

Welcome Remarks  
by Consul General Rolf Schütte  
at a talk by Professor Tony Platt  
„Present Absences: How Germany Remembers its Genocidal Past“  
at the German Residence, San Francisco, March 6, 2008

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**I would like to welcome you at the German Residence to what promises to be a most interesting and thought-provoking event. Not your usual diplomatic reception with hors d'oeuvres and small talk, but an evening devoted to a most challenging subject: How Germany remembers its genocidal Past, the Holocaust.**

**As some of you may know, I have organized a number of related events here at the German Consulate and have also frequently talked on German-Jewish relations in synagogues, Jewish community centers and universities. The importance of the Holocaust for German and Jewish identity is one of the central elements of these talks.**

**I am very grateful that the Holocaust Center of Northern California is a co-sponsor of our event tonight. I am currently also in talks with the Center about the possibility for me to give a talk at the Center later this spring. As that will give you a chance to hear my own views about the subject I will not address them in detail tonight.**

**However, I would like to start the evening with a quote:**

**„Most countries celebrate the best in their pasts. Germany unrelentingly promotes its worst.**

**The enormous Holocaust memorial that dominates a chunk of central Berlin was completed only after years of debate. But the building of monuments to the Nazi disgrace continues unabated.**

**On Monday, Germany's minister of culture, Bernd Neumann, announced that construction could begin in Berlin on two monuments: one near the Reichstag, to the murdered Gypsies, known here as the Sinti and the Roma; and another not far from the Brandenburg Gate, to gays and lesbians killed in the Holocaust.**

**In November Germany broke ground on the long-delayed Topography of Terror center at the site of the former Gestapo and SS headquarters. And**

**in October, a huge new exhibition opened at the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. At the Dachau camp, outside Munich, a new visitor center is set to open this summer. The city of Erfurt is planning a museum dedicated to the crematoriums. There are currently two exhibitions about the role of the German railways in delivering millions to their deaths.“**

**The quote is from the New York Times of January 29, 2008 and was titled: „Germany Confronts Holocaust Legacy Anew“.**

**This is also the topic of our event tonight. And our guest speaker is a person who recently travelled to Germany and will do so again next Saturday. He actually spoke at the „Topography of Terror Center“ mentioned in the NYT article.**

**Our speaker is: Professor Tony Platt. You found some information about him in your invitation. But let me add a few more details:**

**Tony Platt is professor emeritus of social work at California State University, Sacramento, where he has taught since 1977. Previously, he taught at the University of California (Berkeley) and University of Chicago. He was educated at Oxford University, where he received his BA (1963), and at University of California, Berkeley, where he received his doctorate in criminology (1966). He has been a member of the Editorial Board of Social Justice since its inception in 1974. His publications include The Child Savers: The Invention of Delinquency (1969), which has been translated into other languages; The Politics of Riot Commissions, 1917-1970 (1971); E. Franklin Frazier Reconsidered (1991); and (with co-researcher Cecilia O’Leary), Bloodlines: Recovering Hitler’s Nuremberg Laws, From Patton’s Trophy to Public Memorial (2006). His essays have appeared in a wide variety of publications, including Z Magazine, Monthly Review, Souls, The Annals, Los Angeles Times, and Social Justice. He was a book reviewer for the Los Angeles Times and is currently a reviewer for the San Francisco Chronicle.**

**Platt has received numerous awards for teaching, research and his publications. He was a visiting Research Associate at the National Museum of American History, Washington D.C., a visiting professor at the Institute of Comparative Law, Chuo University, Tokyo. In 1999 he was a fellow at the Huntington Library in San Marino, California.**

**As already mentioned, in 2007, Platt gave talks at the Topography of Terror Museum in Berlin and the Documentation Centre, Nazi Rally Grounds, in Nuremberg.**

**During that trip to Germany he made observations which are the background for his talk tonight.**

**Let us all give a warm welcome to Professor Tony Platt.**