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Travel and Exchange

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TRAVEL AND EXCHANGE

WEIMAR 1975

From July 6 to 28, 1975, I participated in an "International Hochschulferienkurs für Germanistik der DDR," sponsored by the University of Jena and held in Weimar, Thuringia. It was one of eleven such international university summer courses held annually in the GDR, seven of which are for teachers, four for students of German. (Dates and locations of the 1976 Hochschulferienkurse were published in the September 1975 issue of the Bulletin. The cost for the three-week courses is a very reasonable \$180 for teachers and \$120 for students and includes room, full board, instruction, excursions, and health care.)

There were just above one hundred participants in the Weimar I group. The course program was intelligently conceived, well-organized, and well-staffed. Twenty-seven Lektoren, Betreuer, and administrators served as liaison personnel and were responsible for the daily instructional program. The course administration was responsive to the suggestions of participants and the teaching was handled competently. On the basis of written and oral placement tests, participants were assigned to practice groups for remedial work in phonetics, conversation, composition, and grammar. In addition, they were free to choose one of the following Arbeitsgemeinschaften: GDR Drama, GDR Short Prose, GDR Poetry, and Grammar. People requiring no further language training joined in an Interessengemeinschaft on advanced stylistics and enjoyed a supplemental lecture program dealing with aspects of the "Pflege des kulturellen Erbes" in Weimar. While the teaching lay in the hands of Jena University personnel, an additional twenty-eight specialists from different parts of the country maintained the lecture program, which dealt with questions of historical, political, economic, artistic, and intellectual life. Most interesting were a presentation by the Stellvertreter des Ministers für Kultur, Klaus Höpke, on the role of culture in the GDR, a lecture by Professor Dr. Dieter Schlenstedt of the Academy of Sciences, Berlin, on the GDR-novel in the 70s, and readings by authors Bernd Jentsch, Sarah Kirsch, Eva and Erwin Strittmatter. Höpke displayed an engaging blend of ideological aggressiveness, erudition, pride

in the cultural achievements of his country, and humor. The extended question-and-answer sessions, which followed all presentations, often developed into hour-long debates and were as interesting as the lectures themselves. The average program-day consisted of two to four Übungen, seminars, colloquia, or lectures, with lighter programs on Saturdays and Sundays. Local archives, library, museums, and galleries were accessible to course participants. A real discovery was the excellent Museum für Ur- und Frühgeschichte Thüringens.

The opportunity of watching GDR colleagues in the process of teaching German as a foreign language and comparing methods and results with them was an incidental benefit of the Weimar course. It was equally instructive to observe faculty-student interaction at a socialist university, since the lectures and some of the Übungen were regularly attended by groups of Jena University Hospitanten. The long-range planning, according to which research is being conducted and theses are written within the Sektion Germanistik of the University of Jena and which, no doubt, is representative of procedures at other GDR universities, seems to be effective. It entails a systematic exploration of the socialist heritage in German literature, the coverage of GDR writers since 1949, of genres, of stylistic and linguistic phenomena, and of certain literary movements in the German-speaking areas, as seen from the perspective of socialist ideology.

An important dimension of living in Weimar was to discover and to sense Goethe's presence virtually everywhere. It was not difficult to experience what might best be described as a visceral awareness of the Great Master.

Among the coincidental bonuses of participating in the Hochschulferienkurs was the opportunity of getting acquainted with colleagues from socialist countries, in particular from the various republics of the Soviet Union, from Poland, Bulgaria, Rumania, and from developing nations, like Algeria, Egypt, and Morocco. It was enlightening to compare notes with them regarding methodology, teaching loads, enrollments, class sizes, textbooks, teaching aids, and prevailing attitudes towards German studies in their respective countries, some of which were devastated by the Germans as recently as thirty years ago. Furthermore, since the Hochschulferienkurs coincided with the "III. Kulturtag der Freien Deutschen Jugend" and ran parallel with the summer program of the Hochschule für Musik "Franz Liszt", course partici-

pants were able to attend a variety of unique political and cultural events.

Finally, the chances of establishing contacts with citizens of the GDR abounded, in Weimar, as well as throughout Thuringia and Saxony, since we were free to travel on weekends. -- Incidentally, there was no need to be apprehensive about ideological pressure and proselytising. At least, that seemed to be the experience of the four Americans in the course. In fact, our different views were met with a great deal of tolerance. The spirit that existed within the group, including the University of Jena staff, was one of mutual respect and cordiality. I, for one, found being in the Weimar course an enjoyable learning experience and can recommend it to colleagues without reservations.

