

### Dear Friends of SOLWODI,

As a result of different life situations, women have been forced and are still being forced today to work as prostitutes. During the Nazi-regime women had to be available for men doing forced labour (see page 3). Today it's legal in Germany that men use prostitutes. What didn't change, is that this service, delivered by women, was adapted to the development of society and that women were and still are treated like a merchandise.

Today our SOLWODI workers are confronted all over Germany with a wave of women, who come from Eastern Europe (especially from Romania and Bulgaria). From experience gained in the home countries of those women and also from talks with those women, our workers know the reasons and needs that drive those women to leave their home countries and to go to Germany (see page 3).

In addition, the working conditions for prostitutes have changed. After prostitution was declared legal and after opening the borders between European Union (EU) countries, the prices for that service have fallen extremely. To be able to ask for more money, often unsafe sex is being offered now. As a result, there is an increase of sexual diseases and also of the number of abortions. As a result of that, there is a great need for healthcare and sex education, when those women come to SOLWODI.

A further problem is that not generally state funds are foreseen for our activities. Our help is mainly financed through donations. But this can't be a solution for ever, that our workers should hope for help from state side. At the moment, financial support depends on rules and laws, which are different in the various countries and cities of the Federal Republic. At a meeting of the heads of our advice offices in April 2010, it became clear, that policy decisions are urgently needed how to help these women coming from East European countries, that recently joined the EU. This becomes obvious when looking at subjects like trafficking and other problem areas (see page 2).

Our first priority is to provide continuous support and advice to those women who need it. For us it's less important, if those women became intentionally or unintentionally prostitutes. The experience of our advisors shows, that it takes time and that also failures have to be accepted, until those women are capable to give up that job as a prostitute and to live free and independently. Since 25 years it's our aim, to show those women that we trust and estimate them and by doing so to build a relationship to them.

Also in the future it will be necessary, to speak up and to do something against the crimes of our time. We say many thanks to all those people who support and accompany us in our work and who show solidarity with us and we invite those people, to celebrate with us (see page 4).



*Yours, Sister Lea*

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### SOLWODI Romania

End of February 2010 in Bucharest / Romania a new independent, non-governmental organization "SOLWODI Romania" was founded, assisted by Renovabis and the nuns of the "Congregatio Jesu". Its aim is, to foster an intensive cooperation – across the country borders – and to react on the present stream of East European women into prostitution. Through education and campaigns, dealing with trafficking and enforced prostitution, those women shall be informed – already in their home countries – about the risks they must expect. In addition, women returning to their home countries shall get professional help. At the moment, already 8 women, (who became victims of trafficking and violence) are being advised and supported, after they had had support from SOLWODI in Germany.

## When can we expect a humanitarian right of residence?

The problem of trafficking has reached the politicians – thanks to the activities of non-governmental organizations such as SOLWODI. Nevertheless one gets the impression, that this subject is only good for "Sunday speeches", but is of no interest in the day to day work of politicians.

What happened over the last years concerning that problem? OK, a residence law was finally and with years' delay adapted to the EU guidelines for victims from 29. April 2004 and with § 25, subpar 4a of the residence law, a temporary permission for victims of trafficking was introduced, provided that those victims cooperate with the criminal prosecution authorities. That's what SOLWODI had claimed for a long time. But this doesn't mean, that victims are entitled to live in a women's home and also to get essentially needed psychosocial support. Unfortunately one is mainly talking about criminal law.

The legal situation in Germany does not yet reflect what European and international laws are asking for concerning the protection of human rights, a situation that doesn't worry politicians here. Although there is a very good example for an efficient protection of victims, that is the "T-visa" in Italy. According to article 18 of the "Decreto legislativo" number 286/98 from 25. July 1998, victims of trafficking can get a temporary permit – based on humanitarian reasons – even if there are no criminal proceedings connected to that case. The only precondition is that the police have stated that the person is a victim. After an enquiry programme, which is being organized by a special advice office, even an unlimited permit can be obtained. In real life this law is being applied in very different ways. But it's interesting to hear, that there are no reports, that the law has been abused so far. Who hinders the Federal Republic of Germany to introduce a similar law?

The SOLWODI advice office in Berlin reports the following examples, proving the necessity of a humanitarian right of residence:

\* Mrs. M. was taken by a German tourist – with wrong promises – from

an East African country to Germany. Already at the day of their arrival in Germany, the man was beating and raping that woman in his small flat and forced her in a very brutal way to satisfy men sexually day by day. She was "imprisoned" and couldn't even open a window. She asked each of her clients for help but none of them helped her. When after almost 2 months she could escape with one of her clients, the police accommodated her in a women shelter flat. From the authority dealing with foreigners she got a residence permit that required her to leave the country after only a few months. Although preliminary proceedings had been started against the trafficker and although the police believed the woman to be credible, the woman has no chance to stay in Germany for the time of the legal proceedings, since the police couldn't track down the trafficker and his flat. Instead the woman is being accused to have entered Germany illegally.

