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## Press Release

### Church Makes Pact with the Devil

The Association of the Cigarette Industry (VdC) has named Bishop Wolfgang Huber, Head of the EKD Council, and Karl Jüsten, Director of the Berlin Commissionership of German Bishops, as honorary guests at a "Spree Discussion" on 8 March 2006. The names of these two representatives of the Protestant and Catholic churches are the only names on the invitation, which announces "freedoms" as the theme of the event. There is to be discussion about "social, political and economic processes" as well as about "freedoms in the ecumenical movement."

Johannes Spatz, spokesperson for Forum Rauchfrei, criticizes the "church pact with the devil." For whereas the Church is committed to life, the tobacco industry is involved in the death of 140,000 people per year as a result of tobacco consumption. In a letter on 5 February Forum Rauchfrei has urgently requested the church representatives to decline the invitation.

Spatz, in a letter on 13 September 2005, had already warned Huber, "that the tobacco industry attempts to build up a socially recognized image and to stem the 'loss of control over the public discussion about smoking and tobacco' (words of British American Tobacco Germany, BAT)." The issue at that time was a joint event of the Protestant Academy and the Körber Foundation, which receives a large part of its funding from the production of cigarette manufacturing machines.

The tobacco companies refer to this approach as the "third way" and believe that they have "built up a network of relationships with all parts of society and eased the market climate in this country" (BAT advertisement, Vorwärts 12/2000, p. 17). To this end they hold events such as these with which they want to pull representatives of individual groups onto their side.

In this connection Forum Rauchfrei cannot understand how the advertisement of Brot für die Welt (Bread for the World), a foreign aid organization of the Protestant Church, could appear in the 3 February issue of Tabakzeitung. The Church apparently sees common ground with the tobacco industry when it states, "Together we can help (these first words appear in boldface type) to assure that poverty, disadvantage or disability do not hinder people from assuming full responsibility for their own lives." This sounds cynical in light of the prognosis of the World Health Organization for the coming decades, that predicts 10 million deaths primarily in the Third World as a result of the expansion of the cigarette market.