



*The World Chief Guide*

*Lady Baden-Powell*

Berlin

At the World Conference in Denmark in 1963 the President of the Union of German Girl Guide Associations invited the World Chief Guide to visit Germany and asked me to accompany her. As a result of this invitation, Lady Baden-Powell flew down the "corridor" and into Berlin on the afternoon of May Day 1964.



Crowds of singing, smiling Brownies were at the airport to greet her and send her off to the hotel where, later, a Press reception was held. In addition to many reporters, the heads of various Women's Organizations were present. Then representatives of both the American and British Forces network came to make recordings which were broadcast in Germany that night.

In addition to German and NATO Guides living in West Berlin, we were told that 800 Guides were coming from West Germany by air and road. Two coach loads had not yet arrived. These Guides had posted their uniforms ahead, for reasons of security, but there was a delay of eight hours at the Soviet zone border. After twenty-four hours spent in the coaches they eventually turned up to everyone's relief. As one of them calmly remarked: "It was quite an experience."

Later that evening I was taken to meet the Displaced Persons' Guides to hear their latest news. Lithuanians, Latvians, Estonians and Ukrainians had all flown to Berlin to see their "Chief". Several of them had been at the World Association Training Conference for Leaders at Konigswinter in 1962 so we had much to discuss.

On the morning of May 2nd there was a huge gathering in the Congress Hall, that wonderful modern building given to Berlin by the U.S.A.

The flags of each country present were carried in after the World flag and placed on the stage behind the Chief. In front sat the guests: the American Commander-in-Chief, the British Consul-General, French, Belgian and German officials. Scout representatives and parents, and behind them row upon row of laughing excited Guides.

In her speech Lady Baden-Powell "looked back, looked round, looked forward". She spoke of the force for peace which Guiding is; of the character training which helps each Guide and, through her, other people; of the happiness and fun enjoyed through comradeship. She told how Lord Baden-Powell chose a uniform for Scouts and Guides for two reasons : uniform is a sign of service, of being part of a team. Nurses wear uniform, postmen wear uniform, football teams wear it. Uniform is a "leveller", it makes us all look alike whether we are rich or poor, clever or not so clever!

She spoke, too, of the handicapped girl and of how Guiding can bring happiness and "service to others" even into the lives of the physically disabled. She told of one such Guide who said, "I can serve God with my soul even if I cannot serve Him with my body".

The applause echoed through the great hall as she told of her pleasure at being in the German capital and among the German Guides.

A reception for VIP's and guests was then held and later another recording was made, this time for a German broadcast.

At 6 p.m. there was a huge camp fire. Everyone seemed at ease, gay and happy. It was indeed a wonderful evening, one of the highlights being a song sung by a lovely fair-haired Estonian Guider with a very beautiful voice. She was in national costume and accompanied herself on the guitar.

On the morning of May 3rd, Sunday, we were driven along the "wall" (erected by the Russians three years ago) and saw for ourselves some of the tragedy of divided Berlin.

Our tour ended with first a Roman Catholic Guide Service followed by a Protestant one, the first time that Guide Services have ever been held in Berlin.

We were seen off at the airport by the President of the "Ring", Frau Heinstein, and by the Chief Commissioners of each Guide Association. The whole event had been a tremendous achievement on the part of the German Planning committee, working against all sorts of odds, and the World Chief Guide's historic visit to Berlin will certainly never be forgotten by anyone who took part in it.

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