

Greeting

of the member of the House of Representatives

and Chairman of the CDU Group

Dirk Stettner

on the occasion of the 72nd *Pankow Orphanage Talk* on 5 March 2025:

Opening of the new *exhibition*

and

Panel 'On the future of a culture of remembrance of the SHOAH'

The use of this former Jewish orphanage is a *living use*. That is the topic I would like to talk about. The questions are '*How do we deal with the commemoration of Jewish life in Berlin*' and '*How do we keep it alive*? And '*How do we deal with the commemoration of Jewish life and all the terrible events of Jewish life in Berlin in an interreligious way*'

And so it is important that we have places of remembrance, that we also look after the places of remembrance. But there are memorial sites that are very quiet and there are lively ones, like the one we see here today. Professor Albrecht said that you get the feeling that you are looking into hundreds of faces. There are probably a few more. This is a very lively memorial site. A living reminder of former Jewish life. And that is realised through the use of this house. We have a school. We have a library. And we have an exhibition on the history of the Jewish orphanage. And that is important, because we have to make sure that what happened is not forgotten. On the one hand, but on the other hand, we must not forget what we are currently experiencing, what Jewish life in Berlin is currently like.

I don't know if everyone is aware of the numbers. We have an estimated 40,000 Berliners of the Jewish faith in our city. We have an estimated 300,000 people of the Muslim faith in our city. And now we could go on to list how many nationalities we have in our city. In any case, we have a considerable amount of potential conflict in our city. And not only since 7 October of the year before last have we known that anti-Semitism has never gone away in our city. But we now also know how acceptable it is again in our city to act anti-Semitically. And this is done under the guise of freedom of opinion, under the guise of freedom of demonstration, which

are of course great assets of our community that we must respect and uphold in any case. But we still have to criticise and prevent what is not covered by this. And that is the challenge we face.

The whole thing has a lot to do with the media, with publicity, but it also has to do with money, with supporting Jewish projects. The state of Berlin has set up special funds to support Jewish life in Berlin. Many, many millions. We have – this is a sad situation, a sad truth – spent many, many millions more on the security of Jewish life. And that is nothing positive. It would be very nice if we didn't have to do this at all, but we have to do it intensively. And we are discussing this with the Jewish communities in Berlin. And of course we are also talking to all other religious communities in Berlin about what are good projects and what are not good projects. And who can judge that?

There are very different perceptions of what are good projects and what are not good projects and which demonstrations we must allow, which dialogues we must allow and which we must prevent. You may have noticed what has happened at our universities in the last few months and is happening again and again. And we are having the discussion again: what is a necessary dialogue and what is simply anti-Semitic, what is simply racist in other places? What is a call to murder? We have now defined that. We know which signs we have banned. We know which slogans we have banned.

But that puts Jewish life in Berlin in a very one-sided niche where it doesn't belong at all. It is a religion, a religious life that needs to be protected, which is criticised by many, many people and which always appears in the media when something bad has happened. And that has nothing whatsoever to do with the great good, with the good fortune that we are once again able to enjoy Jewish life in Berlin. It should have nothing to do with it. But it has.

And I am very pleased that we have projects like this exhibition by the Cajewitz Foundation. But also the entire utilisation of this building, which goes far beyond the exhibition. The entire use of the building was certainly also an economic challenge for you - Professor Albrecht - to say, I'm doing this now. I know that very well. At that time, I was also running around Berlin, including Pankow. I'm from Pankow and I thought this building was great even back then, and I'm very happy to be in it now. It's as beautiful as it has become and to see what you can make of it if you go into a project

like this with passion and are prepared to take the risks. But what I believe you do personal passion in all your projects. Which is special. We need people like that in Berlin. I think that's worth a big round of applause for the Cajewitz Foundation and for you, Professor Albrecht. Thank you very much. It characterises you that you play it cool. That's all right. But it doesn't change the need for thanks.

And we have to make sure that we bring different ways of thinking from different religions together in Berlin with projects like this and with other projects and not let them drift further apart. That is what we are currently facing as a major challenge in Berlin, but I believe we are facing it throughout Germany. We know that almost all governments in recent decades have had special tasks. You, Professor Schwan, are also aware of the particular difficulties we have had to deal with.

But there is currently a qualitative difference. I don't need to tell you about the tectonic shifts in the world's power structures and thought patterns. You are all following this. In my view, there are some very, very bad developments happening right now. But in our own country, too, we are experiencing a radicalisation and an increasing weakness in the solid foundations of the community. We are experiencing this in Berlin as a focal point. What is happening here is not yet happening on such a massive scale in other German cities. But it could get there if we fail here. We have to make it clear that we want to continue to live together as a democracy, as a tolerant, diverse city. With all religions that want to live peacefully with us and that calls for violence are unacceptable from any side. And we have to create the right places, the right events for this. That always starts in the past. 'Then and now' is written on the wall. If you don't know where you come from, you can't take a safe step into the future.

In that sense, this exhibition is a major contribution to that. Everything we do is a major contribution to this. I wish you all an informative exhibition opening.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to honour this. This is a wonderful end to my day and I wish you every success with your Cajewitz Foundation projects.

A big thank you to you all.