

September 2014

**A memorable experience**

I do not often go to demonstrations. But I have just come back from one. A Pro-Israel-Demo in Stuttgart with about 500 Israel supporters. As the first speaker began, suddenly there was chanting: "Child-killers: Israel!" "Long live Palestine!" and extremely loud horn blowing. The Israel supporters looked behind them in surprise – but the police were there and had formed a police-cordon to separate us from the Palestinians. But they were allowed to continue with their noise. I went behind. Sheer hatred. The thought came to me: "Ortwin, this is what it costs to stand alongside Israel." Not from a troubled conscience, but out of simple obedience, for despite all their mistakes "God has not rejected his people, whom he chose from the beginning." (Romans 11:2). "That is why I stand here!" -OS-

**Public show of hatred for the Jews**

Almost 70 years since the Holocaust, at a demonstration by Palestinians in July, such a hatred for Jews was unleashed, unabated all day long, that the Jewish community in Germany was deeply shaken and made to feel totally insecure. When "Hamas, Hamas, Jews to the gas!" can be yelled directly under the watchful eyes of the police, when synagogues are attacked, and Jews wearing a kippah (yarmulke) are beaten on the street - then we stand at the edge of the abyss. Although leading politicians as well as the media have been speaking out for the protection of our Jewish citizens, the number of participants at demonstrations in support of Israel has remained relatively small. The Jewish people rightly deserve stronger support, as Hamas is a terror organisation that has the express goal of annihilating Israel by terrorist means as stated in its founding charter.

With the growth in the number of Muslim immigrants, increasingly stronger Islamic/Arab anti-Semitism is now adding to the latent anti-Semitism in Germany. It is stirred up not only through the Arab media - but also by the one-sided reporting by the German media.

Islamic anti-Semitism is still greatly underestimated in Germany and there are hardly any strategies to contain it.

**Prayer:**

- **Pray for forgiveness for all the hatred and cursing of Jews in our land. (Genesis 12:3)**
- **Thanks for all those who are actively engaged in combating hatred of the Jewish people and pray for blessings, protection and an increasing effectiveness of their work.**
- **That those in authority in politics, society and in the media will know how they can take the necessary measures to stop the growth of Islamic anti-Semitism. (Psalm 83).** -RS-

**Foreign Minister Steinmeier**

For many months Frank-Walter Steinmeier (SPD) has been constantly on the move as crisis manager: Ukraine, Gaza, Syria, Iraq – the number of conflict areas is increasing. Steinmeier was given the assignment to resolve such crises

diplomatically by means of negotiation and compromise. Germany must act differently: patiently serve, not dominate with strength – sit down and talk instead of using force – and do none of this alone! Steinmeier looked for and fostered friendly cooperation with his European counterparts. In the Ukraine crisis he joined forces with the French and Polish Foreign Ministers and travelled with them alternately to the EU partner countries in the east. He wanted to de-escalate the confrontational situation with Russia. But to no avail!

Such an intensive and prolonged mission is particularly wearing when there is no tangible result. The rapprochement in European-Russian relations which was very painstakingly achieved has now fallen apart. But Steinmeier is already thinking ahead as to what place Russia might have in the European security policy after the crisis.

According to some reports, our Foreign Minister believes in God and about his Bible reading he comments: "When it again becomes more intensive, then it is somehow connected with the fact that in the course of one's life, one has increasing awareness of the importance of a God who gives strength and protects, who gives direction and a firm foothold, and who forgives."

**Prayer:**

- **Thanks for Steinmeier's untiring devotion to duty in crisis diplomacy, and pray for renewed strength for all his assignments. (Proverbs 25:11)**
- **For wisdom "that comes from heaven" and for fresh inspiration in the search for peaceful solutions. (James 3:13-18)**
- **That the peace of God can be brought into the relationship between Russia and the Ukraine to avert war. (Psalm 46:9-11)** -RS-

**Persecution of Christians**

The world is full of blood and violence against Christians. Against individuals, against churches, against towns and villages. The perpetrators are almost exclusively radicalised young Muslims, whether in Indonesia, in Nigeria, or in Syria and Iraq where the IS fighters have now declared a new state: the Caliphate of the Islamic State (IS) where Sharia law will be exercised with absolute rigidity. The Christians in Mosul (= Nineveh) were given a choice: leave the town within hours (flee the area), stay and pay a heavy tax, convert to Islam, or be killed. Eight young men who were accused of converting to Christianity were beheaded in public and their heads hung on a power cable for all to see.

In northern Nigeria the violence against Christians continues to increase. In 2013, 612 Christians were killed, hundreds wounded, many women were raped and 300 churches destroyed. Tens of thousands have been forced to leave their homes. Attacks which are now occurring almost daily are turning Christians into widows and orphans. In the churches there is tension between the young men who want to fight back and those who want to respond in love and forgiveness.

