

CALL OF THE WATCHMEN

March 2014

True tolerance

In many countries of Europe, behind all the demands for “tolerance”, a groundswell of debate and contention is rising over basic values in our society.

True tolerance (Latin: tolerare = suffer, endure, forbear) is only possible with respect to a firm set of values. Tolerance must have a firm foundation in the Holy Scriptures, otherwise it is not effective in bringing about a positive change in men’s hearts and in society. Abandoning one’s own standpoint, out of fear or to accommodate other people’s views or even just for the sake of peace, is **false, mistaken tolerance**. Friends of mine have been threatened with dismissal from their jobs or loss of valued customer confidence because they have expressed support for the petition (see our special issue last month – Education Policy for 2015). In spite of everything, our words and actions towards people who disagree with our beliefs and convictions should be filled with God’s mercy and grace. Romans 8 v.38-39 will always remain true!

-ME-

Threats of boycotts against Israel

The threats of trade boycotts against Israel because of the continued expansion of settlements are real. Some large investors in the Netherlands have now already withdrawn their money from Israeli banks. In a dramatic speech Israeli Finance Minister Yair Lapid recently pointed out the great danger of further trade boycotts by European firms. Europe is Israel’s most important trading partner. Research scientists are also complaining about boycotts especially by the USA and Great Britain.

At this time Germany is negotiating the extension of *two agreements* for cooperation in research. Although the German government has expressly recognized “Israel as a Jewish and democratic state”, it is requiring for both agreements the inclusion of the “territorial clause” – stating that the settlements may not benefit from German funding. Lapid appeared to be shocked by this as he had expected more consideration from the German side “for reasons that are well-known”. By which he was defining once again the German-Israeli relationship in terms of “victim-perpetrator”. There is much fear in Israel of a breakdown in political relations.

We must however re-establish the relationship between Germany and Israel at a new level. We know that what happens in the spiritual realm often becomes reality in the political realm. Therefore we will not fall back again into the shame of the perpetrator, but rather resolve as intercessors to be committed to a *friendship* with Israel that is based on the love of God for Israel. Especially in times of crisis!

Prayer:

- **Open the hearts of our governmental leaders to establish such a secure, dependable relationship with Israel. (1 Kings 18 v.21)**

- **We pray in faith for a stop to all boycott actions against Israel. (Mark 11 v.22-24)**
- **May God have mercy on the deadly mistrust between Israel and the Palestinians. (Genesis 33 v.3-4)**

-OS-

Taking more responsibility

German President Joachim Gauck held the opening speech at the Munich Security Conference in February. Before an international audience he challenged Germany to show more self confidence in world affairs and take more responsibility. He considered it necessary for Germans to correct their self image. Germany has been living as a free and secure democracy for six decades. “Germany, as we know it, is at its best.” This has been possible, especially since 1989, because of the “open world order” from which Germany has “benefitted more than most”. For this reason Germany should in future contribute more to peace and freedom in the world than before: be it with financial help, development aid, or in case of emergency also with military assistance. Of course never on its own, but always in cooperation with its alliance partners.

The speech was carefully agreed in advance with Foreign Minister Steinmeier who with Defence Minister von der Leyen confirmed in more detail the extent of the level of responsibility: stronger engagement at the diplomatic level and more involvement in military missions. The CSU however strongly disagreed with military involvement. The chancellor has not yet commented on this new security and foreign affairs policy. So far this has not been in her line of thought.

We have been praying since 2000 for Germany to come into its calling. Through the years God has been with us step by step, as in the football World Cup in 2006 and also last year in the Leipzig “New Season” conference. In Leipzig we experienced a breakthrough from a shame mentality to one of joy in our German nation. The picture of a sceptre and a shepherd’s crook was a graphical representation of how we should exercise this new leadership role and responsibility. What is now happening in the political arena is exactly a mirror image of what we experienced in Leipzig in that our politicians are themselves discovering this dual responsibility of strength and humility.

Prayer:

- **Thanks for this next step by God in our land to lead us from shame to responsibility. (1 Chronicles 4 v.10)**
- **Thanks for how God prepares in the spiritual realm a way for such political developments. (Matt. 6 v.10)**
- **Thanks and intercession for those politicians who will be implementing the dual responsibility of strength and humility. (1 Timothy 2 v.1-2)**

-OS-

The Islam Conference

The Islam Conference has been taking place in the Interior Ministry since 2006. Its purpose is to find ways to resolve

social conflicts between people from two different cultural backgrounds on the basis of free democratic law and order. Four million Muslims currently live in Germany. Two million already have German nationality. In the past there has been much argument over the subjects to be discussed. Interior Minister Thomas de Maizière will therefore clarify the purposes, agenda and structure of the next conference by mid-March. The whole event takes place in a spiritual battle field that cannot be resolved by political means alone. Islam requires the submission of all people to the rule of "Allah", to a power which has nothing in common with our God, the Father of Jesus Christ.

