

**Remarks: Bob Kerrey, President, The New School
New School for Social Research
University in Exile 75th Anniversary Celebration
Chancellor Merkel Honorary Degree Citation
Thursday, February 19, 2008
American Academy in Berlin
Am Sandwerder 17-19
14109 Berlin, Germany**

BOB KERREY REMARKS:

I am delighted that all of you could be here to help The New School mark the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the founding of the University in Exile. I am particularly delighted that the former German President and Mayor of West Berlin, Mr. Richard von Weizsäcker is here. Mr. Weizsäcker accepted an honorary degree at our 50th anniversary celebration in Berlin, at a time when this beautiful city was still divided and the Cold War was nearing its end. The establishment of the University in Exile was an historic event which signaled a tremendous victory for academic freedom around the world and established enduring ties between The New School and a vibrant German academic tradition. To honor this tradition we have created the Alvin Johnson-University in Exile Memorial Fellowship Fund which will exist in perpetuity to bring exceptional students from Germany to The New School for Social Research to pursue a degree in the social sciences. In a fitting tribute to the ties that bind our school to Germany, donors in the U.S. recently pledged to equally match every new contribution received by German donors, thus doubling the value of all gifts from Germany which to date already includes generous gifts from Volkswagen, Deutsche Bank, the Axel Springer Stiftung, and Mr. Harry Wolff. We are most grateful for this support of scholarship at the New School for Social Research and we look forward to reaching our goal of \$1,000,000 with the continued support from both German and American supporters.

In 1933, in response to the growing totalitarian threat throughout Europe, The New School's president, Alvin Johnson, created the University in Exile at The New School to provide a safe haven for scholars and artists whose lives were in danger. In the years immediately preceding this event, Johnson had been working on compiling the groundbreaking *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* and was thus intimately familiar with many of the endangered scholars from Europe on both a professional and occasionally personal level. He was also acutely aware of the intellectual heft that these scholars carried, and the fact that many of their ideas had not yet been considered in the American academy. What was saved when the University in Exile was founded was more than the lives of those endangered scholars, for in rescuing them we also rescued their ideas...ideas that in many cases came out of the advances made in the Weimar Republic...ideas that might have been lost to humanity if the minds that were thinking and expressing them had been silenced. And those ideas thrived in the new and foreign soil that was The New School.

That such a thing would happen at The New School comes as little surprise when one considers that in 1919, our founders took as their central mission the creation of a protected space for scholars to explore the most important political and social issues of the day, free from the constraints of the "old school", connected as it was to corporate, political and religious forces. From the very beginning, The New School was designed to be a place that sought to nurture disciplined, outspoken, and creative minds by supporting them in a way that other institutions would or could not. The University in Exile was a natural extension of, or perhaps even the inevitable outcome of, those sound academic principles upon which The New School is founded.

It's worth noting that Johnson's level of concern over the emerging threat to these individuals' lives was not shared by his peers in the United States. His initial idea was to find homes for these scholars at universities across the country, but while many of his colleagues were sympathetic to the cause; their primary concerns were with the fear of

negative reprisals that might ensue if they were to welcome Jewish scholars into their institutions. Even our State Department never filled the small immigration quota allowed for European Jews at that time. Fortunately, Johnson was a tenacious visionary who would not be deterred so easily. He was decisive, resourceful and even heroic in his response to the situation, deftly turning his effort into a private fund-raising campaign which met with immediate success.

Johnson would eventually rescue more than 180 endangered scholars from across Europe and use that intellectual capital to create an academic environment unlike any other in the world at that time. Among the luminaries he rescued were great minds such as Max Wertheimer, Gerhard Colm, Hans Speier, Leo Strauss and Karl Brandt. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine what the social sciences would look like today if these scholars had not been spared the fate that befell so many others. The decades that would follow would see The New School producing an intellectual output that was radically different from other, more established universities. Recognizing the new environment that had been forged at The New School, new generations of scholars – faculty and students alike - flocked to our campus to ask and answer important questions that others simply were not addressing. The world took notice. It had to. The state of higher learning had been forever altered for the better.

The New School is still known as a place where radical ideas can thrive and flourish. The students and faculty members who come through our doors today continue to be drawn to us because of our reputation for welcoming and encouraging new approaches to the problems that confront our society. I suspect and hope that this will be true for many generations to come. Our institution continues to provide this kind of asylum to great thinkers and we continue to be concerned with questions of intellectual freedom. The conference being presented later today, “Free Inquiry at Risk,” deals precisely with this problem which sadly, persists to this day. Indeed, scholars in all parts of the world continue to face the threat of reprisals for the ideas that they espouse.

Under the editorial leadership of Professor Arien Mack, the organizer of today's conference and editor of the well-respected journal *Social Research*, that journal now tracks a growing number of these scholars in each issue, ensuring that their plight is not forgotten by their peers around the world. *Social Research*, like The New School itself, continues to serve oppressed scholars around the world as we uphold the principals set forth by our founders and reaffirmed by the creation of the University in Exile 75 years ago.

