



## **World Schools Debating Championship 2004 in Stuttgart, Germany**

**Wednesday, 11<sup>th</sup> to Saturday, 21<sup>st</sup> February, 2004**

### **Ten fantastic days of debating and a super Monday for Mörike School**

On Wednesday, 11<sup>th</sup> February 2004 29 international debating teams came to Stuttgart for the **16<sup>th</sup> World Schools Debating Championship** to find out which was going to be the best team in the competition.

They had come with their coaches, judges and observers from such far-away countries as **Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Singapore, South Africa and Kuwait**, but also from European countries such as the Czech Republic, Estonia, Slovakia and England, just to mention a few.

Ten most exciting and fantastic days lay ahead of the teams.

How did the **Championship** start off for the organizers of this event? Well, we actually met in Angelika Höness's room in the **Maritim Hotel in Stuttgart** on Monday morning, 9<sup>th</sup> February. We, that meant Angelika Höness from Germany, Phyllis Hirth and Susan Parke from the USA, Geetha Creffield from Singapore and Asher Weill from Israel. The names and places tell you right away that it was an international gathering indeed on a small scale, later on during the tournament it was of course to be on a larger scale.

For two days we stapled papers, stacked brochures and filled nearly 300 bags with info material, booklets and handbooks and street maps of Stuttgart for the participants in the tournament.

The **Contacts List** contains over 250 names, which translates into so many debaters, judges, shadow judges, coaches and observers.

On Wednesday, 11<sup>th</sup> February all the teams arrived at the **Maritim Hotel in Stuttgart** in the course of the day. Markus Bihler, one of the organizers, had arranged a shuttle service for the teams to be collected at Stuttgart airport or Stuttgart main station. And this transport system worked very well.

Tanja Wolf and myself were responsible for the financial part of the registration of the teams. We worked from 9 am to 9 pm on this Wednesday with only one coffee break in between. We checked whether the teams had paid the correct participation fee. Some teams had paid too much, some had paid too little, and some teams paid cash on the day of their arrival. At 9 pm we were exhausted and closed our position in the hotel lobby. So we weren't able to register the teams that arrived late at night on that first day. Finally, everything

worked out all right and thanks to Tanja Wolf all the teams received their receipt for the participation fee at the end of the competition.

On Thursday morning the debaters went ice-skating or had a dancing lesson or did other physical exercises, which had been organized by Ellen Butzko, to shake off the jet lag and to build up some stamina needed in the competition.

At the same time the **adjudicators, coaches and shadow judges were briefed in the hotel by Asher Weill, the chief judge**, and other experienced judges such as **Mark Gabriel from Singapore** and **Wyllie Cameron from Scotland**. They were all made familiar with their job of judging the debaters during the championship. By the way, shadow judges are judges who are still learning their trade and judge the debaters without their marks being counted.

In the afternoon the teams had a **guided tour of Stuttgart** in small groups and they were also met by their so-called **chaperons**.

I would now like to say some words about the **chaperons**. They were students from the German schools that hosted the teams during the championship and students from the debating clubs of those schools.

They accompanied "their teams" to all the venues for five days. They were responsible for the teams travelling on the right trains, changing at the right places and getting to their schools and venues on time.

I myself experienced the work of the chaperons when we travelled from **Stuttgart to Böblingen** on Tuesday, 17<sup>th</sup> February. Apparently, the chaperons had prepared themselves extremely well for the job. They knew the timetables by heart, they told us when to change, what train to get on, when to get off and they made sure that no one got lost. And they knew their way to school well. They did an excellent job. I would like to say my warmest thanks to them.

**Five students from Mörike School** also worked as chaperons, namely **Roswitha Moldovi, Maxi Blair, Simeon Reusch, Mehran Samadi and Julian Zeyher**. The chaperons got two rewards for their job. They were very close to all the events of the championship and they were invited to the grand dinner on Friday, 20<sup>th</sup> February.

The **opening ceremony for the competition** took place in the **Stuttgart House of Art** (Kunstgebäude).

