



SCIJ Event 2005

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CONNECTING PEOPLES
IN/À
JESENIKY,
OLOMOUC AND PRAGUE
2005





▲ A parade to Olomouc's Upper Square, ▼ a play on a professional skier's life and fireworks opened the meeting.



SCIJ

21-29 JAN. 2005
IN JESENIKY,
CZECH REPUBLIC

Text: Rauli Storm • Photo: Marius Calin Danci, Rauli Storm

IN THE SANATORIUM OF THE MAGIC MOUNTAIN

Hans Castorp travels to Sanatorium Berghof to visit his cousin Joachim in Thomas Mann's novel *The Magic Mountain* about a decade before the World War I.

As the train pursues its course through time and the alpine scenery, the impressionable Hans is transported away from the life and obligations he has known, to the rarefied mountain environment and insular community of the sanatorium.

The long trip from our homes first to Prague and then to Olomouc and finally to Sanatorium Priessnitz in Jeseníky estranged us from war and bombs to a much more welcoming form of water than the tsunami, the all-beautifying snow.

SATURDAY

OLOMOUC WELCOMED US WITH SHORT SPEECHES BY THE MAYOR and representatives of the tourist office and a bit longer but interesting video on the area.

An excellent Czech version of smorgasbord and the world's best beer topped the occasion. But the Czechs had not considered that enough to remove us from everyday life. As the darkness fell on the town our procession marched to the town square to see students perform a play on the life of a true skiing sportsman. He has given his whole existence to being the best skier. He's dressed up in the uniform of a knight of the holly skiing sport. He eats, bathes, exercises and sleeps for skiing and never undresses his skis or helmet. Why bother.



▲ Italian train catastrophe.

▲▲ The altar of Saint Michael's Church.



▲▲ May-day may-day. Get me out of here, Mom. Frederik Wallace testing new shoe phone.
 ▲ David Martin and Mike Cousins (GBR), James Fitzgerald (IRE) and MArine Hass (GBR)

He has no-one to care if he does. During the rest of the week we must have assured anyone that we were not his role models. Incredible, beautiful, masterly planned fireworks with intense and calmer parts taking turns like in Bach's Toccata and Fuga raised to a power of ten acted as the aperitif to a superb dinner with traditional music.

**SUNDAY
 IN THE SUNNY AND CRISPY WEATHER OUR
 HOSTS, DRESSED AS ROMAN OFFICIALS
 TRIED TO ORGANIZE US**

in lines behind carriers of seven coats of arms. What a desperate task. Even to try journalists to go in same direction is fruitless... unless one has scandalous news to offer. Anyway, each group was given a print with photos of several corners in the city. Orienteering by pictures! Just like in children's birthday parties. Well, we journalists ARE eternal children. What a clever way to familiarize us with the cultural highlights of the town like St. Wenceslas Cathedral and Premyslid Palace, where Mozart

composed 6th Symphony or the Holy Trinity Column that's included on the UNESCO List of World Cultural Heritage. (Check Virtual tours in www.discoverczech.com/olomouc) After lunch our group was divided in three and taken the Olomouc mature cheese factory in Lostice, Bell makers in Brodek and a Paper mill in Velké Losiny. The visitors of Brodek also had a chance to play a rare instrument of 21 bells by keyboard. As the masterful pianists *Morten Goli-mo* or *Jean McLeish* were not along the neighbors of the central park had to listen to our desperate struggles to make "Für Elise", "Cat's polka" and whatever recognizable.

TIME STOPPED AS WE TRAVELED THROUGH THE QUIET SUNDAY AFTERNOON, through the quiet Moravian landscape and finally we arrived at Hotel Jan Ripper and Sanatorium Priessnitz in Jeseniky.

The welcoming ceremony rather reminded us of the violence that continues outside our little world of peace and friendship. The canons and muskets of an old-fashioned platoon almost deafened you



▲ Peter Daalder guides the young Dutch Suzan van der Wiel to the secrets of cross country.

▲ Harsh roar gives KG. more speed

▲▲ Austrian Ironman Franz Goritschnig challenges youngsters any day.
 ▲ Great track, great snow, great weather, great competition. Not this cold.

but the hot wine and the excellent goulash gave you strength to defeat the noise and the cold. Later the bubble bath, massage and swimming pool lulled us to the delusion of a sweet indifference. The well-organized Press cafe did keep some of us in contact with reality.