Edmund P. Hecht
Kenyon College
Gambier, Ohio

TRAVEL '76

After the successful program of 1975, the John Abbott College TRAVEL '76 program will again offer students a chance to develop a first-hand awareness and understanding of life in the GDR. Students participating in the program will be based in Erfurt, Dresden and Berlin, sleeping in dormitories in each of the cities. Most dinners and lunches will be with the group in local restaurants and are included in the price of the trip. Breakfasts are not included but may be prepared at the dormitories.

COURSES

Students must register for three of the following courses, but, will have an opportunity to participate in all of them if desired. (A maximum of three credits will be awarded): Socialist World View in the GDR, Education in the GDR, Arts in the GDR, One or Two Germanys. All courses are subject to the approval of the Academic Council. Sixteen hours of instruction will take place prior to departure for Germany.

ITINERARY

July 15-Thursday-Air Canada to Frankfurt, train to Erfurt.

July 16-Friday-Arrive Erfurt. Orientation and
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- July 17-Saturday-Eisenach (Wartburg Castle).
- July 18-Sunday-Pioneer camp, boating.
- July 19-Monday-Erfurt North-Discussion with city planners.
- July 20-Tuesday-Visit workers' cultural club in factory.
- July 21-Wednesday-Discussion with trade union representative. Visit swimming pool.
- July 22-Thursday-Visit with women's organization representative.
- July 23-Friday-Visit kindergarten-evening visit to disco or student club.
- July 24-Saturday-Visit summer theater i.e. Bad Lauchstadt or Thüringen round trip with stop for horse-back riding.
- July 25-Sunday-Visit collective farm.
- July 26-Monday-Discussion with church representative. Visit gymnasium, exercise.
- July 27-Tuesday-Discussion with National Front and Free German Youth representatives.
- July 28-Wednesday-Discussion with judge or lawyer. Swim.
- July 29-Thursday-Visit health facility, talk to doctors, health officials.
- July 30-Friday-Visit polytechnical school or college. Evening: visit disco or student club.
- July 31-Saturday-Buchenwald concentration camp.
- Aug. 1-Sunday-Weimar. Visit Goethe, Schiller houses.
- Aug. 2-Monday-Free.
- Aug. 3-Tuesday-Leipzig (morning), visit location of Reichstag fire trial. Dresden evening.
- Aug. 4-Wednesday-Visit Zwinger, Pillnitz castles.
- Aug. 5-Thursday-Meet with Helmut Arnis (Jewish community head). Afternoon free, evening to Berlin.
- Aug. 6-Friday-German Museum of History, Trep-tower Park and boat ride.
- Aug. 7-Saturday-Potsdam, Cecilienhof and Sachsenhausen.
- Aug. 8-Sunday-Student camp.
- Aug. 9-Monday-Visit House of Teachers, Karl Ordnung, representative of Christian Democratic Union.
- Aug. 10-Tuesday-Visit John Peet, editor of the German Democratic Report.
- Aug. 11-Wednesday-Visit Friedensrat der DDR (Peace Council of the GDR).
- Aug. 12-Thursday-Free
- Aug. 13-Return to Montreal. Air Canada.

COST

The price of \$700 includes all of the items indicated in the itinerary, i.e. air fare, transfers, accommodations and some meals. Students interested in participating in the

program should contact Alan Weiss, John Abbott College, Kirkland, Quebec, CANADA, as soon as possible.

RESEARCH IN PROGRESS

SEGHERS Festschrift

"Die Flucht als Angriff. Studien zum Roman 'Das Siebte Kreuz'" wird von Peter Roos und Friederike Hassauer als Festschrift für Anna Seghers geplant. In dieser Festschrift soll anhand des Romans "Das siebte Kreuz" exemplarisch die Totalität eines Kunstwerks auf einer wissenschaftlich-publizistischen Meta-Ebene analysiert werden. Leser, die eventuell einen Beitrag zum Projekt beisteuern könnten, sollen sich ein Programm von den Herausgebern zuschicken lassen: 5 Köln, Konradstr. 40, West Germany.

