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Welcome address

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Ladies and Gentlemen, good evening!

As an Advisory Board member of the International Erich Fromm Society and an Erich Fromm Prize jury member I am honored to extend a heartfelt welcome to all of you who are gathered here today. The enthusiastic response to both our laureate and this event has been downright overwhelming, a fact we are quite naturally very thrilled about!

Since we have the privilege of witnessing great minds here tonight with much more important things to say than I have, and more eloquent ways of doing so to boot, I will be brief. In addition to making a couple of introductory remarks, I would nevertheless like to welcome a few of our guests by name. Usually, the person giving the welcome address is prone to heighten the suspense. I have, however, decided to go straight to this evening's most important person without further ado.

Ladies and Gentlemen! We are honored and pleased to have the privilege of welcoming among us a most distinguished scholar and dedicated humanist: Professor Noam Chomsky. Dear Noam Chomsky, your analyses and arguments; the criticism you have been leveling at particular political and social conditions (more precisely especially in the U.S. and Israel) since the 1960s – a criticism steeped in the spirit of the Enlightenment –; your unwavering battle against manipulation and disinformation which is but a logical result of your deeply humanistic and de-

mocratic mode of thought and feeling – it has been all of these that more than anything else moved and exhilarated the jury since each element is completely in keeping with Erich Fromm's tradition of thought and action. We are delighted that you have accepted this prize and have joined us here today.

Another guest who has come to us especially from the U.S. is one of our two laudators, Professor Lawrence J. Friedman. You may be familiar with his outstanding biography of Erik Erikson, which unfortunately still has not been published in German. Since 2002, he has been working on an Erich Fromm biography which is about to be completed and which all of us are, of course, eagerly awaiting. Thank you very much, Professor Friedman, for undertaking this long trip, and for speaking to us in a few moments about our laureate, whom you also know very well. Welcome to Stuttgart, Professor Friedman!

There is a journalist who, we are confident, is still remembered around here, within the SWR's broadcasting area. Reporting for SWF 3 station from the West German capital of Bonn from 1982 to 1985, he has since been working as a very sought-after freelance journalist for a number of radio stations. His specialties are political reporting, commentaries, analyses, background reports, as well as very accurate satirical commentaries. I can, however, also recommend his books, as for instance *Der Hintern des Teufels* (*The Devil's Backside*) of 1985, on the life



and work of Ernst Bloch (Ernst Bloch having, after all, also been very close to Erich Fromm), or his 2009 *Tschüss, ihr da oben (Bye, Guys up There)*. In the latter he takes on political and economic leaders, the German government Agenda 2010 reform series, and the increase of poverty in Germany, going as far as to suggest the formation of a new extra-parliamentary opposition against capitalism, if I read him correctly. Hence, he is quite obviously the right man for tonight! A heartfelt welcome to Dr. Peter Zudeick!

Next, I would like to extend a very warm welcome to the Erich Fromm Prize laureate of 2007, Konstantin Wecker, and his partner Jo Barnikel, who, upon learning who is to be awarded this year's prize, immediately volunteered to provide this ceremony's musical backdrop – free of charge, by the way.

Furthermore, I would like to warmly greet among us – presumably not quite in keeping with the order demanded by protocol, for which I kindly ask to be forgiven – the American consul general from Erich Fromm's native Frankfurt-on-Main, Edward M. Alford. Mr. Consul General, you, as a representative of the United States of America, are to be commended for attending this event which honors one of your citizens who, while he does love his country, has for that very reason been an outspoken critic of American politics for decades. Not only does his criticism conform with his rights as guaranteed by the Constitution, but it is deeply rooted in his profound belief in America's republican and democratic virtues, which people all over the world continue to admire to this day. We extend our heartfelt welcome to you!

Dear guests, our democratically elected politicians do not always enjoy what one would term a terribly good reputation. Sometimes we, the public and the media, are too hard on them. Sometimes, though, they are not free of blame when they do not receive the respect that one would actually expect to be their due by dint of their position and their commitment, and possibly even their motives. At the same time, however, there are politicians one cannot but grant respect – irrespective of whether or not one shares their positions, whichever the case may be – because they stand out by virtue of their

courage, cogency, and humanist attitude. Tonight I would like to specifically welcome Hertha Däubler-Gmelin. (Please note that I expressly do not exclude the possibility that there may be other such individuals among us here tonight to whom the same applies!)