**Prayer:**

- **Strength for Christians to hold on to their faith. (Hebrews 10:32-39, Romans 5:1-5) – “Thank you for your prayers” they say.**
- **Pray for a protective shield around them and against bitterness and revenge. (Matthew 5:3-12)**
- **For grace for the persecutors and for them to repent. (Matthew 5:43-45)** -OS-

**The government agenda for the autumn**

Angela Merkel has announced the following agenda items for the government this autumn:

- further budget reduction - the first balanced budget for the year 2015 (Finance Minister Wolfgang Schäuble)
- continuation of the new energy program (Economic Affairs and Energy Minister Sigmar Gabriel)
- appointments to positions in the European Union
- chair of the G7 nations – preparation for summit meetings in 2015
- and the Ukraine crisis.

Less critical items, but important ethically for our country, are decisions about euthanasia/assisted suicide and prostitution.

The question as to whether those who are critically ill may be given arranged and commercially available (as in Switzerland) “assistance to end their lives” will be decided in parliament in the autumn of next year. As there will be no parliamentary whip for the vote, now is the time for individual members to make up their minds and for us to decide how we can pray and influence their decision.

Germany cannot be allowed to continue to be a paradise for sex-tourists. This means that the *prostitution law must be tightened*: among other things, the minimum age must be raised from 18 to 21, the police must have more authority, “flat-rate-sex” must be made illegal, and there must be more help for women and girls to escape and for trafficked foreigners to have rights to remain in Germany.

A new draft law is in preparation. At the moment the SPD (Socialist Party) is still opposing some of the proposals from the CDU (Christian Democrats) for tightening the law.

**Prayer:**

- **Wisdom and good advisors for all ministers in the drawing up of the new draft laws in the next months. (Jeremiah 9:23-24)**
- **For a decisive majority in parliament in 2015 against any form of assisted suicide. (Genesis 2:7, Psalm 90:3)**
- **For a radical revision of the prostitution laws in Germany. (John 8:10-11)** -OS-

**Elections in three federal states**

New state governments will be elected on August 31<sup>st</sup> in Saxony and on September 14<sup>th</sup> in Thuringia and Brandenburg.

Until now Stanislaw Tillich (CDU) has ruled *Saxony* together with the FDP (Liberals). Surveys indicate however that the AfD (Alternative for Germany) party will replace the FDP in the state parliament. The CDU which is very strong in Saxony will have to look for new coalition partners.

In *Brandenburg* Minister-President Dietmar Woidke (SPD) is

expected to continue in his coalition with the “Linken” (Leftist party).

In *Thuringia* Bodo Ramelow of the “Linken” aims to oust the theologian Christine Lieberknecht (CDU) and become the first Leftist Minister-President of a state in Germany. The SPD party is no longer ruling out a coalition with the Leftist party or a Leftist Minister-President. Just 25 years after the fall of the Berlin wall, an ideological left-wing breakthrough may take hold in the heart of Germany, with particular consequences for the education system – with all day attendance, comprehensive schools and cutting back on schools for special educational needs.

**Prayer:**

- **That in all of the German states, people will come into executive positions, who revere and honour God and seek to do His will. (Micah 6:8)**
- **For a coalition government to be formed in Thuringia in accordance with God’s good and gracious will.**

-RS/KH-

**Thank.Celebrate.Pray. – A Prayer Walk**

To celebrate the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the fall of the Berlin wall, a prayer walk will take place from October 3<sup>rd</sup> to November 9<sup>th</sup> along the old East-West German border as an expression of thanks to God. The Minister-Presidents of Thuringia, Saxony-Anhalt, Bavaria, Hessen and Schleswig-Holstein have now become official sponsors.

Everyone can decide how they would like to participate. Prayer walking for just one day or one weekend is possible. Two groups will walk towards each other, one starting in Hof (near the Czech border) in the south and the other in Luebeck-Travemünde (on the Baltic Sea) in the north, meeting in Braunlage. For more information (in German) visit [www.betenbewegen.de](http://www.betenbewegen.de).

To organise such a long walk is a major logistical challenge which a team of dedicated young people have taken on in faith. How many pilgrims will participate, which churches are prepared to offer accommodation, etc.?

For all those who want to pray, a prayer diary “Wunder der Freiheit und Einheit” (The Miracle of Freedom and Unity) has now been published – with contributions from eye-witnesses, from the east and the west, who were on the road to the peaceful revolution 25 years ago and who bring this period of time to life once again. Biblical references provide encouragement for us to get involved within our society and communities with such faith also today.

**Prayer:**

- **That many will join the prayer walk and so show a clear sign of thanks to God. (Psalm 103:2-6)**
- **Peace and protection for all the organisers, prayer leaders and walkers. (Psalm 91:9-13)**
- **That all the planning and preparation work this month will go smoothly.** -RS-

**Date for your diary:**

**20.09** March for Life (Pro-Life Rally) in Berlin.

*God’s blessings for a new start this autumn from  
Ortwin Schweitzer and Rosemarie Stresemann*