**MONDAY
 FIRST DAY ON SKIS IN CERVENOHORSKE SEDLO!**

For most of us the two red runs and especially the black mogul run on the wrong side of the road prevented us from seeing the skillful Aerobatic skiing show by Salt Lake City Olympic winner Ales Valenta and friends. *Hans Castorp soon becomes fascinated with and drawn to the routine established for the "consumptives" and to the social scene that flourishes on the Magic Mountain. Ordinary life seems increasingly unreal to him. (Thomas Mann: The Magic Mountain)*

In the evening the traditional Nations' Evening did what it's supposed to do: Connecting people... or was it Nokia. Whatever, the tremendous atmosphere attached us all to the spirit of SCIJ includ-

ing the 25 new members, who were introduced to the community in an official but informal way. Ordinary life became increasingly unreal to us.

**TUESDAY
 AT FIVE O'CLOCK THE DEVOTED SPORTSMEN
 AND SPORTSWOMEN WOKE UP**

to take the air, measure the temperature of snow and air, with their computers run analysis and forecasts on the conditions to be expected the moment of their start, wash off the wax and re-wax their skis... Well, maybe they were the last ones returning from the disco. Some of them may have slipped in the snowy yard and looked like analyzing the composition of the snow.

**WHAT A GREAT GIANT SLALOM TRACK WAS
 PREPARED FOR US IN DOLNI MORAVA.**

Getting there was the hardest part until the Poma-lift line was closed from non-journalists. The slope was long and interesting. It was fast enough for good skiers, but easy enough for others. However, some ten gates had been left out. Some parts were almost super giant slalom. No-one is bitter,

but many skis were much too quick at turns and much too slow between them, and the gentle straight was a real speed killer (what a cry-baby). The last year's winners were winners now, too, if they had showed up. About 70 people did not, but only those who took part in the race and won have truthfully earned their medals. The brilliant *Amelie Cardell* of Sweden was the new ladies' champion and Slovenia's *Barbara Jerman* and Italy's *Monica Bonetti* the other radiant medalists. As the betting offices in London expected, Germany's *Ralf Scheuerer* was the men's champion followed by Swiss *Miguel Aquiso* and Italian *Alessandro Corbi*.

It was a pleasure to see Ralf storm down the black mogul slope covered with half a meter of powder snow on Friday. A true skier enjoys any terrain.

Italy's *Isabella Villa* was the queen of the senior category and would have been the third in juniors.

Albreht Matjas was the king of the senior category and would have been the silver medalist in the junior class.

Maria Tolnayova of Slovakia and *Franz Goritschnig* of Austria mastered the track in the super senior category like they did last year.

The track was a bit different, but measured by time Franz would've been the second in both other categories. (Results)

"People try to put us do-o-own. Talking 'bout my geeneration..." (The Who sang about the super senior generation of today in 1965)

IN THE EVENING A 3-MINUTE SILENCE WAS HELD in the beginning of the General Assembly in memoriam of *Marcel Pasche*, *Tore Johannessen* and *Carlos Pardo*, the late president of Spanish SCIJ.

Agneta Bolme-Borjeforss and *Uros Sostaric* were voted to continue another four years as vice-presidents. *Renaud Richebe* did candidate but gave up before the second election against Agneta after losing by a vote to Uros. He was only willing to take over as the Technical delegee.

A serious conversation took place on the no-show members. Seventy people cancelled their participation for different reasons. The unprecedented amount of cancellation makes one wonder the reasons. As the contract with the hotel had been made of 200 people, SCIJ must pay for 200 people. And it's taken from the money that we who showed up paid to SCIJ.

For future meetings the participation should be paid beforehand and as SCIJ is considered a travel agency by some people, the rules of payment should be the same as those of other agencies.

WEDNESDAY

HOWLING WIND AND HORIZONTALLY FLYING SNOW GREETED US in the morning. Only half a busload decided to leave for the Ramzová skiresort. They were rewarded with wonderful deep-snow skiing that made even the bitter cold tolerable.



Some of us walked down to the town and enjoyed a pleasant day-off taking the local air, shopping and having lunch in a typical restaurant. Cosmopolitan *Tom Scheck* was the guide familiar with the habits of the natives and not for a moment did we feel insecure or threatened.

IN THE LATE AFTERNOON A BUSLOAD OF US STARTED AN ADVENTURE through the darkening night and tsunaming snow towards the cave Na Spicaku for a clarinet concert in memoriam of *Marcel Pasche*. First we got lost and had to drive back. Then the small road looked too dangerous to the driver and he suggested us to walk the remaining 400 meters in our inside shoes. The dark night, the deepening snow, the fear of wolves and were-wolfs prevented us from the task. A fearless bunch of the organizers volunteered to walk to the cave and ask the musicians to come to us and give the concert in Priessnitz. The braves stayed out two minutes and came back to persuade the driver to drive the rest of the trip. With Marcel as our laughing guardian angel we reached the area and with no trouble walked into the cave and enjoyed a healing and refreshing concert with songs at least by *Scott Joplin*, *Cole Porter* and *Brahms*. The drive back was much more cheerful. In the Think Tank we once again pondered the future of SCIJ. Agneta will write the minutes.

