



GERMANY

Perspectives for peace for the 21st century

Universal Peace Federation Germany e.V. starts new peace initiative

Berlin, 15.03.2009



Last weekend in Berlin a series of projects and events with the theme „Perspectives for peace for the 21st century“ were organised by UPF-Germany.. This took place as part of the international „Global Peace Tour 2009“,in which 194 countries will participate until the 15th of May.

The Berlin event began on Friday with a service project which was organised by the UPF-youth organisation *Youth Service Initiative* (YSI) in co-operation with the child and youth relief organisation ARCHE .This youth relief organisation, founded in Berlin-Hellersdorf in 1995, offers homework supervision and leisure activities for children and young people from society's lowest social classes. In co-operation with the young people from YSI, several playgrounds were renovated. In the evening, they all went ice-skating together.

On the following day the symposium of the same name, attended by about 100 participants, some of whom had come from all over Germany, began in the Maritim proArte Hotel. Karl-Christian Hausmann, chairman of the family federation e.V., moderated the symposium, which began with a greeting from Amir Mohammed Herzog, founder and chairman of the Islamic Society of German Speaking Moslems and Friends of Islam, Berlin e.V. At the very beginning, he lit a candle and requested a moment of silence for the victims of the killing-spree in Winnenden, Baden Württemberg. Then he emphatically drew attention to the peace march and rally at the Brandenburg gate . „We will march even if it is raining!“



Karl Meier, chairman of UPF-Germany, referred in his opening speech to the lack of consideration of human rights in many parts of the world.: „All of mankind has a common origin and the same dignity.“ White people in the industrial west have the tendency to look down on people in the third world. However, they could well learn a lot from them about public-mindedness and human relationships.

The family existed before, and has priority over, the state.

Hedwig von Beverförde, who puts value on first being introduced as a housewife and mother of three children, has a diploma in business administration and is a founding member of the Family Network, an organisation that champions family concerns in Germany. Mrs v. Beverförde began her presentation „ Do we need a paradigm-shift in family politics?“ with the statement: „the family is the most natural core of society and as such has a special significance for peace.“ Family existed already before governmental structures .It is therefore not a concern of the state to try to take the upper hand over such basic components of the family, such as family life and the education of children, and to dictate to parents what they should do. She called the attempt by gender mainstreaming to abolish every difference in the roles of the sexes a “socialist-feminist plan“. In this way, politics goes hand in hand with an economic system that is more and more focused on ever increasing growth and maximising profit, which well serves young well educated women, and regards the desire for marriage and children as an undesirable deficiency. The *parent-allowance*, introduced in 2006 is thus nothing more than “ compensation for having children” with the goal of getting young mothers back as quickly as possible to the production line. The massive expansion of nursery school places is taking place with the same goal. According to v. Beverförde, decisions about children’s education must remain in the hands of the parents, and should not be taken over by the State.



Power and Impotence of the United Nations.

In the next contribution, Dr. Norman Weiss, Scientific Assistant in the Human Rights Department of the University of Potsdam, gave a presentation about the power and impotence of the United Nations. Since the UNO as an organisation, does not have its own troops, it is always dependant on the co-operation of its member states in a peace mission. Thus, there have been, as well as successful missions, also big failures. At the latest since the so-called Ibrahim Report in 2000, the UNO has realised that UNO troops should be engaged also in a preventive capacity and, equipped with a „robust mandate“, be able to actively intervene in combat. In most recent years it has been increasingly clear just how important it is to involve the local population in the UNO peace measures, especially where the female population is concerned. Measures to dampen conflict are important and necessary. However, even more important is the process of reconciliation and building of a functioning civil society that follows.

No world peace without inter-religious peace

On the basis of this declaration coined from Hans Küng (Project World ethic) Dr. Dieter Schmidt, deputy chairman of UPF-Germany, asserted that according to statistics 88% of the world's population, and about 70% of Germans, consider themselves to be members of one religion or another. To ignore the role of religion in attempts to build peace is therefore to leave unused a big potential in avenues of persuasion. It is surely the stated role of all religions to establish peace in all levels of society. Of course, history offers many negative examples where religions do not play a peaceful role, and fight each other intensely. Exactly in this point lies the challenge to the religious leaders. It is their task, to work on the shared values and goodnesses and to counterbalance the world's problems. UPF propagates the five peace principles as a common base for all religions: God can be compared to parents of mankind; man is principally a spiritual being; he is called to lead a life for the well-being of others; the family is the universal „school of loving human relationships“; and all are called, beyond race religion or ethnic origin, to connect world-wide.



