



Official Greeting

by Helmut Schmidt, Chancellor of Germany, 1974 to 1982

Opening of Jacobs University (then called International University Bremen) on September 20, 2001

When Professor Lüst, Chairman of the Board of this university, invited me months ago for today's occasion, I had three good reasons to accept his invitation. First, there was my friendship with Reimar Lüst. Second, from the time of my youth, I have felt a special sympathy for the partner city of Bremen – in particular for this very town Grohn-Vegesack, where I spent two years in basic training: face-left, face-right, running, pushups. All pretty senseless, but I still cherish the memory of the Strandlust, the Havenhaus, and the brewer's agent Taake. Incidentally, does the "Grauer Esel" still exist?

Third, I've been convinced for more than a decade that Germany urgently needs universities such as the one being inaugurated in Bremen today: that is, institutions of higher learning that are modern, performance-oriented, independent of the reins of state bureaucracies, interdisciplinary, and, at the same time, international.

I would like to make a few remarks why this necessity exists. First, however, a word about the monstrous crimes against humanity in New York and Washington, which we just witnessed with horror and helplessness from afar.

I.

Those of us who remember the assistance received from the American Marshall Plan at the end of World War II and the destruction of Germany; those who recall the numerous instances of foreign aid in the battle against German terrorism; those who know of the United States' decisive support in the reunification of Germany; but also each of us who takes the belief in human rights and charity seriously: today we feel an undivided solidarity with the American nation.

The extent and the complexity of the simultaneous acts of terrorism against the lives of tens of thousands of Americans, and against the nerve and command centers of the state cannot have been accomplished without extensive organization, without a great number of suicide terrorists, without a great number of assistants and sympathizers, and without a lot of money. Therefore, it will probably not take long to uncover the masterminds of this mammoth crime.

Until then, it is necessary for the American as well as other governments to refrain from any false accusations. Rage, resentment, but also fear might lead to hysterical reactions in many places

around the world. Thus, it is, first and foremost, imperative for all governments and politicians to show common sense and balanced reason!

Second, all governments should brace themselves against future acts of terrorism and should provide for the safety of their citizens.

Third, and concurrently, an extensive search for clues and an investigation of the crime are imperative. In order to achieve this, the governments of all allies and friends of the United States have to pledge their all-encompassing assistance to the American government.

It is possible that we are dealing with a private group of terrorists – it could be several groups. It is also possible that a state or a government was an indirect accomplice, as we already experienced in the case of the terror of the RAF. It cannot be completely precluded that it might be a group of terrorists created and sanctioned by a state. In each of these possible scenarios, the necessary reactions of the United States and of other threatened countries will be different. Our country, too, is one of the states threatened by terrorism. In any case, lawful governments will have to honor their own constitutions and the Charter of the United Nations. Therefore, the united decision of the UN Security Council is a reasonable step.

If it turns out that the terrorists acted with the support of a state or a government, this might lead to war. Therefore, in particular, rational prudence is required.

In any event, the United States will defend itself with great force and vitality. And we Germans will stand by its side.

It could be – although it is not clear at all yet – that the attacks on the command and nerve centers of the United States are due to a religiously motivated terrorist organization. However, whatever organization is behind this must be brought to justice decisively, even if it takes time to find the truth. We will need patience – keen and intent patience.

But let us not turn to religious hatred! For far too long, since the Middle Ages in fact, our priests and pastors and bishops, our rabbis and mullahs, almost all religious and spiritual leaders have neglected to take a stand against religious hostility.

Religious fanatics exist in many religions. There are Christian terrorists – see Northern Ireland. There are Islamic and Jewish terrorists – see the Near East. We cannot exclude the possibility that the attacks against America are due to Islamic terrorists. Should this be the case, it would certainly not be a reason for us to hate all Muslims.

There are more than a billion Muslims, more than a billion Christians, and many million Jews. All three religions prohibit murder. Defense and self-defense against murderers, however, are permissible. It is a commandment of responsibility and reason to prevent this monstrous crime from turning into a general conflict between Western civilization and Islam. It is possible that the very intent of the terrorists and their supporters is the instigation of a global clash of civilizations.

It is in our self-interest to prevent such a global clash. This is in America's interest as well as in Europe's and Germany's! Indeed, all of us have suffered intensely from the consequences of the Holocaust, World War II, and decades of the Cold War. We do not wish to revert to this. In retaliation to German bombs on Coventry and the V1 and V2 bombings of London, hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians lost their lives in Dresden, Hamburg, and Bremen. This shall not be repeated.

Based on all the evidence gathered thus far, this mammoth crime is the work of an intercontinental organization, some of the perpetrators seem to have come from at least three different continents. This would not have been possible without telecommunication and globalization of air traffic.

II.

The possibility of intercontinental crimes is not at all the only, and not even the most important consequence of globalization. Worldwide economic exchange has existed for centuries. New, however, is the immense acceleration of scientific and technological advances and their dispersion throughout the continents. The discovery of DNA and its double-helix structure is barely half a century old; however, the life sciences and their gene-technological applications have already made it possible to consider seriously the pros and cons of manipulating human genes. When I went to school, we wrote a postcard once or twice a year – from our summer vacation or on the occasion of a birthday. Today, hundreds of thousands of telephone calls, or visits to the Internet, circle around the globe simultaneously. Each day, financial managers electronically chase after enormous sums of money throughout the world – sums that are at least fifty times the actual world trade of goods.