THURSDAY

WHAT A PLEASANT DAY. Only a four-kilometer transfer from the hotel. No wind, snow flakes gently falling on their older kin making the surroundings of the old Russian Army complex almost pleasant. The huge hall, once inhabited by lethal machinery of the invader gave us shelter. The trail was easy with little vertical difference and the whole race was over very quickly. Hyper senior *Franco Sitton* took a shorter trail by mistake, realized that his time was too good, re-started and won gold. (Results P. 8) The traditional Dutch pea soup and "hard tea" was the prize for all the competitors now matter how fast one skied.



▶ *Hana Saitzova*, the entertainer. ▲ So, the meeting is finally in checkmate. Thanks, Czech mates!

FRIDAY

FREE SKIING ALL DAY. Whole morning a whole bunch of us went berserk in the half-meter powder snow on the black moguls of Cervenohorske sedlo. It's probably some kind of infantile pleasure this burrowing in the deep snow.

Sergio Carmona had great time teaching the Argentinian (young) ladies to ski backwards and do (horizontal) 360° turns on the blue slope. The real masochists went snowshoe walking with the leader of the local regional government and Euro MP, Jan Brezina. Everyone to her/his taste.

THE GALA DINNER of the last night and giving prizes to the best skiers and others just great Guys and Dolls plus the incredibly authentic sounding Pangea - Beatles revival band took the atmosphere to new highs and wild dancing until the hugs of the first ones to departure started bringing in the melancholy of losing these people again for another year knowing that the 1-minute silences in the general assembly are getting longer and many other good friends one may never meet again for other reasons.

SATURDAY

Hans Castorp stays at the sanatorium for seven years, freeing himself from the constraints and conventions of life "in the flatlands" and instead engaging in a prolonged "questioning of the universe." (*Thomas Mann: The Magic Mountain*)

What a freeing idea to be exempted from the demands of everyday life. To be completely institutionalized. To be called at seven, breakfast, three hours skiing, lunch, two hours skiing, bubble bath, dinner, disco, to bed. And the next day the same, and the next, and the next for seven years... Well, sometimes even one week in the same ski resort can be too much for a journalist. So, the first bus left at 3 am, the next one an hour later.

Corinne Lepoutre and *Peter de Kievith* started their 1000 km drive to Amsterdam. This time we lucky ones left Jeneseniky at 10 o'clock only to start our 3-day post-tour in the wonderful city of Prague. To lend an old cliché: That's another story.

Pac a pusu *Radka*, *Hana*, *Lucka*, *Karolina*, *Mirka*, *Jaroslava*..... •



▲▲ Victorious ladies: 2. *Barbara Jerman* (SLO) 1. *Amelie Cardell* (SWE) 3. *Radka Markova* (CZE) ▲ Victorious men: 2. *Miguel Aquiso* (SUI) 1. *Ralf Scheuerer* (GER) 3. *Frederik Wallace* (CAN)



▲ Balade dominicale tranquille et ensoleillée à Olomouc. ▼ Olomouc nous accueille au son du violon.



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21-29^{ÈME} JAN. 2005
 A JESENIKY,
 RÉPUBLIQUE TCHÈQUE

Texte: Rauli Storm • Photo: Marius Calin Danci, Rauli Storm

SUR LE SANATORIUM DE LA MONTAGNE MAGIQUE

Dans le roman de Thomas Mann “La montagne magique”, qui se déroule une dizaine d’années avant la première guerre mondiale, Hans Castorp va rendre visite à son cousin Joachim au sanatorium de Berghof. Au fur et à mesure que le train poursuit sa route dans le paysage montagneux, Hans se détache de sa vie habituelle et de son lot d’obligations et s’apprête à entrer dans le monde clos de la montagne et dans l’univers insulaire du sanatorium.

Le long voyage qui nous a menés de chez nous à Prague, puis à Olomouc et enfin au sanatorium Priessnitz à Jeseniky nous a éloignés de la guerre et des bombes pour nous amener vers une incarnation de l’eau beaucoup plus accueillante que le tsunami: la neige, qui embellit tout.

SAMEDI
OLOMOUC NOUS A ACCUEILLIS AVEC DE COURTES ALLOCUTIONS DU MAIRE et des représentants de l’office du tourisme et par un vidéo un peu long, mais intéressant, sur la région. Une excellente version tchèque du smorgasbord et la meilleure bière au monde ont célébré l’occasion. Mais les Tchèques ont jugé que cela ne suffirait pas à nous dépayser. À la nuit tombante, nous nous sommes rendus en procession jusqu’à la Grand place pour assister à un spectacle donné par des étudiants. L’histoire est celle d’un authentique sportif qui a consacré toute sa vie à devenir un champion de ski. Il se nourrit, se



▲ Pas mal du tout. A condition d’aimer la neige. La petite station de Cervenhorské sedlo a de belles pentes et de la belle neige.



