

“NEIGHBOURHOOD OBLIGES”

**THE FRITZ STERN
WROCLAW PROFESSORSHIP**

Edited by

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Preface

This publication documents the ceremony of awarding of the Fritz Stern Wrocław Professorship to Richard von Weizsäcker, former president of the German Federal Republic, held in Wrocław on 4th March 2011.

The Fritz Stern Wrocław Professorship was established in 2009 by the President of Wrocław, Rafał Dutkiewicz and the Zeit-Foundation Ebelin and Gerd Bucerius in order to honor Professor Fritz Stern and his outstanding scientific activity. The aim of the initiators was to inspire the academic community and enrich the intellectual life in Wrocław by attracting to the city scientists known all over the world – representatives of humanities and social studies as well as to support the city in reinforcing a multi-cultural heritage of Wrocław. The basis for selecting the laureates of the Fritz Stern Wrocław Professorship is both the criteria of scholastic perfection and civic activity: involving science into the process of creating mutual communication between the nations and cultures, supporting the fight for counteracting prejudices and hatred as well as building a conscious civic society.

The Fritz Stern Wrocław Professorship is awarded once a year. Wrocław Academic Schools of Higher Education are invited to submit the candidatures of their scholars. The decision to award a scholarship and a selection of the candidature is made by the Programme's Committee, honorably chaired by Professor Fritz Stern, including the following members: Professor Jerzy Szacki, Professor Marcin Król, Professor Elżbieta Matynia, Janusz Reiter, Anna Hofmann, Ph.D., Professor Tadeusz Luty and Hana Červinková, Ph.D.

Richard von Weizsäcker is the first laureate honored with the Wrocław Fritz Stern Professorship. He was President of the German Federal Republic in the years 1984-1994. After the tragic experience of the war, he considered the reconciliation between Germany and Poland as the main aim of the German policy and the way to reunify divided Europe and supported such initiatives as the Memorandum of Tübingen.

Both, Professor Stern and President von Weizsäcker have been engaged in the process of reconciliation between Germans, Jews and Poles and of European integration.

This publication includes the biographies of the both prominent figures, authorship of Krzysztof Ruchniewicz and Marek Zybura, followed by speeches of Prof. Marek Bojarski, Rector of the University of Wrocław, Rafał Dutkiewicz, PhD, the President of Wrocław and finally of President Richard von Weizsäcker.

The awarding ceremony was accompanied by two discussion panels, which are also documented in this publication with the account of Michał Matlak and Sylwester Zagulski and two records of the discussions "The Neighbourhood Obliges. Poland and Germany in the Face of Globalization Challenges" and "Five Germanys and Many Americas".

The events were organized by the City of Wrocław, Wrocław University, the Willy Brandt Centre for German and European Studies at Wrocław University, the University of Lower Silesia, the International Institute of Studies on Culture and Education at the University of Lower Silesia and the Bente Kahan Foundation for Jewish Culture and Education. We would like to express our gratitude to the City of Wrocław and the ZEIT-Foundation Ebelin and Gerd Bucerus for the financial support as well as to Joanna Lempart-Winnicka, PhD and Maja Antoniszyn, the translators of the texts.

Elżbieta Opitowska

Krzysztof Ruchniewicz

„My Life Has Been Ordinary by All Standards. However, It Has Taken Place in Unusual Times”.

A Sketch to Fritz Stern's Biography¹-

Three years ago the memories of an eminent American historian, an expert at modern history of Germany and Europe – Professor Fritz Stern – were published in Polish – *Five Germanys I Have Known*. The author and the publishers decided for a cover that leaves much room for interpretation – in the foreground a smiling author in front of the open window, while behind the window one can easily recognize a silhouette of the Wrocław town hall, the premises of the authorities of Fritz Stern's hometown. The window is there not without reason. It symbolizes openness, broad horizons, curiosity of the world. The window is also opened when one wants to let some fresh air into the room. Of course the past Breslau and the today Wrocław are not the same cities. They are divided not only by years but also by political systems, national identity, and culture. The old German Breslau is a closed chapter. However, the present, Polish Wrocław partly tries to refer to this heritage, interweave it into the later-shaped experience. Fritz Stern is a living link between former and new Wrocław, at which he looks with sympathy.

The life of Fritz Stern has not been ordinary. This is not only because of the life choices he made himself but also because of the century,

¹ The text also appeared in the March issue of the Odra monthly, 2011.

in which it fell. He comes from a family of assimilated German Jews, respected inhabitants of the city. His father, grandfathers and grand grandfathers were highly regarded doctors. Fritz Stern was born in 1926. Fritz Haber – a famous chemist and Noble Prize laureate of 1918 - was his godfather. After dozen of years and a few historical breakthroughs, at the beginning of the 90s of the 20th century, Fritz Haber and other Silesian Noble Prize laureates were honored with a separate memorial plaque at Wrocław University. The Sterns' family house was not typical. It hosted influential people of the political and scientific world. Among other persons, Albert Einstein stayed there. Also, Fritz Stern's uncle, Otto Stern, was a famous physician. A young Fritz was growing up, as he himself wrote after years, in the shadow of the "greatest catastrophe" of World War I. Although he had not experienced it personally because of his age, the tragedy of war did not allow to be relegated to oblivion. "For instance I remember my father during the war, entering the balloon alone to observe the movement of the enemy's army. I also remember the cripples at the corners of the streets with their terrible prosthesis, occasional marches of Stahlhelm's units and front-line soldiers." As a very young man he was the witness of the crisis of Weimar Republic, the expansion of the national-socialist movement in the city at the beginning of the 30s and its terroristic activity. On July 22, 1932, he was sitting with his parents listening to the coverage of parliamentary elections on the borrowed radio. In those elections, Hitler's party, NSDAP [National Socialist German Workers' Party], achieved a spectacular success.

A bomb attack at the workers' leader and his father's patient – Ernst Eckstein, imprinted on the precocious boy's memory similarly to carting Hermann Lüdemann, the super-president of Lower Silesia in a wheelbarrow and then putting him in a concentration camp at Wrocław's Tarnogaj district. Fritz also remembered the November 1932 elections and the day of January 30, 1933, when Hitler had seized power and Fritz handed over to his father the special issues of newspapers reporting that fact. On that day, in the afternoon, in front of the Stern's windows marched a demonstration of men, women, the elderly and children carrying a red flag. The crowd chanted "hunger, hunger, hunger". It was the last public appearance of the communists in the city. Stern's interest in political affairs displayed at such a young age did not



Prof. Fritz Stern during his lecture at the University of Lower Silesia

remain without impact on his further development. “I was growing up in such an atmosphere – he wrote. [...] The fact that I was a witness of the battle of Weimar (even if I did not understand much at that time) and that my past shaped me firmly became apparent to me when I was writing my latest book *Five Germanys I Have Known*. I knew perfectly at that time, he wrote after years, who set bombs, although I did not

know where the children had been from – as a child of a professor of medicine”. When the Nazis seized power, the repression started to grow not only towards the political opponents of Hitler and his party but also towards the Jewish community. They were dismissed from work and from schools, discriminated and humiliated. The everyday life was becoming more and more difficult, subjecting people to constant insults. The Sterns’ felt more and more at risk and decided to emigrate to Germany. After years of endeavor they succeeded to emigrate to the United States. It was the last possible moment to go. A few weeks later in Wrocław, and the whole Reich the pogroms of Jews were taking place. A lot of friends and family acquaintances were deported to the concentration camp in Buchenwald. From the perspective of time the period spent in Wrocław, was crucial to his life. As a child he used to grow up quickly under the impression of the events taking place in the city. This was the time when his first political interests were born. “For my generation the Third Reich was the major collective experience” – he wrote after years. Yet in another place he would add: “Within the first twelve years of my life I experienced that Hitler was not a necessity. Although national socialism was deeply rooted, the history is not decided upon in advance. I knew that people were fighting for freedom in Germany. I confirmed the conviction that history is open during my studies. First, however, I had to survive. I also had to live by the fact that, as Napoleon said, politics is a destiny. There is no private property since politics may shock people or even kill them. Living through the brutality and cowardice, an ambivalent behavior of many – all these shaped my life”.

After arriving in the States, Stern did not follow the family tracks, he did not take up studies in medicine. However he began historical studies in New York at a prestigious University of Columbia, becoming one of its professors in 1963. At that time the University used to employ lots of prominent scholars, political refugees from Europe. Whether Stern attended lectures of Oskar Halecki, a Polish historian and author of numerous works addressing the history of Central-Eastern Europe, is not known. A German emigrant, professor of history, Hajo Holborn, became his teacher. He represented a particular field of historical research. As Friedrich Meinecke’s follower, Holborn installed in his students the necessity to take into account psychological



Krzysztof Ruchniewicz with Richard von Weizsäcker

aspects in their research. The method was successfully used by Fritz Stern in his research on more or less well-known figures in the history of Germany. Very quickly he considerably strengthened his position in the scientific circles. He is the author of numerous books and articles related to the history of Germany in 19th and 20th centuries. Over the course of time he worked out his individual style of historical writing: "All that Fritz Stern writes distinguishes itself with a fascinating force. First of all, not only does he present people or events but also the history of the ideas of that time and the whole society of a particular époque – its customs, fashion, superstitions, interests, literary and

cultural achievements. Were it not for the fact that he is a prominent historian, he would be famous for his style and narration – both in German and in English” – wrote his friend, countess Marion von Dönhoff, a famous German journalist.

