

# Peace Road 2015 - Germany

## Three tours along the former border between West- and East-Germany

Germany, 1. – 4. August 2015

Germany was separated for almost 40 years into West and East. Berlin, though situated in the middle of the former German Democratic Republic, was also divided into West and East-Berlin, with a wall and fence running 160km around West Berlin. The Family Federation and the UPF Germany deemed it most meaningful for Peace Road 2015, to take a bicycle trip along the former border between the two German states before unification at the end of 1989. For this purpose, one team of 17 cyclists went from the southern city of Hof near the Czech border north to Kronach. This team travelled along the “iron curtain – south route”, which is very hilly with lots of ups and downs. A second team came from the northern city of Bleckede and travelled south to Grafhorst, more than 210km in three days. Their route is called “iron curtain – north route”. The third team travelled in a day-trip along the former wall separating West- and East Berlin. Each team presents a report on its respective trip with pictures and info materials.



By Fritz Piepenburg

### Iron Curtain Road South Route

#### Day 1: Hof to Hirschberg

After spending one night at the Youth Hostel in Hof, the team of 17 people started their trip along the former German-German border, previously known as the “iron curtain”, but now called the “green belt”.

The border strip was heavily guarded against trespassers, and flora and fauna could develop unhindered. Since the opening of the border, the “untouched wilderness” has been preserved by NGOs and local governments. The 1400km death zone between the two

Germany was thus transformed into a natural lifeline.



The trip started in front of a memorial named “November 9th, 1989”, the day when the Wall and Iron Curtain first opened. The road passed the “Fernweh Park” (park of longing for distant countries), where plates of far-away

destinations are exhibited, symbolizing the longing of East German citizens to visit the world. A “freedom bell” announced the hour of the fall of the Iron Curtain.



The cyclists then arrived at the border crossing, where a large signboard reads: “Here Germany and Europe was

divided until the border opened on November 12, 1989 at exactly 10:00 am.” – From there on, they were in former East German territory.

Passing former watch towers standing as a reminder of the division, the team travelled along so-called “Kolonnenwege”- border control roads formed by concrete blocks, which enabled East German army vehicles to constantly survey the border. We then arrived at the “Three-State-Stone”, the meeting point of three state borders: Bavaria, Saxony and Thuringia.

Continuing to Moedlareuth, we had a picnic lunch and later visited the former wall which divided the small village. Moedlareuth was also called “Little Berlin”. The brook dividing the village was the border between the State of Bavaria and the State of Thuringia, and thus the border line between West and East Germany. East German authorities built a wall, fence and other border structures right through the village. Some 100m of the wall is still preserved and can be visited, along with a museum detailing more facts about the tragic division of the small village.



The trip came to an end at Hirschberg in front of a war memorial commemorating the end of World War II. We spent the night at the “Festungsherberge Kronach”, a youth hostel situated in the middle of the large castle (dating back to the 13th century) towering high above the old city of Kronach.

## Day 2: Schlegel-West to Schlegel-East and the Altvater tower

The next day started with a surprise. The plan was to start at the little town of Schlegel and continue the cycle path all the way to Steinbach. We typed in the city name in our navigator and in fact arrived at a village called Schlegel. However upon inquiry we discovered there were two villages with the same name: one in former West Germany and the other in former East Germany. The navigator had led us to Schlegel in

West Germany. We quickly adapted our plans in order to connect the two villages by our peace road tour, which we did. On the way we lost two cyclists who went a different route and eventually ended up in a village called “Hell”! However they went down the “Hell Valley” and joined the main group at Blankenstein just across the former border into East Germany.



From Schlegel (East Germany) we continued to the Altvater tower at an altitude of 800m. This tower was erected by the ‘Association of Displaced Families’-(displaced as a result of World War II). Several memorial plates bear witness to the tragedy of people being driven away from their homes in the east and having to resettle further to the west.

## Day 3: Klein Tettau back to Kronach

On the third and last day we started from Klein Tettau (former West Germany) along the former border. Ironically the border takes a twist to the south before continuing to the north. Thus during this trip, East Germany was in the West while West Germany was in the East. Hence the saying: “Here people point towards the West and say: over there lies the East.” Large boards in Neuenbau remind of tragic incidents along the iron curtain.