The round hall which was decorated with huge paintings for an art exhibition was a very appropriate room for this occasion. The debaters were welcomed to Stuttgart by **Lord Mayor Dr Schuster**. In his welcome speech he pointed out that Stuttgart was the right place for this international debating event,

because Stuttgart was the home of people from many different countries with a multitude of languages being spoken in the Stuttgart streets. **Angelika Höness, the president of the Debating Society Germany**, thanked Dr Schuster and **the people from the Stuttgart departments for cultural and school affairs** for their support in hosting the **WSDC**. She also expressed her gratitude and joy that for the first time **the Worlds** took place on the European continent in a non-English speaking country.

During the next couple of days the teams went debating in various schools in and around the Stuttgart area. **How did the schools welcome the teams?** There were many different ways of welcoming them.

There were songs. Actually, one school created a song about debating for this special occasion and welcomed the teams with this song. Music bands and combos played nice music by way of welcoming the guests. And there were student dancers who entertained the guests with traditional and modern dancing. There were also welcome speeches by the heads of the schools. And the greetings were always reciprocated by one of the judges who also thanked the schools for their hospitality.

I should like to turn to **Mörike School in Esslingen** now to show how the debates went on Monday, 16<sup>th</sup> February. Actually, there was a second Esslingen school (**Theodor-Heuss-Gymnasium**) involved in hosting the teams on that day. So four teams came to Mörike School, namely **New Zealand, Slovenia, South Africa and Indonesia**, four teams went to Theodor-Heuss School in the morning, **England, Germany, Scotland and Lithuania**, for round 5 of the debates.. At lunch break we took two teams,

**New Zealand and South Africa**, to Theodor-Heuss School and collected two teams (**Scotland and England**) from there for round 6 of the debates.

In the morning the teams were met by members of the Mörike School debating club and by students from Theodor-Heuss School at the Esslingen main station.

On their arrival at our villa they were welcomed by **Mr Tanzer, our headmaster**, who expressed his great happiness that **Mörike School** was able to host such distinguished teams for the day. He also wished all the teams every success in their debates. The members of the **Slovenian team** together with their **coach Bojana Skrt** were welcomed as **old friends** because they had been present at our school during the **European Debating Week** two years ago. I think the debaters were quite surprised when they were also greeted by the songs of the **fifth grade choir**. They sang some songs in English, and not only did they sing, they also played their mouth organs. It was a very fine picture of 90 youngsters singing to the accompaniment of the piano ( **Mrs Frank and Mr Schatz**).

After the reception and some refreshments it was hard work for the debaters because in round 5 they had to do a **prepared debate** with the motion being: **This House believes that trade unions impede progress**. In this round **New Zealand and South Africa** were proposing, whereas **Slovenia and Indonesia** were opposing. Both debate rooms, namely the library and room V 16 were jampacked with students from Mörike School and also guests who had come from as far as Eislingen and Urach to watch the debates. And it was really a fascinating thing to follow the debates because all the teams were very good at handling this difficult motion. The atmosphere in the debating chambers was really vibrant. What surprised me and also made me happy was the fact that 8<sup>th</sup> graders and 9<sup>th</sup> graders and even younger students showed a great interest in the debates. They sat still and listened to the speakers with great intensity for over an hour. So hopefully, some more students will join the Mörike School debating club in the future.

After all, they listened to debates of a very high standard, with the teams being the best teams from their individual countries. Both the proposing teams won their debates.

I should also like to mention that we entertained the teams to lunch at lunch break. And we had a wonderful cake buffet of over 30 cakes, too. Thus freshly invigorated, the debaters were able to stand the strain of the afternoon debates. Two judges came up to me the next day and said that they had really enjoyed the lovely cakes. I'd like to pass this on as a compliment to the Mörike School parents who had made the cakes.

Because of the support from our sponsors, we were also lucky enough to give some presents to the teams which should remind them of Esslingen.

As the weather improved in the afternoon and the sun came out, some of our guests seized the opportunity of going for a stroll through "medieval" Esslingen together with some teachers from Mörike School.

The **motion for the afternoon debate**, which was an **impromptu debate**, was: **This House would require governments to protect their native languages**.

I think the **Scottish team** who turned up in their Scottish kilts and national costumes made a deep impression on our students. We all felt that the third speaker of the Scottish team gave a brilliant speech, which showed great clarity in its arguments, although, for German

ears, he spoke very fast indeed. Unfortunately, the Scottish team lost against Indonesia by a split decision and so did Slovenia versus England in the afternoon.

