

Berliner Ärzte (Berlin Medical Journal) 3/2009, p. 30 (translation)

Christian Pross Receives the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany

Christian Pross, a physician and professor of psychotraumatology at Charité University Medical Center, was awarded the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany in Berlin on January 22, 2009. He received the Order in recognition of his outstanding achievements in the psychosocial and medical care of refugees and victims of political persecution and in the areas of medicine, human rights and research on the history of medicine. The Order was awarded by Minister Karin Lompscher in a ceremony at the Berlin Ministry of Health.

Pross began studying the role of medicine in the Nazi period in the early 1980s. He directed a project on the persecution of Jewish physicians at Berlin Moabit Hospital that culminated in 1984 in an exhibit and a book. Subsequently, under the supervision of his mentor, professor of literature Jan Philipp Reemtsma, at the Hamburg Institute for Social Research, he explored the history of reparations and the medical evaluation of concentration camp survivors. He was responsible for the exhibition “The Value of the Human Being – Medicine in Germany 1918 – 1945” at the annual meeting of the German Medical Association in Berlin in 1989. This was the first time medicine in the Nazi period had been included in the agenda of the German Medical Association’s annual meeting.

In 1991, after the first Gulf War, the Berlin Medical Association and the Berlin state government asked Pross to organize an aid campaign, “Berliners help Kurds,” which established a field hospital for Iraqi Kurdish refugees and five rural outpatient clinics in northern Iraq. The experiences in this campaign led in 1992 to the establishment of the Berlin Center for the Treatment of Torture Victims (BZFO), in which Christian Pross played a decisive role. Until 2003 he was director of the BZFO, which provides a broad range of therapeutic care for traumatized victims of war, torture, displacement and persecution. For over ten years, Pross has been an active member of the international network of centers for the care of torture victims, the International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims, located in Copenhagen.

This year, Pross plans to establish a “German Center for Psychotraumatology,” which will focus on research on complex trauma, establish a network for emergency disaster intervention, and coordinate the outpatient and inpatient care of trauma patients in Berlin. Negotiations with donors and partners are in progress.

Christian Pross was born in 1948 in Göppingen. After training as a family physician, he was licensed by the Berlin Medical Association in psychotherapy and as an evaluator of the after-effects of trauma. In 2006 he earned his postdoctoral degree (*Habilitation*) from the University of Göttingen. In addition to teaching at the Charité in Berlin and Göttingen University, he works as a supervisor and consultant for trauma centers in Eastern Europe.

Pross has examined the aftereffects of communist political repression in the former German Democratic Republic (East Germany) in numerous publications. In 2008 he participated in a report by Physicians for Human Rights/USA on former detainees at Guantanamo. His book “Wounded Healers,” a study of the burdens, risks and dangers for caregivers in working with extremely traumatized patients, will be published shortly.

Under a new name, “Survival Center” the Center for the Treatment of Torture Victims, the Center for Refugee Aid and Migration Services, the Foundation Survival, and the charitable organization Catania are coordinating their activities.

Matthias Heining, Survival Center, BZFO