

Thursday, 30 December 2004

Cathy promised that either she or Silvia would be picking me up at the station in



Cathy Burckhardt and Dr. Silvia Smolka

Braunschweig when I arrived. As it turned out they were both there and both seemed really happy to see me. They drove me to the hotel they had booked for me, and brought a bundle of money to pay for it if I was happy with the accommodation. Of course there is no way I could accept that degree of hospitality, especially after I insisted on staying at a hotel rather than in their homes.

The village is totally gorgeous and the hotel modern, roomy and clean inside but built into a traditional German 3-storey heritage listed building. I am as happy as a pig in Jerusalem. We went for a walk through the peaceful little village and then turned in



My Hotel

for a fun filled meal. Vincent, a Feldenkraise practitioner came up for the dinner and meeting tomorrow, having driven some two and a half hours to be with us. Iris Ness, working in a related field, phoned from Switzerland and said she was coming up for the meeting too, in the overnight train from Switzerland. She would then go back the next evening.

Friday, 31 December 2004

We had a great meeting yesterday. We went into the upstairs seminar room, which was cold but cosy. When I asked the hotel lady for some water, she was alarmed that we were up there. She had heated and prepared the downstairs room with table cloths, pens, all sorts of cold drinks, coffee, pretty flowers etc. So we moved and were very comfortable all day. In the afternoon we were joined by an ENT specialist doctor who supports Silvia with her work, and also by a Russian who has had some experience with a Russian Buteyko practitioner. Tonight I'm invited to Silvia's home for a quiet new year meal.

Sunday, 02 January 2005

I met Cathy's family privately on New Year's eve and chatted to her for around two hours, to clarify stuff that came out of the last meeting. Then I enjoyed New Years Eve celebration at the home of Silvia and her family, where we had a raclette, followed by fireworks. It was great to be at the home of such a lovely family, and they provided me with a wonderful and very happy evening. Silvia told me that all the people who attended our meeting at the hotel said they were very happy with the way it went.



The next morning Silvia and I travelled together by train to Potsdam to meet Thomas Kirschner, who translated Andrey's book. Silvia and Thomas were interested in



meeting each other. It just so happens that Thomas has a huge interest in all sorts of other alternative health care stuff including a range of electronic devices that Silvia was already familiar with, so they spent the whole afternoon discussing this material. I'm a little sceptical and don't really have much interest in it. With Buteyko you really don't need anything else!!

After dinner at an Indian restaurant, Silvia faced another two hour train trip back home. As with Cathy, I farewelled her with a heavy heart, something that I've experienced a lot on this trip.

I'm in a lovely country hotel in Hermanswert on an Island in Potsdam, 10 minutes walk from where Thomas and Inna live (also on the island.) This is in east Germany and was under the communists of course, but is now blossoming. It is a



very lovely part of the world. Inna (his Ukrainian wife) gave me lunch today (they are strict vegetarians) and then Thomas went to show me the remoter sites in



Potsdam, including the castle of Friedrich the Great and the bridge where countless movies have been made over prisoner exchanges between east and west.

The trip to Berlin didn't turn out quite as expected. Thomas and Inna showed me some of the sights. We popped into a huge cathedral and climbed up to the dome. We also did tour of the basement where all the famous Kaisers and their families lie buried. For a Ukrainian émigré, Inna had an extraordinary knowledge of the history of Germany, including details of all the Royal families. Inna also has an extraordinary knowledge of how to get around Berlin. Thomas didn't need his amazing satellite navigation system (which not only gives you a continually updated map of where you are and where you are going, but also actually speaks to you and tells you where to turn), because Inna knows exactly where to go.
