ten years thereafter he was a member
of the Social Unity (Communist) Party, only to be
read out of it by Walter Ulbricht himself. For in the
early Sixties, some of Biermann's poems and songs
were critical of the government.

Not that any poems of this stripe were pub-
lished; nor did Biermann perform on TV or radio or
film. A few poems that could give no offense appear-
ed in print in East Germany. Otherwise Biermann
was known there either through personal appearances
in club-rooms and concert halls or through type-
written and mimeographed sheets which passed from
hand to hand. Reporters in this period found East
German Youth very familiar with Biermann's work
and even able to quote whole passages from it. This
was -- as far as he was concerned -- what began
the trouble. There were also broadcasts by Biermann
in West Germany, which the East did not appreciate.

Unluckily for his personal fortunes, Biermann
became most outspoken at just the time that his country
approached a cultural -- and more 'han cultural --
crisis. Two items that appeared in Neuss Deutschland
in 1965 were likely to give special offense. One was
the poem "Germany: a Winter's Tale" which is re-
corded in the present album. The other was a letter
to Wolfgang Neuss. And before the latter is quoted,
it had better be explained that the title Neuss
Deutschland was itself "offensive." The official
Communist daily in the East is called Neuse
Deutschland, a paper Biermann ridiculed in his Villon
poem (see album). Neuss was able to parody the title
with his own name, Neuss being by profession a
comedian. Above the title Neuss Deutschland there
always appeared the slogan: "Comedians of all lands,
unite!" And Neuss was particularly interested in
two lands. His paper came out in West Berlin but
addressed itself to the East as well -- though it could
not legally be sold there. Sold, for that matter, it
was not, to any great extent, anywhere. It was just
a four-page sheet hawked up and down the Kurfürsten-
damm by Neuss's friends. Here is the text of the

Biermann Letter it ran in its issue of July-July 1965
(as done into English by Hugo Schmidt):

Much beloved Neuss,

I hope you've realized, in the meantime,
that you are, in every sense, a persona non grata.
By virtue of the very same Communist ambitions
which could have brought you into a pleasantly
serious disagreement with conditions in West Ger-
many, you were thrown back, a dangerously smelly
fish, into the salty dead sea of the homeless Left,
into the very medium which appears to us ridicu-
lously unfit for political action.

Germany's reactionaries know quite well
where they are exiling their incorrigible correctors:
into the unproductive position of bitterness and
desperately obtuse salon revolutions. I have just been
reading an observation by Engels, fresh as dew, on
the situation of a German poet in 1847:

"On the one hand, being part of German
society, he find it impossible to revolt, because
the revolutionary elements per se are as yet un-
developed; on the other, he finds the chronic misery
that surrounds him too debilitating to rise above it,
to act freely against it, and to mock it, without him-
self falling back into it. For the time being, the
only advice to all German poets with a little talent
left is to emigrate to civilized countries."

We know that any and all criticism against
conditions in Germany is ludicrous, because the
criticized conditions are below the level of all
criticism; and we know that all the untoward circum-
stances in Germany unfortunately do not possess the
dignity of historically relevant processes. All con-
flicts that might arise on German soil are automatically
farces, because our dear old German Michel has re-
mained the impotent clown in history ever since the
suppression of the peasants' revolt. I expect little of
Germany, which means, of us. I can only guffaw at
the schizophrenic alternative: East and West Germany.

The most devastating effect of the beat-
ing we constantly receive is our getting used to
it; if this will continue long enough, we shall even
lend to our sufferings the appearance of the reason-
able and ordinary, and, missing greater pleasures,
shall decorate ourselves with the crown of thorns
of the martyr. The black and blue spots on paper
are being replaced by those on our asses. We
are moving through our musty German territory
and, instead of doffing our hats, we doff our trou-
sers and bare our tanned hides. Thus the pose of
"pompously whimpering socialism" is developed
in us, that is, in me.