Fritz Stern's immense scholarly accomplishments can be distinguished with three clear sets of discussed problems: the history of Germany in the second half of the 19th century and relations between money and power, the problems of the Third Reich and Holocaust as well as the role of Germany in uniting Europe. Significant publications were addressing each of them. In 1977 a classic, today, monograph: *Gold and Iron: Bismarck, Bleichröder, and the Building of the German Empire* was published in English, and a year later in German. It was the result of many years of studies. During the preliminary research he encountered unknown letters of Gerson Bleichröder, Chancellor Bismarck's banker. For over 20 years of the acquaintance a special relationship between the Chancellor and a "German Rothschild" was established. At the beginning he had been appointed a secret advisor, while in 1872 he was given the title of a gentleman. In the course of time, Bleichröder became a symbolic "figure of plutocracy" and an object of attacks of the anti-Semitic wave growing in Germany starting in the 70s. For Stern it was a great occasion to show the correlation between the power and the money but also to show the relations between anti-capitalism and anti-Semitism. "He is also an example to follow when it comes to searching for truth and treating the truth as a superior value, which not only refers to the historian's apprenticeship but also is the message for the modern cultural life. Fritz Stern is not afraid to articulate the painful truth about the German and the Jews, also those, which even now can be painful for the two nations" - wrote Bronisław Gerecek, his deceased friend, a well-known Polish medievalist. Taking up difficult, complex topics is especially visible in the second of the theme sets mentioned – studies of the Nazi period. In 1961 he published the *Cultural Pessimism as a Political Threat*, which was reissued many times. In his book, he deals with the origin of the national socialism, which he finds in criticism of the contemporary world and nostalgia for the real religion. According to him, anti-Semitism and imperial ambitions were an inherent part of the praise of idealism and they formed the basis for Hitler's nihilism. For an American historian a totalitarian system was not

just an event or a temporary disturbance of the European history's logics but it also was up-to-date in contemporary debates. Another topic taken up in Fritz Stern's works is a tragic fate of Jews, especially during the Second World War. He dedicated numerous studies to that problem. He also wrote about the uniqueness of Holocaust from the perspective of its victims. He recalled the illusions of the German Jews who started to believe in the power of Germany. He is a participating historian, he wants to try to understand but he is far from justifying. He did not follow a then fashionable evaluation trend in historical studies. He was rather persistently seeking for the answer to the question "why?" In one of his essays, titled significantly "National Socialism as Temptation" he quoted a famous political scientist Ralf Dahrendorf, who was writing about the difficulty in evaluation what is moral or immoral if one had never experienced temptation. "I must add something personal – this temptation was resisted – it is not my privilege but it stems from the fact that the full-blooded non-Aryans were denied" – he wrote about himself. In Stern's works there were publications dedicated to those people who had been "tempted" but also to those who definitely rejected it and had to sacrifice their lives. This is how Stern's interest in the history of the anti-Hitler opposition, its form and organization, can be translated. A lot of attention is paid to the history of Hitler's failed attack in July 1944. During the last year's anniversary celebrations of this attack he proposed to create a European commemorative place, where German oppositionists and the European resistance movement would be commemorated, including the specificity of each of them. Another trend in Stern's scientific deliberations is the place and role of Germany in unifying Europe, including the country's union, specific relations between Germany and the USA and finally Germany's participation in the process of the Old Continent's unification process. He was the first foreigner to be invited to Bundestag in 1987, where he gave a speech on the anniversary of the anticommunist people's uprising in the German Democratic Republic as of June 17, 1953, which had been suppressed by the Soviet army. It was an opportunity for him to recall German freedom traditions. He referred to the figures of Ferdinand Freiligrath, a poet, and Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a protestant theologian, an opponent of national-socialistic regime, born in Wrocław and executed by the Nazis. He warned against the temptation of forgetting about the



Fritz Stern, Marek Zybura and Adam Jeziński, Vice Rector of the University of Wrocław (from the left)

Germany's past and relativizing it. He has seen the future of Germany in relation to the values of a free and pluralistic society, as part of the West. In subsequent years Fritz Stern did not avoid public speeches. Each time he was listened to intently and what he said was vividly discussed. He has a special intuition for difficult topics, when writing and talking about them he presents a great knowledge of them and a distance typical for a historian as well as kindness. He poses much more questions rather than provides ready-made judgments. This makes his listeners and readers reflect deeply and independently. This was the case at the beginning of the 60s during a vivid debate on the Germans' being guilty of the outbreak of the First World War (the so called dispute on the theses of Fritz Fischer, a Hamburg historian) as well as during the so called dispute of the historians of the 80s about the most contemporary history of Germany. The last debate was echoed during the speech made in Bundestag in 1987. He treated the unification

of Germany as the “second chance”, “a rare gift for the nations as well as for individuals”. He was one of the advisors of Margaret Thatcher, British Prime Minister, whom he convinced not to be afraid of the united Germany. He was sure of the Germany’s being deeply anchored in the West. Many years later, a well-known historian and Fritz Stern’s friend – Heinrich August Winkler said that the historical experience of Germany could be called “a long way to the West”. For him – similarly as for Fritz Stern – together with the uniting of Germany, the so called separate road of Germany ended. Germany, when signing a treaty with the world powers of the Hitler coalition, as well as with the neighbours, including Poland, confirmed its relations with the West, which was of particular importance for Polish issues – the border status quo.

Fritz Stern treated the Polish issues and Polish-German relations with a great kindness. It might have been caused by the fact that his hometown was then located in Poland. At the end of the 70s he came to our country for the first time. He established contacts with Polish scientists. With some of them, for instance with Professor Bronisław Gremek, he established lasting ties of friendship. This is how the American historian’s great enthusiasm for the Polish aspirations for independence can be explained. He was an adherent of the Polish “Solidarity” movement, he did not resign himself to the introduction of the martial law. Whenever he could he supported Poles at the international arena. Many times he polemicized with the stand of American politicians who assigned themselves a key role in the events of 1989. “Who won?” Sterns’ answer: ‘Solidarity, Gorbachev and the Polish Pope (his great knowledge and understanding of Polish issues can also be noticed in the fragments of his conversation with the former Chancellor of the German Democratic Republic – Helmut Schmidt, published in monthly magazine *Odra*).

During his first visit to Poland in 1979 he also came to Wrocław, his hometown. The stay in Wrocław etched on his memory. He had an occasion to get to know the tragedy of Poles during the Second World War. “I visited a villa of my grandmother” – he recalled after years. “We spoke in French with its host, a Polish cavalry officer. He showed me my grandmother’s room, in which there were the pictures drawn by children. He also showed me a camp tattoo and talked about five years spent in Auschwitz, Brzezinka, Buchenwald. A bust of Father Maximil-

lian Kolbe was at the table. A few weeks earlier, in Auschwitz, the Pope paid tribute to him. Mr Ostankiewicz suffered a fate which my family managed to avoid. We shook our hands and at that moment I had an impression that something fair happened at this world." It was a peculiar paradox. He, a German Jew, Professor of an American school of higher education, a wonderfully saved Pole and a prisoner of concentration camps who rebuilt his life in a formerly unknown city to him, met after years in Wrocław, which was close to both of them. The problem of losing your "small homeland" was one of the most beautiful of Fritz Stern's essays. He wrote something which is still up-to-date: "What does it mean to lose your homeland? The homeland gives you the feeling of safety, it is yours subconsciously formed identity. In what we call the homeland we feel the deepest bonds. Also to nature: woods, meadows, smells, sounds to all that to which we have gotten accustomed. Very frequently we connect our homeland to a particular place in our house or garden, which we associate with our parents and ancestors. Only when we lose it we can feel a unique value of what we have gotten accustomed to."

Marek Zybura

The Morality of Power – the Power of Morality

Richard von Weizsäcker as the German National Good¹

There is no politician in the contemporary history of Germany (and it is hard to find a parallel in the neighbouring countries) who, thanks to his personality, activity, but also, let's say, an aura which he exudes, would represent an ideal of statesman for both his people in Germany and those abroad with such obviousness as it is done by Richard von Weizsäcker.

The sixth president of the German Federal Republic, in office between 1984-1994, is still a German president (for both his people and those abroad) and it does not matter that he is no longer in office. He is the president in the consciousness of the contemporary not because of the common custom to call former presidents and prime ministers (and in the course Poland it even applies to one-day ministers) with their former titles, although, sometimes, one would like to forget as quickly as possible that those democratically elected people held such offices. The fact that Richard von Weizsäcker is still a president for the contemporary stems from the yearning which naturally emerges in people who are in favor of such service of political offices in the country as it was the case during his presidency in the time of a global collapse of authority of politics and politicians. For him a word and an act were a unity in politics. A deeply religious Christian, engaged institutionally in

¹ The text also appeared in the March issue of the Oder monthly, 2011.



Richard von Weizsäcker



Richard von Weizsäcker's entry in the Guest Book of Willy Brandt Centre, with Krzysztof Ruchniewicz

his Evangelical Church (a member of its Synod Board, President of the Kirchentag), as a politician he was convinced of the necessity to build the power on the foundation stone of morality and he knew that this is the morality of which the genuine power is born, in which people trust and to which they entrust themselves. A conservative, who politically left the CDU when he became the President, he did not report the completion of the task to Helmut Kohl, he did not serve his own party but the whole nation, a democratic country and civic society. Never before did any German president criticize so harshly and so pertinently the political and party life in Germany, reviling the appropriation of the country by the parties, reproaching politicians that they were ready to aim at power at any cost – how painful these words are in today's Poland!

Being sensitive to a moral dimension of authority could not leave him indifferent to the historical aspect of this problem, that is, to the way of holding power in Germany in the past – the past which is still a burden to the German, the years of Nazi rule and the Second World War. In the German history it is still a period to which public figures do not stay indifferent and of which they have to take their own view. Even



Marek Zybura with Fritz Stern

more, if, similarly to Richard von Weizsäcker they were aware of those times or actively participated in them. Some react to it (as, for instance, Martin Walser, a writer) with frustration, calling this compulsion, or rather a test of historical sensitivity and honesty, “an Auschwitz mace” with which the Germans are bashed without any reflection. Without reflection because those who are bashing allegedly do not want to accept the transformation of a Nazi Shawel into a model Paul of Western democracy. Becoming the President in the middle of the 80s, when the disoriented Europe, feeling that the world order is changing but not knowing in which direction those changes would go, looked with hope at a new leader of West Germany, which at that time was economically and politically leading the Continent, Richard von Weizsäcker took up the challenge. On May 8, 1985, on the 40th anniversary of the end of war, he made a speech in Bundestag, which is thought to be the best in the postwar German history. (Legitimately it was mentioned in the “Greatest Speeches in History” issued in 2006 by the *Polityka* weekly).