Globalization is not only a matter of knowledge and technology, not only of information and communication, not only of finance but also of an enormous increase in the number of participants. In the course of the last century, the world population has increased four-fold; the number of people involved worldwide commerce, however, has doubled in just the last twenty-years – due to the opening of Russia and all the other states created from the former Soviet Union, the opening of all formerly closed states of the Soviet alliance, and, above all, due to the opening of China.

Most of the 150 third-world nations have opened themselves to global economic exchange on a broad basis – partially to their advantage, though partially to their disadvantage as well. If you still remember the so-called four little tigers of thirty years ago – South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, and Hong Kong – which at that time were developing countries but are, today, first-rate industrial states, you have an example of four very positive developments. All four, tightly governed, to say at least, have adopted all the modern Western technologies. They were able to raise the standard of living of their population quite impressively because the quality of their export goods, although equal in quality to those of the west, were cheaper due to their lower labor costs.

The majority of all the other developing countries, however, has managed this only partially. In most developing countries, progress has been hampered by decades of incompetent governments and, in particular, by unchecked population explosion. However, it will not take China, for example, long to follow the little tigers. Incidentally, it has fifty to sixty times the population of Taiwan.

The flip side of the coin for Europe is that sections of its industry have lost their competitive edge – just think of leather industry, shoe and textile production, or ship-building, for example. For a quarter century, we West Europeans have been faced with the choice between lowering our production costs (i.e. wages and social benefits) or finding new or better products that cannot yet be manufactured by developing countries. The former – lowering production costs – we have emphatically rejected; the latter – new products – we have attained only partially. This is one of the many reasons for the continuing structural unemployment in Germany and Western Europe.

However, the United States has managed – particularly in the last decade – to attain a high-capacity output of new products and services. The collapse of the hysterical new-economy euphoria shall

not obscure that the United States will not only be playing a leading role militarily and strategically for decades to come, but also in the most fields of research and their applications, as well as in manufactured goods and proficiency of services. This current American leadership is, first of all, due to the far greater support of research through funding by the public and the private sector. Second, it is due to the very liberal spill-over of research results to the civilian economy and society, which the government had originally initiated via the military, space exploration and so forth. Third, it is due to the exceptional capacities of the predominantly autonomous American elite universities.

I cannot discuss in detail here the economic situation in Europe on the eve of a global economic recession, with an imminent massive expansion of the European Union, and also in view of the increasing percent of elderly in the population, and the resulting necessity to correct some of the excesses of the welfare state.

However, the briefly indicated global economic developments, alone, as well as the predictable scientific and technological advances of the United States force us Europeans to strive for higher performance and, thus, to expend greater efforts if we do not want to remain stuck in mediocrity within the next two decades – a situation that would require us either to accept our mass unemployment as a permanent condition or to compromise our standard of living.

III.

Despite all of this, I do not see reason for pessimism. For, first of all, the intelligence quotients here are not any lower than in America or China. Further, the generation of those born in the 1920s and 1930s, which is somewhat exhausted from political suppression, from war, and the unprecedented reconstruction, already has been predominantly replaced by new and – through their physical and psychological vitality – fresh generations.

I do indeed feel honored that you have permitted an 82-year old to speak to you this morning, although my generation is actually part of the old scrap dump. My defense, however, might be that for quite some time I have recognized and publicly criticized the flawed development of Germany's public system of higher education. My premise is that productivity and efficiency are not solely based on intelligence and diligence but also on education. Our mass universities, however, have a hard time dealing with education and training.

We have a disproportionately high percentage of dropouts. The graduates of our universities study significantly longer than those of the United States, Japan, France or Great Britain. This is only to a limited extent the fault of the students. It is mostly due to the flawed legal university policy, to inefficient management, and finally it is the fault of the professors. And, our public universities are actually even more expensive per student than some American private universities.

It is a principal error to attempt central and uniform regulation of our school and university system for all 16 states. Although, according to the constitution, it is a matter of the states, their cultural ministers for years have relied on an unsuitable centralism and *de facto* have yielded responsibility increasingly to the federal bureaucracies.

It would be more suitable to return the freedom to the states to compete with each other for the best school and university systems. Competition is necessary and desirable even between individual colleges and universities.

Why shouldn't some institutions of higher learning be permitted to require admissions tests for incoming students? Why shouldn't other institutions offer drastically shortened curricula? Why not have intermediate examinations? Why shouldn't at least some countries start offering their universities the incentive – and freedom – to spend their funds in a meaningful way? Why don't all states permit their universities a greater extent of self-government and responsibility? Why don't they weed out their state laws and cultural bureaucracy that today really predominantly govern the universities, and grant them free space for a modern form of management?

Is it really necessary to force each university professor to follow the old ideal of unity in teaching and research? Would it not be a great gain for hundreds of thousands of students if their professors were primarily excellent teachers?

The answers to all these questions are obvious. Therefore, I would like to underscore my respect for the founders of International University Bremen. You are on the right track. You are also on the right path in trying to become elite. Not an elite of those whose parents can pay tuition and living expenses, but an elite of achievers. Those who cannot pay have to be financed – with the stipulation to repay later when they are earning well. We started a similar concept with the Bucerius Law School in Hamburg.

I also extend my congratulations to the collaboration with the excellent Rice University in Houston, Texas. This applies as well to the Senate of Bremen, which overcame many of its old conventions.

I wish you that, in just a few years, your students will prove to be particularly competent, capable of independent achievements, able to form their own judgments – and able to lead others, which means: prepared to take responsibility. Whether someone will work in biogenetics, will become the CEO of a bank, or someday will be Chancellor of Germany or President of the United States, or lawyer or professor: they all have to assume responsibility. Nobody has only rights; everyone has duties as well. And any elite also has to be an elite of responsibility.