

**3rd International Summer School Prague – Szczecin 2014:
Annus Mirabilis: The Year 1989 in East Central Europe. Causes, Processes,
Consequences
Szczecin – Wrocław – Prague, 24/8 - 7/9/2014**

“Annus Mirabilis: The Year 1989 in East Central Europe“ is the 3rd International Summer School supported by the “Go East” Program of the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD). The summer school is organized jointly by the University of Szczecin and Charles University Prague and will be held in cooperation with the Center for Interdisciplinary Polish Studies at the European University Viadrina in Frankfurt (Oder) and the Willy Brandt Center for German and European Studies at the University of Wrocław.

2014 is the 25th anniversary of the “annus mirabilis“ 1989. Recapitulation of the dramatic, rousing, and revolutionary events in Poland, Hungary, the GDR, the ČSSR and Romania, and also in Baltic republics of the Soviet Union shortly thereafter will not only take place in the media. The public remembrance will also offer an appropriate opportunity for the humanities and social sciences to pay new attention to the end of state socialism and the subsequent transformations of the economic, social and political systems of East Central and Eastern Europe. While the social and political sciences have already developed long-running research debates, historians are also starting to unfold new research perspectives with the growing distance of time and the increasing availability of archival materials. Against this background, the range of upcoming national anniversaries of 1989 offer an opportunity to critically examine previous research results and discuss advances in historical perspectives.

In addition to scholarly debates among historians, the prehistories, processes and consequences of the change of 1989 are also major topics of ongoing public discussions and political conflicts of interpretation in all societies that were impacted by these changes. The revolutions of 1989-1991 constitute core elements of identity-building and self-assurance in the new democracies and the newly developing political cultures. In this connection, debates about the past are, at the same time, debates about the present and the future.

The focus of the international summer school 2014 will be the events of the year 1989, their prehistories and their consequences in Poland and Czechoslovakia / Czech Republic. The discussions will focus primarily on the following, often contested issues:

- What was the nature of state socialism? Were the “people’s democracies“ totalitarian dictatorships, forcibly suppressing entire populations, or simply authoritarian regimes, which made use of various instruments of power to secure their existence?
- What were the reasons for the downfall of the socialist regimes? Apart from economic explanations and the role of political factors such as the activities of dissidents, one should also consider the fact that Gorbachev abandoned the Soviet threat of intervention and thereby opened up the possibility of “round table” negotiations.
- The paths and diversity of the transformation process in East Central and Eastern Europe, which more than once overthrew initial prognoses. Here, cultural aspects (“path dependencies“) or diverging practices of exercising power („Leninist legacies“) must be considered.
- In addition, coming to terms with the history of state socialist regimes has developed into a major political battlefield. Controversies oscillate between amnesia, amnesty, and absolution. Thus, the narratives of “1989“ based on these debates form an important aspect in legitimizing new claims to exercise power.

The summer school will be held in Szczecin, Wrocław, and Prague.

Szczecin is of interest for three reasons: In 1970/71 and 1980/81 the city was a center of worker

protests and strikes in the People's Republic of Poland. Those protests, however, were more proletarian and less shaped by intellectuals than in Gdańsk, for example. Furthermore, Szczecin's situation has been fundamentally changed by the new character of the German-Polish border since 1989, which moved the city away from a position on the periphery into the center of a new system of the borderland.

In *Wrocław*, although the point of departure after 1945 was similar to that of Szczecin, opposition against the socialist regime was shaped to a larger degree by the activities of intellectuals and artists. Furthermore, the city developed much more dynamically than Szczecin after 1989. *Prague* was the center of the "Velvet Revolution". Protests emanating from the city spread across the entire country by the end of 1989 and finally overthrew the socialist regime. Prague also played an important role in the prehistory of the fall of the Berlin wall in the GDR: In October 1989 more than 3,000 GDR citizens fled onto the embassy grounds of the German Federal Republic and after lengthy negotiations were allowed to leave for Western Germany.

The International Summer School "Annus Mirabilis: The Year 1989 in East Central Europe" addresses MA and PhD students from the Czech Republic, Germany, Poland, and beyond. The summer school will examine the events of 1989 as well as their prehistory and consequences in East Central Europe with a focus on Poland and Czechoslovakia / Czech Republic. Participants will analyze and understand the central problems and current debates in talks and panel discussions with prominent persons from the process of transformation, with subject-experts (historians, scholars of culture, social scientists), and also by preparing their own presentations of selected topics. The program includes on-site visits and excursions to sites of the "revolutions" together with former activists and eye witnesses. Participants of the summer school gain ECTS credit points for the successful completion of an essay.

The Summer School will be held in English.

Eligibility:

Application with a one-page letter of motivation, resume, application form, and recommendation by a university teacher.

Czech or Polish language knowledge is appreciated, but not required.

Participation fee: 650 EUR for participants from Germany and other countries, except for countries in East Central and Eastern Europe (please contact the organizers for more information about participation fees).

Please note: the DAAD has agreed to support up to 10 German participants (for further information see <https://goeast.daad.de/de/25457/index.html> or contact the organizers).

Application deadline: 31/5/2014

For further information see: www.joerghackmann.eu/summer_school.html

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