

**Greetings on the occasion of the opening of JVA (detention centre)
Cottbus Dissenchen on 14.03.02**

Ladies and gentlemen,

Welcome to today's inauguration celebration.

I congratulate the Federal State of Brandenburg to this new state of the art facility.

As architect responsible for design and implementation of the project I am certainly very proud of what we have achieved. I would like to share this pride with the many other contributors, who have made the realisation of my ideas possible by their energetic commitment.

To that extent I would like to express my deepest gratitude and be insured that this is no formal exercise. Please excuse that I it is impossible to mention all contributors by name, it would surely exceed the available time. An exception to this shall be allowed: I would like to mention my two assistants, Mr. Peter Dobrunz and Thomas Bartelmann. Over a period of many years they were indispensable in leading positions in my office. They have both developed a strong commitment to the project, on occasions this went near self-abandonment for the sake of progress of JVA Cottbus-Dissenchen. The project in particular as well as myself owe a big deal to them as a source of ideas, competence and tireless effort. Many thanks.

Thanks to our site management team (Office Rauh-Damm-Stiller, Mr. Ihlo and Mr. Krug) and all the specialist consultants involved. I am indebted to the support of all authorities – in particular the local planning authority under the direction of Mr. Ulrich Morawitz – and the Ministry of Finance and the ministry of justice in charge.

Despite occasional discussions, which should be mentioned here as well, mutual agreements were always the result of humane and pleasant processes. We all celebrated on a regular basis events like the topping-out ceremony, or the tackling of a deadline. If no occasion was in sight, we simply made one. This is common among building professions. The informal gatherings included nearly without exception the countless craftsmen and building workers. In particular on a day like this I would like to express my full acknowledgment and respect for them.

What you can enjoy here today, is a "modern" institute in the truest sense of the word. It is conceived according the latest knowledge of detention practice and strictly adheres to national standards and building regulations, which I would like to stress separately.

This statement is meant to the address the media, in particular the writing guild, which has attributed a special degree of comfort and luxury to this institution in the advent of completion. This cannot remain unchallenged. On the one hand

these buildings have a functional lifespan of at least one hundred years. On this basis alone a responsible recognition of future needs requires the application of the highest standards in contemporary institutional building. This is also a viable approach if considered economically, even in the short term.

On the other hand an open and democratic society is based on values, which are usually embodied in the law. In this institute humans, i.e. adults as well as young persons, are held in detention awaiting their trial. Based on our legal order these people are considered innocent at least up to the trial. Prisoners on remand, as well as tried offenders, may rely on the legally binding principle of the re-socialisation. The process of re-socialisation may be considered as self obligation of a human society, to provide the opportunity of re-integration to offenders once they have served the sentence. Even if the faith in the effectiveness of this legal instrument is in doubt in some instances, there is no alternative. The provision of humane accommodation may be seen as prerequisite in this context.

We presently bear witness of violence and terrorism moving the world towards fear and fright. I am deeply convinced that in the long term counter-violence will not be the option to overcome these complex issues. The readiness of a pluralistic society to embark on a dialogue, although laboriously and lengthy, will form the bridging element in a pursuit of understanding and civilized co-operation. Risking the boldness of a statement in relation to the global situations, I claim that this dialogue begins here at such a place.

A place, in which the state equipped with the monopoly on violence by law, provides the opportunity to offenders to serve their sentence in dignity and provide a credible prospect for the future. We have committed ourselves to achieve this goal for the building. It is now at the administration to put this spatial commitment into practice and enhance the everyday life of the prisoners.

After all those years of positive co-operation with the authorities of the federal state I personally do not have any doubt that this will succeed with bravura.

Professor Dr. h.c. Joerg J. Kuehn
architect
Council of German architects, BDA
Royal Institute of British Architects, RIBA