



60th Week of Brotherhood in Germany

31.03.2012 | Rev. Dick Pruiksma

On Sunday March 11 the official opening of the German Week of Brotherhood took place in Leipzig. This year's edition of this nation wide event is the sixtieth in a row. Only a few years after the horror of the Shoah Jews and Christians in Germany came together trying to find ways of co-existence, dialogue and perhaps even friendship. What started on a small scale in 1952, became in sixty years a nation wide event with numerous lectures, exhibitions, concerts etc. all over Germany.

The opening ceremonies began on Friday evening, March 9, in the Leipzig synagogue. As in so many German cities the Jewish community of Leipzig has grown considerably during recent years, mainly because of the immigration of Jews from the former Soviet Union. This evening's guests, coming from all over Germany, were warmly welcomed by the vibrant community during the Erev Shabbath service and the following kiddush.

One of the main features of the opening of the Week of Brotherhood is the award ceremony of the Buber-Rosenzweig Medal. This award is given to an individual or institution contributing to Jewish-Christian dialogue in a more than excellent manner. This year's recipient of the prestigious award is Rev. Dr. h. c. Nikolaus Schneider, the President of the Lutheran Church in Germany. On Saturday afternoon Dr. Schneider shared with a large audience his reflexions on "In the beginning was the WORD; on the meaning of "word of God". This lecture was given in the historic Nikolai Church, the place where the peaceful 1989 revolution began, ultimately leading to the fall of the Berlin Wall and to the reunification of Germany.

Following the lecture a Jewish-Christian meditative service was held in the New Town Hall (Neues Rathaus) of Leipzig. Again hundreds gathered and listened to three short meditative presentations given by President Schneider, Rabbi Dr. Henry Brandt, the Jewish President of the German ICCJ member DKR, and Bishop Mussinghoff, who is the liaison person between the German Roman Catholic bishops and the Jewish community in Germany. The contribution of the Choir of the Leipzig Synagogue really was remarkable because of its high level of performance.

On Sunday morning, March 11, the official opening ceremony of the 60th Week of Brotherhood took place in the famous Leipzig Concert Hall, the Gewandhaus. Before Rabbi Brandt officially opened the Week of Brotherhood, we listened to the huge Gewandhaus organ and the world famous Gewandhaus Orchestra and the Choir of the Leipzig Opera conducted by Herbert Blomstedt. An almost fully packed Gewandhaus then listened to short speeches given by the Prime Minister of Saxony, Stanislaw Tillich, and the Lord Mayor of Leipzig, Burkhard Jung. The two hour event was moderated by Mrs. Gundula Gause, anchorwoman of the main news broadcast of the Second German Television Channel, ZDF.

The highlight of the opening ceremony however was an excellent "Laudatio" for award winning Dr. Schneider, given by former Federal Foreign Affairs Minister Dr. Frank-Walter Steinmeier, now the leader of the Social-Democrat opposition in the German Bundestag. His assessment of the rapidly changing political situation in the Arab world is already published on the website of our German friends, the [Deutscher Koordinierungsrat](#), DKR.

ICCJ warmly congratulates the DKR with this excellent opening of the 60th week of Brotherhood.

The ICCJ, located in Germany, values very much the ties of friendship between the Martin Buber House and one of our major member organizations. Pictures of the opening of the 60th Week of Brotherhood can be found under

http://www.iccj.org/60th_Week_of_Brotherhood_in_Germany.3735.0.html

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