▲▲ Roberto rentre son ventre.
▲ Monica ne lésine pas sur la pasta.

lave, s'entraîne, dort en fonction du ski et n'ôte jamais ses skis ni son casque. Pour quoi faire? Il ne se soucie de rien ni de personne. Nous avons dû passer le reste de la semaine à jurer que nous n'étions pas la source d'inspiration de ce personnage... Un feu d'artifice splendide, orchestré de main de maître avec une alternance de moments forts et d'autres plus calmes, genre toccata et fugue de Bach à la puissance dix, nous a été servi en apéritif d'un superbe dîner sur fond de musique traditionnelle.

DIMANCHE
PAR UN TEMPS FROID ET ENSOLEILLÉ NOS HÔTES, habillés comme des notables Romains, ont tenté de nous faire mettre en ligne derrière sept porteurs de bannières. Mission impossible. Inutile d'essayer d'envoyer des journalistes dans une seule et même direction... sauf si c'est sur la piste d'un scandale. Quoi qu'il en soit, chaque groupe se fit remettre un feuillet imprimé avec plusieurs photos des divers recoins de la ville. Un jeu de piste! Exactement comme dans une fête d'anniversaire enfantine. Les

journalistes SONT d'éternels enfants. Une façon habile de nous faire découvrir les hauts lieux culturels de la ville comme la cathédrale St.Wenceslas et le palais Premyslid, où Mozart composa sa 6ème Symphonie, ou encore la colonne de la Sainte Trinité qui figure sur la liste du patrimoine mondial de l'UNESCO (Chèquez Virtual tours in www.discoverczech.com/olomouc).

APRÈS LE DÉJEUNER, NOUS NOUS SOMMES DIVISÉS EN TROIS GROUPES, le premier allant à la fromagerie de Lostice, le second à la fonderie de cloches de Brodek et le troisième à la fabrique de papier de Velké Losiny. Ceux qui sont allés à Brodek ont eu l'occasion de jouer d'un rare instrument à clavier actionnant 21 cloches différentes. Les pianistes émérites que sont Morten Golimo et Jean McLeish n'étant pas du nombre, les riverains ont dû endurer nos pathétiques tentatives de jouer la "Lettre à Élise", "Cat's polka" et autres airs plus ou moins méconnaissables.

DIMANCHE APRÈS-MIDI, LE TEMPS S'EST ARRÊTÉ TANDIS QUE NOUS TRAVERSIONS LE TRANQUILLE PAYSAGE DE LA MORAVIE pour finalement arriver à l'hôtel Jan Ripper et au sanatorium Priessnitz à Jeseníky. La cérémonie d'accueil nous a remis en mémoire la violence qui se poursuit hors de notre petit monde de paix et d'amitié. Les canons et les mousquets d'un détachement à l'ancienne nous ont presque rendu sourds, mais le vin chaud et l'excellent goulash nous ont donné la force de surmonter le bruit et le froid. Un peu plus tard, bain tourbillon, massage et piscine nous ont transportés dans un état de douce indifférence. Le "Café de la presse", bien organisé, a permis à certains d'entre nous de garder le contact avec la réalité.

LUNDI
PREMIER JOUR DE SKI À CERVENOHORSKE SEDLO! Deux pistes rouges et surtout une piste noire à bosses du mauvais côté de la route ont empêché la plupart d'entre nous d'assister au spectacle de ski acrobatique donné par Ales Valenta, champion olympique à Salt Lake City, et ses acolytes. *Hans Castor est rapidement fasciné et absorbé par la routine établie pour les malades de la "consommation" et par la vie sociale de la Montagne magique. La vie ordinaire lui semble de plus en plus irréelle. (Thomas Mann: La montagne magique)* Ce soir là, la Soirée des nations a fait son office: créer des contacts entre les gens...ou était-ce avec Nokia? En tout cas, l'excellente ambiance nous a tous mis dans l'esprit du SCIJ, y compris les 25 nouveaux membres qui furent présentés de façon officielle, mais informelle. La vie ordinaire nous semblait de plus en plus irréelle.

MARDI
À CINQ HEURES DU MATIN, LES SPORTIFS ET SPORTIVES FANATIQUES se sont levés pour aller humer l'air, relever la température ambiante



▲ Amelie commence sa course de ski victorieuse.



