

Incorporación del Profesor Doctor Peter Hommelhoff

como miembro honorario de la Academia de Ciencias
Sociales, Políticas y Morales del Instituto de Chile

- Discurso pronunciado por el Profesor Francisco Orrego Vicuña,
13 de noviembre de 2006.

The Academy of Social, Political and Moral Sciences of the Institute of Chile is honored in welcoming today Professor Dr. Peter Hommelhoff as an Honorary Member, the highest distinction awarded to foreign scholars and personalities that have made a significant contribution to the advancement in the fields of knowledge with which this Academy is concerned.

Among the immediate predecessors of Rector Hommelhoff is His Eminence Cardinal Angelo Sodano, until recently the Secretary of State of the Holy See, and Professor Anthony Giddens, formerly Director of the London School of Economics and Political Science.

Two considerations have led this Academy to award this distinction.

Professor Dr. Peter Hommelhoff is first and foremost a most distinguished legal scholar that belongs to the German academic tradition so much admired throughout the world for its analytical depth and high scientific standards. After following law studies in Berlin, Tübingen and Freiburg, Rector Hommelhoff obtained his Doctoral Degree from the University of Freiburg, having successfully completed his Doctoral thesis on “The liability for material defects at corporate acquisitions”.

A few years afterwards, in recognition of his academic work, the University of Bochum awarded him the post-doctoral qualification as a lecturer, the much dreaded “Habilitation” of the German university system, where he defended his post-doctoral thesis on “The duty of corporate group management – Crucial aspects of the law concerning the inner structures of corporate groups”.

Dr. Hommelhoff had meanwhile worked as an academic research assistant to the distinguished legal scholar Professor Dr. Marcus Lutter, who held the Chair of German and European Commercial and Economic Law at the University of Bochum. It would thus come as no surprise that in 1981, Dr. Hommelhoff was granted the “*venia legendi*” for civil, commercial and economic law, and accepted the offer of the Chair in this field at the University of Bielefeld.

This was of course just the beginning of Professor Dr. Hommelhoff’s academic and professional achievements in Germany and Europe. Other such achievements have been his participation in the Board of the Association of Professors of Civil Law, his activities as Chairman of the Board of the Company Law Association, and his role as a part-time judge of the Special Division for Commercial and Company Law of the Higher Regional Court and as a member of the Board of Examiners for Chartered Accountants of the Ministry of Economy of both North Rhine-Westphalia and Baden-Württemberg.

At an early point in his career, Dr. Hommelhoff had also the occasion to be in private practice as in-house legal advisor to an important electricity company in Hannover . He is currently a member and the speaker for the Scholarly Board of Advisors of the German Railway Corporation, Vice President of the Council of Academy Presidents and speaker for the universities and managing editor of the Journal of Business and Corporate Law. All such activities are also evidencing that high legal scholarship can also be combined with important contributions to professional achievements.

The second consideration this Academy has had for recognizing Rector Hommelhoff is the significant contribution he has made to the advancement of academic leadership of major universities and scholarly institutions.

In 1993 Professor Hommelhoff was appointed Dean of the Faculty of Law at the University of Heidelberg, later a member and Deputy Chairman of the Heidelberg University Council and, since 2001, the Rector of the Ruprecht-Karls University of Heidelberg.

In addition to the above, Rector Hommelhoff became closely associated to the work of the Max Planck Institute. Having been awarded in 1997 the Max Planck Research Prize for International Cooperation, he currently serves in the Professional Board of Advisors of the Max Planck Institute for Foreign and International Private Law in Hamburg and the Max Planck Institute for Intellectual Property, Competition and Tax Law in Munich.

Rector Hommelhoff's leadership at the University of Heidelberg has not only meant that this major scholarly institution has further developed its role in the fields of humanities and sciences, but quite notably also in the pursuance of international cooperation with sister institutions.

A close association has been established to this effect with the Jagellonian University of Krakow and other universities around the world, thus evidencing that Germany and its institutions are not absent from the thoughts and concerns of many other scholarly institutions and countries. The University of Chile and the Catholic University of Santiago will join this partnership with the University of Heidelberg in ceremonies to be held tomorrow.

In the pursuit of this broader international perspective, the University of Heidelberg established in Santiago in 2002 the Heidelberg Center for Latin America, that first invited Rector Hommelhoff to our country. Out of that visit, a most successful Masters Program on International Law, Trade, Investments and Arbitration was organized in association with the Law School and the Institute of International Studies of the University of Chile. This was the first teaching program undertaken by the University of Heidelberg outside Europe. The program also involved for the first time ever a teaching activity of the Max Planck Institute, having developed a close association with the Max Planck Institute for Comparative and Public International Law in Heidelberg.

I am pleased to welcome today in this ceremony a number of the graduates and current participants of this Program, all of whom are no doubt grateful to Rector Hommelhoff for having made possible that they are, or soon will be, masters of law from both the University of Heidelberg and the University of Chile.

Rector Hommelhoff's scholarly contribution and university leadership have been recognized by various scholarly awards. Having received the Medal of Honour and the *Dr. ius honoris causa* from the Jagellonian University of Krakow, as well as the *Dr. iuris honoris causa* from the University of Montpellier I, we are pleased to recognize today Rector Hommelhoff as an Honorary Member of this Academy.

I have several times challenged Rector Hommelhoff to various competitions. I challenged him first about whether the longest bar in the world is in Santiago or in Heidelberg, next to a competition between Chilean red wine and German white wine, and more recently to have the German Prime Minister to study in our Program, just as our President had studied in Germany.

None of my challenges have been accepted thus far. Yet, Rector Hommelhoff has taken up the greatest challenge of all. Not well known is the fact that he was a distinguished young naval officer in the German military navy. This probably explains why he decided to take the University of Heidelberg across the seven seas and land in our shores, rough as they sometimes are. We are grateful to him for having accepted, and won, this, the ultimate challenge.

Magnifizenz, welcome to the Academy of Social, Political and Moral Sciences of the Institute of Chile.