**Maiden voyage of the "Wilhelm Gustloff" to Madeira**

**April 21 - May 6, 1938**

**Google translated account for the Wilhelm Gustloff Museum:**

Although the upcoming trip is not my first sea voyage, this time it is really exciting, because it goes to distant shores that we have only seen in our wildest dreams.

So we go to Hamburg, do all the necessary formalities (baggage drop, change in board money, exchange control, etc.), go on a city tour and then the time has come! –

Full of excitement we enter the proud ship, which lies in front of the floating youth hostel "Hein Godenwind" in Überseehafen, the "Oceana" in front of that. We can no longer get out of the astonishment. Magnificent hydrangeas in bright blue and red, grouped around palm trees in large tubs in the reception hall, they delight our view. Stewards dressed in white show us the way to our cabins; they are all located on the outside, extremely spacious, comfortable and cozy. Soon there were four of us at the cabin, so the first group is also called for lunch by the trumpet signal, which tasted great. Then we go on a journey of discovery. We start with a visit to the smoking salon, which is followed by other wonderfully equipped lounge and social rooms.

Occasionally we come across the state-of-the-art hairdressing salons. We are delighted by the unique swimming pool in the bottom deck of the ship. At the top of the ship's keel is the command bridge with the officers' cabins behind it, in the same place, one deck below the arbor, a cozy lounge, then comes the gym, which is equipped with all conceivable equipment so that you can get up can operate in a wide variety of ways. Backwards there is the extremely large sports or sundeck, which in the wonderful weather, as we were allowed, became a favorite stay during the whole trip. **(End Pg. 1)** Up here we celebrated May 1st together with the officers and crew of the ship as a large German family, here morning sports were held every morning, here we held an ocean Olympics, here the on-board circus rose, here people sang, played and danced, here we stood up on the comfortable sun loungers in the soothing sun of the south, which we have longed for a long time, but one evening we stood together in deep sadness when we thought of our dead Captain Lübbe.

On the lower deck there are cabins, surrounded by the open promenade deck, including the social rooms mentioned above, surrounded by the closed promenade deck. Another deck below is the two dining rooms, hospital, doctor and dentist and in turn cabins, including administration rooms, paymaster, travel agency, team rooms and much more. Machine rooms, utility rooms, cabins of Hitler Youth and B.d.M. Carpentry, mortuary, and more. Sure, one more deck down the swimming pool.

And now I want to report on our departure from the overseas port: The interesting maneuvers of the "make ship clear" begin. At exactly 3 o'clock our huge ship is pulled away from the quay by a Buxier steamer and it slowly leaves the harbor under the sounds of Germany and Horst Wesselliedes. While we are still singing "Must I then, I have to go out to the small town", an eager "Waving, Waving" begins to speak in the words of our humorous tour guide. This is followed by the "Oceana", which also vacationers on board make the same trip with us, while from Bremerhaven 2 world-famous K.d.F. Steamers leave for the same destination.

We sail down the broad Elbe stream, past the wonderfully situated Blankenese, Cuxhafen, and will soon be in the North Sea. In the evening the lightship "Elbe I" appears. Day 2: At the wake-up call "Enjoy your life" you quickly get out of bed. A look through the porthole tells us that the sea is calm. At lunchtime we meet with the "Deutschland" and "Sierra Cordoba", who come from Bremerhaven, a joyful greeting from board to board. "Wilhelm Gustloff" takes over the leadership of this proud German fleet. We are following an informative lecture by Fincke on the North Sea with great interest. Then we drive on the canal and clearly recognize the narrowest point Calais-Dover, 31 km. Here the blow hits us hard in the middle of joy: Our captain is dead. He was called from his responsible post with a final heartbeat. The next 48 hours are mourning. We head for the English coast to be trained on their skills after an uplifting funeral service in Dover ashore. **(End Pg 2)**

*\*Possibly a page is missing here.*

In the afternoon we are very lucky, from a lovely German abroad. Miss Gehweiler, to be led, who takes care of us in a touching way. At our request, we take a walk through particularly poor neighborhoods. We see a lot of things that make us think. But it also leads us up to one of the many elevations in the city, from where we can enjoy a wonderful panorama. Then she takes us to her friends' house on the flea market. The son is a doctor and, like his friend (engineer), studied in Germany. They give us Madeira wine and we have a lot of fun because, as everywhere, there is a lack of understanding. Now we have to get back on the ship.