Having no barricades, across the kitchen
tables we hurl empty beerbottles at our wives'
backs, and, wet with tears and cold sweat, we un-
load on our closest friends, poor fellows, our
petit-bourgeois hangover.

Constant revolt against political timidity
finally turns us into good German backyard-garden-
ers, and, if we are possessed by a feeling for art,
into plaster garden-dwarfs. Neuss, the garden
dwarf with the ceramic ax, Biermann, the garden-
dwarf with the plaster violin -- here they stand in
the front garden of world politics on their loam legs
and cry the paint off their baked clay. "The World
is Bad" -- "Oh, Man" -- "Germany, Pale Mother"

-- "We Will Have to Die, Then there Will Be Peace"
 -- "Ashes Upon Us" -- "Woe to All of Us" --
 "Spickenagel, it's Your Fault!" All my misery is
 ridiculous; ridiculous as well as justified. Timid
 bickering between battles.

One has to get used to peace as a musty
 state of emergency. The thought horrifies me that
 my fear might grow faster than my hatred. Once
 that happens, I'm done for.

Good luck, my friend. We're more likely to
 meet on the moon than in Germany. Or else, you'll
 have to sing a disgustingly reactionary, revanchist,
 militaristic tune, - then our bald-headed decision-
 makers will let you in here, as they let all the others
 in. Remember, at last: It's the heretics who are
 fried, not the heathen. May my lamenting disgust
 you and rid you of your own! Greet Grete from me,
 kiss Jette, kick Brandt.

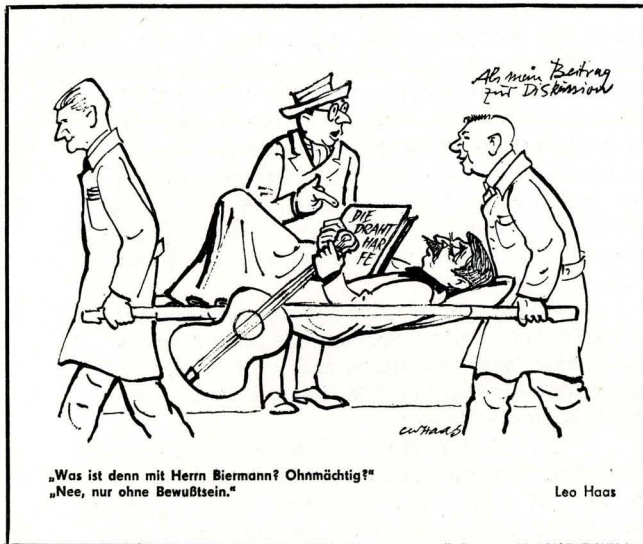
Yours,

Biermann.

In addition to publishing this letter and "Germany,
 a Winter's Tale," Biermann allowed the West
 Berlin publisher Klaus Wagenbach to issue a whole
 book of his songs and poems, *The Wire Harp*.

In December 1965 the East German Chief
 of Planning Erich Apel shot himself. He did not
 like the way the Russians seemed to be always
 getting the best of economic arrangements be-
 tween their country and his. For whatever reasons,
 the suicide was followed by a cultural crisis in which
 government leaders denounced dissident artists. In
 a 351-line article in *Neues Deutschland*, Wolf
 Biermann was described as "anarchistic" and "polit-
 ically perverse." In the next column *The New York
 Times*' account of Biermann's relation to the crisis
 (January 23, 1966).

As was desired, many writers and other
 artists took the opportunity to re-affirm their soli-
 darity with their government. Here is a cartoon in
 which the cartoonist did this by kicking Biermann
 while he was down:



The caption reads: "What's with Herr Biermann?
 Fainted?" "No, just lost consciousness." In the
 top righthand corner the artist has written: "As my
 contribution to the discussion."

East German Poet Is Called Betrayer

By LESLIE R. COLITT

Wolf Biermann, a fiery young
 East German poet and balladier
 whom Germans in both East and
 West have called the successor
 to the late poet and playwright
 Bertolt Brecht, has been de-
 nounced by the East German
 Communist party for his alleged
 "betrayal of the basic positions
 of Socialism."