▲▲ Qu'est-ce qui rend le plus heureux. ▲▲ Où est passée l'excitation de la compétition?
▲ L'après-ski de fond : soupe aux pois hollandaise. ▲ Le doux Kjell développe son agressivité.

et celle de la neige et faire sur leurs ordinateurs de savantes analyse et prévisions des conditions probables au moment où ils allaient prendre le départ... À moins qu'ils n'aient été les derniers fêtards à revenir de la discothèque. Il se peut que certains aient glissé dans la cour enneigée et aient feint d'analyser la composition de la neige. Une superbe piste de slalom géant nous attendait à Dolní Morava. Le plus difficile était d'y accéder, jusqu'à ce que le tire-fesses soit déclaré réservé aux journalistes. Le tracé était long et intéressant, assez rapide pour les bons skieurs, assez facile pour les moins bons. Mais il manquait une dizaine de portes. Certaines sections du parcours ressemblaient à un Super géant. Sans rancune, mais certains virages s'enchaînaient beaucoup trop vite tandis que d'autres s'étiraient avec une lenteur extrême, et le dernier droit en pente douce faisait perdre tout élan (quel chiâleur!). Les gagnants de l'an dernier auraient encore gagné s'ils s'étaient présentés. Quelque 70 ont fait faux bond, mais ceux qui ont pris part à la course ont véritablement mérité leurs médailles. La brillante Amelie Cardell, de Suède, occupait le haut du podium féminin, accompagnée de la

Slovène Barbara Jerman et de l'Italienne Monica Bonetti. Tel que prédit par les bookmakers londoniens, l'Allemand Ralf Scheuerer l'a emporté chez les hommes, suivi par le Suisse Miguel Aquiso et l'Italien Alessandro Corbi. C'était un vrai plaisir de regarder Ralf dévaler les bosses de la piste noire couverte d'un demi-mètre de poudreuse le vendredi. Un vrai skieur aime toutes les conditions. L'Italienne Isabella Villa a dominé chez les seniors et se serait classée troisième chez les juniors. Premier dans la catégorie seniors, Albreht Matjas aurait eu l'argent chez les juniors. Chez les super-seniors, la Slovaque Maria Tolnayova et l'Autrichien Franz Goritschnig ont triomphé comme l'an dernier. Le tracé était un peu différent pour eux, mais en temps Franz serait arrivé second dans les deux autres catégories.

LE SOIR, L'ASSEMBLÉE GÉNÉRALE A COMMENCÉ PAR TROIS MINUTES DE SILENCE en mémoire de Marcel Pasche, Tore Johannessen et Carlos Pardo, défunt président du SCIJ Espagnol. Agneta Bolme-Borjefors et Uros Sostaric ont été réélus vice-présidents pour un nouveau mandat

