



PEACE ROAD in the former East-West German Border Area (Fourth stage of Peace Road Germany 2018)

Hamburg, Germany, September 15, 2018

By Ulrich Ganz

On 15 September we met in the Café Knigge in Hitzacker, a small town at the edge of the former inner German border. Situated on the Elbe in Wendland, it was a special destination for excursions for people in the Western part of Germany during the time of separation. From there it was possible to see the border on the other side, the part of Germany that was at the time communist, without exposure to any danger.

Bicycles were hired by those who had not brought their own; then we assembled on the banks of the Elbe for

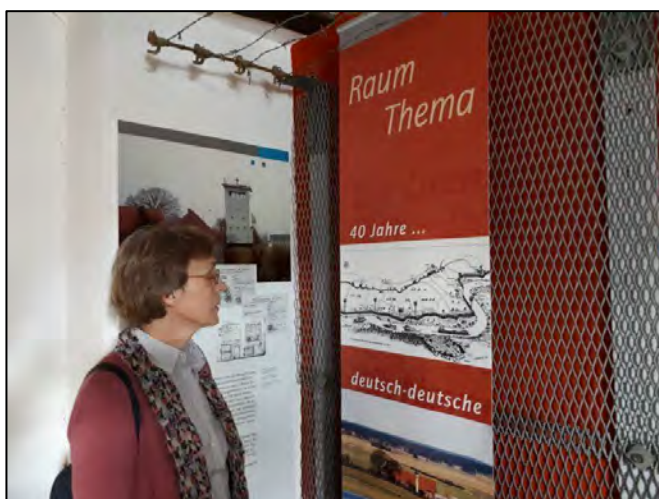
a group photograph. In the background the former border is visible, an area which after the fall of the Wall was converted into a nature reserve „Grünes Band“ (‘Green Area’).

We then visited the museum „Altes Zollhaus“, (old custom house) where there was an exhibition about the local history for visitors. There is also a display about the time of divided Germany, with photographs, documents and other utensils from this time that now lies almost thirty years in the past.

After looking around the town which looked as if it was still in the middle-ages with its timbered architecture,

many decorated little shops and winding alleyways, we cycled to the next destination. We split into two groups - the sporty and the somewhat slower ones. There was also a group on foot who joined us and then came by car to the next stop, the village of Sammatz.

Sammatz lies about 14 kilometers downstream Elbe in the hilly forested moraine landscape, the so-called Elbauen. This is home to the Michaelshof, which is run according to the philosophy of Rudolf Steiner, the founder of anthroposophy and Waldorf schools.





Goats, sheep, cows and other animals are kept there. Fruit and vegetables are also grown, and there is a wonderful flower garden with a pond and fountain, making this place an oasis of peace, immediately captivating visitors from near and far.

We then made ourselves comfortable in the Hofcafé and over coffee and home-made cake, exchanged thoughts about how a culture of peace can be encouraged in a reunited Germany. Not only in Sammatz, but also in other villages that we saw along the way, the houses and farms emitted a certain peacefulness, reminiscent to the older of the group of their childhood.

The final stage was Bleckede, which was divided by the border and the Elbe in the DDR days. The cyclists then continued along the banks of the Elbe where there were sometimes sandy

paths and many hills but the pure nature and fresh forest air made all our efforts worthwhile. The Pries family had extended an invitation for a grill party, which we all enjoyed together until late in the evening.

In the meanwhile, the numbers of our peace group had swelled to almost forty. Acquaintances, relatives, friends from Berlin and other cities had come along and not only were we a large variety of nationalities but also a big mix of ages from seven to seventy.

On the following day we closed with a Sunday breakfast at the home of the artist family Gröning in which we were joined by the participants who had travelled a long way to be with us.

Thus, this final stage of the Peace Road in Germany was for all who participated an experience dedicated to

world peace which made a big impression and was also a preparation for next year when we will celebrate thirty years of reunification in our country. This will give an additional boost to our Peace Road Project!

Annegret Landwehr, a participant from Berlin wrote: „At the Elbe in Hitzacker, the former border country, I felt as if I had returned to my childhood. Shortly after the Wall had been built in 1961 - over 55 years ago - I looked from the West over the border and asked myself why one could not be „over there“. Since then, much has happened. After the opening of the border came reunification. We are now able to look back on almost thirty years in a reunited Germany...“!





Impressions of „Michaelshof“ in Sammatz





Garden party at the home of the Pries in Bleckede