Please let me also very warmly welcome the astrophysicist and recipient of the Alternative Nobel Prize, Hans-Peter Dürr. Dear Professor Dürr, you, too, have not only attained great scientific achievements, but have never wavered in your commitment to strive for a better world. We are very glad that your attachment to the EFS proves so strong and that you have once again returned to your home town of Stuttgart to attend tonight's ceremony, where we are awarding this prize, on Erich Fromm's 110th anniversary, for the fifth time. In this context let me also extend a warm welcome to Mrs. Susanne Laugwitz-Aulbach, Head of the Cultural Office of the city of Stuttgart, and Pastor Helmut Müller of the Hospitalhof Stuttgart Educational Center, which this year is yet again one of the event's co-organizers.

I am also very pleased we have a very committed citizen of Stuttgart as our guest tonight, and would like to welcome Mr. Stefan von Holtzbrinck, publisher and Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Max Planck Society Excellence Foundation.

Ladies and Gentlemen, this prize is an endowment, but its patrons want to remain anonymous. However, they are here tonight, and I would thus – without naming names, and on behalf of all of us – like to express our heartfelt gratitude and most warmly welcome them in our midst. Furthermore I would like to greet the Fromm Society Board, which has turned out in full to mark the occasion, as well as the many other guests who have come here as students, friends, translators, publishers, and fellow activists of Noam Chomsky's from within Germany and from without.

Our prize recipients are selected by a jury of five. It is comprised of Dr. Norbert Copray, Dr. Rainer Funk, Prof. Dr. Heinz Glässgen, Dr. Rainer Otte, and myself. In conclusion, let me give you some of the reasons why we are awarding Noam Chomsky the Erich Fromm Prize.

In addition to practicing as a psychoanalyst,



Erich Fromm was an influential social critic known throughout the world. He held Noam Chomsky in high esteem and studied his work avidly. In one instance, for example, he notes that it was Chomsky who alerted him to a particular observation made by the French Enlightenment philosopher Du Marsais (it does indeed seem as though the 18th is your favorite century, dear Professor Chomsky!), namely that people tend to express their feelings and moods in linguistic terms denoting ownership (as, for instance, when they talk about “having a disease” rather than “being sick,” etc.). Fromm experts know that this hint was to inform not only his clinical work but also his classic *To Have or to Be?* Your criticism of B.F. Skinner’s influential school of behaviorism and the so-called cognitive turn in psychology associated with your work were completely in line with and enthusiastically hailed by Fromm, who was fervently opposed to behaviorism.

Dear Prof. Chomsky, you have been actively engaged in the social and political arenas for five decades. In 1964, you began to speak out against U.S. involvement in Vietnam. In 1969, you published *American Power and the New Mandarins*, a collection of essays on the Vietnam War that greatly influenced the American opposition movement. In addition to continuing to play a role of undisputed eminence in your academic field, i.e. linguistics, you have since become one of the most significant critics of U.S. foreign policy, of the political world order as it is today, and the power of the mass media.

You were among the first to criticize the prevalent ideology of „neoliberalism,“ which even the current financial crisis has not managed to root out, and have been fighting this ideology to this day. Suffice it to mention your book *Profit over People: Neoliberalism & Global Order* (1998) in this context.

You have worked to foster awareness for human rights and taken a stand against manipu-

lation and control; one case in point is your 2002 book *Media Control. The Spectacular Achievements of Propaganda*. With regard to your political writing you have been dubbed the “world’s most frequently quoted maverick” and are considered one of the thinkers who pioneered the criticism of globalization.

The Erich Fromm Prize constitution sets forth that the award is designed to honor persons “who, on the basis of their scholarly, scientific, social, sociopolitical, or journalistic commitment, have achieved or continue to achieve excellence in preserving or reviving humanistic thought and action in the tradition of Erich Fromm.” Yet, in honoring you for your “lifework inspired by humanism and dedicated to enlightenment in Erich Fromm’s tradition,” our phrasing does not even begin to reflect the extent to which you deserve this award or the scope of our gratitude and respect as we are presenting you with this humble prize.

Erich Fromm’s program, in a nutshell, spelled: „Reason and Love“. This synthesis is essential to Fromm’s concept of humanism. Using reason to free our thinking from traditional, rigid, and obsolete concepts, prejudices, and ideologies, thus making room for accepting newly acquired knowledge, makes you his brother in spirit. Your unwavering passion in advocating the truth as well as the elemental civil rights and liberties of all people make you Erich Fromm’s „brother at heart.“

Erich Fromm once wrote “that to recognize the truth is not primarily a matter of intelligence, but a matter of character“ (*Beyond the Chains of Illusions*, 1962a, GA IX, S. 155). Without wanting to anticipate the laudators, I consider this quotation especially suitable for honoring our laureate Noam Chomsky, whose outstanding intellect even his most ardent adversaries have never thought to call into question.

I wish us all an exhilarating evening!