JR: LADIES / FEMMES Slalom

1. Amelie Cardell (SWE)
2. Barbara Jerman (SLO)
3. Monica Bonetti (ITA)

CC / Ski de Fond

1. Elisabet Frerot (SWE)
2. Amelie Cardell (SWE)
3. Tatiana Lenhartova (SLK)

Combined/Combiné

1. Amelie Cardell (SWE)
2. Barbara Jerman (SLO)
3. Radka Markova (CZE)

JR: MEN / HOMMES Slalom / Slalom

1. Ralf Scheuerer (GER)
2. Miguel Aquiso (SUI)
3. Alessandro Corbi (ITA)

CC / Ski de Fond

1. Ralf Scheuerer (GER)
2. Miguel Aquiso (SUI)
3. Frederik Wallace (CAN)

Combined/Combiné

1. Miguel Aquiso (SUI)
1. Ralf Scheuerer (GER)
3. Frederik Wallace (CAN)

SR: LADIES/FEMMES Slalom

1. Isabella Villa (ITA)
2. Jana Janku (SLK)
3. Darina Gyurkovics. (SLK)

CC / Ski de Fond

1. Ivana Suhadolc (ITA)
2. Jana Janku (SLK)
3. Anne Plessz (SUI)

Combined / Combiné

1. Ivana Suhadolc (ITA)
2. Jana Janku (SLK)
3. Darina Gyurkovics. (SLK)

SR: MEN / SENIORS Slalom

1. Matjaz Albrecht (SLO)
2. Giovanni Bruno (ITA)
3. Kjell Malmberg (SWE)

CC / Ski de Fond

1. Primoz Kalisnik (SLO)
2. Matjaz Albrecht (SLO)
3. Jan Matula (SLO)

Combined / Combiné

1. Matjaz Albrecht (SLO)
2. Kjell Malmberg (SWE)
3. Jan Matula (SLK)

SSR: LADIES / FEMMES Slalom

1. Maria Tolnayova (SLK)
2. Leah Larkin (USA)
3. Urska Sproggar (SLO)

CC / Ski de Fond

1. Urska Sproggar (SLO)
2. Leah Larkin (USA)
3. Laroslava Severova (CZE)

Combined/Combiné

1. Leah Larkin (USA)
2. Urska Sproggar (SLO)
3. Agnes Toth (HUN)

SSR: SUPER / HOMMES Slalom

1. Franz Goritschnig (AUT)
2. Peter Weissenst. (AUT)
3. Alois Loibnegger (AUT)

CC / Ski de Fond

1. Franco Sitton (ITA)
2. Laroslav Kopic (CZE)
3. Rauli Storm (FIN)

Combined/Combiné

1. Franz Goritschnig (AUT)
2. Franco Sitton (ITA)
3. Peter Weissenst. (AUT)

de quatre ans. Le Français *Renaud Richebe* était candidat mais s’est retiré face à Agneta après avoir été défait d’une voix face à Uros. Le seul poste qui l’intéressait était celui de délégué technique. Les annulations de dernière minute ont fait l’objet d’une sérieuse discussion. Soixante-dix personnes ont annulé leur participation, un chiffre sans précédent qui incite à se poser des questions sur les motifs invoqués. Le contrat passé avec l’hôtel ayant été établi sur la base de 200 participants, le SCIJ doit payer pour 200 personnes, à partir des sommes versées par ceux qui se sont effectivement présentés.

À l’avenir, les frais de participation devront être acquittés à l’avance et puisque le SCIJ semble être considéré par certains comme une agence de voyage, les coûts d’annulation devraient être les mêmes que ceux qu’appliquent les agences.

MERCREDI

LES HURLEMENTS DU VENT ET DES BOURRASQUES DE NEIGE À L’HORIZONTALE nous ont salués au matin. Le bus en partance pour la station de ski de Ramzová n’était qu’à moitié plein. Ceux qui étaient à bord ont été récompensés par une magnifique poudreuse qui leur a même rendu tolérable le froid mordant.

Certains d’entre nous ont plutôt parcouru la ville à pied et profité de ce jour de congé pour prendre l’air ambiant, faire des courses et déjeuner dans un restaurant typique. Tom Scheck s’est chargé de faire le guide et grâce à sa connaissance de la culture locale, nous nous sentions en parfaite sécurité.

EN FIN D’APRÈS-MIDI UN AUTOBUS S’EST LAN-CÉ à l’aventure dans la nuit tombante et les rafales de neige en direction de Na Spicaku, pour un concert de clarinette à la mémoire de Marcel Pasche. Nous avons d’abord fait fausse route et avons dû rebrousser chemin. Puis le chauffeur a jugé la route trop étroite et nous a conseillé de parcourir à pied –en chaussures de ville!–les derniers 400 mètres. La nuit noire, la neige qui s’accumulait, la peur des loups et loups-garous nous en ont dissuadés. Quelques organisateurs téméraires se sont portés volontaires pour aller à pied chercher les musiciens et leur demander de venir nous rejoindre dans le bus et de donner leur concert à Priessnitz. Deux minutes plus tard, ces braves étaient de retour et convainquaient le chauffeur de nous conduire à bon port. Avec Marcel pour ange gardien, nous nous sommes finalement rendus à destination où Scott Joplin, Cole Porter et Brahms nous ont remis d’aplomb. Le voyage de retour fut nettement plus joyeux. Le Think Tank fut encore une fois l’occasion de débattre de l’avenir du SCIJ. Agneta se chargera d’en faire le compte-rendu.

JEUDI

CHARMANTE JOURNÉE. Seulement quatre kilomètres en bus pour se rendre de l’hôtel au parcours de ski de fond. Pas de vent, quelques flocons tombant doucement sur le vieux com-

plexe de l’Armée Rouge pour le rendre presque accueillant. L’immense hall qui abritait naguère l’arsenal de la puissance occupante nous a servi d’abri. Le tracé était facile, presque plat, et la course s’est terminée très rapidement. L’hyper senior Franco Sitton a pris un raccourci par erreur, s’est rendu compte que son temps était anormalement bon, a repris le départ et a gagné l’or. La traditionnelle soupe aux pois hollandaise et le hard tea ont récompensé tous les participants, rapides et lents.

VENDREDI

SKI LIBRE TOUTE LA JOURNÉE. Certains d’entre nous se sont éclatés toute la matinée dans un demi-mètre de poudreuse sur les bosses de la piste noire de Cervenohorske sedlo. Pendant ce temps, Sergio Carmona s’amusait à enseigner aux Argentins comment skier à reculons et faire des virages à 360° sur la piste bleue. Les masochistes sont allés se balader en raquettes avec le député européen et chef du gouvernement régional local, Jan Brezina. Chacun ses goûts! Le dîner de gala du dernier soir, la remise des prix aux meilleurs skieurs et autres Super Gentils Membres, plus l’orchestre Pangea qui sonnait plus authentique que les Beatles eux-mêmes, ont porté l’ambiance à de nouveaux sommets et mené à des danses endiablées jusqu’à ce que les embrassades des premiers départs sèment la mélancolie à l’idée de se séparer pour toute une autre année, en sachant que les minutes de silence à l’Assemblée générale se font de plus en plus longues et qu’il y a bien d’autres vieux amis qu’on ne reverra peut-être pas, pour d’autres raisons.