One reads: “Traces from the GDR Border: On August 3rd, 1964, the 49 year old mechanic Karl Matz from Neuenbau tried to cross the border. After having a scuffle with a party functionary he was afraid of being imprisoned on the charge of “slandering the state”. When Karl Matz left his home around 2:00 am and went to the border, he was intercepted by a so called “ambush patrol”. One of

*the citizens had betrayed him. Karl Matz, father of four children, was shot at and wounded in both legs. He died on the same day from his injuries and blood loss in Sonneberg hospital. The two soldiers, M. and K., were decorated with the “medal for exemplary border control service”.*

At Heinersdorf further to the south the community established a memorial place with part of the wall, which prohibited its citizens from travelling to the next city Welitsch just a couple of hundred meters away.

One signboard explains about the forced resettlement of “untrustworthy citizens”: “Heinersdorf experienced larger resettlement actions in 1952 and 1961. In May of 1952 all citizens, as in other border villages, were screened. Some 130 persons were then deemed to be untrustworthy and in need of resettlement further away. The authorities announced on the morning of June 5th 1952 that people had to be ready for transfer by the next day. Several panicked and tried to escape, leading to dramatic scenes. The border police demanded additional troops and sealed the border as tightly as possible. At about 3 pm some 40 people were able to escape into the West. Altogether 130 citizens could reach the Western villages of Welitsch and Friedersdorf. In August 1952 the first barbed-wire fence was erected.”

The south-route continued all the way back to Kronach, where everybody was rewarded with a large cup of ice cream. The mayor of Kronach sent a congratulatory telephone message to all participants on having accomplished such a meaningful bicycle trip along the former German-German border.

By Ulrich Ganz

## Iron Curtain Road North Route



On the evening of 31 July, the 16 participants in the north part of the ‘green belt’ route (as the former demarcation line between the two Germanys is now known) met under the motto ‘Connecting the World

through Peace'. Our tour was to start the following day in the small town of Bleckede, just a little to the east of Lüneberg.

We gathered at the home of Dagmar and Siegfried Pries where we were to stay that night, and as we barbequed that evening in the garden, the full moon shone through the branches of the trees, bringing a spirit of adventure.



At 09.00 the next morning, we had an appointment with Martin Gödeke, the deputy mayor, who received us in the town hall and offered us refreshments. He told us many interesting stories about the time when Germany was divided by a border. After a photo for the Bleckede newspaper - (already published with a report in the paper) - we set off in the ferry for the opposite banks of the Elbe, which were once in the DDR. We were greeted by the idyllic almost untouched countryside on the bank of the Elbe with numerous water lily filled ponds.

In Konau, a small centuries old village in the marshes whose inhabitants were forcibly resettled in the DDR era, we found an exhibition with photos, visual aids and authentic interviews with contemporary witnesses who related stories of the border. Here we met a group of 40 people who also wanted to find out about the former border. They were very inspired as we explained about our Peace Road project and that we wanted to support the unification of Korea.

Our first goal was Gorleben, a small but nevertheless very famous town connected with the phrase '**nuclear waste repository**'. There we were treated to a hearty meal of local specialties such as pickled herring, aspic, different kinds of meat and savoury roast potatoes. Having cycled 80km, this feast was very welcome! The next morning we met in the restaurant of our small inn and prepared for the day with a tasty breakfast.

Our group was made up of a family from Giessen, Gottfried and Sylvia Tuchecker with son Markus, Dieter and Ana Schmidt from Flensburg, Siegfried Pries with his friend Olaf from Bleckede, Raimund Eder and Gerhard Toelke from Hamburg, Manuel and Masuyo Gröning, Hilke and Ulrich Ganz with their sons Sebastian, Tobias and daughter Elisa from Stelle. The **journey through the 'green belt'** bound us tightly as a group although we had only come together a short time before.

Our first goal that day was Schnackenburg, where we visited a very informative border museum. Schnackenburg is the most eastern community in Lower Saxony. From here onwards, the former inter-German border leaves the Elbe. Next our tour continued to the idyllic Arendsee. We reached the lake at midday after 40km cycling, and rewarded ourselves with a refreshing swim in brilliant sunshine. We all wore the same t-shirts, which opened the way everywhere for conversation and stimulated many discussions about world peace.

Our accompanying team, Ana, Hilke and Elisa supported us at every stop with drinks and food. And for anyone who could go no further, a car was available for part of the trip. We appreciated the support of this team!



That evening, after the second stage, we stayed overnight in Wustrow in the '**Black Hen**' a picturesque inn that we had completely to ourselves. The pizzas were very tasty after such a day!

After a hearty breakfast, at 09.00 the next day we had an appointment with

the deputy mayor of Wustrow, Mr. Stendel who explained the points of interest in the town and willingly answered our questions. From him we understood that the past still greatly influences the lives of people in the '**green belt**' and gives them their identity. More and more we had the feeling that we were learning a new aspect about this part of Germany. And especially for our youth, the Peace Tour was a journey in time back into an unknown past.

