

TRAVEL AND EXCHANGE

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U.S.C.F.G.D.R. TOURS

The U. S. Committee for Friendship with the German Democratic Republic (130 East 16th Street 3rd floor, N.Y., N.Y. 10003) sponsored two tours of the GDR in August and September. Participants spent approximately two weeks visiting cities such as Leipzig, Dresden, Meissen and Berlin. Each tour included stops at museums and exhibitions as well as talks with representatives of trade unions, political organisations and youth groups.

ANTIOCH SUMMER TOUR TO THE GDR

As part of an intensive seven-month European Seminar, I accompanied a group of 26 students in the Marxist Studies Program at Antioch College (Yellow Springs, Ohio) for a three week tour to the GDR. In an attempt to generate understanding of how the theory of Marxism has been and is being applied in the transition to socialism, this group--together with Professors Andrew Winnick, Ludo Abicht and Monika Abicht--organized an itinerary covering Belgium, France, Italy, Yugoslavia and the GDR. Participants in the Seminar came from various academic disciplines and social backgrounds. Marxist studies had been an integral component of all their studies, and most of the students reflected a sophisticated background in Marxist theory. The group was definitely not interested in sight-seeing, but rather in meetings and discussions with representatives from important political institutions and social organizations.

As with all group tours to the GDR, arrangements had been through the Reisebüro der DDR (Jugendtourist). It became rapidly clear that this office--the only one available to foreign tourists--was not in a position to organize a "political" tour in the sense of the group. We were later informed that the Reisebüro is a tourist organization with neither the authority nor the personnel to set up contacts with individuals in government and state institutions. However, within the next 2-3 years such an office may be established, as this interest has increased enormously since the international diplomatic recognition of the GDR.

The following highlights offer an idea of what can be coordinated with enough determination and forethought. The first week included such things as a discussion of youth organizations and university policy with a representative of the FDJ, Berlin; also, a visit to the agricultural technical school and a collective farm in Trebin. The second week was filled with lectures of all kinds. One, for instance, was given by the Secretary of the Demokratischer Frauenbund, Berlin; and another on cultural policy was given by students from the Humboldt University. This week also included a visit to "Havelobst", an orchard run collectively by the FDJ.

The itinerary for the third week included lectures on health care and trade unions, plus trips to the Lenin museum, Buchenwald concentration camp and cities such as Weimar and Dresden. In addition, through personal and spontaneous contacts, informal meetings were arranged with the following: students from the Humboldt University, a NDPD representative to the National Assembly, a hotel directress, the dramatist Heiner Müller, a director from Deutsches Theater, a film librarian at the Volksbühne, and two young workers from Berlin. Finally, mention might be made of the official tour guide, Ramona Keller, a young philosophy student from the Humboldt University, and our "political advisor", Dr. Frank Karer from the Akademie der Wissenschaften, provided to us by the FDJ.

Despite their general background in Marxist theory, the Antioch group was not well enough prepared for the GDR section of the tour. Source material in English is non-existent or it reflects a typically biased, bourgeois perspective. Initial attitudes of the students ran the spectrum from hesitant neutrality to outright skepticism derived from a Marxist Iron-Curtain mentality of anti-Sovietism. By the end of the tour, however, expressions of critical respect prevailed in view of the economic stability and prosperity, but with due regard for the obvious bureaucratic centralism permeating all spheres of life.

-Marc D. Silberman
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BROWN UNIVERSITY EXCHANGE PROGRAM
WITH WILHELM PIECK UNIVERSITÄT, ROSTOCK

Since 1972 Brown University's German Department has participated in a program of materials exchange with the Wilhelm Pieck Universität in Rostock, GDR. The program has been expanded to include Brown's graduate and undergraduate students' annual participation in the Hochschulferienkurs held at Rostock each July. To date approximately 12 Brown students have attended the three and a half week course dealing with an introduction to GDR society and culture. The program also includes the exchange of books in the amount annually of five hundred dollars. Plans for actual student exchange and for faculty exchange between the two institutions are now being formulated. Professor Duncan Smith of Brown's German Department has made three visits to Rostock over the past four years to work with Professor Hans-Joachim Bernhard on the details of this program. His latest visit was the result of an invitation from Rostock to accept a guest professorship there for six weeks in May and June. Further information may be had by writing: Duncan Smith, German Department, Brown University, Providence, R.I. (02912).

WEIMAR 1976--AND MORE

As editor of the Bulletin, I was invited by the Ministerium für Hoch- und Fachschulwesen to visit the GDR this summer, including participation in the 1976 version of the "Weimar I" section of the Internationaler Hochschulferienkurs für Germanistik. Travel funds were generously provided by the International Research and Exchanges Board under an ad hoc grant to promote international exchange. Although the format of Weimar 1976 was essentially the same as that reported by Edmund Hecht in the last issue of the Bulletin, the theme of this year's program, "Erbepflege und Erberezeption in der DDR" resulted in a somewhat different constellation of speakers, seminars and colloquia. By any standard, the program was presented by a distinguished group, including persons from the literary sphere, such as Horst Haase (Institut für Gesellschaftswissenschaft beim ZK der SED), who headed the team which produced the long-awaited Geschichte der deutschen Literatur, Bd.

