

## Press Release

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### **The Akademie der Künste is opening up the archive of editor and publisher Leonhard Kossuth**

Leonhard Kossuth, who was born 100 years ago on 25 July in Butscha near Kyiv, was one of the most important figures in the publishing world to bring the literature of the Soviet Union to an East German readership. From 1959 to 1989, he was head of the editorial department for Soviet Literature at the Kultur und Fortschritt and Volk und Welt publishing houses.

Kossuth transferred his substantial **archive** to the Akademie der Künste himself. In addition to photographs and biographical documents, it contains files relating to the books he edited and wrote as well as extensive correspondence with authors, editors and literary scholars, including Lilya Brik, Vasil Bykaŭ, Adolf Endler, Elke Erb, Konstantin Fedin, Lev Ginzburg, Stefan Heym, Grigorijus Kanovičius, Sarah Kirsch, Lev Kopelev, Abdizhamil Nurpeisov, Boris Plevoy, Yuri Rytkeu, Yuri Trifonov, Vladimir Tendryakov, Otar Chiladze and Fred and Maxie Wander.

Kossuth did not limit himself to the work of Russian authors; he also focused his attention on the Armenian, Georgian, Kyrgyz, Ukrainian and other national literatures from within the multi-ethnic state. He had contact in a professional capacity with a range of authors including Chingiz Aitmatov, Daniil Granin, Oles Honchar, Yevgeny Yevtushenko, Icchokas Meras, Bulat Okudzhava and Mykolas Sluckis. The classics of the early Soviet Union, from the work of Isaac Babel and Alexander Blok to that of Ilya Ehrenburg and Osip Mandelstam, became known to the East German public through Kossuth's editorial work, which was key to their transmission. Many a translation produced by his department also found its way to readers in the West in the form of licensed editions put out by West German publishers. As an editor, he made outstanding contributions to the works of Sergei Yesenin and Vladimir Mayakovsky and the Kazakh national poet Abai.

**Leonhard Kossuth** was born to a Ukrainian mother and an Austrian father. He went to school in Vienna and began studying engineering but was then conscripted and had to return to his mother's homeland in a Wehrmacht uniform. Having been detained as a POW, he applied himself to Slavonic studies in Berlin and Halle (Saale) following his release and met his future wife, Charlotte, who would go on to become a distinguished translator. After a few years working at the University of Halle and the German Institute for Literature in Leipzig, he switched to publishing, where he found lifelong employment, even though his wife had fallen into the clutches of the Stasi in 1956 and was sentenced to 20 months in prison for "state treason". In old age, Kossuth lived in the Cajewitz Foundation in Berlin,

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maintaining until the last a lively correspondence with writers and literary scholars in Moscow, Kyiv, Almaty and Bishkek, and received visits from authors and diplomatic representatives of various Soviet successor states. In the final month of his life, he was aware of Russian troops invading Ukraine, but he was spared knowledge of the war crimes that are now associated with his place of birth. Leonhard Kossuth died in Berlin on 1 March 2022.

The **Leonhard Kossuth Archive** is in a gradual process of in-depth cataloguing; thanks to Kossuth's generous financial bequest, it is being made accessible to researchers and interested members of the public. In terms of content, it is closely linked to the Volk und Welt publishing archive, which is also stored in the Academy Archives.

**For questions relating to the Leonhard Kossuth Archive, please contact:**

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