\* Mrs. S. came to Germany together with her German husband, who had married her in her African home country. For him she had given up her job and left her little daughter with her parents, because he had promised her to bring that daughter as soon as possible to Germany as well. Right from the beginning, her husband tried to tie her to his flat and to prohibit her from communicating with other people. He didn't allow her to learn the German language. Again and again he threatened to kill her, especially when he was drunk. Without her knowledge he drew money for her from the job-centre. After he had attacked her one day so badly that she needed treatment in hospital, she ran away and she found shelter in a women's home. But before he had sent a letter to the authority dealing with foreigners, accusing her to have obtained a residence permit for Ger-

many by leading a fictitious marriage. The authority didn't believe in her counter-arguments and she was asked to leave the country within less than 6 weeks.

\* Mrs. E. is a young woman from a state which belonged to the former Soviet Union. When she was 17 years old, her mother went to Germany and married there a German man. 2 years later, Mrs. E. got – with the support of her female cousin and their friend from Eastern Europe – an invitation to come to Germany in order to find a job there. Against her will, she was forced by that East European "friend" to work as a prostitute in a brothel. After more than 1 year she managed – with the help of a client – to escape from that brothel and to return to her mother. When the police checked her one day and she couldn't show a passport, she was declared a victim of trafficking. She acted as a witness against that friend of her cousin, who was then sentenced to a suspended sentence of 2 years with probation. After that trial she only got a limited residence permit and finally had to leave Germany. Some weeks later – after she had arrived in her home country – the trafficker called her several times, threatening her. Being frightened, she returned again to Germany, where her mother and brother are living. Now she is in prison, awaiting her deportation. The authorities are expected to decide soon, whether she could be considered as a case of hardship and if so, be allowed to stay in Germany.

I don't want to hear only friendly words anymore, I would like to see action!

*Prof. Dr. Joachim Renzikowski – Martin Luther university in Halle-Wittenberg, prof. for penal law and philosophy;*

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## Woman as a bonus

From Sandy Green

It's a sad chapter in German history, which hasn't been reappraised yet – that is enforced prostitution in German working camps, run by the Nazis during world war II. In state controlled brothels, female prisoners were forced to work as prostitutes, being offered to male forced labourers as a bonus.

Those women, who were frequently selected for "special commandos" didn't initially know what would happen to them, until they arrived in those brothels. Every day they had to be available for 8 – 10 men, only in the so called missionary position. Per client only 20 minutes were allowed and guards were watching the couples through slits in the doors. Those women lived completely isolated in barracks, which were located separately from the normal camp. If a woman got pregnant, an abortion was ordered, which some women didn't survive. Some women were sterilized. Although one had promised to those women in the beginning, that they would be released after 6 months, this didn't happen. When those women were totally exhausted, they got the following remark in their file: "completely spent". With that remark they were sent back in the working camps, where they were assassinated, if they were no longer able to work. Many of those women got mad and most of them didn't survive those tortures. Women, who were freed at the end of

World War II, had a very hard lot, because they were damned not to say anything or to lie for the rest of their life. If it became known, that they had been in one of those brothels, they were stigmatized by almost everybody. So they were forced – totally traumatized - to find a way back to normal life, without being able to cope with what had happened to them.

I became aware of this unbearable grief that happened to many thousand women between 1943 and 1945, when I visited an exhibition in the former Mauthausen concentration camp. Stunned and shaken as well, I decided to draw, as an author – with all means available to me –, the attention of the public to that subject. Based on historical research and some interviews with some women still alive, I wrote the novel "Zaunkönig"(which means the bird Wren), probably the first novel, dealing with the fate of those women who were forced to work as prostitutes. It's the story of Elfi, who had been denounced to be an antisocial person and who, as a consequence, was sent in a working camp,

where she was selected to work as a prostitute. Continuously surrounded by death, she was fighting to survive. When the camp inmates were freed at war-end, Elfi was returning to her husband Benno. But the return to a normal life seems to be impossible. Her fate, her anxieties, her fighting and her misery are an example for the misery of many women. The novel "Zaunkönig" will touch the readers, who will get a feeling for Elfi's fate and they will get an impression of that history-period. I am trying to give a voice to those women, who are damned to be quite and my aim is, that we shouldn't forget the fate of those women.

If you buy that novel, you support the project "Magdalena" sponsored by the Caritas in Wuppertal / Solingen, a project that tries to help migrant women, who have become victims of enforced prostitution, trafficking or enforced marriages.

Sandy Green "Zaunkönig", published by Shaker Media in Aachen, ISBN 978-3-86858-553-7, 14.90 €

### The project LILJA celebrates its first birthday

Since one year, SOLWODI is with its "project LILJA" – a contact and advice office for prostitutes – active in the red light milieu of Oberhausen; this project is being financed by "Aktion Mensch". The aim of that project is to advise prostitutes in that area and to improve their life situation. The Romanian and the Bulgarian colleagues working in that office could discover important facts about the life of many women.