In the evening 500 Portuguese guests come on board the "Wilhelm Gustloff". There is still enough space for the holidaymakers, we have fun dancing and playing on the sports deck, because the temperature is like at home on a nice warm summer evening. After it got completely dark, the cloud comes: The big fireworks that are burned on the two ships in front of us, "The Deutschland" and "Sierra Cordoba". At the beginning, torches are laid out on the upper promenade deck, which reflect the Portuguese national color on the water. Then the rockets thunder into the sky, magnificent figures, including palm trees etc. It takes a long time before it ends. This evening there is operation on board until 2 a.m.

On the second day we are on our feet early as always, because we want to go ashore again as soon as possible. I ring the bell from Firme Herold from the ship, but no one can be found before 10 a.m. Then I take the tram with Hermann Michel to Rua dos Douradores, where we are warmly welcomed, shown the company and invited to a car party in the afternoon. Mr. Herold picks us up at the harbor at 12 noon, we take a small snack in the city, and then the unforgettable journey with radio accompaniment starts through many suburbs of Lisbon to the mountains with the goal: Cintra Castle.

A rain shower falls on the drive, so that all of a sudden the view is blocked. Passing many vacationers surprised by the rain, up to Cintra Castle. After the tour, we drive through a magical garden, because the wealth of the rich flora is so lavish. **(End Pg 3)** It is still bright enough to recognize the characteristic chalk coast of England.

Meanwhile, the two K.d.F. Steamer and the following night we sit at the top again. On the promenade deck, we can use a map that is tipped with little flags by the ship's management to inform ourselves about the respective location of the ship. We are still in the channel. We are now seeing the Norman Islands, which, although situated hard on the coast of France, belong to England. We are now driving through the dreaded Biscay, 4800 m depth of sea are reported. No country to see for 2 days. We can operate the bridge. And now the mourning has expired, there is dancing again, a big concert is being held, recitations are heard, the "Model Husband" is running, the Hohenstein puppet shows delight young and old.

We see the Spanish coast for a short time and then reach the Portuguese coast. Upstream island groups are already appearing. Countless sailing boats enliven the picture, many occupants swim a little way along, but we can only see that through the glass, just like the fountains of the water-spouting whales.

Our tension grows hour by hour. At night, the Tejo estuary is already entering. At dawn, the city of Lisbon, built on 7 hills, unfolds in all its splendor. After being destroyed by an earthquake in 1755, it was rebuilt in terraces by Praea Marquez de Pombal. After "Wilhelm Gustloff" has moored at the Alcantara quay, we go ashore, past all sorts of stalls that offer souvenirs to buy, climb the ready tram and let us start 3 hours walking downhill. We get out in between to visit the bullring, then a greenhouse and the third sight, the Moorish monastery in Belem. Originally there was a seaman's house here. The monastery owes its origin to a vow made by King Manuel I. When Vasco da Gama set out on the discovery of the old seaman's house on the Tagus River on July 8, 1497, the king vowed to put a monastery in the place of the seaman's house after her happy completion. After 2 years the great Portuguese seafarer returns to India as the discoverer of the sea route and in the same year (1499) the foundation stone was laid for the monastery. Vasco da Gama is buried here.

Belem has not been a monastery for a long time, rather it houses 1,000 orphans who can easily find it here without outside help, because it is not far from the harbor. **(End Pg 4)** After thinking of my brand collector friends in Germany here, we walk through the city together to climb the cogwheel train, which is supposed to take us to the Terreiro da Lucta, about 1100 meters high. On the way, little boys and girls run alongside the train, up the steep mountain and hope to get cigarettes or pennies from us by throwing flowers, roses, mimosa. It doesn't even need an encouraging look on our part, the flowers just fly into the open path that we enjoy. We just get to the summit dry, leave the cogwheel train and enter the hotel hall, from which we hear lively tunes inviting us to dance.

Flower-decorated bowls are on all tables, delicious pieces of cake and a Madeira wine are served. While we are having fun up here in the breezy mountains, a heavy rain falls, we can just wait until it stops, then we have to wade through the puddles back to the cable car, because the next group of holidaymakers is already on the way. We take the railway down a small distance and now climb the sledges, of which we had no idea before. This sleigh ride is really a very dubious pleasure for us. Apart from the fact that the upholstery in them is completely drenched by the previous rain, this descent is by no means to be described as beautiful. 2 or 3 men, mostly barefoot, run alongside and are in dire need of stopping the sled appropriately and avoiding that it does not hit the rock face on the narrow path. When there were only a few cigarettes as a reward for this effort, the brown fellows made long faces. Countless, very nice displays entice us to enter the shops. Valuable embroidery is on the way to the ship.

