

# Declaration

## of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Germany and Austria Concerning the Sixtieth Anniversary of the End of the Second World War, May 8, 1945

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### Preface

In these days it is sixty years since the end of the Second World War. What happened during that time, our mothers and fathers lived to pass through and suffer. Their experiences and memories have become part of our own history. Their texts and documents are not only stored up in our archives; they have become part of our knowledge and our memory.

Conscious of the responsibility for our thoughts and deeds, today as well as for the past and the future, we feel called upon to take a stand to the past events in an open and humble manner.

### I. We deeply regret...

...that this terrible war which brought unmeasurable suffering over mankind originated in our countries – and that Seventh-day Adventists also took part in it.

...that the character of the National Socialist dictatorship had not been realized in time and distinctly enough, and the ungodly nature of NS ideology had not clearly been identified.

...that in some of our publications or papers published by us there were found articles glorifying Adolf Hitler and agreeing with the ideology of anti-Semitism in a way that is unbelievable from today's point of view.

...that our peoples became associated with racial fanaticism destroying the lives and freedom of six million Jews and representatives of all the minorities in all of Europe within a few years – and that many Seventh-day Adventists did not share the distress and suffering of their Jewish fellow-citizens.

...that we excluded, separated and left fellow-citizens of Jewish origin to themselves so that they were delivered to imprisonment, exile or death.

### II. We honestly confess...

...that by our failure we became guilty towards the Jewish people, towards all persons persecuted and all suffering of war and also towards Adventists in other countries. For this we humbly ask God and the survivors concerned to forgive us.

...that in those days of distress we as Seventh-day Adventists did not act more courageously and consequently, in spite of our knowledge of the Holy Scriptures and the Prophetic Word, and thus failed to follow our Lord. We did not follow decidedly enough the ones among our ranks who boldly offered resistance and did not bow to the Nazi dictatorship nor cooperate with it.

...that neither the passing of time nor the great distress and need of those days could justify or repair the wrong committed; only God in His Grace is able to grant remission of failure and sin.

### **III. We want to take a firm stand...**

...that never any war against other nations will originate from Germany or Austria, and that no one will be limited or discriminated against because of race, religion, nationality or gender.

...that the past events will not be left forgotten but remain in our sight even today as a continuing memorial.

...that the obedience we owe to the state authorities does not allow giving up Biblical convictions and values.

...that we will be able to 'discern the spirits' and to confess our faith and live consequently, even if we will come into the 'hour of temptation'.

### **Final Remark**

With this declaration we do not want to express contempt over those who lived and believed in those times. We have no right to condemn our fathers and mothers, God alone is the judge. Nor are we entitled to free others from their guilt, God alone makes us free. In our days however, we want to take a decided stand for right and justice – towards all peoples. We earnestly pray to God that we will succeed. By His Grace He alone is able to give us the intention and the power to fulfill that task.

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**In the name of the Seventh-day Adventist  
Church in Gemany**

**Klaus van Treeck  
Chairman**

**Günther Machel  
2nd Chairman**

**In the name of the Seventh-day Adventist  
Church in Austria**

**Herbert Brugger  
President**