The 29-year-old East Berliner,
 a man with a drooping red mus-
 tache and ever-present guitar,
 went to East Germany from
 Hamburg in 1953. He was then
 a member of the Communist-led
 Free German Youth organiza-
 tion.

He studied economics in East
 Berlin on a state scholarship
 and became a member of the
 Socialist Unity (Communist)
 party.

Ousted From Party in '63

After writing a satirical play
 about the Berlin wall he was
 expelled from the party in 1963.
 Since then Mr. Biermann has
 sung his biting songs and re-
 cited his incendiary verses be-
 fore the like-minded and curi-
 ous in rented halls, universities
 and writers' clubs of both
 Germanys.

Neues Deutschland, the party
 newspaper, opened the cam-
 paign against him last Decem-
 ber when it reviewed a collec-
 tion of his poems published in
 West Berlin.

From week to week the at-
 tacks grew more abusive until,
 on Dec. 15, Erich Honecker,
 a member of the party's Polit-
 bureau, reported to its Central



Wolf Biermann

Committee: "Biermann's so-
 called poems reveal his petty
 bourgeois anarchistic behavior,
 his arrogance, scepticism and
 cynicism."

In the course of the attacks,
 excerpts from Mr. Biermann's
 poems were published for the
 first time in East Germany—in
Neues Deutschland:

"I am supposed to sing to you
 Of the happiness of a new age.
 But your ears are deaf from
 speeches.
 Create in reality more happiness
 And no longer will you need
 the ersatz
 Of my words."

Again, the party newspaper
 quoted Biermann:

"I don't want to see anyone!
 Stop standing there!
 Don't stare!
 The collective is wrong.
 I am the individual.
 The collective has isolated itself
 From me!"

Following this excerpt, *Neues
 Deutschland* observed: "Bier-
 mann speaks for himself. He
 cannot cope with our new age,
 but the new age is not at
 fault."

His Verses Widely Known

When an American visitor to
 East Germany in mid-1955
 spoke with students, writers
 and dramatists about Wolf Bier-
 mann, they showed a detailed
 knowledge of his sardonic verses
 and ballads. They considered
 him a dramatic symbol of the
 gradual but persistent thaw in
 East German literature, theater
 and film over the last two
 years.

The party allowed him to per-
 form in West Germany last year,
 and party toleration of his per-
 formances in the East seemed
 to indicate a new willingness
 to permit criticism of "the basic
 tenets of Socialism" in East
 Germany.

But the rising attacks against
 him recently recall a political
 chanson in which he described
 the thaw.

"My Fatherland has a hand
 of fire.
 My Fatherland has a hand
 of snow.
 And thus it pains when we
 embrace.
 But the fire does melt the snow
 And warm waters, flow on red,
 red clover."

Outside of East Germany, liberal and
 radical critics took Biermann's part. *Die Zeit*
 of Hamburg published expressions of solidarity
 from Peter Weiss and Heinrich Böll (December 17,
 1965). *The Nation* of New York ran such a state-
 ment by Eric Bentley in its January 10, 1966, issue.
 Biermann must have been less gratified to be de-
 fended at length by Marcel Reich-Ranicki in *Die Zeit*,
 since Reich-Ranicki is a refugee from Communist
 Poland. And Biermann was horrified to be taken
 up as a martyr by the West German anti-Communist
 press in general.

On this subject he wrote what was destined
 to be his last contribution to *Neues Deutschland*,
 for the little paper went out of business soon there-
 after. In this poem the statue of a dwarf with which
 German middle-class people like to adorn their
 gardens is made the symbol of the West German
 press:

Es reizt mich nicht die Bohne
 wenn mir der deutsche Gartenzwerg
 verleiht die Dornenkrone
 Dornenkrone, meine Herrn
 ist doch noch kein Lorbeer nicht
 ach, ich glaub, ihr habt's schon gern
 wenn man mir das Rückgrat bricht
 Macht doch endlich eine grosse
 Lügenfett-Entfettungskur
 Leben steht nicht auf dem Spiele
 Euer Wohlleben ja nur.

