

FIAT Debate Ploiesti/Romania

July 2005



Report

From 9th-16th July, a German debating team, consisting of Katharina Jungblut from the Württemberg-Gymnasium, Stuttgart, Sabine Fritz and Sonja Mall from the Max-Born-Gymnasium, Backnang, and Arne Lang and Fabian Stöhr, from the Lessing-Gymnasium, Winnenden, took part in a debating tournament in Azuga, near Ploiesti in Romania. During the tournament, which lasted nearly a whole week, the team was able to come a superb second place, after losing 3:2 in a nail-biting final.

The event, held in a mountain resort, did not just consist of debates; the emphasis was on a cultural programme and international exchange.

The following is a brief sketch of the programme:

Saturday, 9th July 2005:

Departure from Stuttgart. The journey lasted around 28 hours with changes in Nuremberg, Budapest and Bucharest.

Sunday, 10th July 2005:

Having arrived slightly late in Ploiesti, we were taken by two of the organisers by taxi and minibus, a very popular form of transport there, from Ploiesti to the event site in Azuga, around an hour away.

Azuga is a mountain resort, with small skiing and hiking areas close to the hotel. However, it rained for most of our stay in Romania, even though the region was not directly affected by the flooding which hit other parts of the country.

Having arrived in the simple, pleasant hotel, we were informed that several of the other foreign teams had cancelled at short notice, meaning that, besides the Moldovans, who also speak Romanian, we were the only foreign team taking part. However, this affected neither the quality of the debates nor the atmosphere of the event as a whole.

Monday, 11th July 2005:

The next day was given over to introducing the less experienced teams to the World Schools debating format. Many debating clubs in Romania employ the Karl Popper format, which differs both in terms of rules and evaluation from the World Schools style, employed both in Germany and in many international tournaments.

In addition, and sometimes in parallel to this introduction, there were various teambuilding activities, which took place despite the rainy weather.

By the way, for most of the next days, we were without running water - something blamed on the heavy rain.

In the evening, there was a "Cultural Party", in which the different countries presented themselves and for which the Romanian groups had prepared sketches.

Tuesday, 12th July 2005:

The first day of debating.

The first debate was an impromptu, meaning that the motion (i.e. the topic to be debated) was only announced one hour before the debate ("This house would ban tobacco advertisements." – We were opposition.). For us, this was the most difficult debate of the preliminary rounds, as it was our first debate as a team and it is usually better to have debated together beforehand to be able to know each other's strengths as speakers. However, we still won by a narrow margin.

By contrast, the second debate was prepared ("This house believes the polluter must pay." - Proposition), meaning that we had been able to prepare the debate before leaving Germany. In addition, there was also a "Communication and Teamwork" workshop.

Wednesday, 13th July 2005:

There were three debates on the Wednesday. The first two were additional preliminary rounds ("This house believes that an oppressive government is better than no government." – Impromptu, proposition – and "This house believes in the right to die." – Prepared, opposition). Then came the quarter-finals, which, for us, was a fun debate, due to an unexpected approach on the part of the proposition ("This house would turn vegetarian." – Impromptu, opposition). We spent the evening preparing the semi-finals for the next day. We had collected a few vague ideas back in Germany, but not much more as we hadn't expected to reach the semi-finals!

Thursday, 14th July 2005:

Thursday saw the semi-final ("This house believes the information superhighway needs traffic police." – Prepared, proposition), followed by the final ("This house would be a citizen of the world rather than of a nation." – Impromptu, opposition). After a close race, the final was won 3:2 by one of countless Romanian clubs taking part.

The awards and closing ceremony followed, along with a party in the evening. By now, all the members of the team were ill, along with some of the Romanians – it seems the tap water was to blame. The water was served with meals in the hotel, but, as chemist told us, was not safe due to the heavy rainfall.

Friday, 15th July 2005:

Originally, the Friday was to be used for an excursion for all the debaters. However, the plans had to be changed, as, due to the floods, many of the debaters from Northern Romania and Moldova had problems getting home, and thus wanted to start off immediately. During the entire week, it was unclear whether they could get home at all, as rail and road connections had been cut off by the floods. Luckily they managed to get home in other ways.

That morning, we left and headed for Ploiesti, where we were put up by families. We spent the rest of the day with the host families and visiting the city.

Saturday, 16th July 2005:

On Saturday, we took part on the, now smaller, excursion to Peles Castle, a beautiful 19th century palace, whose rooms contained an amazing variety of architectural and artistic styles. The excursion, with the tour lasted until the late afternoon.

Our train left a few hours later. After some problems (apparently our train, which was held up for several hours at the Hungarian border, was coupled to a slower Austrian train with another destination), we arrived on **Sunday evening**, four hours late.