

Address to the Rotarians of the new Russian district

I wouldn't for the world have missed this rendezvous of the history of Rotary with European Russia.

Because the bonds are strong and long-standing between us and many of you:

- Thirteen years ago, I first met my friend Andrei who was then the young secretary/interpreter of the Moscow club
- It is also thirteen years since I started my relationship with the club of Saint Petersburg Neva and Vladimir Vassilikov.
- One of my great rotarian memories I owe to the Moscow club, with the friendly visit they paid to my club of Denain-Bouchain under the presidency of Vladimir Litvinov with a delegation of thirty friends.
- Because here in Moscow, in 1995, we jointly set up one of the most active inter-country committees, a committee which fully participated in the expansion of Rotary and the training of rotarians.
- Because we have been able to realize numerous cultural and professional exchanges
 - o The training of many medical doctors in France
 - o The twenty performances in France and Belgium of the children's ensemble Loktev. An unforgettable experience for the eight thousand members of the audiences
- Because with that committee we initiated great projects, the latest of which is the purchase of the horse Izbrannik-Beslan for the hippotherapy centre.

I greet my friend Jorma Lampen who, ten years ago, was appointed Presidential Administrator and succeeded Paul Nicolai Elhers.

I have always thought that the Rotary International must have a great future in Russia, and I have been disappointed to see the slowness of this development.

I believe in the future of Rotary International in Russia because the Russian spirit is noble, idealistic, humanistic and these seeds are only willing to grow and come into bloom.

So, Rotarian friends, when you speak of Rotary International among your acquaintances, don't hesitate to say:

- That we took part in the drawing up of the UNO charter
- That we contributed to the creation of UNESCO,
- That we share the objectives of the millennium for education, health, poverty, water,

- That we accompany young people in their training and their looking for jobs,
- That the Rotary Foundation offers many programs in favour of youth,
- That we think peace can be built in collaboration with the young.

You should say that we are one path among others but a sure path for the future of man and society.

And you should say this, to begin with, in the club which brings together friends who come from various milieux but share the same ideal of a life in which one can alleviate sufferings and bring hope in the absolute respect of each person's political, religious and civil convictions.

So I rejoice at the creation of the district which, fifteen years after the first club was set up, now enables you to lead your own destiny:

- Keep in mind that ethical preoccupations are fundamental in the rotarian spirit
- Keep in mind that your personal engagement is necessary to the peace of the world,
- Keep in mind that your actions towards the population are part of the development of mankind, to which we collaborate,
- Keep in mind that nothing lasting can be achieved if youth feels our objectives are alien to its preoccupations.

Let us aim at the stars!

So strong is the belief that a deed of love gives birth to a new dawn

Thank you very much and good luck!

Serge Gouteyron
RI Vice President 05-06