I'm not in the least irritated
 If the German garden dwarf
 Confers the crown of thorns on me
 Crown of thorns, gentlemen

Is still not exactly a laurel crown
 Oh dear, I rather think you're happy
 If I get my backbone broken
 Go on a crash diet at long last
 Take off the fat of your mendacity
 Life is not at stake
 Only your way of life.

Would Biermann, too, re-affirm his solidarity with the government? He at no point ceased to regard himself as a good Communist. What he had strongly suggested, though, was that some adherents of the regime were bad Communists. That being his position, he could hardly in good faith confess any guilt. In "Reckless Abuse" he had acknowledged that the officials would like him to swim into the net of self-criticism. But he had said then -- and he had to prove it now -- that if they wanted him on bread they must first put him through the meat grinder.

Would they? The days of pure Stalinism were over. Biermann was not shot or even imprisoned, and so he has not been befriended by organizations that go to the help of the incarcerated. His punishment was less severe but more subtle. He was "left alone" but prevented from working, or rather from exhibiting his work, as also from making a living by it. No club-room could invite him to sing any more; no concert-hall could include him in its program. Since, even before, he was never invited onto TV, radio, or film, he was now left with nothing. Or almost nothing. A TV-film, "Biermann speaks and sings," already existed in the West and can still be exhibited in the West. A record album made by him and Neuss for Philips (West German) could still be bought in the West. The Wire Harp was selling there like hot cakes. Could Biermann earn a living by marketing his new work in the West?

On January 12, 1966, the East German Writers' Union declared that their writers had proved unequal to the challenge of a social situation in which greater social responsibility was called for. One conclusion from this premise was that East German writers couldn't be trusted to market their own wares. In future, it was to be strictly understood that their writings belonged to their publisher, the State; and only their publisher would be allowed to sell foreign rights. Such is the law which Germans call Lex Biermann. It seemed to stop up the last hole. But did it? Biermann was a Hamburger, and his literary rights were looked after by a member of his family in Hamburg. . . . As I write, in 1968, the legalities are still unsettled; as is the whole future of Wolf Biermann.

Meanwhile no further volumes of his work have in fact appeared in the West. Though he has written a good deal in the seclusion of the past two years, only snippets -- such as the Ky poems in this album -- have seen the light of day. Here is the last verse of a song entitled Vietnam which belongs to this period:

Verflucht im WEISSEN HAUS sei
 der Mörder-Präsident
 -- für seine Taten
 Ich kann und will nun nicht mehr nur
 auf Frieden
 warten
 Die Lunte brennt!
 Die Lunte brennt in Vietnam
 und nicht zum Spass
 Die Erde ist
 Die ganze runde Erde ist
 gerammelt voll:
 ein kochtrockenes Pulverfass!

Confound in his White House
 The Killer-President
 -- for what he's doing
 I won't just wait for peace to come
 I won't sit
 waiting
 The fuse is lit!
 The fuse is lit in Vietnam and that's
 no lie!
 The whole world is
 The whole round world's a powder keg
 The keg is full, the powder's dry!

Notes

For the English text of the songs and poems, the reader is referred to The Wire Harp by Wolf Biermann, translated by Eric Bentley, Harcourt, Brace and World, New York, 1968. For the German text, he is referred to Die Drahtgarbe, Klaus Wagenbach, West Berlin, 1965.

BALLAD ON THE POET FRANÇOIS VILLON.

Brecht's Threepenny: for the songs in Threepenny Opera Brecht drew freely upon a German translation of Villon.

ND: initials of *Neues Deutschland*, Communist newspaper, written in the language of functionaries.

