

Peace Road 2016

Three Days in the “Green Zone”

Germany, 12. August 2016



By Ulrich Ganz

On 12.08.16 we were ready to go! After much preparation, the 25 participants, a good half of whom were young adults, met in Bleckede at the home of the Pries family. Friends of the Peace Road had come from Bleckede/Lauenburg, Hamburg, Flensburg, Gießen and even Frankfurt. And this year women made up almost half of our group. Those who had come from a distance had transported their bicycles by train or car, and a few of the young people had already cycled the 30 km from Lüneburg station to the meeting point in Bleckede. An intimate atmosphere was

quickly established as we enjoyed a barbecue together, and the evening came to a relaxing end.

On the following day we took the ferry over the Elbe and our route took us through the small town of Boizenburg that was once in the DDR, right on the border. There we met a reporter from the Hagenow area local paper at the idyllic market place. After a short conversation, we agreed to meet her for an interview at the border memorial site „Checkpoint Harry“, about 3 km. outside the town. On our arrival, we learned from the reporter that on that day, August 13th, 55 years previously, the wall had been built

between the DDR and the BRD. Precisely on this memorable day, the German section of the „Peace Road 2016“ led us to „Checkpoint Harry“ on the way from Boizenburg to Lauenburg.



The next edition of the local Hagenow newspaper contained the following: ‘last year alone, people from 120 countries all over the world took part in the project ‚Peace Road‘. On foot, bicycle, by car or other means of transport, every year they form a path of peace round the world in order to say ‘we are all one family’’. The newspaper went on to say that the project would be given a different motto each year. ‘This year, we, along with the participants in most other countries, are championing the reunification of North and South Korea. Additionally, we are supporting the opening of a fifth UN office at the border of the Koreas’, Siegfried Pries was quoted as stating.

Kayong Kim from South Korea, who joined the accompanying team with Hilke Ganz and Dagmar Pries, could hardly





express her astonishment that the Germans were so dedicated to Korea. The 24-year-old art student has lived for one year in Germany. 'Yes, the situation between North and South Korea is again deteriorating', she told the reporter in concerned tones.

Dagmar Pries explained that as a Czech citizen who has lived for 20 years in Germany, she was personally very moved by her travels in this section of the once 'death zone', now the 'green zone'. Because the wall which divided Germany in two, was, until 1989, also part of the almost impenetrable 'iron curtain' between the East Block, of which

Czechoslovakia was a part, and the NATO countries.

Dieter Schmidt, who was one of the organizers of the only large demonstration against the wall in 1987, remarked that at that time, all the political parties opposed the demonstration, and had tried to block it. Almost nobody believed that Germany would be reunited.

While we were dealing with this historical topic, a white-bearded grandfather who was out for a walk with his grandchild, had suddenly joined us and admitted that he had once been a soldier at the border. As an 18 year old, he had helped to build and guard the wall. His 'I was there'

stories enthralled us and we had the feeling that we were really experiencing a journey into the history of Germany.

And so, highly motivated, we continued our journey to the next goal, the pretty town of Lauenburg on the bank of the Elbe, where we enjoyed an extended lunch break in a restaurant at the harbor. It was then back to the other side of the Elbe, where there are many enticing convivial cafes.

On the third day, we cycled to Lüneburg with its historical old town which attracts tourists from all over the world. Thus not only had we demonstrated for world peace, but we were also able to enjoy the beauty of the Elbe countryside and to rediscover the attraction of small historical towns in north Germany. In doing so, we covered over a hundred kilometers.

Reinhold Merta made this comment about his participation: 'this year's Peace Road (my first time taking part) was pleasant. I enjoyed staying in the inns, as well as the barbeque to start off with and all the discussions in between. The way up to Boizenburger Heights was a bit exhausting, but doable. It was a valuable experience to combine a holiday activity with a positive purpose'.

In this spirit, we hope that this peace initiative can be continued and developed next year.