RECENT PAPERS

Ronald H.D. Nabrotzky, Iowa State University, "Wozu Heinrich Heine in der DDR" (paper for Iowa AATG Bicentennial Year Workshop, March 1976).

Fritz König, University of Northern Iowa, "The Integration of GDR Literature into Classes on Modern and Contemporary German Literature" (paper for Iowa AATG Workshop)

Ansätze zur Rilke-Forschung in der DDR

Zum 100. Geburtstag Rainer Maria Rilkes am 4. Dezember 1975 standen in allen überregionalen DDR-Zeitungen kenntnisreiche und verständnisvolle Gedenkartikel, sogar im sonst literaturabstinenten Gewerkschaftsblatt "Tribüne", das im Werk des Dichters ein "Zurücksehen nach vorkapitalistischen Verhältnissen" entdeckte, während Hans Richter in "Neues Deutschland" von "Gegenbildern zur Gegenwart" und "antikapitalistischen Zukunftsentwürfen" sprach. In allen diesen Artikeln wie auch in einem Ostberliner Podiumsgespräch im Dezember, das Rilke-Experten der DDR zu Wort kommen ließ, wurde immer wieder betont, daß der Dichter, der den Krieg verabscheut habe, 1917 Sophie Liebknecht begegnet, 1918/19 mit Kurt Eisner,

Oskar Maria Graf, Ernst Toller befreundet gewesen sei und die Ausrufung der Bayerischen Räterepublik freudig begrüßt habe.

Der Grund für diese unerwartete Aufgeschlossenheit der DDR-Germanistik, die 1976 ihren Ausdruck in einem Sammelband "Rilke-Studien" des Ostberliner Aufbau-Verlags und einer für später geplanten Rilke-Ausgabe durch Hans Richter finden wird, mag einmal in der kulturell-politischen Auflockerung der letzten fünf Jahre und dann auch im gewachsenen Selbstbewußtsein der DDR-Germanistik selbst liegen, die noch vor anderthalb Jahrzehnten die Auseinandersetzung mit jeder Spielart "spätbürgerlicher" Dichtung scheute. Inzwischen aber wurden die naturalistische und, in deutscher Abkehr von Georg Lukacs, die expressionistische Literaturbewegung rezipiert, die beiden Anthologien expressionistischer Lyrik von Kurt Pinthus "Menschheitsdämmerung" (1919) und von Ludwig Rubiner "Kameraden der Menschheit" (1920) wurden nachgedruckt und Reinhard Weisbach, selbst Lyriker und Germanist, definierte in seiner Untersuchung "Wir und der Expressionismus" (1972) die offizielle Position der Literaturwissenschaft.

Die Aufwertung des "spätbürgerlichen" Lyrikers Rilke hat freilich noch einen anderen Grund: im Frühwerk einer ganzen Reihe sozialistischer Lyriker wie Johannes R. Becher (1891-1958), Louis FURNBERG (1909-1957) und Georg MAUER (1907-1971) ist der Einfluß von Rilke-Gedichten unverkennbar (wie auch noch die Wirkung Gottfried Benns auf die Lyrik Franz Fühmanns zu untersuchen bleibt!).

Die neue Interpretation Rilkes setzte schon 1973/74 ein in den beiden Bänden 1890-1945 der offiziellen "Geschichte der deutschen Literatur" (Verlag "Volk und Wissen", Ost-Berlin), wo dem Werk des Dichters "ein der Kritik am Imperialismus abgewonnenes humanistisches Menschenbild" und "eine humanistische Gesellschaftsperspektive" gerügt wurde. Diese kritisch-distanzierte, aber dennoch positive Einstellung fand ihre Fortsetzung im zweiten Band des Leipziger Schriftstellerlexikons (1974), wo Rilke "einer der bedeutendsten und einflußreichsten spätbürgerlichen Dichter" genannt wurde, dessen "Suchen nach Menschlichkeit...den Mächten des Ungeists nicht wirksam zu begegnen" vermochte. Besonders erwähnt wird seine Rußland-Reise 1900 und sein Besuch bei Leo Tolstoj wie auch seine Liebe zur böhmischen Volksdichtung, "ohne allerdings von deren fortschrittlichen Tendenzen berührt zu sein". Hier nun fand sich der Ansatzpunkt einer marxistischen Rilke-Kritik: seine