

Ten Days That Shook Our World

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We met early that morning in Vnukovo Airport, Moscow. Some were talking. Some were laughing. Some were listening to our parents' lectures about safety. Tired, excited, and a bit upset because a member of the group, Gleb, could not come because of sickness, we proceeded to the plane. We laughed and talked excitedly about the convention, England, British boyfriends and girlfriends, and all sorts of silly things, catching attention from many passersby. We were so different from each other, yet so similar.

Luckily for the passengers in our plane, we had to wake up quite early that morning, so most of us were sleepy and tired. Therefore, we spent our trip in the plane in a very quiet and well-behaved manner. Little did we know that we were flying to ten of the most memorable days in our lives.

After four hours of flight, we landed in Heathrow Airport, London. Everyone quickly became wide-awake to admire the view and "practice" British accent.

We soon settled ourselves in a warm and comfortable bus that brought us to Stonehenge. Stonehenge welcomed us with terribly strong wind. If there really existed any ancient mystery about Stonehenge, then this wind must be one. However, thanks to A.C.E program, in which we learnt persistence and bravery as character traits, we managed to accomplish the life-risking "mission" of walking from our bus to the rocks, stopping for photos, and then returning to our bus.

After all the trials and hardships in Stonehenge, we, a little bit blown up by the wind, but victorious, were rewarded with a comfortable three-hour bus trip to The Bear Inn Hotel located in the town called Street.

The Bear Inn Hotel, though small, was nice and comfortable. My roommate Thao My and I really enjoyed the beautiful scene of Street surroundings from our windows. The only problem was that we had to share one blanket. The night was cold, and I somehow took the whole blanket for myself and left My almost frozen to death in the morning.

After a good night sleep, everyone was ready for the European Student Convention in Millfeild School. After a short drive, we stood amazed at the breath-taking scene of Millfeild School. We were used to the small and modest accommodations, so for us the bright flowers-covered parks, beautiful buildings of both modern and old architecture style, huge dining room with numerous kinds of delicious food, and professional athletic fields seemed like a dream.

Each school was given a building where all students of that school lived together like a big family. Our school's building was Abbey.

We spent our days in Millfeild School competing in various areas of platform events, sports, and academics. Though we were very busy, we had some free time to go shopping, drink tea in the kitchen, play table tennis in the living room, watch movies, play video games, or watch our friends' performances.

We were not only surprised by the accommodation, but also by a very high-level exhibition and students' performances at the European Convention. Besides having the advantage of being native speakers, the students there were especially talented in music and sports.

We were also surprised by the rules and the way the convention was conducted. The rule, which I remember most, was about boys and girls who had to be at least eight centimeters apart. What our boys did was making the look as if they were perfect students who always followed the rules: they began walking quickly ahead of the girls, and then stopped suddenly, causing us girls to bump them. As a result, our boys started condemning us of breaking the rule.

There is no place on earth where we could be free of all troubles. However, all these troubles made convention so charming. I can't stop laughing when I think of all the times when we lost the way, failed to understand the "British pronunciation" of our names, forgot our props for platforms events, had problems with the water in the faucets, made too much noise at night, waited for those who were constantly late.

When we hear the word "European Convention," we immediately think of the luxurious accommodations, high-level performances, and precious

moments with our friends, and...rallies. Rallies were conducted in the gym, where the floor was completely flat. Therefore, if there was a tall person sitting in front of me, I could not see half of what was happening on the stage. That was not a big problem since there was not a lot to see, we mostly listened. We had a professional music band and singers, so we always started rallies with standing and singing series of hymns. Finally, when we could not feel our legs anymore, we were permitted to sit, and the medals were given out. The closing of the rally was as impressive as the opening. Rallies always ended with two-hour devotions about "Such a Time as This" (the theme of convention). We never meant to be rude, but the British accent was hard to understand. Moreover, after dinner, blood rushed from our brains to the stomachs to help digestion; therefore, the speech sounded nothing but a lullaby for us. After the first rally, some of us were even planning to bring pillows, blankets, and toothbrushes to the next rallies. We did not do though.

Please do not think that rallies were bad. We learnt a lot from them. Not really about "Such a Time as This" as expected, but about other practical things. First, we learnt to appreciate our teacher, Mr. Ndirowei's morning speech. Normally, we were thought, "Why does he speak too much?" However, after the convention, we all realized that Mr. Ndirowei was a very laconic person. Second, some of the girls and I managed to lose some weight and had our leg muscles strengthened.

Time quickly passed, and convention ended. We felt exhausted, because some of our peers got sick, but very satisfied. Some judges saying that they were very impressed by our works sometimes approached us. A girl from our group Linh performed her piano solo in one of the rallies. We together brought forty medals to our school. We were so proud both of others and ourselves. We had fought a good fight. I guess the Soviet soldiers could not be happier when they knew they won Germany than we were after the award ceremony.

We gave Millfeild School our last glance with some feelings of regret because either for many of us graduating this year or next year it was our last

chance to participate in the European Student Convention. Leaving behind us all the tasks, we headed for our fun time in London.

We were very blessed in London. First, Gleb joined us. Second, the weather was fantastic. It was neither hot nor cold. It only sometimes rained a bit to add “romanticness” to the trip. Basically, it was great.

London was full of interesting places. For us, each place in London was special because of memories in that place. How can we forget how Lam and My rushed right into the souvenir shop at National Gallery without even looking at art works; the boys scared girls in London Dungeon; we lost Honore in Madame Tussauds Museum; in Sherlock Holmes Museum, Alex almost was arrested because of bringing his pony and gas mask there?

When we hear the word LONdon, we do not only think of the excursions, but also of all the late night talks, the Mafia games, the truth-and-dare games, and all the precious moments spent with each other.

Our educational trip to Great Britain ended. That was our first trip together, and perhaps the last. We returned to Moscow to our usual lives. We will study, graduate, and each will enter his/her new life as a college student. We will never experience all the moments in England together again. However, no matter where we are, let us all keep these wonderful memories of England in our heart. Forever.