DDR: *Deutsche Demokratische Republik*, or German Democratic Republic.

Kurella: Alfred Kurella (born 1895), a man who has held various important cultural posts in East Germany during the past dozen years. Attending a Kafka conference in Prague in 1962, he took the anti-Kafka side, and later wrote that, if one swallow does not make a summer, this swallow--Kafka--was in any case a bat.

BALLAD OF THE LETTER CARRIER WILLIAM L. MOORE OF BALTIMORE

who walked alone into the Southern States in 1963.
 He protested against the persecution of the Negroes.
 He was shot after one week.
 Three bullets struck him in the forehead.

SUNDAY

Sunday he rested, William L. Moore,
 After a week of work.
 He was a letter carrier, that's all.
 His home was Baltimore.

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MONDAY

Monday, a day in Baltimore,
To his good wife, said he:
I'm through delivering letters, my dear
It's touring the South I would be.

BLACK AND WHITE, UNITE, UNITE!
He wrote on a sign
And JIM CROW MUST GO, MUST GO!
And he set out alone.

TUESDAY

Tuesday, a day on the train going down,
Many asked William Moore:
What is the sign you got there with you?
And wished him luck on his tour.

BLACK AND WHITE, UNITE, UNITE!
Written on his sign . . .

WEDNESDAY

Wednesday, through Alabama that day,
William Moore went on foot.
Long is the road to Birmingham
And his feet hurt him a lot.

BLACK AND WHITE, UNITE, UNITE! *etc.*

THURSDAY

Thursday, the Sheriff stopped William Moore
Told him: "But you are white!
"Niggers are none of your business," he said.
"Fellow, just think of the price!"

BLACK AND WHITE, UNITE, UNITE! *etc.*

FRIDAY

Friday, a little dog followed him
Soon it was always there
And in the evening stones hit them both
But they walked on—quite a pair!

BLACK AND WHITE, UNITE, UNITE! *etc.*

SATURDAY

Saturday, this day was frightfully hot
And a white woman came
Gave him a drink and secretly said:
"You and I think just the same."

BLACK AND WHITE, UNITE, UNITE! *etc.*

LAST DAY

Sunday, a blue blue day, and he
Lay in the grass so green
Three red carnations, crimson as blood,
On his pale forehead were seen.

BLACK AND WHITE, UNITE, UNITE!
Written on his sign.
And: JIM CROW MUST GO, MUST GO!
And he died all alone
He won't remain alone.

THE BARLACH SONG.

Biermann has written a series of poems named
Portraits. In this one he paints the portrait of the
great sculptor Ernst Barlach, 1870-1938.

NOTHING TO IT! Public criticism of Stalin has been
approached in a very gingerly fashion in East
Germany. And public criticism of the Wall is almost

non-existent. "Ausweis bitte!" is what the border
guards at the Wall in Berlin say to visitors -- "pass-
port please!"



WILLIAM L. MOORE

SPAIN TODAY

MAY-JUNE, 1963

Franco's Only Solution: Blood

Paris, May 3

By JEAN-PAUL SARTRE

The Spanish government has assassinated Julián Grimau García. On the average, at least 400 workers leave Spain every day to try to find work abroad. I believe that these two facts are intimately related. The emigration—a veritable hemorrhage—is a measure of the insane ferocity of a regime which has increased exploitation and suppression to the point of depriving itself of the manpower it needs. These workers are leaving because they actually can no longer live; the annual per-capita income amounts to \$283; if one appreciates the incredible inequality that exists, those figures are a sufficient illustration of the misery resulting from a small number of people exercising power over the vast majority. It is the brutality of this privileged group which is undermining Franco's regime: the country can no longer afford to have its riches thus plundered. If the Spanish people were united, Franco could not last one more day.

