



The summer camp at Feisneck 1951 to 2005



Waren was no exception when it came to summer camps, with its own camp at Feisneck. And a very popular one at that, going by the moniker „La Pasionaria“. What remains is only the memory of a summer camp where thousands of young girls and boys enjoyed hours of fun - but also attended so-called „Wehrunterricht“, or „National Defence Training“. In 1951, the Neptun Shipyard in Rostock was commissioned to build a kids' and young pioneer camp at Feisneck. The resulting facility could house up to 900 kids and young pioneers, exclusively in tents. The camp bore the name „La Pasionaria“ - the pseudonym of Spanish revolutionary Dolores Ibárruri - from the very beginning. It was customary in East Germany to name larger young pioneer camps after leading figures of the German and international communist workers' movement.

In exchange for helping to build the camp, workers from the Neptun Shipyard (a Publicly Owned Enterprise, or POE) were allowed to send their children here to spend their summers in their own holiday groups. Children were still sleeping in tents as late as the 1960s. Permanent buildings were built for recreation rooms, cooking and administration, and the roads to and inside the camp were fortified. By 1970, a village of bungalows had been established that could house 900 children and 150 counsellors.

Sending their children on 14 or 21-day camps cost parents an average of 12 to 20 East German marks to cover food, accommodation, travel and supervision.

The camp organised hikes, sports, games, cultural activities and much more. There was also a playing field. There was an arts and crafts workshop, a science centre, a photo lab and a radio tower for the camp radio.

It was mostly children from the north of East Germany who spent their holidays at Feisneck. Around a quarter of the camp was run as a so-called Betriebsferienlager (a camp for workers' children) and was also one of the roughly 50 Central Young Pioneer Camps. The focus here was on group work. Everything was intended to raise the children to become „leading socialist figures“. Education plans were drawn up, led by the young pioneers organisation. The daily flag-raising ceremony provided information on current political events such as the battle for the freedom of peoples suffering under the oppression of colonial powers, disarmament proposals from the Soviet Union, sports competitions, or the anniversary of Ernst Thälmann's death.

The bringing in of the harvest was accompanied by a „Harvest Day“. The children took care of the Thälmann memorial and tidied up the playing field. There were courses on maths, biology, young artists, young agitators, crafts, batik/arts, radio, sports, tourism, young paramedics, historians, fire service, and young crossing guards. Items for solidarity bazaars were created in the workshop and in group activities. Until 1961, the „Zentrale Arbeitsgemeinschaft (ZAG) – Frohe Ferien für alle Kinder“ (Central Workers' Collective – Happy Holidays for all Children), founded in Düsseldorf in 1955, arranged for West German children to come and stay at East German summer camps. This ended with the closing of the East German border in 1961 and the West German government's ban on holiday schemes – by the end of the 1950s, these schemes were considered to be an attempt by the communist SED (the East German Socialist Unity Party of Germany) to infiltrate West Germany. As political tensions subsided from 1970 onwards, members of the Naturfreundejugend (German Young Nature Friends) and children whose parents were part of the German Communist Party were welcomed back to the camp.

Until the end of the East German period, there were also exchanges with socialist countries such as Poland, Hungary or the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic. Despite everything, one of the main aims of the stay was to allow all children to relax during their holidays. Outside of the summer, the camp at Feisneck was used by the GST (Sport and Technology Association) and was also used for young persons' pre-military training as part of their schooling. The major young pioneer camps in East Germany also had a darker side, such as their planned use in case of unrest in the country. Starting in 1982, the summer camp at Feisneck was intended to act as an internment camp to house foreigners and passengers-in-transit residing in the territory of East Germany during periods of tension and if the state was on high alert.

After the end of the East German period in 1990, the camp initially continued to operate as a convalescence centre by Feisneck lake. Plans for a future hotel or tourist facility failed to pass the national park's strict regulations. The site fell into disrepair. By 2004, the former „La Pasionaria“ young pioneer camp had decayed into a place mostly characterised by vandalism. The remaining buildings were subsequently torn down.