He did not make the Germans stop remembering about the crime of war and its victims. What is more, he gave a clear lesson to his countrymen, vacillating between the interpretation of May 8, 1945 as a day

of liberation or rather a defeat or those thinking (similarly to his predecessors in office during the subsequent anniversaries of that day) that it was partly the first and partly the second. He said that “the 8th of May, 1945 was a liberation day. On that day we were liberated from national-socialist system of violence despising people. And being aware of the fact that for a large part of the German society’s family memories, and taking into account individual fates of the Germans, that day was associated with a catastrophe, he added: “Because of the liberation nobody will want to forget about suffering, which started for many on that day of May 8.” In this way he clearly implied that, forty years after the war, he did not want to divide his countrymen and inflame. However, soon after, he meaningfully emphasized again that „the reason for defections, expels, and enslavement cannot be related to the end of the war.”



Richard von Weizsäcker’s entry in the Guest Book of the University of Wrocław, with Marek Bojarki, Rector of the University of Wrocław



Richard von Weizsäcker and Fritz Stern (behind)

They should rather be connected with the beginning of it and with the beginning of the power of terror, which had caused it. We must not differentiate between May 8, 1945 and January 30, 1933." Nobody had heard such words in the mouth of the West-German Head of State before. None of the German politics had spoken so plainly and unambiguously about the German nation's guilt of the Nazi crimes and reproached the countrymen with the words "too many of us were excusing ourselves (after war) with not knowing about anything, not suspecting anything." In this way he undermined one of the most popular German myths after 1945 about the functioning of the national socialism in the Third Reich. His speech was widely echoed in the country, in Europe and all over the world. On demand, the President's Press Bureau issued 650,000 copies of it! As an appeal for a responsible German attitude towards the past and reconciliation between the two former enemies, it was an important step forward to break a stalemate in the political relations with the Eastern Block.

For such a stand, a conservative Richard von Weizsäcker paid a high political price in his political camp, in which his biggest adversaries were Franz Josef Strauß and Helmut Kohl. Strauß reacted with a fury to Weizsäcker's quoting in his speech of an Israeli mystic Ben-Eliezer: "The mystery of salvation is called memory". Strauß demanded to be through "the permanent dealing with the past" [that means with Nazism and war – M.Z.]. Kohl, once a political supervisor of Weizsäcker strived to dismiss him from the CDU [Christian Democratic Union] (for unpaid fees!), and finally he devoted, to the person with whom he had cooperated for years, forty-something lines in his "Memories". The right-wing circles sneered at the President that making his speech and appealing for remembering about the German crimes and their victims he had allegedly forgotten about his own serving to Hitler in Wehrmacht from the first till the last day of the war, which he had started as a grenadier and finished as a Capitan decorated many times with the Iron Cross of Merit. They also sneered that knowing personally many conspirators from the Colonel von Stauffenberg's circles and knowing about their intentions, he had never joined them; finally, that he was an assistant of defense of his father in the Nuremberg Tribunal, Ernst Heinrich von Weizsäcker, secretary of state at Ribbentrop and SS Brigadeführer in Himmler's personal staff.

That is all true, apart from the fact that when he was setting off for the war he was only nineteen years old and he had never forgotten the lesson he had learnt from it, contrary to many of his countrymen. And it was a really painful lesson not because of the fact that his opportunistic father, convinced that he was following a political “Wallenrodism” had to appear before the Tribunal for War Criminals for the deportation of the French Jews to KL Auschwitz. Only on the second day of the war the beloved older brother of Richard – Heinrich died in Tuchola Woods. He was serving in the same regiment. Those two events and exterminatory war experiences in the East, in Poland and in Russia, formed the basis for his postwar moral attitude as well as his views and political activity.

As fate would have it, in the closest family of the future President – since it is prerequisite to mention his second older brother: Carl Friedrich, a physicist, taking part in Hitler’s atomic program (he thought that “the divine grace” caused technical problems which made it impossible to build such a bomb) – the German drama of the 20th century was set: from the guilt to expiation through reconciliation with the victims.

Richard von Weizsäcker emphasized again and again that the war experiences in the East inclined him to take up an intense activity in the structure of the protestant church after war, where in the 50s and in the 60s he learnt the art of dialogue with the Catholics. They also made him get engaged in politics, in which he considered as his main task, after the tragedy of the war, the reconciliation of the Germans with the Slavic East, particularly with the Poles. As early as at the beginning of the 60s, when in Poland the CDU party was considered to be the center of Nazis and revanchists, with one word of “Teutonic Knights”, a young politician opted for the normalization of the political relations with Poland. He supported initiatives of his brother Carl, the so called Memorandum of Tübingen and in 1962 demanded the recognition of the border at Oder and Neisse. Next he insisted on this political objective in the East Memorandum of the Evangelist Church in Germany in 1965 as one of its initiators. Such a stand – presented at that time – had to at least irritate von Weizsäcker’s political party colleagues. However, he remained faithful to his view for years and consistently remained his countrymen – especially his critics in compatriots’ circles, who did not remember about that, because they did not want to remember

– why they were forced to leave their former Eastern provinces and how Poles found themselves there: “All these are people who were not asked about permission and who suffered because of the travesty of justice; people who became innocent objects of political events and to whom the enumeration of injustice and confrontation of claims would not make up for the evil done to them” he stated on May 8, 1965 in his famous speech. However it will be a mistake to search, in von Weizsäcker’s attitude towards Poland and Poles, for concern about special relations between the Germans and the Poles (underlined with completely un verbalized expiation wishes). Peter Lachmann, distinguished for the Polish-German dialogue, is not right saying that “Poland cannot be an ordinary country for the Germans” and that “they have to have a special attitude towards it” since the development, also in mutual relations between people and nations, cannot be permanently based on “extra ordinaries”. Otherwise, in our relations, we would always have to deal with the permanent state of emergency. Richard von Weizsäcker understood it perfectly and although in 2004 he confirmed that “the agreement and reconciliation were for my generation and for me personally the highest imperative”, he had always placed his engagement in agreement with Poland in the broader context of building new Europe on the ruins of the continent reduced to ashes in the Second World War. In 1962 he wrote in the “Die Zeit”: “The main aim of our policy towards Poland must be the will to support a long-term evolution, at the end of which the stop of the division of Europe, and at the same time Germany, will await us.” In his speech in Warsaw on June 12, 2006, on the 15th anniversary of the Polish-German Treaty, he talked about a good neighbourhood and friendly cooperation. From a historical perspective he added: “The changes in Europe would not have been possible were it not for the breakthrough in German-Polish relations.”

The demand for free Europe and united Germany had to be Utopian-sounding in 1962 but Richard von Weizsäcker finally saw his efforts being carried out. And since Europe and Germany without borders have become a fact he co-shapes their nature. Since he became the President in 1984, Germany has carried his image in the world. At present, besides Helmut Kohl, he is the most recognizable German politician in the world, but contrary to Kohl he is well-liked and respected. He is not enough known and appreciated in the con-

temporary Poland, for which he did so much contrary to other German politicians. What a contrast he makes with Kohl, who ungenerously wandered around when it came to the acknowledgment of the border at Oder and Neisse and to signing the border treaty in 1990. He then meaningfully transferred Hans-Dietrich Genscher since he did not want to sign with his own name the "betrayal", which the treaty was in the view of the electorate of the Union of the Expelled (who-so Honorary Badge he has had). Richard von Weizsäcker, on the other hand, in the already-quoted article in „Die Zeit“ as early as in 1962 wrote such meaningful words: "we cannot allow for the germinating ideas of the Eastern politics of the West to be treaded out in vagueness, in which our contacts with Poland are held due to our formula of the foreign matter. (...) For all, including those in the prominent positions, and for our allies the border at Oder and Neisse is a matter long ago and finally settled." And what an irony of history that Kohl embracing with Mazowiecki in Krzyżowa (whom he immediately leaves there and later treats him unceremoniously and paternalistically many times) is thought to be the icon of the Polish-German reconciliation!

We should hope that Wrocław, the city authorities and the university (at which his uncle Victor managed the neurosurgery clinic), hosting President Richard von Weizsäcker at the beginning of this month, will welcome him with kindness and gratefulness for which he deserves in the hearts of the Poles.

The Speech of Prof. dr. hab. Marek Bojarski, Rector of Wrocław University

Honored President Weizsäcker!
Dear Professor Stern!
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Opening such meetings as the one, in which we are participating today, is one of those rare but much more pleasant parts of rector's duties. We have gathered on an exceptional day, which is a testament to perfect relations between Poland and Germany, not only as far as politics is concerned but also science and other forms of cooperation. In Wrocław, both with regard to its past and present as well as perspectives for the future, it is of the utmost value. It is a belief strongly held by the authorities of our university and by Rafał Dutkiewicz, President of Wrocław, as well as his associates.

