

thursday sept 01 2005
dispatch #4 (final) from ralph in vienna

monday august 29

My first day off since leaving home nine days ago. Linda and Raoul took me to dinner at a fabulous Chinese restaurant in Maurer, a suburb of Vienna, with their daughter Hannah and her partner, Andy.

tuesday august 30

I had been invited back to IIASA by the Dynamic Systems Group to explore mutual interests. This group turned out to be two russian mathematicians from the Steklov Institute in Moscow, Arkady and Alexi. They visit IIASA part-time, with short monthly visits. Their work on optimal control theory is pretty abstract but looks like good math. I guessed that they have poor relations with the other groups at IIASA (forestry, fisheries, air pollution, etc) and proposed a collaboration in which my NSF sponsored work with Dan Friedman and Pablo Viotti at UCSC would try to bridge between their work and IIASA's applied groups. This would give them a chance for increased support within IIASA. They seemed to like this proposal, and I have yet to see if it is possible.

Next on my agenda was the second presentation of my Vienna visit, a fireside chat with the parents and teachers of the Rudolph Steiner Schule Wien/Maurer. This is one of the earliest of the Waldorf schools, and includes an important teacher training program, led by Tobias Richter. It was a visit to this school a decade ago that brought me into contact with Linda and Raoul and their children. Sasha, the youngest child, was a senior at the school during this earlier visit.

I was to tell the parents and teachers about the program I had developed with Bill Thompson for the Ross School on Long Island. This went surprising well, as some of the basic concepts of the Ross curriculum are very similar to the original ideas of Rudolph Steiner, a century ago, which I had never known. So here also, like the IIASA Dynamical Systems Group, there is a possibility for future collaboration.

wednesday august 31

Today was devoted to a visit to Elizabeth Gergele, one of the founders of the Rudolph Steiner Schule Wien/Maurer, who had just celebrated her 85th birthday. Her country home is beautiful, peaceful, and almost monastic in the Steiner style. It was she who had organized my earlier visit to the Maurer school, and she was keen to hear about last night's talk.

thursday september 01

Linda and Raoul took me on a tour of the Hundertwasser buildings of Vienna. These are comic but comfortable buildings somewhat like Gaudi's apartment buildings in Barcelona, of which I have fond memories. Although I laughed at Hundertwasser today, I have a feeling they will stick in my memory for a long time. It is the contrast with staid and classical Vienna that gives them such power. And tomorrow: homeward bound !!!

end #4