We follow and talk to him because he has learned a little German "out of his mouth". Incidentally, he adorned himself with German winter aid badges. We take lunch on the ship as usual and take a stroll through the town at noon (we cannot afford an ox sled). **(End Pg 5)** After a short detour to the rock cave, we reach Estoril, where we are invited to a glass of wine by Mr. Herold in the villa. We get to know his wife and capture this moment with a shot in the garden. Presented with flowers, enriched by a tremendous experience, Herr Herold brings us back to the ship. Today all vacationers have to be back at 5 p.m., because at 6 p.m. it is time to say goodbye to Lisbon. After we moved back to our "hotel", we looked down for a while on all those with whom we became acquainted in the few hours of our stay. As soon as you understand the many shouts, we can only get it through diligent "waving, waving" express our thanks and joy. In any case, this farewell is something moving. We are already driving out of the Tejo estuary and will soon be swimming on the high seas again. So we drive through the night, the other day, and only the next morning we are in front of Funchal, the capital of Madeira on the south coast. We are slowly approaching and still have enough time to absorb the cityscape. Funchal is also built in terraces, it stretches endlessly high and high along the rocky coast. In small barges, Portuguese come close to the ship, who successfully dive for their arm-like shouts, such as "Signorina, Signorina, Penny, Penny" in the clear water; others bring canaries that they offer with the cages for sale, as well as wonderful blankets with the famous Madeira embroidery. They want to sell bottles of wine and much more, but they are out of luck with us because we still need the few escudos ashore. Something else deserves our attention: in a barge, children dressed in white come to our ship decorated with flowers. We will soon be able to read clearly on a sign that they have on board: "The German school greets home". It really overflows you. And now the small company actually comes on board the "Wilhelm Gustloff". You will be greeted and entertained. But we only take a look at the festively covered hall and we probably only come to the fairyland of Madeira once in a lifetime and that's why our slogan is to always be on the dam so that we get everything. We climb the barges, everything is fabulously organized. First of all I look at the post office that we **(End Pg 6)** visit, the shops and count our escudos on a case-by-case basis to which shopping they will still take a long time. In Funchal we also had a great firework display and there were also many guests on board. On the second day we take a bus ride to Santa Cruz, a small fishing village. Bananas are bought and eaten here, because taking them home is even better in the fruit hall in Funchal. The trip goes over the mountains at a rapid pace, whereby we have the bad luck that our junk box loses a bike, the driver whizzes away without a word and comes back with another car after about 1/2 hour.

We cannot talk to the residents now, because no communication is possible. In the city itself, English is sometimes used. In the afternoon we make the excursion to Madeira, this time to the east coast, also a small fishing village Camera de lobos. It is far more interesting here than in Santa Cruz. Finally, from the garden of the German embassy we enjoy a wonderful panoramic view of the city and the sea, on which our ships appear like toys from this height. And now we have to get back on the ship, gradually the guests are also leaving, the German school that came again has to say goodbye. She drives around our ship several times and calls in the chorus: "They can't run us." On this trip we could really be a witness to how great the solidarity between Germans all over the world is. Sometimes the impressions were so powerful that it gripped you deep inside. Many barges came to say goodbye to the ship, the occupants waved bad luck, burned fireworks and finally let an illuminated balloon rise. For a long time we looked back at the island of Madeira, which gradually disappeared into darkness. If we have seen a lot in the 2 days, there is still a lot to look at.

It makes us sad that we are now heading home, that all the magic of this wonderful journey will soon be over, we initially believed that these two and a half weeks could never end. With the varied program on board and the impressive impressions, they disappeared on the fly. **(End Pg 7)** We sunbathed diligently on the sports deck and then, as it got cooler the more we got north, we did a thorough inspection of the ship, which we were allowed to do. We owe the fact that we always felt comfortable not least to the fact that the market was always very good and decent. We only got a little taste of it one evening, along the Spanish coast, when we were shaken back and forth by heavy swell and when we were just having dinner, the plates flew to the lower end of the pond. It stayed that way, many guests preferred to go straight to their cabins, but only the squeamish ones did. We encountered large passenger steamers, cargo ships, and also a submarine that maneuvered in front of us at dusk. If you kept your eyes and ears open, this trip must have become an unforgettable experience. There would be an infinite amount to tell, but I would like to close my report with the scheduled arrival in Hamburg with the wish that it may be granted to every comrade to take such a trip once in his life so that he can convince himself how it elsewhere in the world and how it is at home, because the fact is: there is only one Germany!