Two prominent figures are here with us today. They have been widely and actively engaged in difficult events of the 20th century, such as World War II and the experience of Nazi rule. These chapters are of great significance in biographies of our esteemed guests. Since they both are prominent and respected figures in our country I will not recall their achievements and biographies in detail. However, I would like to strongly emphasize that Professor Stern and President von Weizsäcker have been extremely active in the process of reconciliation between Germans, Jews and Poles. This generation of Europeans – on our side let me just mention Professor Władysław Bartoszewski – following its historical experience provided us with an outstanding lesson of responsible civic and human attitudes. What is also important to Wrocław is the fact that Professor Stern was born in our city and,



The speech of Marek Bojarski, Rector of the University of Wrocław during the ceremony

regardless of the years passing and all changes taking place, he still feels connected with it. Our university is extremely proud to have Professor Stern as its Doctor Honoris Causa. I do hope that in the much awaited discussion with the participation of our prominent guests the topic of the past will be raised for our benefit and content.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our meeting is also an opportunity to express our gratitude for a particular initiative, which supports research conducted by the youngest generation of Polish and German scholars. In 2005, Deutsche Nationalstiftung, the foundation established by, among others, Helmut Schmidt, former Chancellor of the German Democratic Republic, decided to set up Fritz Stern Scholarship. The Scholarship Programme, managed by the Willy Brandt Centre for German and European Studies at our university and the Viadrina University in Frankfurt Oder, has so far encompassed 30 young researchers from both countries. Thanks to transferring the prize awarded to President Weizsäcker to the Scholarship Programme, it may be continued in subsequent years. On behalf



Fritz Stern's entry in the Guest Book of the University of Wrocław, with Marek Bojarski

of the Wrocław academic community and future scholarship holders, I would like to cordially thank the Foundation's authorities and President Weizsäcker as well as Professor Stern.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

2011 is a jubilee year of Wrocław University, marking the bicentenary anniversary of its founding. The memories of university life before 1945, its achievements as well as shadows are now considered as part of the legacy of our university. The memory of the Habsburg's Academy of Leopold and University of Jan Kazimierz of Lviv, which after the war supported Wrocław with prominent researchers, is also included. We are facing many challenges for our university and for the whole scientific environment of Poland. We have to meet them by making use of the achievements to date, which include a well-developed cooperation in research and didactics. The University of Wrocław has been cooperating with many foreign higher education institutions. Our teaching staff participate in a constant scientific dialogue and exchange. The most important fields with which they deal include the Polish-German



Rafał Dutkiewicz, President of Wrocław, Richard von Weizsäcker and Marek Bojarski (from the left)

cooperation. Today we further enhance it. Such events show us and the world that breaking with the burden of negative historical experiences is possible. It proves that the nations, once standing at the opposite sides of the political conflict's barricade can successfully solve problems and build future together. Such an optimistic end of the tragic 20th century could have not been predicted. It would have not been possible, though, without the engagement of people such as our honorary guests. I would like to cordially thank all the organizers of the today's event, including our city's authorities.

The Speech of the President of Wrocław, Rafał Dutkiewicz

The history of Wrocław is both rich and complicated. And extremely difficult. Yet it is beautiful.

“Die Blume Europas” – “The Flower of Europe” – this is how our city used to be referred to. At the same time that is the title of the Nor-



The ceremony of awarding the Fritz Stern Professorship to Richard von Weizsäcker in Aula Leopoldina

man Davies' book about the history of my city, a peculiar microcosm of Central Europe. About the history of my city, the history of your city – Professor Stern.

It would be hard to find anyone who, through his own fate and the fate of his family, ancestors, embodied the history of Wrocław.

Professor Stern – a great researcher of history, philosopher.

Today I would like to thank for your words referring to our most recent history of Wrocław, to events which launched the beginning of the most contemporary Wrocław.

I have quoted them many times. I would also like to do it today.

“Now, looking back upon the Wrocław of the 80s, I saw it acquire a new dimension, becoming a true bastion of the “Solidarity” – a Polish civic movement, which led to a self-release of Eastern Europe, but also to the unification of Germany.”

Fritz Stern “Five Germanys I Have Known.”

Thank you very much Professor.



Richard von Weizsäcker with Rafał Dutkiewicz



The speech of the President of Wrocław, Rafał Dutkiewicz

The Fritz Stern Professorship is in fact a tribute to our academic environment. It emphasizes once again that we do not have anything more valuable, anything more precious than our academic life.

Even if it is criticized, it still is and will be the most precious part of Wrocław.

You Ladies and Gentlemen – university presidents, professors – shape our future, participating in the process of making, and puzzling out, the sense of the surrounding world.

You are supposed to serve as a model for behaviors, thinking, creative quest. Education and exchange of thought are our future.

Please be open to thinking.

As open as Professor Stern is. As open as President Weizsäcker is.

After WWII Germany were undergoing a process of deep reflection. Thought, much consideration on the tragedy of the world war, burdening the history of Germany, brought about two related results.



Richard von Weizsäcker, Rafał Dutkiewicz, Janusz Reiter, former Polish ambassador to GFR and US and Marek Bojarski (from the left)

They brought about the world reconciliation and – built, among other things, on this reconciliation – European project.

And again I want to say that not many Europeans were so beautifully and genuinely engaged in that process as President Weizsäcker was.

Richard von Weizsäcker is than an example and personification of searching for something which we call Europe.

Common, free and fair Europe.

That is why we wanted and that is why the members of the Fritz Stern Professorship Chapter, including Professor Jerzy Szacki, Professor Marcin Król, Professor Elżbieta Matynia, Janusz Reiter, Anna Hofmann, PhD, Professor Tadeusz Luty and Hana Červinková, to make a German citizen, a co-creator of the Polish-German and of the European reconciliation, Richard von Weizsäcker, the first honorary professor assume the Wrocław Fritz Stern Chair.

Since this is the most significant sense of the Polish Wrocław, the sense which should be discovered by our academic thinking. This simple sense: **Europe**.

Richard von Weizsäcker

The Speech at the Fritz Stern Professorship Award Ceremony

Mr Mayor,
Distinguished guests,
My much esteemed friend, Fritz Stern,

Thank you very much indeed for your kind words. You could not have conferred on me a higher honour. The office of professor is a very distinguished one which carries tremendous responsibility. In naming this professorship after Fritz Stern, moreover, you have shown your expectations of me are particularly high. Fritz Stern is a great historian and teacher, who at many critical junctures has helped us Germans to reach a fuller understanding of our past, including its dark sides. He has helped us to recognize both the impositions we have time and again made on our many neighbours and the affinities that have drawn us together.

If I may be permitted to describe myself as a disciple of Fritz Stern, I take that as a great honour!

Of all cities Wrocław-Breslau, Fritz Stern's native city, is predestined to establish a professorship dedicated to the fullest extent possible to the cause of international understanding.

Over the past thousand years this great city belonged practically in turn to its neighbours in the east, west, north and south, to the Poles, Bohemians and Hungarians, the Habsburgs and the Prussians.

The city's impressive historical monuments in diverse building styles testify to this multifaceted heritage.

One such monument is this hall, reminiscent of the Habsburg Emperor Leopold. When his capital was under siege, it was the Poles who came to his aid. This magnificent chamber where we are assembled today is resonant with Leopold and his era.

In the course of its history Wrocław has been the scene of great and terrible events. It was we Germans who started World War II by attacking our Polish neighbours. Poland, which after World War I had – thanks not least to American influence – finally regained its sovereignty, became the first victim of this new war.

And in the end the city had to endure a whole series of expulsions. People were compelled by fear and under duress to abandon their homes and former lives.

From the story of Fritz Stern and his family we know what a terrible fate awaited the Jewish population. Subsequently, as a consequence of the war we Germans had unleashed, a great many of its German inhabitants were forced to leave. Then large numbers of Poles from the east and south-east of their country arrived in the hope of finding and making a new home here.

All this created a new situation, a situation the various neighbours needed to adjust to as a matter of urgency. At first this seemed well-nigh impossible. We Germans had to come to terms with our new position on the map, including Poland's new western border – and to understand what had led to this situation. For no side was this by any means an easy task.

We Germans received crucial support in this endeavour from Catholic church leaders. And here I'm thinking above all of Bishop and Cardinal Bolesław Kominek, whose monument I had the privilege of visiting today. At the end of the Second Vatican Council the Polish bishops reached out to their German colleagues in a letter ending with the words "We forgive and we ask for forgiveness". This gesture was a truly courageous act intended to overcome barriers and it greatly helped us in Germany to evolve step by step towards a sensible, peaceful *modus vivendi* with our Polish neighbours. In this letter, I may add, Bishop Kominek included Germany's Protestant Christians in his greetings!



The speech of Richard von Weizsäcker

To this positive development in German-Polish relations Wrocław, one of Poland's biggest and most important cities, has made a seminal contribution. Not only its remarkable history and fine buildings but also its rich cultural life and economic achievements have made Wrocław once again a city with admirers all over the world, a city which Germans today are delighted to visit and find themselves welcome. For both sides are eager to learn from one another and so contribute jointly to greater understanding among the nations of Europe.

Following the forced exodus of many former inhabitants, Wrocław is today also a remarkably youthful city. The Poles' talent for cultural renaissance in cities scarred by war and the passage of time is truly amazing and unmatched anywhere in Europe. And the proof is here,



Fritz Stern, Richard von Weizsäcker and Rafał Dutkiewicz (from the left)

this city whose face is above all that of the young generation. Anyone walking its streets is bound to be struck by the number of students – well over one hundred thousand in all – whose energy and lively minds are everywhere in evidence.



Richard von Weizsäcker with Rafal Dutkiewicz

That is the reason why nowadays, too, Wrocław-Breslau is a uniquely important centre in our new shared European neighbourhood.

As we all know, it was of course the Russians, the Prussians and the Austrians who in the 18th century robbed the Poles of their

sovereignty. Yet as close neighbours we also had plenty of occasion over the years to admire Poland's hard-won struggle for national unity and freedom. Perhaps not many of today's young students are aware what a key milestone the so-called Hambach Festival was, a gathering held in south-west Germany in 1832. It attracted a host of young people from Poland, Prussia and other German princely states as well as from France and other countries in Europe. What brought them there was the desire to discuss together how best to work for national unity and freedom in their respective homelands. Even then, in 1832, the banners they carried proclaimed "Europe" as their great goal. That is what unites us today.

Here in Wrocław we have good reason to reflect on the fact that, despite all the appalling things this neighbourhood of ours has experienced, the aspirations of the new upcoming generations have always drawn us together and kept us close. Hardly anyone today either here or in Germany has heard of the small town of Hambach. For me it has always been a symbol of hope that things can change for the better. Despite all the dark chapters in our shared history, we now for the first time live truly at peace as neighbours in a Europe that is our common home. And it is this lively, historic, culturally rich and economically thriving city of Wrocław-Breslau that opens our eyes to just how close we are and what responsibility we share for our common future. Universities are the right place to reflect on such matters and draw the necessary conclusions for the years that lie ahead. That I am privileged here, at this University, to be part of that endeavour I see as a high honour and an immensely important task, for which I offer my heartfelt thanks.

