



Prayer for Berlin

March, 2007

Good News: Jesus on the Platz

For over a year, Berlin Christians have been going every Friday evening to the Potsdamer Platz. Using skits, songs and creative messages, totally natural and without much preparation, they tell tourists and Berliners about Jesus Christ and how He has changed their lives. And they discover how curious people are, and how open they are to talk about their own personal needs and to let others pray for them. From April 12-14th the group is offering training for all those who would like to learn to talk about Jesus in an easy and yet credible way on all sorts of occasions. Information (German and English version) at: www.amplatz.blogspot.com/

Good News: Loveparade cancelled

It looks as though the Loveparade will not be held in Berlin in 2007. Since the Senate had not given its approval by February 21st because of documents that had not been turned in, the general manager Mr. Schaller recalled the petition and began to look at other major European cities to host the Loveparade. The last word may not yet have been spoken, but in spite of some economical advantages, we, along with many Berliners, would be thankful if we would be saved the negative side (seen from a Christian ethical perspective).

A district with an eventful history

The first things most people think of when they think about Hohenschönhausen are the typical pre-cast concrete apartment blocks and the Stasi (State Security Service police in former East Germany). But there's much more to the district. Hohenschönhausen and Lichtenberg have been a united district in north-eastern Berlin since 2001. Approximately 252,000 residents live in the district. Originally Hohenschönhausen had the character of a small town, but beginning in 1975, flats for over 100,000 people were built, primarily for government staff and persons belonging to the Communist Party of East Germany. 40 years of East German Republic left their mark. Despite strong losses in the previous election, the PDS (leftist party), with 40% of the votes, is the strongest party in the local government.

At times, up to 800 persons were detained in the central prison for national security—these included members of the opposition, Christians, and brave people who had

chosen to oppose the dictatorship of East Germany. Today, this prison is a national memorial. (Information at: www.stiftung-hsh.de – we recommend you take a guided tour). In addition to the Stasi-prison, there is the former central administration department of the Stasi of East Germany in the Normannenstraße, which is now also a museum worth visiting housing, among other things, thousands of files of persons spied upon.

The percentage of children and youth in Hohenschönhausen is above the average of Berlin. But there are an increasing number of problem households. The number of children left alone to themselves, cases of isolation, and domestic violence are increasing. Unfortunately, Hohenschönhausen is also known for its right-wing tendencies among youth.

The district was and continues to be a center for the advancement of sports. Over 100 European champions, world champions and Olympic gold medallists have trained here in previous years. For instance, the gymnast Andreas Wecker, the ice-skater Claudia Pechstein, and the hockey champions "Eisbären Berlin" live here. The next generation of athletes is being trained in a special intensive training center.

At first, Hohenschönhausen did not have any churches in the newly built housing areas, because East Germany did not want any churches to be built there. Nevertheless, brave Christians planned and built a Protestant church which was dedicated in 1985. The building was approved because it served as compensation for the Versöhnungskirche on the Bernauerstraße that was demolished when the wall was built. In 1989, shortly before the fall of the wall, the Christus Church, a free church in the middle of the high-rise apartment complexes, was founded. Today there are eleven churches of different denominations, from Roman Catholic to Protestant free churches.

Nevertheless, there are few Christians. This district, comprised of 90% non-religious people and 1% church-goers, is a real missionary challenge. The existing churches are active in the district: social welfare information centers, kindergartens, and social projects for children and youth work (Addresses can be obtained at www.Christen-in-Berlin.de) [Source: W. Rudloff, Christliches Sozialwerk Berlin e.V.]

Prayer

- **Thank God for the changes since the fall of the wall**
- **Pray for wisdom for the district government to recognize and foster potential in the district**
- **Pray for further growth and funding for projects of churches and social welfare**
- **Pray for unity and the evangelistic testimony of the churches**
- **Pray that the old and new anti-democratic and anti-faith attitudes would be overcome**

Neo-Nazis increasingly aggressive

The NPD has announced that it will sponsor an increased number of demonstrations in Berlin this year. A strong presence in the capital city is the propaganda factor that the NPD needs in order to strengthen its power. After having success in some states in recent elections, including Berlin, the NPD is now being more open about its ties to the Neo-Nazi scene.

