



Consulate General
of the Federal Republic of Germany
Chicago

German Consulate General, 676 N Michigan Ave, Ste 3200, Chicago, IL 60611

Dr. Christian Brecht

Consul General of the Federal Republic of Germany
Tel. (312) 202-6714
e-mail: L@chic.diplo.de

Chicago, January 21, 2014

Honored guests of the Polish Mission,

It is a privilege to address you today and to congratulate you for hosting the ceremony in remembrance of the 69th Anniversary of the Liberation of Auschwitz.

Auschwitz - this name is an epitome of the crimes committed by the National Socialists of Germany. It stands for the attempt to eradicate an entire people. When we think of Auschwitz, it is not the scope of the genocide alone that is so disconcerting. We are shaken also because it was a factory of death, with efficient processes and machinery. And we are moved by the fates of those behind the numbers - the life stories of men, women and children from all over Europe who were killed here because the National Socialists denied them their right to live. The Holocaust was more than a monstrous violation of the moral principles that unite all cultures and religions. It was the attempt to do away with morals altogether. The crimes against humanity perpetrated by the National Socialists have shown how thin the veneer of civilization is, how dangerous the achievements of science and technology can become, and how fragile the cultural constructs are that we take for granted every day.

The reason for us to remember the past is that we need to relate it to our own present and future, we need to learn the lessons it holds for us. We remember the victims because we respect them. We remember in order to learn from history. And we remember for our own sake, because remembrance also means seeking the truth and, with it, a firm foundation for our own lives. The responsibility incumbent on the German people because of the Holocaust forms part of our present identity as Germans. Our mourning for the victims, our deep shame over the horrible deeds, and our will to achieve reconciliation with the Jewish people and with those who once were our enemies in war, are the roots of our republic. "The dignity of man is inviolable." These are the first words of the German constitution of 1949. It is our answer to Hitler's dictatorship and our commitment to humanity and freedom.

I have the highest respect for the extraordinary achievements of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum in preserving the memories of the past and in educating the public to ensure that the world will never forget. The Forbidden Art exhibition, featuring works of art made by prisoners in German concentration camps under threat of death, captures and expresses the unimaginable hell of Auschwitz. I am deeply grateful that this exhibition is being presented to the American people.

Please be assured of my highest considerations.

Yours sincerely,

Christian Brecht