

Debating Comes to Berlin

- an initiative of the British Embassy in Berlin in 3 stages -



Stage 1: October 2005 a workshop at the British Embassy for teachers from 10 Berlin & Brandenburg schools - run by Michael Pates of DSG & Andrew Walsh of the British School Berlin. Students of St Benno Dresden travelled up to give a demonstration debate on the prepared motion *This House believes that African children should go to school instead of working to help their parents.*

Stage 2: November 2005 a second workshop for the same teachers plus 20 of their students. Schools present were: Friedrich-Ebert-OS, Humboldt-OS, Leibniz-OS, Schiller-Gymnasium; & Bertha-von-Suttner-OS from Berlin; & von-Saldern-Gymnasium Brandenburg, Lise-Meitner-Gymnasium Falkensee, Gymnasium Kyritz, H.-von-Helmholtz-Gymnasium Europaschule Potsdam, Friedrich-Wilhelms-Gymnasium Wusterhausen, from Brandenburg.
(see below.)

Stage 3: January 2006 the ten schools will meet at the Embassy & at the British Council Berlin to debate the motions:

Round 1: *This House believes that the World Cup will enhance Germany's image.*

Round 2: *This House believes that terrorism is the new threat to global peace.*

Round 3: *This House sees climate change as the greatest threat to our existence.*

A personal account of Stage Two by Bulza Sopi of Ferdinand-Porsche-Gymnasium Zuffenhausen:

On November 11th, 2005, seven of us took the early plane to Berlin: Leonie, Ahsan & Donat from Königin-Olga-Stift, Franz, Sultan & Bulza from Ferdinand-Porsche-Gymnasium, plus Mike Pates, Grand Old Man of Debating & the organiser.

The reason for the trip was that the British Embassy was organising a day in which students from Brandenburg and Berlin, two of the Federal states that had not yet succumbed to the debating fever, had the chance to watch a live debate and afterwards to perform themselves.

But before entering the Embassy, we first spent the morning looking at Berlin. We went up the dome of the *Reichstag*, we took a look at the *Kanzleramt*, the German Cathedral, the *Alex*, the *Nikolaiviertel*, the *Gendarmenplatz*, & a French shopping centre, both jumping on & off the number 100 & 200 buses & wearing our poor feet out. Berlin was fascinating, especially for those of us seeing it for the first time. After this little sight-seeing tour, we made our way past the Brandenburg Gate & across the *Pariser Platz* round the corner to the Embassy, where we were to show off our skills.

Naturally our show debate was intended to give the Berlin students, who on average seemed about 17 years old, an impression of debating. Our prepared motion was *This House believes that Africa needs a European life style* - an African topic had been specified by the Embassy - & was won by KOST, both on the decision of the single judge, Andrew Walsh, and also on a floor vote by the narrowest of split decisions of 19 to 18!

But even more important was the subsequent debate contest among the students themselves. They formed mixed teams, two from each school per team, but as there were too many for them all to speak, some just joined the 50-minute preparation time with their teachers. They then spoke in two parallel debates on the impromptu fun motion they had chosen: *This House believes that black clothes are out.* It was very interesting to see how individualistically they debated even at this early stage, so that we can predict seeing a future of strong, individualistic debaters from this area. The 6-minute speaking time presented no difficulties, & the rules of *points of information* were successfully grappled with.

We look forward to competing in future debates against these students from Brandenburg & Berlin. We are also certain that the debating fever will spread further & further throughout Germany, & we will be happy to make many new contacts.