SAMEDI

Hans Castorp reste sept ans au sanatorium, libéré des contraintes et des conventions de la vie “dans les plaines” et absorbé dans un profond “questionnement de l’univers”. (Thomas Mann: *La montagne magique*)

Quelle idée libératrice que de s’exonérer des exigences de la vie quotidienne! Être complètement pris en charge. Se faire réveiller à sept heures, petit-déjeuner, trois heures de ski, déjeuner, deux heures de ski, bain tourbillon, dîner, discothèque et au lit. Même chose le lendemain, et le surlendemain, et le jour d’après, pendant sept ans... Mais rien qu’une semaine dans la même station de ski peut quelquefois être trop longue pour un journaliste.

Alors le premier bus est parti à trois heures du matin, le second une heure plus tard. Corinne Lepoutre et Peter de Kievith sont montés en voiture pour leur voyage de retour de mille kilomètres vers Amsterdam.

Nous, les chanceux, n’avons quitté Jeseniky qu’à 10 heures pour notre post-tour de trois jours dans la merveilleuse ville de Prague. Mais pour utiliser un vieux cliché: ceci est une autre histoire.

Pac a pusu Radka, Hana, Lucka, Karolina, Mirka, Jaroslava.....

SCIJ POST-TOUR IN PRAGUE

28-30. JAN. 2005 **Text and photo: Rauli Storm**

Leaving is the worst part of a SCIJ meeting.

Coming to the resort is sometimes a frustrating fight with flight delays, snowstorm and

missing luggage. Coming from Finland to a

Central or South European ski resort can

take longer than flying to Los Angeles. The

great expectations on the week ahead make

difficulties tolerable. The chance to brag

about them is an extra bonus.

When members of the post-tour woke up after our last night in Jeseniky, the first departurers were already at home after leaving in the middle of the farewell party. Now our great expectations were on Prague.

The late bird does not catch the worm. By leaving late we arrived late in Prague and kind of lost that day. However, the darkness usually smoothes the important first impression. Also the dinner in a cellar restaurant and a few beers in local pubs kept me happy.

THE PROGRAM PLANNED FOR US PROVED TO BE VERY TOURISTIC, which didn’t bother me being for the first time in Prague. Once again, I fell in love with a new city.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart composed Don Giovanni in Prague in 1787.

In the famous “Catalogue Aria” Mr. G’s servant Leporello lists to donna Elvira the ladies his master has fallen in love with. Well, seduced to be precise.

“My dear lady, this is a list

Of the beauties my master has loved...

...In Italy, six hundred and forty;

In Germany, two hundred and thirty-one;

A hundred in France; in Turkey, ninety-one;

In Spain already one thousand and three.

Among these are peasant girls,

Maidservants, city girls,

Countesses, baronesses,

Marchionesses, princesses,

Women of every rank,

Every shape, every age...”.

I fell in love with Prague, but she seduced me.

Havana did the same two months ago and sever-

al villages, towns and cities before that.

I must confess I was unfaithful to her later the year with Oslo af Norge, Porto de Portugal and Barcelona d’Espania. Wonder who’s the next?

HOW CAN ONE DESCRIBE PRAGUE. Put the grandeur of Paris and coquetry of Salzburg in a London-like chaos and you are close to Prague. Anywhere you look, magnificent buildings or a creepy statue look back at you.

Just slightly turn your head and another triumph of architecture lurks from behind the first one. Pictures cannot tell it; you have to be inside to take the atmosphere, to feel it in your mouth. Several web sites give you the foreplay, www.prague-info.cz is probably the most professional.

IN THE JEWISH CEMETERY WE STOPPED AT THE TOMBSTONE OF RABBI LEUW. Little pieces of paper with scribbled wishes are left in the cracks of the stone. At least two wishes have been reported having come true. *Ivana Suhadolc* tells about her own wish and *Gene Kramer* writes on a wish of a famous person.

IVANA: Rabbi Loew really helped me. Believe it or not, the story is true. I was visiting Prague at the beginning of the eighties and our tour couldn’t but include the Jewish cemetery, one of the most famous sights in town. In the sombre chaos of the ancient cemetery our guide point-



▲ *The blinded clockmaker stuck his hand deliberately between the wheels to stop the clock.*

Rabbi Loew was a legendary scholar, alchemist and expert of the Kabbalah who lived in the 16th century during the reign of emperor Rudolf II. The Rabbi is revered as the legendary creator of the “golem” which is the Jewish version of the Frankenstein monster, although golem stories predate Frankenstein, going as far back as the 5th century.