Forced by a desperate economic situation and being dependent on their families, young women are often driven into the so called "poverty prostitution" A normal Romanian woman working as a seller in a shop, earns about 150 Euro per month. This is not enough to cover the rent for a flat and the living costs. In addition, many of those women have to support also their families (parents, sisters and children) As a result of a low level education or none; they have almost no chances on the normal working market. Clever pimps promise to those women, who are often not psychological stable, a four times higher income, if they are prepared to go abroad. And if they go, they very often see no money. Those women are completely unprepared for a life abroad and as a result have no chance to live on their own. They don't know their rights, they don't speak the foreign language, they very often don't have a training for a job and they don't have a health-insurance. The pimps use all those deficiencies to exploit those women. Many women don't realize, that they get into a situation without a perspective. Since our colleagues speak the language of many of those women, they are in a position to get close to those poor women and to discuss with them exit-options. A young Roma woman could be convinced to try a rehabilitation programme, organized by an organization with the name "Reaching out". This victim of trafficking – suffering from psychosis – was for the court not a trustworthy witness. Without being entitled to receive social aid, joining this rehabilitation programme, was her only chance for a life with a perspective. Getting such a chance makes those women hope. But not all of them are lucky.

"It's hard and frustrating as well, that we can only help a few of those women. There is a great demand for help, but the amount of help we can offer is limited", says the head of LILJA.

## 25 Years SOLWODI – Summer charity concert staged by the Mainzer Hofsänger (the castle singers)

In the context of this year's 25<sup>th</sup> jubilee of SOLWODI, there will be several events, spread over the year and the Federal Republic. With 2 special concerts we will celebrate in Boppard and we invite you, dear readers, to come to those concerts.



Already since 2007, the Mainzer Hofsänger, together with their partner Lotto Rhineland-Palatinate, are touring through Rhineland-Palatinate, on a special concert-tour. Most important is that this tour serves a "good purpose". On 4. June 2010, at 19:00, the Mainzer Hofsänger will stage a special charity concert in the St. Bartholomäus church in Boppard-Hirzenach, in favour of SOLWODI's jubilee. Tickets at a presale price of 10 Euro will be available at the following places:

SOLWODI Deutschland e. V. ,Boppard-Hirzenach; Gasthaus zum Rebstock, Boppard-Hirzenach; Lotto-Annahmestelle G. Kersting, Boppard; Best Western Bellevue Rheinhotel, Boppard; Landgasthof Eiserner Ritter, Boppard-Weiler; Lotto Annahmestelle A. Müller, St. Goar and finally at the evening ticket box, where the tickets will cost 12.- Euro . For further questions or reservations please call SOLWODI in Boppard, Tel. 06741 – 2232

It's worthwhile to look ahead for the autumn 2010. On 8. October 2010 there will be a charity concert in the city-hall of Boppard, performed by Django Reinhardt and his band.

The Kösel editors will publish a book with the stories of women who were supported by SOLWODI.

More information about the October concert and about the above mentioned book can be found in our next circular letter.

25 years SOLWODI, this means 25 years of help and support for women suffering from poverty and violence. SOLWODI is fighting for the rights and the dignity of women and that women can live a self-determined life, free of force and violence. Please support our work, for instance by visiting one of the charity concerts this year!!

### Dinner for Solidarity

Since Sr. Dr. Lea Ackermann presented with a lecture in Leer the work of SOLWODI, the women of the protestant reformed community of Großwolde organize now every year barter in a coffee, where articles can be exchanged and bought. In addition those women invite, since 4 years, every winter to a candlelight dinner in favour of SOLWODI. In the community house, decorated with dolls and old dolls` prams, 32 guests were served and fully enjoyed a 7 courses dinner. Each of the 10 women organizing that event prepares alone or together with another lady one of the 7 courses. At a rehearsal dinner it is decided, who has to serve which course at what time. Red and white wine are being offered for a donation. During the last dinner, 784 Euro were raised and transferred to SOLWODI. Originally this women`s group was formed by one mother and some children. When the own children were grown up, the women were looking for subjects, that were of interest to them. They thought it would be necessary to engage themselves for the problem of suppressed women and by doing so, giving a signal to the community. That women group says: "SOLWODI is for us living faith". Faith turns them on. We wouldn't mind, if many more women would also take on that idea.



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Acc.-No. 656565 1000

Sorting Code 570 900 00

BIC GENODE51KOB

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##### Landesbank Saar, Saarbrücken

Acc.-No. 2000 9999

Sorting Code 590 500 00

BIC SALADE55XXX

IBAN DE84 5905 0000 0020 0099 99

##### Kreissparkasse Rhein-Hunsrück

Acc.-No. 11 270 00

Sorting Code 560 517 90

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