

## Koblenz, Ehrenbreitstein 18.-20.3.05



*Arrival: Friday evening*, after a long train or car journey and wrong turnings towards the "castle", people arrive at the Ehrenbreitstein youth hostel – a relic of the 19th century on a hill above Koblenz. For some, there is scarcely time to draw breath, and the first debate starts, the "by-round" for Wernigerode who couldn't make it to the previous meeting, and therefore had the points and the results missing for one round. Quickly, three speakers are found, against whom they are to speak. These are available pupils with nothing better to do. Ten minutes of preparation time for what is actually a "prepared" debate and then a respectable job by the "mixed team".

At the same time, there is a quick presentation by each individual participant - many of whom know each other - as part of a team/town presentation, and then it's off to the rooms. Not, as would be expected, to celebrate meeting again, oh no! Rather to find any weak points in cases considered watertight, and to talk through speeches written during the journey with the rest of the team. Exhausted from the tribulations of the inward journey, everyone falls into bed to be fit for the next, demanding day.



*Saturday.* No weekend, no lie-in, tired faces - for most people not from partying the night away - after a cold night - these old buildings are not particularly warm and youth hostels like saving money - the first big test with a morally difficult topic: "This house would use human embryos for scientific research" and the start of the activities of the following 24 hours. Speeches don't stop, but go on one after the other: there are eye for an eye fights, arguments over one word or another, the definitions of others are redefined, the topic is debated, and finally the winners of the debates are announced, and the new placings in the overall scheme of things are worked out. A brief chance to draw strength, really actually drawing breath, as the food was not suited to our high-



class palates. Thus we advanced, filled to the brim with sugar, into the next round. Again, a highly political topic - but that is par for the course for any debater wanting to be successful. As the Worlds team told us during the introduction about their experiences from Canada: "It is important to be up-to-date and have more information than one's opponents. That works! Therefore, read the papers, watch the news, be politically interested!" – "This house would not give development aid to non-democratic states." Not just a conflict and matter for discussion for us, but a brand



new and hotly discussed topic.

Dinner. Another experience and a fight of equal proportions to the debates. And then, again no parties this evening (at least for the majority), but hard mental exercise: workshops on structure, "Points of Information" and then, for those looking for more amusement, a somewhat less dry "balloon debate". Then, no, still no break, we meet in the rooms, usually with our own teams and talk about what we have just heard and been taught.

**Sunday.** Even more tired, even sweeter (we have to find alternatives to youth hostel food), even more enthusiastic, on the one hand, to put our new knowledge into practice, and also because this last debate this weekend is decisive for the placings and for who is in the semi-final. "This house would introduce university fees." Again, a very controversial topic, often discussed in the media, and, for many of us, something which is close to our hearts, as the oldest amongst us soon hope to attend universities very soon. At the end of each debate, there is a certain amount of uncertainty, but we have to have a winner, and the evaluation takes place immediately. Finished, in every sense of the word, and the placings are decided. In a modest ceremony, everyone receives a medal and the top four teams can look forward to seeing each other again soon.



Now, everything happens quickly, a short goodbye, at least until the German Championships in May.

### **The summary of many:**

a pleasant, lively and educational weekend. It was not possible, as many had hoped, to get to know many people, there was not enough time, but we learned a lot. We feel more at ease with the members of the teams - a great success, and also a trump card - and everyone was better practised in speaking.

**Well worth it!**

