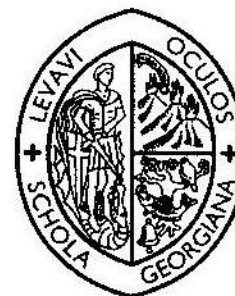


Friday June 24th 2011



### Eastern Europe Trip 2012

Dear Parents,

We are writing to give details of the Eastern Europe trip 2012. This has been run very successfully in previous years at St George's, proving to be a very popular and worthwhile educational experience. It will be of real benefit to those studying History at A2, Germany 1945-1990, though it will still be of much benefit and interest to students who aren't studying history. Indeed, there is a wider social, moral, spiritual and cultural purpose to the trip, beyond any exam. During our trip we will draw on the experiences of ordinary people and how they were affected by living under repression, by being split from their loved ones and even persecuted because of their beliefs, their race or ethnicity. We hope the experiences of all students will be profound and enduring.

The trip will run from Friday 30<sup>th</sup> March to Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> of April 2012, entirely within the Easter holidays. We will travel by executive, air-conditioned coach, and will stay in Hotels and Youth Hostels in the cities of Berlin, Leipzig and Prague. In Berlin, staying three nights in central accommodation, we will begin our studies of the impact of the Cold War on Germany by visiting the remnants of the former death strip at Potsdamer Platz, and the watchtowers of Leipzigerstrasse. Indeed, Leipzigerstrasse was also the site of open rebellion against the East German State in 1953, an uprising cruelly quashed by Soviet Tanks. The impact of the Berlin Wall will further be explored through visits to the excellent museum at Checkpoint Charlie, one of three Checkpoints in the city during the Cold War, and to the fascinating artistic representation of the wall at the new documentation centre at Bernauer Strasse.

The wall symbolised the harsh divide between East and West. A key element of the GDR's system of control was the use of the State Police, the Stasi. Recently made famous in the film *The Lives of Others*, the Stasi were one of the most successful and expansive police systems in History – 1 in 6 Germans in the GDR was an informant! We will visit the eerie and moving Stasi Prison, a former remand centre for political prisoners. The Stasi Prison gives a fascinating insight into the interrogation methods used by the Stasi on thousands of ordinary Germans and the modern day relevance of issues like physical and psychological torture and judicial murder.

The impact of the Cold War on Berlin was profound. However, in many ways, the GDR brought positive aspects to its people and these are brought home in the fun and slightly kitsch brand-new DDR museum just off Alexanderplatz. The socialist ideal of the time can also be seen in the model murals around Alexanderplatz and the wondrous Stalinist architecture of Karl Marx Alle. One should not underestimate the pain inflicted on the German people: the affecting chapel of Reconciliation at Bernauerstrasse and memorial of the dissidents at the Zionkirche in Prenzlauerberg will also bring home suffering of ordinary citizens.

Berlin has been known as a weathervane of history and it hasn't just seen the tumultuous events of the Cold War. Our visit to the Reichstag not only provides a fantastic view of the city but also gives a clear narrative of the traumatic century it has been witness to. Veering off the curriculum, we will take in the striking, newly constructed Holocaust memorial in the centre of the city, which gives a powerful retelling of the persecution of the Jewish community of Berlin in the 1930s. The students will also become painfully aware of the vacuum of modern-day Jewish experience – a sharp contrast with the long history of the vibrancy of Jewish people in Berlin. Starting the day off at the excellent Jewish Museum, our experiences will be consolidated through a walking tour of the Jewish district of Hamburgerstrasse, taking in the New Synagogue, Jewish Boys' School and former site of the main Jewish cemetery, itself cruelly razed to the ground by the Nazis in the Second World War. There will also be the opportunity to visit the Otto Weidt workshop and trace the story of Otto Weidt and his efforts to save and hide Jewish workers – Berlin's own Oscar Schindler. Berlin is a fascinating city, not only of the past but also of the now, and students will have the opportunity to explore some of the districts themselves, taking in the sights, shops and other cultural attractions.