Then we moved on to Salzwedel. The road there goes through a swamp land that we had to cross by way of the roads taken by the former DDR border troops - '**Kolonnenweg**' - with perforated concrete slabs for the traffic, also called '**Plattenweg**'.



Salzwedel, a jewel of German timbered-housing, is also known for the original traditional '**Baumkuchen**' (tree-cake). Thus we were able to connect our peace mission with German tradition when we met the local reporter in the '**Baumkuchen**' café Kruse. Dieter Schmidt gave him an interview and the reporter took a photo of our group for an article that was published in the **homepage of the 'Hansestadt Salzwedel'**

It was over 35 degrees C as we slowly approached our goal, the station in Bad Bodenteich after a trip of over 210 km. Before we parted to make our homeward journey, either by car or train, Dieter offered a prayer of gratitude. Worthy of special mention are our female participants Silvia Tuchecker and Masuyo Gröning. Silvia even cycled the whole way.

Many expressed their thanks that the group had been able to establish a tightly knit community and that these bonds would long remain in memory.

It is our deep desire that our Peace Tour in Germany makes a contribution to world peace, and especially to the unification of Korea. We are grateful for this world-wide peace tour, inspired by our founding couple, Rev Sun Myung Moon and his wife, Hak Ja Han.

By Bernd Flieger

## Iron Curtain Road Berlin Wall Tour

As part of Rev. and Mrs. Sun Myung Moon's International Peace Road 2015 initiative, and as part of the Peace Road Tour in Germany we undertook a bicycle tour in Berlin, travelling along the route of the former Berlin Wall – that iconic symbol of the cold war era and the manifestation of division between two ideological camps. Now, 26 years after this wall came down, it is still a big magnet for millions of tourists every year. The Berlin Wall was a symbol of division. But the wall that was overcome, the wall that does not exist anymore has become a symbol of joy and hope. Even the most strongly guarded borders can open up peacefully.

While cycling and visiting the various historic places in Berlin we prayed for the re-unification of Korea and for a heartistically united human family - connected through roads of peace.



**East Side Gallery** : a 1,5 km part of the Berlin Wall in Central Berlin next to the Spree River that, in 1990, was turned into an Open Air Gallery by artists from 21 nations. It contains over 100 paintings of very different artistic expression.



**Standing on Oberbaum-Bridge**, spanning the Spree river. Between 1961 and 1989 the bridge was a border checkpoint.



In front of the **Axel-Springer Publishing House**, a conservative West German newspaper publishing company which supported a unified Germany and Europe during the cold war. Around the building, which stood right next to the border, are pieces of the Berlin Wall, the **Balancing Act** sculpture, memorial plates for **Ronald Reagan** and **Richard von Weizsäcker**, and the **Fathers of Unity** memorial showing **George Bush senior**, **Helmut Kohl** and **Michael Gorbatschow**.



1986: "The Wall in Berlin is a reality; but realistic it is not, because it is not reasonable, not humane. Therefore – from a historical perspective – it will not last."



Memorial plate showing Ronald Reagan's famous appeal: "Mr. Gorbatschow, open this gate. Mr. Gorbatschow, tear down this wall." And standing on a strip of cobblestones that marks the position where once the Berlin Wall stood.



Praying for the unity of the two Koreas on the broken pieces of the Berlin Wall.



Honoring the politicians who made the right decisions at the right time: **George Bush senior**, **Helmut Kohl** and **Michael Gorbatschow** ... and honoring **God and True Parents** for preparing the right time.



In front of the North-Korean embassy.



Tourists join the picture in front of the iconic **Brandenburg Gate** – a symbol for the unified Germany and Europe.



Cycling on a line of cobblestones that marks the position where the Berlin Wall divided the city in the past. Now it is a park.



At the central Berlin Wall memorial: transcending borders for World Peace. The "Iron Curtain" is no longer a hindrance on the road to world peace.



*At the central Berlin Wall memorial: The Chapel of Reconciliation. The chapel is a reminder of the church of reconciliation which stood in the border death stripe and was blown up in 1985 by order of the East German government.*



*Exhausted but grateful that we could be part of Peace Road 2015, we concluded our cycling tour at the sculpture "Reconciliation", where we prayed for the reconciliation and unity of God and mankind, husband and wife, parents and children, religions and nations.*



*Finally we ate ice cream, mindful of the fact that we were sitting on a spot that - only 26 years ago - was one of the best protected borders of the modern world.*

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