Rabbi Loew lived in the 16th century but the legend of his creation of a monster from the mud of the Vltava river in Prague only dates back to the 18th century when the story was first told. Golem named Yossel came to life when the Rabbi placed a shem in its mouth. (A tablet with a Hebrew inscription.) Yossel is said to have aided Rabbi Loew in his struggle with the anti-Semites in the court of Rudolf II, the Hapsburg Emperor who was then the ruler over what is now the Czech Republic, but was at that time part of the Austrian empire.

Legend has it that the golem finally ran amok and the Rabbi had to interrupt his Sabbath service in the Synagogue to deal with it. His congregation kept repeating the verse in the psalm that they had been reciting until the Rabbi returned. To this day, at the Old-New Synagogue, a line in the Sabbath service is repeated in memory of this event.

The end of the golem came when the Rabbi removed the shem from its mouth; he allegedly carried the remains of the golem to the attic of the Old-New Synagogue where they supposedly reside to this day.



▲▲▲ The Municipal House and its interior are decorated by leading Czech artists e.g. Alfons Mucha.

The Dancing House ▲▲▲ Cafe somewhere near Kafka's old home ▲

◀ Mucha Museum close to the Municipal House. Recommended.

▲ Puppets are plentiful with varying plays

Old Jesuit library ▲

Karlův most ▲▲▲ (Charles Bridge)

ed out the most the famous tomb of the Rabbi. In the cracks of the old stone I discovered small slips of paper which I couldn't but read. They were inscribed with wishes. At that time I had a wish myself. I was working for RAI in Trieste and my husband lived in Venice. So I asked Rabbi Loew to let me be sent to Venice! After a couple of months I got a half-year assignment in the RAI seat in Venice. I was extremely happy, but felt that I had wasted my wish. It was only a half-year assignment, when what I wanted was a permanent move! Prague was too far away, but I remembered the ancient Jewish cemetery on the Lido island and thought that maybe that could do too. On a cold winter morning I took the boat to the Lido and discovered that the cemetery was locked. There were no opening hours. The place was not in use anymore. Since the 17th century all the Venetian Jews were buried in a "new" cemetery nearby. I didn't let myself be discouraged but climbed the wall. The place had the same sombre atmosphere of the Jewish cemetery in

Prague. I settled for a rather dignified tomb, which however proved to have no cracks, so I put a small stone on the note that I had carefully composed at home. "Dear Rabbi Loew," it said, "Sorry for bothering you again, but unfortunately I did not properly word my wish. Thank you so much for granting it so quickly, yet what I really wanted was not a simple assignment, but a permanent transfer to Venice." After three months I got my transfer. This story has taught me the importance of an exact definition of a wish. And it has made me aware that, when old rabbis are concerned, we sometimes do get a second chance in life.

GENE: After narrowly losing the 1960 presidential election to Kennedy, Richard Nixon grumbled to the press corps that "you won't have Dick Nixon to kick around any longer." He changed his mind and undertook a European journey to return from the "political wilderness" and enhance his foreign affairs image.



Nixon started with Moscow, was refused a visa by Poland, went to Bucharest. My foreign editor in AP in New York called me in Warsaw, where I was based, with orders to get to Bucharest. But it was too late to get a visa and we settled for Prague, Nixon's next stop. During the tour of Prague Nixon was taken to the Jewish cemetery. His guides were informed of the tradition of visitors writing their wishes on scraps of paper and inserting them between the stones of the gravestone of Rabbi Loew. (The current practice was to wish for world peace, peaceful coexistence, glory for socialism, or whatever.) Nixon delegated an accompanying Republican Congressman to leave his wish. Your dedicated AP correspondent lingered behind until everyone had left, then dug out the scribbled wish, copied it into his notebook and returned it to its resting place. Text of the writing: "A wish for the people of America: Richard M. Nixon in 1968." The tradition of wishes coming true was thus upheld, since in 1968 he was elected president of the U.S.A.



John Kerry and Rabbi Loew. Notice resemblance?

John Kerry's paternal grandfather, Frederick A. Kerry (born Fritz Kohn), was born on May 10, 1873 in the town of Horní Benešov, Austria-Hungary (in what is now the Moravian-Silesian Region of the Czech Republic), and grew up in Mödling, Austria (a small town near Vienna). His wife Ida (née Loewe) was born in Budapest, Hungary. They were both German-speaking Ashkenazi Jews. In 1901, Fritz Kohn converted from Judaism to Catholicism and changed his name to Frederick Kerry. His wife Ida also converted at the same time. They then immigrated to the United States, arriving at Ellis Island in 1905. They raised their three children, including John's father, as Catholics. A Czech historian believes that Ida was a descendant of Sinai Loew, one of three older brothers of Rabbi Judah Loew.