We will also take in the imperious and powerful 18<sup>th</sup> century Prussian architecture of Berlin and Friedrich the Great. After 3 days in this great city, we travel south to Leipzig. Leipzig is rightly famous for the German greats of Goethe, Schiller and Bach but also provides some excellent opportunities to further stretch our understanding of *Die Wende*, the so-called 'turn' – the German revolution of 1989. It was primarily in Leipzig that the protests against the state gained momentum –

Monday prayer meetings of the Nikolaikirche in the summer of 1989 and protests in the city centre on October 9<sup>th</sup> were a turning point for the end of the GDR. We will visit the sites of the 'peaceful revolution' and also take in the Contemporary History Forum, with its excellent exhibition on the GDR, and the Runde Ecke, the former Stasi Headquarters. Leipzig has been carefully restored and its centre is a picturesque and thoughtful place to visit. We then travel to Prague, stopping at Dresden for lunch. Before the Second World War, Dresden was widely known as the 'Florence of the East', with its dazzling Neo-Classical masterpieces shimmering in the magnificent Elbe.

Dresden is now better known for the destruction wrought by British and American bombers in February of 1945 and the newly restored Frauenkirche will provide a poignant place of reflection for our students. We then continue our journey to Prague and on the way visit the harrowing fortress town of Terezin. Terezin was used by the Nazis in the Second World War as a model ghetto, where even the Red Cross were duped into believing that the Jewish people were properly treated, and was also used as a place of concentration in horrific conditions, transport and also execution. The chilling words 'Arbeit Macht Frei' greet the visitor of the SS small fortress at Terezin. It is entirely preserved and these poignant stories are told through some outstanding, if, disturbing, museums and sites. We will then arrive in Prague, staying 2 nights in central Hotel accommodation and will continue to explore these themes as we visit Lidice, a village completely obliterated by the Nazi government of Bohemia and Moravia in 1942 in retaliation for the assassination of Reinhard Heydrich by Czech special forces.

Prague is a beautiful city and the students will have time to go shopping and soak in the majesty of the place. We will have a walking tour of the city, taking in the Renaissance architecture and will visit the amazing Charles Bridge and resplendent Castle. Whilst in Prague we will also visit the excellent Museum of Communism and will finish the day by having a walking tour of the history of Soviet occupation of Prague, including the events of the Prague Spring of 1968 and the beginnings of the Velvet Revolution in Wenceslas Square in 1989. Other highlights of Prague students will have the opportunity to visit are the fascinating Kafka museum and puzzling Jewish cemetery in the Old Quarter.

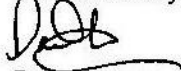
Our trip concludes with a visit to the wonderful German city of Nuremberg, another German city blessed with its classical architecture, but also well known for other historical reasons, as here was where the Nuremberg trials of leading Nazis took place following the Second World War. A brand new memorial, located in the building where the trials took place will give a fitting conclusion to the wider questions of repression, persecution and reconciliation that the students will have considered. We hope all of these experiences will be enduring.

The cost of this trip is likely to be 599 pounds. This includes a 9 day visit, 6 nights half-board accommodation, 3 in Berlin, 1 in Leipzig and 2 in Prague, all transport (Coach, Ferry and public transport), insurance, cost of excursions and museum admission, damage deposit and educational resources. The price has increased from that of last year's due to increases in costs like fuel and the extra day's visit to Leipzig.

Ideally, we would like to run this trip for the current Year 12 only. There are 42 places to fill and priority will be given, in the first instance, to those taking History in current Year 12, followed by those taking German. Places would then be allocated to students in the rest of the year. Should there be insufficient interest from History and German students then places will be given to other students from Year 12, these will also be drawn from a hat. Based on previous experience, it is likely that there will be places available to non-historians and I would encourage all students from year 12 who are interested to apply. Last year around 1/3 of the trip attendees were non-historians and got a lot out of the experience.

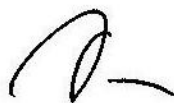
In order to apply for a place on this trip it will be necessary to complete the reply slip below, together with a deposit for 50 pounds and return to the finance office by **Friday July 1st at 0900**. If you feel your family would qualify for support from the Harpenden or Redbourn Trust due to low income, you need to contact Mr Waters before this date. Payments in this instance should be by cheque only and payable to St George's School.

Yours sincerely,



David Waters

Head of History



Paddy Storrie

Deputy Head

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## Reply slip for Eastern Europe Trip 2012

I would like my child \_\_\_\_\_ of Tutor \_\_\_\_\_ and

House \_\_\_\_\_ to go on the Eastern Europe trip of 2012. I enclose a cheque for 50 pounds payable to St George's School.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

**PLEASE RETURN TO FINANCE OFFICE BY FRIDAY 1<sup>st</sup> JULY BY 0900.**