„One Family under God“ – for a peaceful world in the 21st century

More than 200 guests were present at the evening programme, amongst them SE Dr. Makase Nyaphisi, ambassador from Lesoto, and the first secretary of the Embassy of the Peoples Republic of Korea. Friedrich Pörtner, who was for 18 years a member of the state parliament of Lower Saxony, expressed in a short speech, his amazement that North and South Korea sat together at the evening banquet and seemed to get along well.

Yong-cheol Song, President of UPF-Europe, presented a new vision for world peace in the main speech: „We are confronted by continuous challenges presented by the burning conflicts and outbreaks of violence all over the world. But even more difficult is the fact that we find ourselves in the midst of a moral and spiritual crisis, which is manifest as an increase in marriage and family breakdown, where there is increasing divorce and spread of sexually transmitted disease, as well as an increasing number of young people who feel alienated from society and succumb to violent and destructive impulses.“ The Global Peace Tour, according to Dr. Song, targets the renewal of society, and should be a platform for inter-religious co-operation, strengthening of the family, and for the establishment of a culture of living for the sake of others.



The event was accompanied by musical contributions from the younger generation, who presented classical as well as modern pop music. At the end of the event, five persons engaged in public life were honoured with a peace ambassador certificate. Included in this number were a recipient of the *Bundesverdienstkreuzes*^[1] and pastor of the Africa Ecumenical church Lolowengo Botembe and the couple who are leaders of the intercultural centre "Babylon House", Dr. Mekonnen and Janet Shiferaw.



Peace ambassadors present their projects

The following morning, Fritz Piepenburg reviewed some of last years' UPF-Germany activities. The Berlin landscape architect Jochen Garbe then presented the project „peace garden in Kabul“. Around the once-palace and parliament building, the Darul-Aman Trust, whose patron is ex-federal president Walter Scheel, plans to build a peace garden. It is to be made freely accessible to the whole population of Kabul, and to offer weekend picnic spot for the whole family under the shade of trees.

Armin Wais, a student from Göttingen, presented his project „Computers for schools in Afgahnistan“. He is looking for partners in Germany, preferably also schools that can organise also student exchange between the two countries.



The peace ambassador Sami ben Mansour, manager of Mellowvibes Ltd., explained the project „Germany’s forgotten children“ in co-operation with the youth relief organisation ARCHE. This concerns neglected children in our society, to whom ben Mansour wishes to give new hope for their lives with good Rap and Hip-hop . „All Rap is not the same“, explained the artist. „There are many different directions. Unfortunately, the mass media is much more interested in porno and gangster rap. They want to connect in one breath sensation, youth, sex and violence. But what good is that for the young people?“



Lastly, Hubert Arnoldi, UPF representative in Stuttgart, reported about the civic initiative „Religions for Peace“ to which a whole assortment of religious organisations and peace NGOs belong. UPF Stuttgart was able to introduce the „Global Peace Festival“ concept as a part of this initiative and generated much interest..



Peace, Shalom, Salam Alaykum

One hour later, around 300 demonstrators gathered at the Humboldt University *Unter den Linden* and marched with police escort towards the Brandenburg gate. Leading the way, were representatives of different religions carrying a banner with the inscription „ give peace a chance,— Religions together for a peaceful world“. At the Brandenburg gate, there was a rally in which Muslim, Jewish, Christian and representatives of other religions called upon their respective followers to work together for peace. Chants, such as „God does not divide the Bible, Talmud and Koran, he sees only the heart of man“, and „In churches, temples, and mosques, God shows us peace“^[2] rang out. The songs of the UPF youth band attracted the interest of many spectators and in this way made a considerable contribution to the success of the rally..

Fritz Piepenburg

^[1] High honour, merit award at the national level.

^[2] The German original rhymes well as a chant