**Christopher Erskine, the chief judge on that day**, who had also invented the WSDC some twenty years ago, was a little bit critical of the debate in his verdict at the end. On the other hand, he was full of praise for the audience. He said that we had been a very good audience. And he also thanked the school for its hospitality. Well, we enjoyed hosting all the teams enormously.

One feature of the tournament is also interesting and worth mentioning. When the debates were over the teams went up to the adjudicators and asked for more information about what had gone wrong in the debate and what had been good. Obviously, they wanted some advice for improving their debating skills in the next round.

For the sake of the newcomers to debating let's mention six basic skills that a good debater should have:

- 1. Debaters listen to what is said by each side.**
- 2. Debaters speak freely without prepared scripts.**
- 3. Debaters think on their feet.**
- 4. Debaters learn tolerance by weighing the two sides to a case.**
- 5. Debaters are a team, preparing their case together.**
- 6. Debaters attack arguments not people.**

At this point I'd like to say **thank you to all the people** who supported this debating event at our school in the most wonderful way.

I'd like to thank **Mr Tanzer**, our headmaster, and **Mrs Stürzl**, our deputy head, for being so supportive before and during the debates.

I would also like to thank **Mrs Klein and Mrs Baganz**, our secretaries, for being so helpful. I must not forget **Mr Klepser**, our caretaker, who helped the debating club prepare the debate rooms and who assisted us throughout the whole day.

Thanks to **all my colleagues** who helped me enormously. Special thanks go to **Mrs Moser and Mrs Knödler and Mr Jarosch** who took a big chunk of responsibility off my shoulders. A big thank you also goes to the **members of my debating club**. They helped to organize the whole day.

Thanks to all the **Mörike School parents and students** who baked the lovely cakes.

Thanks to the **mothers who cooked** a most delicious lunch.

Last but not least, I should like to say that I am deeply grateful to **all our sponsors** who supported the debating event at Mörike School in a very generous way indeed.

So on behalf of the whole school thanks to

**Druckerei Arnold, Deizisau  
Festo AG & Co  
Rich. Hengstenberg GmbH & Co. KG  
Volksbank Esslingen  
Town of Esslingen Department for cultural affairs  
Town of Esslingen Department for town partnerships  
Parents' Association of Mörike School  
Society of Friends of Mörike School**

**Without their support this day and indeed the whole ten days of debating wouldn't have been so successful.**

I cannot mention all the events of this tournament. So let me talk about four more things. The location and the elegance of the **Maritim Hotel** were also very favourable to the success of the whole championship. Some parts of the programme took place in the rooms of the hotel. You should have seen the capacious hotel dining room which offers space for 300 people. All the teams were seated at round tables for breakfast, which created a very nice atmosphere. The room was filled with so many voices, but when **Asher Weill did the briefing** in the morning all people stopped talking and listened carefully to what he had to say.

Because the hotel is next to Berliner Platz it offered easy access to a number of venues in Stuttgart. As a matter of fact, some places were within walking distance from the hotel. You should have seen 300 people walk from the hotel to **Stuttgart University**, which served as a venue for the debates on Sunday, 15<sup>th</sup> February. It was like a very long and solemn procession.

However, the university professors hadn't found the time to welcome us on a Sunday morning, only the caretakers, who were very friendly, were there. So **Markus Bihler and Helene Rädler**, the coach of the German team and student at Stuttgart University, did the welcoming part and they did it in a very refined way. We got a bit lost in the huge buildings (K 1 and K 2). And you needed some extra tuition to operate the lifts in the K 2 building. But otherwise the debates went well, certainly because of the debaters and the judges, but also because the **chairpersons and timekeepers** did their jobs very well. For instance, two **8<sup>th</sup> grade girls from Max-Born-Gymnasium Backnang** presided over the debate that I listened to. And you could see that the girls loved to do their job.