The government is well aware of that. It must do its utmost to prevent such unity from coming into existence; it is lost unless it increases its terror from day to day. By every means available: civil liberties are suspended, the police are torturing people, the courts hand down prison terms of fifteen to twenty years, and even the death penalty. In October, 1960, Anastasio Merino was condemned to die. He is forty-three years old. The indictment tells us "that he happened to be in places where eighteen persons belonging to the Right were shot at . . . and it was said that it was he who shot at these people."

That was at the beginning of the Civil War: he was then nineteen years old. The case of Julián Grimau is hence not an isolated one and nobody could believe for a moment that he was condemned for crimes allegedly committed twenty-five years ago. He was tortured and killed because he was a Communist and because he attempted to organize resistance against *Franquist* oppression. If the police seize another responsible Communist tomorrow, they will torture and kill him as they did Grimau.

Franco knows only one solution: blood; it must be spilled. And more and more, the terror can only survive by getting

ever more terrible. The condemnation of Grimaud is a challenge by the government to the people: if the Republicans should start uniting, we shall kill them. The victim was well chosen: who, in the West, will bother about a Communist? I recall the statement made, at a recent demonstration in France, by a police sergeant to the cops who surrounded him: "There are only Communists left, you may proceed. . . ." They did proceed and killed eight people. The reason why I have such genuine respect for any Communist is the fact that he has assumed every possible risk in joining the party, that he has deliberately accepted the duty to fight all bourgeois societies.

The only mistake the sergeant made . . . was to assume that the massacre would remain a complete secret. Forty thousand people were in the streets on that day. Three days later we were seven hundred thousand at the funeral of the victims. Those criminals had brought about what a hundred conspirators could not have done; unity among the trade unions. The assassination of Grimaud, too, is a crime far too savage to be accepted in silence as those responsible for it may have hoped; to judge from the indignation which has become manifest throughout the world, one may surmise that a cold and profound indignation must exist today in the streets of Madrid. By imposing the death penalty on that courageous man, the court martial has, I am sure, hastened the unification of the Spanish resistance movement.

BALLAD OF THE SOLDIER IN WORLD WAR III.

Brecht wrote a poem, famous in Germany not least because it lost him his German citizenship in 1933, called Legend of the Dead Soldier. It told how Kaiser Wilhelm had the body of a dead hero dug up and re-inducted into the Army so it could die a second hero's death:

And they took the soldier away with them
A bright blue sky was on land.
When you took your helmet off you could see
The stars of the Fatherland.

And into his decomposing corpse
They poured some alcohol
And hung two nurses on his arm
And his half uncovered gal.

The band goes Boom-didi-Boom in front
As they play a snappy march
And the soldier just as he been taught
Throws out his legs from his arse.

With Boom-didi-Boom and See-you-soon
Priest and gal and pups
And the dead soldier in the midst
Like a monkey in his cups.

So many danced and revelled there
The soldier could not be seen.
The stars could see him from the sky
Where no one's ever been.

And the stars aren't always in the sky
For lo the dawn cometh
But the soldier just as he been taught
Marched to a hero's death.

BALLAD OF FREDI ROHSMEISL.

The new dances of the Fifties and Sixties in which partners don't touch were banned in East Germany as Western and decadent.

EARLY MORNING.

Milk is not delivered on Sunday, so you go out for it.

THE SINGER'S INAUGURAL ADDRESS.

This poem makes direct reference to official opposition to Biermann.

Marx-Engels Platz: principal public square in East Berlin.

GERMANY, A WINTER'S TALE.

The title doesn't refer to Shakespeare but to a poem by Heinrich Heine.

das lied om schlimmsten

weisst du was das schlimmste
dir im leben ist
was macht dich zum sklaven
was macht dich zum knecht
ach das schlimmste ists ja
ach dass es so ist
dass ihr unrecht leidet
so als ob es so sein muesst.

und was ist das schlimmste
an der heuchelei
was haelte euch in ketten
spottet noch dabei
ach das schlimmste ists ja
ach dass es so ist
dass ihr falschen sinn
saget einfach hin
und ihr doch die wahrheit wisst.

ich weiss was das schlimmste
dir im leben ist
wenn du deinem Herren
treu ergeben bist
ach das schlimmste ists ja
ach dass es so ist
dass wer alles duldet
lebt und schon gestorben ist.