"The Neighbourhood Obliges. Poland and Germany in the Face of Globalization Challenges"

Record of the Discussion Panel with Professor Fritz Stern and President Richard von Weizsäcker, Moderated by Janusz Reiter, Former Polish Ambassador to the GFR and the US¹

Janusz Reiter: *The "neighbourhood" of Poland and Germany depends on what will be done with the gift "Europe" and in what direction Europe will go. Is the project "European Union" irreversible? And if so, what has to be done to secure the irreversibility of this project?*

President Richard von Weizsäcker remembers: [...] Germany was the last nation formed on the European ground and it was a late emerging nation. For all the neighbours of Germany, the formation of this new nation was the origin of a new great problem. On the eve of the 20th century, Germany steered towards World War I and then towards the terrible German war of aggression, World War II. After the end of World War II, a process of reconciliation, first between the USA and West Germany, and then between France and West Germany, took place that was necessary and helpful for peace in the world.

Afterwards, step by step, we were approaching the question of the eastern direction seen from the German perspective. "Later on, the former possibility turned into reality, namely Poland became a member of the European Union. It was one of the most important steps leading to the expansion of the European Union." [...] And today we have common tasks facing us. Finally, at one point, we began to look for ways to

¹ The German version of the text was published in *Akademisches Kaleidoskop*, 1 (33), 2011.

cooperate between Poland, France, and Germany within the so-called Weimar Triangle. Nowadays, there is talk about parliamentary discussions where Polish, German, and Russian politicians can meet to speak about looking towards the East being now just as important as looking towards the West was at the end of World War II." In the eastern direction, there was nothing more important for Europe than Poland becoming a member of the European Union. In the summer of this year, Poland is going to take over the presidency of the Council of the European Union. "Poland is going to tackle it [. . .] with good confidence. For us as neighbours, the point is to assist Poland not only at strengthening the European cooperation but also at updating and expanding it towards the East and at giving Europe a strong voice in the globalized world through it."

Prof. Fritz Stern holds the view that the project "European Union" is irreversible. What Europe managed after 1945 and especially after 1989, is a historic achievement of world significance supported by the civil society in Europe. For the world today, it is very important that this Europe prevails and becomes more stable. [. . .] Earlier, there was already a Europe - this was a cultural Europe that had already been in existence for a long time. What has been created at last, is a political Europe, a political Union." Without help, it could not be achieved. At the beginning, at the deciding moment for Europe, the USA was helpful. "Today it is a task for the younger generations to strengthen this Europe and to remember how many victims were needed before this Europe could be established. It must never be forgotten that these victims started falling in World War I and then millions of people fell victim during World War II.

The country that suffered most of all, accomplished the most." The experiences gained from these two World Wars sent us looking for other political solutions.

Janusz Reiter: *Is there a problem of trust in Europe? At the beginning of the "European project" a consensus was necessary. Does Europe need such a consensus today? Is the American presence necessary?*

Prof. Fritz Stern: "The American presence in the sense of support for the common Europe was much bigger in the forties and fifties during the last century. Now it is mostly up to the Europeans alone. The science of history can prove to be a big aid provided that false history is no longer taught to the younger generations. It is much more important to help young people understand the facts; to enable them to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of their own countries and to be able to criticize themselves."

Richard von Weizsäcker thinks that there is a shortage of performance. Where Europe should actively intervene and help with regard to issues occurring all over the world, it is not capable enough of acting right now [...] "The times when we must check each other are over." Previously, Germany did not have a peaceful cooperation with any of its neighbours. For all of its neighbours, it was a problem that Germany, a late coming nation, had been established. "But it is over and we live in peace." But peace alone is not enough. The Europeans should aim at carrying out supportive programs, among others. Poland drew closer through its EU Presidency [...] "Assuming the challenges facing Poland and the challenges we are going to present to Poland, we as member states should help Poland in Brussels and towards Brussels more than it occurs currently."

Janusz Reiter: *Is there a problem with trust towards Russia? Is a settlement between Poland and Germany concerning the presence of Russia in Europe possible and imaginable?*

For **Richard von Weizsäcker**, it is imaginable. For example, there was talk of a Kaliningrad Triangle instead of the Weimar Triangle.

So that would be a "place where Russians, Poles and Germans could communicate with each other." Russia has an internal order contradicting the order in Poland and Germany. The internal development in Russia is also not right at all for its own country. Their economical development became somewhat weaker compared to earlier periods. But, of course, it must not be under-estimated either. "In this respect, the possibilities of cooperation are simpler again, but this is based directly on the experiences emerging from Poland." The progress in this regard can be made. Besides, the Russians must learn to manage things

reasonably. [...] Gorbachev began the reforms 15 years ago. He tried to reach an agreement with the Americans to cease the further arming of America against Russia and vice versa in the future. The point was to come closer to each other in a cooperative way, in regards to the world's resources and to trade routes, which was the case in Russia in its earlier history, when it was visibly stronger than today.

Prof. Fritz Stern asked to consider that it has not been easy at all to build up a democracy. It has taken a long time for Europeans (England, France and others), tens or hundreds of years, to build up a democracy. For this, a fair justice system is needed and an understanding of democracy, as well. Russia is weaker today, but it needs help as well as an example showing it how really efficient democracies come into being and in what circumstances a civil society can develop.

Janusz Reiter: *Is the democratization or modernization of Russia a basis for further discussion leading to a democratic Russia in the future?*

Richard von Weizsäcker's point of view is that Russia lacks rule of law, a satisfactory human rights situation and a free press. Russia also has other new problems. Its population, mainly male, is declining rapidly. The average age continues to decline even further. "I find it very good if Poland considers itself a country in the middle of Europe rather than an Eastern country in regards to the European development. Moreover, sustainable assistance for Poland towards this is very much in the interest of us, Germans, for example."

Prof. Fritz Stern thinks that Poland understands from its own history what crimes against human rights, the suppression of a free press, and political criminality, being now existent in Russia, mean. "We are thankful that the relations are better, but, on the other hand, we must share the European opinion that some human rights are necessary for a genuine cooperation."

Janusz Reiter: *Can Poland's experiences with the Solidarity Trade Union be used for the freedom movements in North Africa? What is expected from the Polish EU Presidency?*



Richard von Weizäcker with Jan Harasimowicz, Janusz Reiter (behind)

Richard von Weizsäcker: [...] "I think, that the idea that we should react on these movements in North Africa - if we choose to call them freedom movements - by military attacks, makes no sense and is not realistic. Europe has no basis and no instruments at all for dealing with the poor conditions relating to a security policy. I consider it especially important, regardless of the question of how strong or bad Russia is, or whether we put our trust in social movements in North Africa, or not yet. We must be able to act. Able to act at least to a minimum extent and also in the sense of relating to a security policy. And if the Polish presidency has requirements for the European Union heading in this direction, it is good, of course."

Prof. Fritz Stern criticizes that Europe's inability to act has been a rather big problem for a long time. More care needs to be given to its relations with the USA. If anything should be done, then it should only be done together with the USA. Europe is economically efficient, particularly Germany. All these countries in North Africa should be helped

in various ways by private or semi-private organizations to build up just forms of government and to defend them.

Richard von Weizsäcker thinks that Egypt has played, for the few last years, a very significant role relating to what occurred in the Near or Middle East. It continues to carry great weight and significance for the United Nations concerning the war dangers in the Near and Middle East, and particularly relating to Israel and the Palestinians. A declaration was issued in which, a not sharp but nevertheless noticeable appeal to Jerusalem could be found, encouraging Israel to try harder to reach a settlement with the Palestinians and beyond that with the whole Near and Middle East.

Egypt plays a significant role in every respect, but the rioting there is causing poor conditions for the people that should be remedied right away. "Then we can move a little forward with such problems as the behavior of Iran. Of course, there are still big fears in Israel. But Israel can contribute to it a little, too. I venture to say that, with the help of the United States of America too, and without the total shielding of America against making any requirement towards Israel. With consequences, which from our point of view, could influence such an important and big country as Egypt [...] We speak about difficult questions a little inexpertly, but I think it is alright that these problems are treated under the keyword of "Egypt". It is a key country which is significant not only because of its own population, for which a reasonable supply of goods is necessary on the one hand and, on the other, it is really needed for its international role. Sometimes we must whisper this in each other's ears also in relations between Europe and America [...]"

The discussions showed that Poles, Germans and Americans are aware of their responsibility for the world events according to the motto: *The more you have, the more you have to give.*"

“Five Germanys and Many Americas”

Record of the Lecture and the Book Presentation

“Five Germanys I Have Known” of Professor Fritz Stern
at the University of Lower Silesia

Hana Červinková:

Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Guests, It is with great pleasure that I welcome you at the University of Lower Silesia for a very special event – the lecture by and discussion with the outstanding historian and a remarkable person and citizen – Professor Fritz Stern. Even though this is not Professor Stern’s first visit to his native city of Breslau since it has become Polish Wrocław, this time the occasion at which he honored us with his presence is very special for two reasons. Tomorrow, the first professorship established by the Mayor of Wrocław and the German ZEIT-Foundation in the name of Professor Stern will be awarded to the former German President - Richard von Weizsäcker. Most importantly for us today, however, Professor Stern’s visit is an occasion to discuss his book, recently published in the Polish language, entitled, *Five Germanys I Have Known* – a brilliant personal account of the historical changes that Professor Stern has witnessed in his lifetime, written by an outstanding historian and a great writer. The book begins in German Wrocław and is an important testimony to the history of our city before any of us knew it, but also a powerful witness to the most tragic events in 20th century Europe. As Fritz Stern shows, these historical tragedies were the results of concrete political events and decisions and were by no means historically inevitable. The book, which focuses on German history – taking us on an exciting personal journey from the pre-First World War Breslau through the Weimar Republic, the Third Reich, postwar divided West and East Germany to the reunited Germany of today – provides us with an immensely wise lesson and warning about the danger of acquiescence to political totality.

It is a book about political responsibility of each citizen, about the need to never stop creating liberal democracy worldwide.