In contrast to Sunday we were very warmly welcomed at the **teacher training college in Esslingen** on Wednesday, 18<sup>th</sup> February. The auditorium and a meeting room were excellent rooms for the debates, and everything had been carefully planned and arranged. I witnessed the debate **Hongkong vs Australia**. The **motion for this impromptu debate** was: **This House believes that the welfare state should be scrapped**. When I heard the Australians debate they became my favourites for the contest. They were logical in their arguments, elegant in their style and very convincing in their strategy. And indeed, the judges awarded the debate to Australia. The overall marks Australia were given were 787,5 the overall marks for Hong Kong were 765,5. In the other debate South Africa received 770,5 marks, and the USA 770,0 marks. This debate was a very close thing. After a nice, though quick lunch we had to take the winning teams straight to Stuttgart by car, because they had to prepare for **the quarter-finals** in the afternoon.

May it suffice to say that the Debating Society had been offered very suitable venues for the quarter-finals, namely the **State Parliament of Baden-Württemberg**, the **city library** (Wilhelms-Palais), the **House of History** (Haus der Geschichte), and the **Old Palace**.

The **motion for this debate** was: **This House believes that political parties have too much influence on democratic action**. I watched the Israeli team vs the South African team in the city library. The debate was chaired by **Mrs Weckenmann, member of the State Parliament of B-W**. She is also a member of the Social Democratic Party. She chaired the debate in a very elegant way. After the debate she said that she wished that politicians in parliament were always as well prepared as the young debaters had been. In brief, Israel lost, South Africa won. They had made the better case.

So there were only four teams left for the **semi-finals: Australia vs England and Greece (much to our surprise) vs South Africa**. After the day in Strasbourg, Thursday, 19<sup>th</sup> February, it was clear that **Australia and South Africa** were going to be the contestants in the **grand final**.

Before I come to the grand final, let me say something about the **grand carnival**, the fancy dress party **in Backnang** on Thursday evening. It was a super party with 500 people being

present in the town hall. However, at first we had to wait for the teams to arrive from Strasbourg because they got stuck in a traffic jam. Almost everybody came in a fancy dress. Phyllis Hirth was the attraction of the evening, because she came as the Statue of Liberty. Several teams made references to their national customs and habits with their dresses. So the team from Argentina came as tango dancers, the Netherlands team were wearing wooden shoes and lace caps.

Food and drinks were free, thanks to **the parents of Max-Born-Gymnasium**. And all the representatives of the German schools had been asked to bring along some food as a kind of entrance fee to the party. Well, you should have seen the large buffet with all the specialities and delicacies. And there was a good programme with dancing, singing and carnival parades. A very colourful and exciting party. All people enjoyed themselves greatly.

The **grand final** took place in the Stuttgart concert hall (Liederhalle, Mozartsaal). The hall was really packed with people, especially young people. Does debating have an effect on people's way of dressing and style? It seems so, because a good deal of the young people present in the hall were dressed as nicely as the debaters.

The grand final was **Australia vs South Africa**, with Australia proposing and South Africa opposing. **The motion was: This House believes that the world is facing a clash of civilizations.**

South Africa, so it seemed, had been given the hard task of convincing the audience that there was no clash of civilizations, whereas it seemed to be easier for Australia to show to the audience that there was indeed a clash of civilizations.

**Mark Twigg, the British Consul General in Stuttgart**, was in the chair. During the pauses, when the nine adjudicators were doing their calculations he entertained the audience by making some rather witty remarks and comments. So at the end of the debate, **Wyllie Cameron, the chief judge**, said that should Mark Twigg fail in diplomacy he could have a career as a stand-up comedian, to which Twigg retorted that he'd rather carry on with the hard job of being a diplomat, although there was more money in stand-up comedy. **Cameron** kept the audience on tenterhooks because although he mentioned the split of six to three amongst the judges he didn't announce the winner of the debate right away. He was full of praise for the debaters. He felt that it was an outstanding debate. Indeed, there was a clash of debating here.

Finally, the audience learnt that **the debate had been given to Australia.**

There was a big applause for Australia, who had achieved first place. There was an even bigger applause for South Africa, the runners-up of the competition.

The audience had really witnessed an exquisite and exceptional debate. The debate was then closed by Mark Twigg.

At the **grand dinner** all people celebrated the great success of the **World Schools Debating Championship**. Everybody was in high spirits and the championship cup was given to the winner of the competition: Australia.

Hans-Georg Hellebrandt

member of the organizing committee  
coach of Mörike School debating club