11: Literatur der DDR (See review section); Anneliese Löffler (Humboldt-Universität, Berlin), former editor of Weimarer Beiträge; Hans-Georg Werner (Martin-Luther-Universität, Halle-Wittenberg) on E. T. A. Hoffmann today and the rediscovery of the romantic heritage; Friedrich Möbius (Friedrich-Schiller-Universität, Jena) with a sharp critique of reception theory.

The extraordinary facilities of the Nationale Forschungs- und Gedenkstätten der klassischen deutschen Literatur in Weimar (NFG--humorously referred to as VEB Goethe by envious colleagues in less well-endowed university departments!) were well represented by Dr. Willi Ehrlich director of the Goethe Nationalmuseum, Dr. Hans Henning, director of the Zentralbibliothek der deutschen Klassik, Dr. Hans-Heinrich Reuter, who led a bi-weekly working group on "Aneignungsprobleme des klassischen Erbes"; and Dr. Walter Dietze, general director of the NFG, who led a brilliant colloquium on "Klassisches Erbe und sozialistisches Traditionsverständnis".

Prominent medievalists, linguists and theater people were also well-represented. Because of its proximity, scholars from Friedrich-Schiller-Universität, Jena, also played a particularly prominent role in the program, especially those dealing with this institute's special field of concentration: literature of the 1920's and 1930's -- Dr. Irene Wegener on Anna Seghers, Dr. Manfred Beyer on Döblin and Brecht, Dr. Klaus Hammer on Friedrich Wolf. In addition, there were lectures on economic problems of the post-IX. Parteitag era and developments in the visual arts and music. Special theater, film and pantomime performances, orchestra and chamber concerts were arranged for us, along with three splendidly organized day-long excursions to points well off the beaten tourist track. There were receptions, parties, long walks in idyllic surroundings -- and even opportunities for independent trips to other towns and cities. An especially attractive feature of my own program was a small Arbeitsgemeinschaft of some eight persons half of them from the GDR, which initially dealt with the prose writings of Günter Kunert under the competent and gracious leadership of Hans Richter, Jena. After

a session with Kunert in person, we moved on to an exploration of poets' self-perceptions of their role in contemporary GDR society. Other groups who worked on the poetry of Heinz Kahlau and the dramas of Joachim Knauth also had a session with the writer concerned in addition to the evening readings by the writers, which were open to the entire group.

As editor of the Bulletin, I also had opportunities to talk privately with most of these people as well as with the editors of most of the major literary publishing houses, a representative of the ministry of education and the deputy minister of culture, who has general responsibility for publishing activity in the GDR. I spent a rewarding day with the director and some of the staff of the Herder Institut in Leipzig, which has attempted to support the Bulletin from the beginning. Everywhere I encountered warm support and interest in our activities, open and helpful discussion partners -- many of whom expressed amazement at the extent of interest in GDR topics reflected in the pages of the Bulletin. The U. S. Embassy in Berlin became likewise apprised of the interests of members of our profession in better channels of information and increased opportunities for academic and cultural exchange.

Since Weimar I is the most prestigious of the various summer programs in the GDR, participation is supposedly limited to college and university teachers with previous experience in GDR literature and culture. Selection of participants is unfortunately limited to a certain extent, however, by cultural agreements of the GDR with other socialist countries, whereby a majority of participants are "delegated" by the ministries of their respective countries. While this leads to a wider range of interests and familiarity with the substance of the program than one might hope for, it is an interesting mix of people from almost every country in Europe, in fact from almost every continent, and those with similar degrees of expertise soon found their way together. In view of the fact that all arrangements, including visas, are taken care of for participants, these programs offer a high-quality initial acquaintance with

the academic milieu in the GDR, free from the many frustrations which seem to confront those undertaking to organize their own program or one for their students.

Although the situation is rapidly changing, Americans are still a relatively rare species in the GDR and will find their colleagues there eager for an exchange of ideas and experiences. Since there is no coercion, beyond their intrinsic appeal, to participate in any of the planned activities, there is adequate opportunity to undertake independent activities and excursions. The Bulletin will publicize next year's programs as soon as we receive specific information.

-- Patricia Herminhouse
Washington University

VISITING LECTURERS

FRITZ BENNEWITZ

Professor Fritz Bennewitz, director of the Deutsches Nationaltheater in Weimar, will be in New York City for two months in early 1977. Bennewitz has been invited to direct a production of "Der kaukasische Kreidekreis" at La Mama Theater, with a cast composed of members of New York's ethnic minorities. He will be at La Mama, 74A East Fourth St., from January 25 until the production opens on March 27. After New York, he will undertake a similar venture in Manila, The Philippines. Bennewitz, who is particularly acclaimed for his Brecht and Shakespeare productions and was the director of a highly original "Faust" production in Weimar last year, is especially interested in contact with theater specialists in this country. Persons interested in meeting or inviting him to their campus should write now to Professor Fritz Bennewitz, DDR-53 Weimar, Markt 10.