Before I ask Ambassador Janusz Reiter to introduce Professor Fritz Stern, I would like to thank the Mayor of Wrocław, Rafał Dutkiewicz, PhD for the establishment of the Fritz Stern Professorship of the City Wrocław, which symbolizes his commitment to the strengthening of contemporary Wrocław's connection to the best of the City's pre-war heritage – its remarkable scientific and academic tradition as well as multicultural legacy. I would like to thank the Mayor for the establishment of this and other programmes that build the city's intellectual milieu by supporting local public and private institutions of higher learning. I would also like to thank two foundations that helped fund and organize this event – the German ZEIT-Foundation and Bente Kahan Foundation for Jewish Culture and Education. I would like to give my deepest thanks to Professor Robert Kwaśnica, the President of the University of Lower Silesia, for co-sponsoring this event and for his steadfast dedication to the building of an independent university committed to the nurturing of academic excellence and intellectual freedom. While he cannot be with us today in person, he is with us in spirit and he is represented here by academic teachers, students and university administrators. And last but not least, I would like to thank Professor Stern for coming to Wrocław and honoring us with his presence and for bringing his family – his wife Elisabeth Sifton and his son Fred Stern with his wife Lois Stern. Thank you for being with us.

Mr Ambassador, you were so instrumental in bringing Professor Stern to Wrocław; I would like to ask you to introduce Professor Stern. Thank you.

Ambassador Janusz Reiter: Thank you very much. I advised some of the American friends to take the headsets, because if they didn't then the majority would not understand me, since I planned to speak in Polish. But I see that everybody understands me when I speak in English, so I have a dilemma. But I think I will speak in English.

In any language, the message will be the same. It is really a great privilege to welcome Fritz Stern here in Wrocław. This is, I may say, our third trip to Wrocław. The first was in 1999 with Elisabeth. And Fred was the part of the next trip when Fritz received a degree from the Univer-

sity. And now it's the third trip and I'm really very privileged to introduce Fritz Stern, who is a great historian, who is a great intellectual, and who is also a great friend of this country, and whose friendship means so much to me personally. I would like to make just two points that I believe are important to understand Fritz, his importance to Europe and to the US. First, I would like to say a little about Fritz in the US. Fritz is someone who co-shaped the thinking of the Americans about Europe after the Second World War. Let me first say that I remember the world meeting, the discussion I was hosting at the Polish Embassy seven years ago, with Fritz and with Zbigniew Brzeziński, who is, of course, well known in this country. And this debate about the US and Europe was one of the most exciting and most moving events I have ever attended and certainly I hosted in Washington. It was moving because there were two great Europeans from Germany and from Poland sharing their experience and sharing their vision of the Euro-Atlantic community. And speaking not just as intellectuals, not just as writers, but speaking out of the emotion of people who left their *Heimat* in Europe. Well, of course, Zbigniew Brzeziński is part of Poland and Fritz is committed to Germany. But imagine how different their lives would have been had there never been the Second World War. I think it's hard to overestimate the influence of those two and, of course, other Europeans from that generation, but those two especially, on the American thinking about Europe.

"The US is a European power." This is how Richard Holbrooke, the great American diplomat, who passed away a few weeks ago, and who was a dear friend of Fritz's, began his essay for Foreign Affairs. One could wonder whether an American policy-maker could begin an essay on Europe and the US today, in the same way, but the US has been a European power for decades. And we believe now, looking back at that time, that it was only logical that the US belonged to Europe, that the US had obvious reasons to stay in Europe, but this is not exactly the famous 'retrospective determinism,' that is wrong. It was a sum of decisions that were made by people and these decisions were based on the certain knowledge and on the certain understanding of European history, and also on the certain understanding of the possible European future. And Fritz was one of those who largely contributed to this success story of the Euro-Atlantic community, who for the American

presence in Europe was indispensable. And the second point: Fritz Stern in Germany. Everybody who knows Germany, knows that Fritz Stern is, as people would say today, an icon in Germany. Recently, just a few weeks ago, when Fritz was in Warsaw and he was my guest at the conference that we made in Warsaw and the Mayor was there. When the German President Wolf, when I introduced him to Fritz Stern, well, the reaction clearly said “This is the man I wanted to meet here.” Then he spent most of his time speaking with Fritz Stern. Fritz was one of those who provided an interpretation of German history that was critical, but that was fair, because it was not deterministic. It didn’t say, what happened the Third Reich was the product of the German spirit. No, it was the result of the sum of decisions that were made by people and that could have been avoided. And the message of that was, of course, that tragedies can be avoided. So, you cannot undo the past, but you can shape the future. And that was the right message, and it was so important to Germans. I will never forget what Fritz said about the German unification; he called that ‘a new chance to Germany.’ That has been a very generous attitude towards this country.

And finally, I’m really happy to say that Fritz is a great friend of our country and of some people in our country and we are very happy to have you here, Fritz. Now the floor is yours.

Professor Fritz Stern: Mr. Mayor, my profound thanks for your hospitality, for the important part, the essential part that you have played in making this visiting professorship possible. You can well imagine how much it touches me and how much, and here I speak on behalf of my family, how much we’ve enjoyed meeting you and enjoyed your hospitality. Let me thank at this point the indefatigable Hana Červinková who, it seems to me, represents what I think is terribly important – the academic *engagé*, that is to say, an academic, who at the same time lives in the public sphere. And finally, dear Janusz, my thanks to you. I had the good fortune to meet Ambassador Reiter in Bonn, when he was made Ambassador of a free Poland to a Germany that was officially unified. The capital was still in Bonn. I remember the café where he and I first met. From my point of view that was an extraordinarily lucky event, and a conversation that never stopped and I hope will continue for the very, very long time. I would simply say what he’s done to help



The speech of Fritz Stern at the University of Lower Silesia

German-Polish relations, what he has done to help American-Polish relations is extraordinary. He's simply the star of contemporary diplomacy. I also take the opportunity to thank Ewa Łabno-Falęcka, who I thought might be here, but I don't see her. She has been co-responsible for the Polish translation of the book, for which I'm very, very happy.

Let me share with you a moment that I had this afternoon. We had a programme this morning, and then Hana arranged for us to have a few minutes for ourselves. During those few minutes for ourselves, I suddenly had a thought, which I had not had in that form before, which is very simply: I have mixed bright and deeply dark memories of Breslau; I have nothing but glorious memories of Wrocław. Call it by all that you've done and by the regeneration politically, moral, and every other way of this great city. So that for me, I think the division between Breslau, as a both, obviously, terribly important, but shadowed by darkness, coexists with the very happy memory, with a very happy sense of a flourishing city called Wrocław. So, I wanted to say that.

I've been asked why this book? I would readily acknowledge that historians aren't supposed to write about themselves. I tried to hide it

to some extent, and genuinely hide it. That is to say I wasn't interested in primarily in telling the story of my life. But that I had happened to live through extraordinary historic times, that I was conscious of. If one way of telling what historic times one lives through is through the personal story – and we all have such personal stories, everyone of you – then that is a real temptation to do. I do tell, as indicated, the “Five Germanys” refer to Weimar, which I saw as a child to National Socialism; then the inter chapters, one is called “The Terror from Afar” between left-Breslau in 1938, and the end of the Second World War; a chapter on the Federal Republic; a chapter on what I called “The Forgotten Germany”, which is the GDR, which for a long time was your somewhat more difficult and not particularly beloved neighbour; and then the unified Germany.

The Weimar years and the National Socialist years, that is to say my childhood and young adolescence. I was 12 when I left Breslau. Hitler-encapsulated-Hitler-jubilated-Germany- Breslau gave me sort of my basic political education. I'm not sure that I've learned few things philosophically thereafter. So the basic attitude of how important history can be to the individual life, to each of our lives and touches us, and how, in the particular case that I'm referring to, how evil can be institutionalized and the most horrible things can happen. As Ambassador Reiter was kind enough to say, the point of the book, in a sense, and the point of my interpretation of Nationalism Socialism, is that it was neither inevitable, nor coincidental. That is to say, it could well have been prevented, is my view. But the forces making for it were obviously very, very strong, very deeply rooted, and one has to understand that. But the deepest political lesson that I've learned is the citizen's responsibility. I think the Romans talked about citizenship. For the French the *citoyenne* was terribly important. But it is not only terribly important, it is not only the thing that gives us great privileges, it is also an obligation, it's a duty in a certain sense, a moral duty. In that sense, that's one of the lessons I learned, one of the treasures I keep is a sense of being a citizen, of realizing in other peoples' lives, how important citizenship is, and the exercise thereof.

Let me just briefly say a few words about the early years. The book actually starts well before Weimar. My parents left with boxes of mostly of letters, but also documents. My guess is that out of their own feel-

ings of grief of having to leave their home, they took the boxes, but never looked at them again. When I decided that I would write the book, I opened the boxes, I read every letter very carefully and tried to give the life the letters seemed to suggest a meaning or a context and understand the spirit in which these letters were written. Recreate, thereby, a milieu. The milieu was of my immediate ancestors, that is to say, four generations at least that that I know well about, and they happened to all be from Breslau. Four generations, without exception, of physicians, of medical people, of doctors. Towards the end, I think, beginning in the third generation, they were all associated with the university. It was, in many ways, a thriving milieu, with certain difficulties. Obviously, it was a remarkable piece of history, which I could illustrate through some of the letters, some of the strictest notions that they had about life: that life was meant to be serious, that life was meant to be lived in a certain relatively hard way intermixed with vacations, intermixed with pleasures and so on, but a quiet sense of discipline. You might say that was German. I don't think so, I think it was European. As my whole outlook of that world, of the world before 1914, was that it was a Europe, there was a Europe. It may have been slightly class-bound; this may be true of the so-called upper classes and the bourgeoisie than of other classes. Though with International Socialism that probably, wasn't that much the case. It was a European world that understood each other to some extent, and all that was destroyed by the First World War.