THE SONG OF THE WORST THING

Do you know the worst thing
In the life you live
Making you a lackey
Making you a slave
Well, my friend, the worst thing
Is that all of you
Tolerate injustice
Just as if it had to be.

Do you know the worst thing
About hypocrisy
Making you a fool, not
Letting you be free
Well, my friend, the worst thing
Is that all of you
Carelessly let fall
What's not so at all
Even though you know the truth.

In the life you live, I
Know what's worst for you:
When you are obedient
When you're tried and true...
Well, my friend, the worst thing
Is that any man
Who puts up with all things
Lives but is already through.

Soldatenmelodie

Soldat, Soldat in grauer Norm,
Soldat, Soldat in Uniform,
Soldat, Soldat, ihr seid soviel,
Soldat, Soldat, das ist kein Spiel,
Soldat, Soldat, ich finde nicht,
Soldat, Soldat, ein Angesicht.
Soldaten sehn sich alle gleich,
lebendig und als Leich.

Soldat, Soldat, wo geht das hin?
Soldat, Soldat, wo ist der Sinn?
Soldat, Soldat, im nächsten Krieg,
Soldat, Soldat, gibt es kein'n Sieg,
Soldat, Soldat, die Welt ist jung,
Soldat, Soldat, so jung wie du,
die Welt hat einen tiefen Sprung.
Soldat, am Rand stehst du.

(Literal, prose translation of Soldatenmelodie:-

Soldier, soldier, in standard grey, Soldier, soldier,
in uniform, Soldier, soldier, there are so many of
you, Soldier, Soldier, it's no game, Soldier,
soldier, I do not find, Soldier, Soldier, a face.
Soldiers all look alike, alive or as corpses.

Soldier, soldier, where are you headed? Soldier,
soldier, where is the meaning? Soldier, soldier, in
the next war, Soldier, soldier, there is no victory.
Soldier, soldier, the world is young, Soldier,
soldier, as young as you. The world has a deep rift
in it. Soldier, you stand on its brink.)

ERIC BENTLEY

Eric Bentley is already wellknown to Folkways
listeners on account of his BENTLEY ON BRECHT
(FH 5434), SONGS OF HANNS EISLER (FH 5433)
and other albums. Brecht and Eisler are, of course,
Biermann's great models. He has written of the
latter as follows:

BRECHT ON THE RECORD

You will want to own these five record albums:

BENTLEY ON BRECHT

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Rare circumstance of a round human being!
Neither his tongue nor his brain showed any cleavage,
Nor was there any split in him between top and bottom.
Just where on other men's bodies you'd find a weak spot
Just where other men have got their backs broken
Arches powerfully forward his cheerful belly
And swings up and down in uproarious laughter
At stupidity in music, and not only in music.
Thus the big man spared us bigger words.

Marvelling still today we newcomers travel
Hither and yon over that tiny globe. O spherical
flatland,
Wondrous paradox! We never
Get to
The end.

And it was Hanns Eisler's son, Georg, who introduced
Eric Bentley to Wolf Biermann in the spring of 1965.
Biermann sang to Eisler and Bentley in his apartment,
and that was the beginning of the Bentley-Biermann
collaboration. Eric Bentley wrote about Biermann
in the Winter 1966 issue of *Partisan Review*, and took
his side in an editorial written for *The Nation*, 10
January 1966. A year later he had completed a
translation of *The Wire Harp*. During 1966 and 1967
he sang Biermann songs at peace demonstrations and
for student groups. On October 6, 1967, the BBC
(London) broadcast a forty-minute Biermann program
arranged and presented by Eric Bentley. A similar
program was broadcast in the United States by
Pacifica Radio in 1968.



BERTHOLD BRECHT

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