In the past, the Senator of the Interior outlawed two Berlin chapters of Neo-Nazi groups. Members of these two groups found a new home within the NPD youth group “Junge Nationaldemokraten” (JN) (Young Nationaldemocrats). The number of right-wing extremist acts of violence in Berlin rose dramatically last year. The number more than doubled to over 100 incidents. Up until now, “only” propaganda incidents took place, but now an increasing number of incidents have been recorded in which people have been the victims of right-wing violence.

These numbers also reflect the increase in aggressive conflicts between violent right-wing and left-wing supporters. They no longer let loose on one another if they happen to meet up somewhere, but now are actively seeking confrontation. Groups of right-wing enthusiasts wander through Freidrichshain or Prenzlauer Berg, looking for left-wing adherents; the left-wing groups follow the right-wing “Faschos” around in Lichtenberg, Treptow, or Neukölln.

In recent months, the main area for these conflicts has been the right-wing stronghold Weitling-Kiez around the train station in Lichtenberg. This means a lot of hard work for the police. The police department 6 (East) has over 100 police on the streets during some nights whose sole duty is to prevent riots between Leftists and Right-Wing adherents.

Prayer

- **Pray that right-wing violence will be stemmed**
- **Pray that the NPD’s plans to gain more influence in Berlin will not succeed**
- **Pray that the police will have long-lasting success in stopping confrontations between right-wing and left-wing groups**

Vietnamese in Berlin

Approximately 5,000 Vietnamese have come as „Boat People“ refugees to Berlin since 1981. Following the fall of the wall, a further 2000 came from East Berlin to West Berlin and applied for political asylum. The wall between the Boat People who fled the Communist regime and those who came as foreign workers to East Berlin still exists.

In the western part of Berlin there is a Catholic-Vietnamese church with 1000 members and a Protestant church with 20 members, which meets in the Rathaus Steglitz.

Following the Jesus-Day in 2003, a new Vietnamese charismatic church was formed under the leadership of Pastor Joshua, a former refugee who wants to reach other refugees. Since then the church has about 30 people who attend services on the weekend. 59 people have been baptized. They are partnering with other churches and organizations in small-group Bible studies to train Christians. Two women evangelists from the church are active among Vietnamese. One of them however was sent back to Vietnam in 2006, where she has led more than 100 people to Jesus. In spite of persecution from the Communist regime and several arrests, she has started a house church with other Christians. Vietnamese are also coming to Jesus in Berlin.

Prayer

- **Pray that the Vietnamese churches in Berlin and in Vietnam will grow**
- **Pray that many will become Christians through personal witness and evangelistic campaigns**
- **Pray for increased understanding between North Vietnamese and South Vietnamese**

EU Support - Worship & Prayer

On March 25th, hosted by Chancellor Angela Merkel, the Summit of the EU government heads will take place in Berlin along with the celebration of 50 years of the European Community. During those days, around 20 leaders of the European Prayer Union will meet in Berlin to pray. Berlin Christians are invited to participate for any length of time during a twelve-hour worship and prayer time on Saturday, March 24th, from twelve noon to midnight at the Berliner Stadtmission, Lehrterstr. 68 at the Hauptbahnhof, sponsored by Together for Berlin and the forum “Together for Praise”.

Different praise bands, not only from Berlin, and not only from Germany, will be leading each of the six blocks of worship beginning on the even hours. During the blocks beginning on the uneven hours, a short informative introduction will be given (among others by Ulrich Parzany, ProChrist evangelist), followed by prayer for the challenges facing Europe. Thus, Christians will be accompanying the Summit in Berlin by giving honor to the Lord of Europe and praying for the continent.

Prayer

- **Pray for protection and blessing for the EU Summit of 27 EU countries**
- **Pray that the Holy Spirit will lead the meeting of the European Prayer Union**
- **Pray that the 12-hour Worship & Prayer will result in renewed commitment to prayer and many answers to prayer**