The influence of Islam in our daily lives in Germany is increasing significantly. For example, there are now courses in Islamic Theology at many universities, official agreements at government level with Islamic associations, and Islamic instruction depending on religious background starting in primary schools in many German states. In Hessen the Islamic Ahamdiyya movement has been awarded for the first time in Germany the status of a "public body" with state protection.

The ecumenical dialog is giving Islam an increasing influence in the church. Performances of the concert: "The Armed Man – a Mass for Peace" have now taken place in several churches in Germany (and already throughout the UK) and include the Islamic call to prayer, typically recited by an Imam.

(See: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Armed_Man).

Prayer:

- **Wisdom for Minister de Maizière in deciding the subjects for discussion at the Islam Conference.**
- **More spiritual awareness and discernment in the body of Christ to stand in the Spirit against the influence of Islam. (Ephesians 6 v.12)**
- **That churches will better understand how to win Muslims for Christ in love. (Colossians 4 v.3-6) -RS-**

European Parliamentary Elections 2014

On May 25th the elections will take place in Germany – (between May 22nd and 25th in other EU countries). In each country local national parties put forward their own candidates for these European elections. National parties with a similar political orientation have come together to form a European party. The Christian democratic and conservative European Peoples Party (EPP) is currently the strongest party in the European Parliament with 262 members. In Germany the CDU and CSU are members of the EPP. Smaller Christian parties such as the AUF (Work, Environment, Family) Party and PBC (Party of Bible-believing Christians) in Germany will need 4,000 signatures from supporters in order to take part in the elections. They are part of the European Christian Political Movement (ECPM). In the proposed parliamentary programs of each party, both large and small, which are now being finalised, priorities appear to be very different. Important issues for Christians – gender politics, abortion and family rights – are partly covered by the AFD

(Alternative for Germany) Party and more comprehensively by the AUF and PBC. There is no word on these issues in the CDU program, but much about the regulation of financial markets, national credit crisis management, climate change and many other things. We each need to examine the party programs more thoroughly according what is important to us personally before we vote. (More information on the European Parliamentary Elections will be posted on our website in March in German.)

Prayer:

- **That men and women will be elected to the European Parliament who will stand up for Christian values and who will support Israel. (Micah 6 v.8)**
- **We call out for God's lordship over Europe – that he will draw the nations to himself. (Psalm 145 v.13)**
- **That voters will take an active interest in the elections and that Christians in particular will exercise their responsibility to vote. -RS-**

Prayer meeting in Athens

From March 15th–20th Ortwin and Rosemarie will be meeting with 35 other spiritual leaders and intercessors from 13 European countries in Athens. Greece holds the EU Presidency in the first half of 2014. As the "European Union of Prayer" we will be praying for Europe and Greece. Our trip is particularly important as (1) Greece has influenced Europe more than any other country (humanism); (2) the country currently still has major economic problems; (3) we are being so warmly welcomed by our Christian brothers and sisters there.

Prayer:

- **That fellowship and unity in the Spirit is quickly established and then grows. (Philippians 2 v.1-4)**
- **Wisdom to know how we can pray in the Spirit and in authority.**
- **Protection for the entire group. (Eph. 6 v.18-19) -RS-**

40 Days of Prayer and Fasting for our Land

2004 was the first year of the prayer guide: "40 Days of Prayer and Fasting for our Land". This was then a new initiative that has since involved more people each year. This year there will be no new prayer guide, but we encourage you to pray for our land throughout Lent, from March 5th (Ash Wednesday) to April 19th (Easter Saturday). Perhaps you can also pray each day alternately for political leaders and spiritual leaders of all churches and denominations in the country where you live. -RS-

Dates for your diary:

- 06 - 08.03** Polish-German Friendship Conference in Tuebingen
- 10 - 13.03** Spring General Meeting of the German Catholic Bishops' Conference in Muenster
- 28 - 30.03** Call of the Watchmen Regional Coordinators' Meeting in Friedrichroda

*God's blessings from Ortwin Schweitzer,
Rosemarie Stresemann and Markus Egli*