

1985

## Travel and Exchange

various authors

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### Recommended Citation

authors, various (1985) "Travel and Exchange," *GDR Bulletin*: Vol. 11: Iss. 2. <https://doi.org/10.4148/gdrb.v11i2.743>

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On February 13th, 1945, following the combined authors: Travel and Exchange  
British and American bombing of Dresden which set the center of that city ablaze and left some 35,000 citizens dead, the Semper Opera House, one of Europe's finest performing arts centers, was also destroyed. Forty years later, the GDR government--after investing some seven years and \$83 million in reconstruction--reopened the Semper with a production of Carl Maria von Weber's "Der Freischütz", the last opera to be performed at the Dresden cultural center prior to its destruction. This performance of Weber's work featured Jana Smitkova, Klaus König, and Theo Adam. "Der Freischütz" has as its setting the Thirty Years War of the 17th century. According to James M. Markham in The New York Times:

"The production drew strong parallels between the 17th and 20th centuries, de-emphasizing Weber's original religious impulses and discovering revolutionary, antifeudal, antiwar elements in the opera's final scenes." The first evening was attended by many dignitaries from both the SED, including its leader Erich Honecker, and the foreign diplomatic corps. The Semper was designed by the Hamburg architect Gottfried Semper in the style of the Italian Renaissance with figures from Goethe's Faust and Lessing's Nathan der Weise decorating its exterior; the construction, directed by Semper's son Manfred, was begun in 1869 and completed in 1878. Both Richard Wagner and Richard Strauss recognized the superb acoustic quality of the house, the former referring to it as "a wonder harp," the latter calling it the "El Dorado of world premieres." The GDR government takes special pride in its reconstruction efforts and the Semper in Dresden is, indeed, a showcase of the GDR's achievements in this direction.

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Herr Weiße ist 27 Jahre alt, arbeitet in einer Möbelfabrik und wohnt im Bezirk Karl-Marx-Stadt. Er interessiert sich für amerikanische Kultur und möchte seine englischen Sprachkenntnisse verbessern.

INTERNATIONALER SOMMERKURS, Rostock 1984

The course in Rostock was attended by 140 participants from approximately 23 different countries.

Tendencies in GDR literature, theory and criticism, and language and linguistics, within the social context of the GDR, were the main focus of the course. Introductory lectures on these topics served as a basis for further discussion in smaller working groups (Arbeitsgruppen). The groups I attended were concerned with Marxist-Leninist literary theory and contemporary literature in the GDR. I found that faculty members were very receptive to the questions and needs of the course participants and were able to communicate material and ideas in a way which made them easily accessible to students coming from very different academic and sociopolitical environments.

The discussion surrounding contemporary theory and criticism indicated an increasing interest in the GDR in reception theory, sociology of literature, and text-intrinsic interpretation, i.e. towards the consideration of all aspects of the production, distribution, and

reception of literary works on the basis of Marxist-Leninist political and economic theory. In connection with this working group, there were meetings with representatives from the journal Neue Deutsche Literatur and the publishing house Der Morgen. A visit to the Bezirksbibliothek Willi Bredel in Rostock gave insight into the organization of public libraries in the GDR, which are well stocked and used extensively by readers.

The working group on contemporary GDR literature was concerned mainly with the reflection in various works of the problems and needs of the individual in modern GDR society. Works by authors such as Christa Wolf, Maxie Wander, Irmtraud Morgner, Christoph Hein and Volker Braun were discussed. Most participants agreed that it would be advantageous to distribute a tentative list of works well before the course begins next year, so that students may be better prepared and bring books with them which are not always available in libraries and bookshops in Rostock.

Participants were also given the opportunity to increase their German language proficiency by attending phonetics courses and small discussion groups (Sprachgruppen) which were formed according to the level of language ability. One of the main problems for the course organizers was that a large proportion of those attending were not Germanists and could speak little or no German. Consequently, some groups had to be converted into elementary language courses.

The program also included readings by the authors Günter Görlich and Frank Weymann, five films, including the controversial film version of Der Aufenthalt by Hermann Kant, and excursions to the islands Hiddensee, Stralsund, Güstrow, and other local places of interest.

On the whole, I consider my visit to the GDR a valuable learning experience. The course organizers and our Betreuer, a group of students from Rostock University--all of them volunteers!--spared no effort to make our stay

as informative and enjoyable as possible. I hope many more Germanists will take this opportunity to visit the GDR and communicate with its citizens and their colleagues from many parts of the world.

Janice A. Murray  
UCLA

### CONFERENCES

#### LOUGHBOROUGH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE GDR

The theme of the conference will be "Perspectives on the GDR." The conference fee is 48 British pounds (residential)/32 British pounds (non-residential). This should be paid by the end of July 1985 at the latest. The number of places available is limited to 80. The program will include presentations of papers by Anita Mallinckrodt, Margy Gerber, David Elliot, and others. Christoph Hein will read from his works. The conference will take place at the Loughborough University of Technology (Hazlerigg Hall) from 13th-15th September 1985. For further information, please contact: Department of European Studies, Loughborough University of Technology, Loughborough, LE11 3TU, England.

#### ELEVENTH NEW HAMPSHIRE SYMPOSIUM ON THE GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

The central theme of the 1985 Symposium (June 21-28, 1985--World Fellowship Center, Conway, NH) will be "The GDR Today--Forty Years after the End of WW II." As in past years, the Symposium will be interdisciplinary. For