This year we are honored to have, at The New School, two scholars who were rescued from oppression in their home countries. Befekadu Degefe, a renowned economist from Ethiopia, and Muwafaq Hamid a translator from Iraq, were each under fire in their home countries for openly expressing views and ideas which conflicted with their government's agendas. The New School is proud to be known as a home for such dissenters.

Many universities around the world now recognize the important principle of protecting an individual's right to express and explore ideas that may run contrary to the prevailing views of a given nation or people. Few, if any of those institutions, however, can claim to have been built around that principle. Today is our opportunity to celebrate this distinguished legacy and our ties to the country which has given our University so much of the character that it is known for today. We celebrate the noble convictions which led to the school's founding and which continue to inform our pursuit of excellence in higher education. Our commitment to academic freedom continues to inform the work that goes on in every division of The New School and the true spirit of collaboration and interdisciplinary opportunity that the University in Exile represented is in so many ways still a crucial part of what makes The New School, "new." We remain unwavering in our commitment to social justice, social engagement, and the right of all scholars to pursue their work without fear of censorship or reprisal. And we are very proud

to count so many German scholars, citizens, and institutions among our allies in this ongoing experiment in higher learning.

With that, I would like now to introduce Mr. Fritz Stern, our laudatory speaker for this morning's award ceremony. Fritz Stern is one of the foremost scholars in the field of modern European history. He received his PhD from Columbia University where he began teaching in 1946. He served as Provost and acting provost at Columbia and is currently University Professor Emeritus there. Professor Stern was a member of the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton from 1969–70, later returning as a visitor for four additional terms. At The New School, he served as a member of the Board of Governors of the Graduate Faculty, which of course was formerly the University in Exile and is today known as The New School for Social Research. He is the author of several notable books including *The Five Germanys I Have Known*, a best seller here in Germany.

He was awarded the Officer's Cross of the Order of Merit in 1976 and subsequently other high honors from the Federal Republic of Germany; He is a member of the Orden Pour le Mérite, Federal Republic of Germany (1994), and was senior advisor to the U.S. Ambassador Richard C. Holbrooke in Bonn, Germany (1993–94). Please welcome, Professor Fritz Stern.

CITATION:

Angela Dorothea Merkel, Stateswoman, negotiator, environmentalist, scientist, leader. For three years *Forbes* magazine has listed you as the world's most powerful woman in recognition of your leadership as a German and as a European. As a young child, you moved with your family to East Germany so that your father, a Protestant pastor, could work in his native Brandenburg. After earning a doctorate in physics at the University of Leipzig in 1978, you settled in East Berlin, where you worked at the Academy of Sciences as a quantum chemist. Your political involvement began in 1989 when you joined the democracy

movement. Shortly before Germany's reunification in 1990, you became a member of the Christian Democratic Union and later that year you were elected as a Bundestag deputy. Your political skill was acknowledged by Chancellor Helmut Kohl who then made you minister of family affairs, senior citizens, women, and youth and minister of environment, conservation, and reactor safety. In the following years in the parliamentary opposition, you demonstrated your negotiating and problem solving skills within your party and with your political opponents. You also showed these skills after the general election in 2005. This led you to assume the Chancellorship of Germany in 2005, becoming not only the first woman to hold the office but also the first East German. In 2007, while serving as Chancellor, you also took on the roles of President of the European Union and chair of the G8. Your leadership played a central role in the negotiation of the Treaty of Lisbon and the Berlin Declaration. Your time as President of the EU was heralded by many as a time of great progress. This led Henry Kissinger to state, "Merkel's leadership style is the art of accomplishing great goals through the accumulation of nuance. Thoughtful but tenacious, she moves toward her goals with inward assurance....In the rotating office of the European Union presidency, she has given a new impetus to European integration." The awards bestowed upon you are numerous and include honorary doctorates from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Leipzig University, and University of Technology in Wroclaw. Your role as negotiator at the EU led to you receiving the Charlemagne Prize for your distinguished services and you have been awarded the Grand Cross of the Order of Merit by both the Federal Republic of Germany and the Republic of Italy. For your commitment to climate protection, poverty reduction, and free and fair world trade; for your innovative and scientific approach to problem solving; for your exemplary negotiating skills; and for your emphasis on worldwide collaboration as a broker for Europe, The New School is most pleased to confer upon you the degree of Doctor of Humane Letters, *honoris causa*.

CLOSING REMARKS:

I would like to thank Chancellor Merkel for taking part in this important celebration and for allowing us the pleasure of bestowing an honorary degree upon her.

I thank you all for being here today, and for helping us to celebrate our proud traditions as well as our commitment to the future. I invite you all to join us for a reception and to stay for the conference that will follow. Thank you.