I'm not going to bore you by telling you about all my distinguished ancestors, distinguished I say that with a certain comic relief. But I think they were, from what I could gather, worthy doctors, who terribly much cared about their patients. As a matter of fact, in passing, if I may also say I have a feeling that medicine has made huge progress possibly at the expense of the same kind of human caring that had once existed. But it is a wonderful profession. You may well wonder why I didn't, with four generations before me, including father and uncle, why I didn't do it. I started in American college as a, what we called, pre-medical student. I was blessed by being totally ignorant of physics and chemistry and incapable of learning it, and obviously consumed by historical and literary interests. So I didn't become a doctor. Again, Janusz mentioned, if there hadn't been a Second World War, Zbig and I would have grown



Fritz Stern with Jan Harasimowicz, and Krzysztof Ruchniewicz with Marek Bojarski (behind)

up as it were in neighbouring countries. I'm not sure how we would have gotten on or whether he would have even taken notice of me. I would have become a doctor in Breslau and life would have been relatively dull.

I do mention one ancestor of whom I am particularly proud and that is a man named Dr. Ash, who in the Revolutions of 1848, played a not insignificant role in the city on the side of liberal progressive elements and to his, whatever I am to him, to his great-grandson's great pleasure – if to his discomfort – he was arrested for a year. He was imprisoned for a year not only for his democratic activities, but for his pro-Polish statements. So, I thought I have a very good ancestor in him. The rest, as I say, was family growing up tightly together where the ethos of work, and the ethos particularly of the doctor and the scientist, which was terribly, terribly important. Was there anti-Semitism in that period? Yes, as there was all over Europe. I think the real break came with that horrible event, the First World War, that almost meant the end of Europe, so heavy were the losses, so heavy the grief and the enmity that was created out of the First World War. Not to deny that there were certain, so to speak, good things that came out the First World War, including the resurrection of Poland as a republic, the resurrection as an independent land. Yes, those were the results of the First World War. But Poland was condemned as an independent land, to be geographically bound by two rather difficult neighbours, on the one hand. And to live in a Europe that was so weakened by the war that it could not find the kind of peace that it needed.

A word just about anti-Semitism. It is an ancient unpleasantness, an ancient hatred of varying degrees, expressed in many, many different ways in different countries. Obviously, this is not the subject I mean to discuss. Just simply to say, before 1914 anti-Semitism existed in Germany. It was difficult for a Jew to get certain positions, or impossible to get certain positions. In a curious sort of way in France it was possible for a Jew to become a major in the General Staff of the French Army, named Dreyfuss, and whether connected with that fact or not, I will simply say that French anti-Semitism before 1914 was much greater than German anti-Semitism. So it is hard to project. But it existed. My ancestors suffered from it in some ways. Some of them converted early to Christianity, a subject laden with difficulty, and laden with problematics.

The real thing I want to discuss, for a moment at least, is the end of Weimar. The Weimar Republic was an attempt at the same time as Poland was recreated in 1918-1919. So there was a pseudo-revolution in Germany in 1918 at the end of the First World War. Indeed, that end of the First World War, after that horror that decimated Europe in many ways and threw it into grief, quite apart from the economic disarray, the political weakness. But the end of the German defeat in 1918 was very curtly disguised. I want to mention that as one of the lessons I think to be learned from German history: the lesson of the end of the First World War. Those elements in Germany that were in power, beginning with the Kaiser, with the Emperor, and going into the military, and going into conservative political elements, made a point of saying: "No, no we were not defeated. We were stabbed in the back by Socialists and Jews." It was four and a half years of fighting, and when the fighting ended German troops were still in foreign lands, occupying foreign lands. So that in that sense one could try to disguise the defeat, which incidentally explains why in the Second World War the allies fought to the very bitter end until they liberated Berlin itself and made it very clear to the Germans that they were defeated. The point I'm trying to make is the notion that in the defeat of 1918-1919 – and no country takes defeat well – but the defeat that was immediately introduced as a lie that many, many people believed, namely, that the German Army was not militarily defeated, but politically from the back, assaulted and brought down, played a major role. I mention this, both because it is essential to understand that the Weimar Republic – the attempt to make out of an imperial Germany a democratic country – was burdened from the beginning by a wide-spread belief that many Germans were responsible for the defeat of 1918. And the defeat of 1918, which ended as you well know in the Treaty of Versailles, was something that Germans couldn't accept. An English historian rightly said: "If the treaty had been easier, if the treaty had been less harsh, the Germans couldn't have accepted it, because what they could not accept was the defeat." Be that as it may, it was a noble attempt to create a democracy in Germany on the ruins of a lost war. When you look back upon the history of the Weimar, however difficult it was, I think one ought to pay a certain amount of respect to the people who fought for it, who stood for it, who tried to govern it against ever-growing antagonisms ultimately

both from the left and from the right. Obviously, from the right as you well know, in the end, from the Nazis and in the end from the left, or even intermittently before, by the Communists. That is the other point I want to make, because it has a certain relevance to our world today: Democracy is not something easy to achieve. You can create the institutions, you can have electoral systems, but to have a democratic spirit that sustains it, takes a society, takes a democratic society, or takes a democratic spirit. Germany was from that point too ill-prepared for that democratic spirit and so there are many other things to be added to it. And all of this, unfortunately, I have to say, perhaps it is less true than it was 20-30 years ago, but I kept saying: the political vocabulary of catastrophe is German. We learn certain German words and use German words in almost all languages to describe catastrophe or terror, whether it's Gestapo, or whether it's *Gleichschaltung*, whether it's Weimar itself. Simply a description when things go bad, the danger is: "is this another example of Weimar or a democracy going down?" And democracy is a very, very fragile growth that has to be deeply protected.

So, it finally failed. I once wrote an essay called "Death in Weimar," which was a bit of a steal from a better known title, in which I said in the end, at a certain point, Weimar died. There is no death certificate, but there is no date that we can give it. We can give it the date for the rise of Hitler, for the appointment of Hitler as Chancellor, which I remember and thereby I move on to the next chapter in the book, that as a school-boy not yet seven, I think three days short of being seven-years-old, I was hawked at the corner, the newspaper announcing that Hitler was made Chancellor of the German Reich. I boarded home, knowing that it was bad news. I had grown up, with what were examples of why the Nazis were a formidable threat and why they exuded it, incidentally from the very beginning. And I well remember the truncheons, which it was said they often took off to beat their opponents and so on, the uniforms. One didn't have to be a political prognosticator, or even particularly politically wise to understand that these were potential murderers, however idealistic they might be, I'm exaggerating, I take it back, they weren't all, obviously. But they had done their murders before they came to power. But such was a despair, which the economic depression of the late 1920's and early 1930's deeply accentuated in Germany.

There were two countries that were particularly hard hit – harder hit than any other countries – by the economic collapse of capitalism: one was Germany and the other was the United States. The German answer was Hitler, and the American answer was Franklin Roosevelt. Clearly, two more different morals of how to emerge from such a desperate crisis could hardly be imagined. But that was, as it were, the immediate conditions under which Nazism arose.

There is a great deal about National Socialism. The libraries are full, you would all, most of you would know the fact that thousands, tens of thousands of books have been written on the subject and I would submit to you, fully understand we still can't. There is something that remains incomprehensible about the ease with which they consolidated their power, the ease with which their terror was accepted, the ease with which Germans renounced, so to speak, not in any institutional or literal form, but in a deeper sense, forgot about the fact that their citizenship was being taken away from them in a totalitarian rule. That week after Hitler came to power and in front of most German universities to the pleasure of students and professors, some professors, books were burned of literature that the Nazis condemned or Jewish books, books by Jewish authors, and so on. All this, as has been said so often, and I am only going to repeat it very, very quickly. All this in the country that prided itself on its culture, that prided itself on the treasure of *Wissenschaft*, of science, learning, *Bildung*. And yet there was something else that Hitler and his people, with, I must say, uncanny psychological skill, could mobilize and thereby, to their own surprise, win over a country within six months or nine months. Let that be a lesson: the ease. Every country has its weaknesses, and every country going through unprecedented crisis can show up unpleasant and indeed terrifying circumstances. So, National Socialism began with the persecution, which I myself heard about and once or twice saw, of political enemies. If the political enemies happened to be Jews, they were particularly hardly hit, but the first attempt, the first concentration camps that were publicly erected, were for political opponents, that is to say, for Social Democrats, for Communists, for Catholics, who were politically organized in a democratic way and so on. At the same time, this law and order, as an American phrase has it, that is to say a certain amount of stability on the streets, was maintained. There were no

more battles on the street as there had been before, because for that the instrumentalities of the state were far too strong and they were readily used in a terrifying way. Let me put it this way, the more pleasant older picture of National Socialism, which lasted exactly 12 years, and how the world could have been changed, traumatized in 12 years, and altered, unmistakably, in many ways, in every corner of the world, is still also an astounding fact that in 12 years so much can happen. But I think even the Nazi development, even the full evolution of National Socialism policy, both to political opponents, to Jews, and finally then to so-called foreign enemies, of which Poland was the first, that to some extent it was predictable that Germany would go to war. The whole aim of the Hitler movement was a revision of Versailles, achieved by force. And undoubtedly, European diplomacy and European politics could have prevented much of that. It didn't. And history happened, as is familiar to you. The cost of passivity, the cost to the Germans in particular, either to be enthralled – and the Nazis it has to be said, were very clever, as right-wing or left-wing elements very often are. I think they did have a particular cunning for psychological appeal, and for psychological subversion, but it is not just the terror that explains Hitler, it is more important also to know, that it was terror and jubilation, terror and consent, which changed with the war, but certainly for the first six or seven years it was a regime that was overwhelmingly supported. And if one knew of things that one didn't support, one said: "Well the Fuhrer couldn't have known about this. This was done in his absence." Excuses were made.

Let me simply say that Breslau, from which as I talk, I feel an enormous distance in a happy sort of way; it is no longer my city – it doesn't exist. But Breslau was a hotbed of National Socialism, as a city, as I investigated, where a higher percentage of people voted for the Nazis – 44 percent – than any other city. That has its reasons – two could be explained. But the point is, time doesn't allow for an historical lesson; I don't want to go into an explanation of why Breslau in particular was so strongly Nazi, but it was. I grew up there and saw even before Hitler had come to power the violence that was used against political opponents; and myself obviously felt the discriminations. I think it's fair to say that before Hitler came to power that I didn't know I was Jewish; I think I would have learned very quickly thereafter even without Hitler.

But it was Hitler, who made it very clear to me that by his declaration, by his way of thinking that the fact that one was Christian made no difference if your so-called racial origin was non-Aryan. So, I grew up in a highly hostile, terrifying regime with a negative identity, that is to say, with an identity of being a non-something. But obviously in that situation one feels enormous loyalty to the major group to which you once belonged, with which you are being persecuted. And therefore my own loyalty obviously to the Jewish population, of which I felt I was one. The point I want to make again: it is the passivity of people that I remember with particular horror. That is to say the acceptance of so many things, under so many situations, that should never have been accepted. And shouldn't have been accepted at a time when resistance to the regime would not have meant martyrdom. You cannot expect people to be martyrs. There are martyrs in history, but they are few and often do it because as they themselves have said: "There is nothing else to do. We had to do what we did to help other people." But you certainly cannot expect it of people. Germans surrendered rights and traditions, without immediate terror, without immediate threat to family. After a while, yes, it became harder and harder and only last July I was asked to give a speech in honor of those who tried to kill Hitler, however late, it was July 20, 1944. You might well argue, why not earlier? Actually, some of them tried earlier, it was the one group, a fairly large unlikely group of officers, for simple reasons that the officers had the one chance of being close to Hitler and of staging a coup, and of having a military presence the day after to keep the country together; and of politicians, I mean ex-politicians from the Weimar period; and of decent citizens, administrators, who joined in an attempt to overthrow Hitler, which failed and which brought the most horrible consequences not only upon those who tried to kill him, but upon the families as well.

In the historical museum that we saw this morning there was a picture, which I actually hadn't ever seen before, but in which I instantly recognized one person, who was a man named Hermann Lüdemann, who was a Governor of Lower Silesia, a social democrat, a man of great, great courage who was dragged through the streets of this city into the nearest concentration camp in a clown's costume. One of the things the Nazis were particularly good at, aside from murder, was humiliation before murder, or instead of murder even. I could give you individual

stories that I, because of my father being a physician having some of these people as friends and patients, grew up knowing about these things.

My parents had the good sense to start thinking about immigration in April of 1933, but it wasn't executed, so to speak, we didn't finally do it until September 1938. If I may tell one last story, so to speak, it was when a reserve officer of the German army whose wife was a patient of my father's came at nine o'clock at night, rang the bell, I opened the door. He said: "I have to see your father." And I knew this only could be somehow a most serious matter, because it had never happened before, so I made sure to stay up and find out what went on. The man simply said: "Look, I've always told you, you mustn't emigrate because my wife needs you, but since you say you are going to emigrate in the next few weeks I am here to tell you: emigrate at once because Hitler is going to invade Czechoslovakia, then there will be war and then you will be drafted into the army as doctor." That is to say, the decency on one hand, the illusion that the non-Aryan or Jewish doctor would be drafted was an absurdity, but it did actually hasten us. We did, my father and I, we left the next night. And I remember the tears in the railroad car from what then was Breslau to Berlin – it was the first time I was in a sleeping car – and I remember the tears of my father at leaving what had been his home, his ancestral home. In passing, he had served in the German army for four years with decoration and all that, but, much more importantly his whole bearing was German. So it was hard for him. For me, as a 12-year-old, I felt nothing but jubilation.

During the Nazi time, my family, very often men, used to take their vacation, always when they could, outside in neighbouring countries, whether it was Czechoslovakia, or Denmark, France, England, Holland. So, in America, to which we came and where life was indeed very, very different, very hard and very wonderful – I could go on in many wonderful stories about what it was like to come from a Hitler-occupied Germany to a free country, to the opposite, as it were, the United States. But as I say, I left with jubilation and identify for myself I think in my own heart and occasionally maybe publicly as an American of European descent. The fact that my vacations were in these foreign countries, even if they were only for two weeks at a time, where you could read newspapers, I mean in German, and I happened to have

been a so-called *groupie* of politics, but it was much more existential than that. I felt that somehow the rest of Europe spelled freedom. And felt, for a variety of reasons, I felt very European, and sometimes I say to myself “a European of *avant la lettre*.” Therefore I’m thrilled beyond my words to express it correctly today, about the progress of Europe since 1989, in particular, the genuine unification, the reconciliation of countries, to which Ambassador Reiter has contributed a great deal, to which I believe this institution is meant to contribute and to which I wish it all the best.

As you can tell, historians are long-winded anyway, and it is a long story to tell the experience of the building up of the Federal Republic, the building up of the German Democratic Republic, of a unified Germany. When I left Germany in 1938, I never expected to have any further relations with that country; with Europe, yes, always, but not necessarily with Germany. It turned out differently and the book tries to tell, partly through my own experiences, and partly what I know as a historian, how the Federal Republic grew up, how the German Democratic Republic, if it ever grew up, how it developed. And finally, how there was a unified Germany. But I do believe that there are lessons to be learned, and that there is the deepest affinity between history and literature. I used as an epigraph for my book the story from the ending of Albert Camus, who was a hero of the French resistance. I used what he wrote to say what I felt. And he says:

Dr. Rieux resolved to compile this chronicle (of the plague), so that he should not be one of those who hold their peace but should bear witness in favor of those plague-stricken people; so that some memorial of the injustice and outrage done them might endure; and to state quite simply what we learn in a time of pestilence: that there are more things to admire in men than to despise...He knew what those jubilant crowds did not know but could have learned from books: that the plague bacillus never dies or disappears for good; that it can lie dormant for years and years in furniture and linen-chests; that it bides its time in bedrooms, cellars, trunks, and bookshelves; and that perhaps the day would come when, for the bane and the enlightening of men, it would rouse up its rats again and send them forth to die in a happy city.

That danger of the bacillus remains with us, and it seems to me it remains our task to make sure that the rats don’t come back. Thank you very much.

Michał Matlak/Sylwester Zagulski

Account of the Ceremonial Awarding of the Fritz Stern Wrocław Professorship to Richard von Weizsäcker, Former President of the German Federal Republic

The visit of two doyens was related to honoring one of them – Richard von Weizsäcker, former president of the German Federal Republic, with an honorable professorship of Fritz Stern. This honorable mention was established 2009 by the President by the President of Wrocław and the Zeit-Foundation in a gesture towards honoring Professor Fritz Stern and his outstanding scientific work.

Both of them took part in a few celebrations in Wrocław, including two organized by the Willy Brandt Centre. The first was a meeting of both guests with the scholarship holders of the Fritz Stern Programme, doctoral students of the Willy Brandt Centre and students of the European Diplomacy. The meeting was held in a friendly atmosphere and

the guests were very curious of their younger interlocutors. The main topics discussed included, among other threads, attitude towards Wrocław, Polish-German relationships, and a challenge for both our nations of European integration.

The second meeting took place in the Aula Leopoldina. After the greeting of the honorable guests by Professor Marek Bojarski, the Rector of Wrocław University, the main point of Stern's and Weizsäcker's visit to Wrocław took place – the official awarding of the professorship to the former President of the GFR. Emotional songs performed by Bente Kahan completed the whole of the ceremony. The Foundation Bente Kahan was one of the co-organizers of the meeting.

Next an exciting debate “The Neighbourhood Obliges. Poland and Germany in the Face of Globalization Challenges” was held. It was mod-



Krzysztof Ruchniewicz with Richard von Weizsäcker, Rafał Dutkiewicz (in the middle)

erated by Janusz Reiter, former Polish Ambassador to GFR and the USA. The interlocutors focused mainly on problems related to the European integration – they wondered whether the process of integration was irreversible, discussed the role of Russia in Europe and its opportunity to undergo modernization and talked about new perspectives of transatlantic cooperation in the geopolitical situation, which is currently changing. The issues of the incoming Polish Presidency in the European Union and the effects of the events in Arabian countries were also raised.

Both debates were extremely interesting, which is not surprising in view of the life histories of both guests. Fritz Stern was born in Wrocław, from which he emigrated to the USA, where now he is Professor Emeritus of the Columbia University. He is also an author of numerous works



The debate at Willy Brandt Centre



A group picture, Fritz Stern with the team of CSNE and guests

on the history of Germany (including a biography *Five Germanys I Have Known*). Richard von Weizsäcker was the President of Germany in the years 1984-1994. Before that he had held the position of the mayor of Berlin and the chairman of the Assembly of the German Evangelical Association.

The meeting was organized by the City of Wrocław, Wrocław University, the Willy Brandt Centre for German and European Studies at Wrocław University, the University of Lower Silesia and the International Institute of Studies on Culture and Education at the University of Lower Silesia.

The undertaking was funded by the City of Wrocław and the ZEIT-Foundation Ebelin und Gerd Bucerius.

Programme

March 3, 2011 (Thursday)

- 5 p.m. „Five Germanys and Many Americas“, a lecture and a discussion with the participation of Professor Fritz Stern as well as the promotion of the book „Five Germanys I Have Known“

The meeting took place at the University of Lower Silesia at 55 Strzegomska Street. It was held in Polish and English. Organizers: the City of Wrocław, University of Lower Silesia and the Bente Kahan Foundation.

March 4, 2011 (Friday)

- 5 p.m. Awarding „The Fritz Stern Wrocław Professorship“ to Richard von Weizsäcker, the former President of the German Federal Republic and a panel discussion „The Neighbourhood obliges. Poland and Germany in the face of globalization challenges“ with the participation of Professor Fritz Stern and Richard von Weizsäcker, the former President of the German Federal Republic, moderated by Ambassador Janusz Reiter.

The meeting was held in the Aula Leopoldina and translated into Polish and English.

Organizers: The City of Wrocław, the University of Wrocław, Willy Brand Centre for German and European Studies at the University of Wrocław and the Zeit-Foundation Ebelin and Gerd Bucerius.

Organizers of the event:

The City of Wrocław

The University of Wrocław

The Willy Brandt Center for German and European Studies at Wrocław University

University of Lower Silesia

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