

Founder of the Foundation

There are many foundations and equally many founders. I, Erich Fischer, born 1938 in Sudetenland (Moravia), am one of them. Before I founded this foundation in the year 1995, during 26 years I was the owner and Managing Director of a Europe-wide active distribution company in the semiconductor industry with three-hundred employees (EBV).

Influenced by the deprivations of the post-war years and the studies of socio-critical authors, from Dostoevsky to Sartre, I arrived very early at the conclusion that extreme injustices exist both in the communistic and the capitalistic systems. This is due to the fact that those who are really working are fobbed off with hypocritical paroles such as wealth formation and co-determination and exploited by companies, managers and Uncle Sam in a good and proper manner. In my own company I wanted to do things differently. What I had in mind was a civilized management of business activities, based on social – not socialistic – principles with fair profit sharing and real co-determination of all staff members. Much to my own surprise, this initially ridiculed and later suspiciously viewed concept has worked out perfectly well for the benefit of all. As a consequence, to me it was more than clear to let my proven staff – a total of 131 women and men – participate in one-third of my company.

A further third of my company shares I donated to my foundation '**Internationalen Stiftung zur Foerderung von Kultur und Zivilisation**' as basic foundation assets (donations are close to nil) the proceeds of which are used for the financing of non-profit charitable projects.

Given that my property is mainly invested in my company, you could say that I donated nearly two-thirds of it. In my view, this is only fair because the classic capitalism – which resulted in the situation that far too little people are possessing far too much and far too many people are possessing far too little – has finally run down as has already happened before with the communism. This scenario is continuously proven by stock market crash, economic slowdown,

mass unemployment and staggering national indebtedness. It wouldn't have come to that if Uncle Sam wouldn't have become a self-service outlet for those who are inside, a fact that our former President Gustav Heinemann already feared in 1974, and if sec. 14 sub-section 2 of the German Basic Law was seriously implemented: **"Property entails obligations. Its use shall also serve the public good"**.

Everybody who wants to consider this sentence as an old-fashioned call for class struggle is entitled to do so. On the other hand, these words could easily be my own statement because they reflect my basic attitude and position without which this foundation would have never come to life.

The purposes I pursue with this foundation are embedded in its Statutes and explained in detail in connection with the individual projects. The question, why I made up my mind for these particular projects – in fact, it could have been other projects too – cannot be answered in a few sentences. In spite of the differences, there is still a common denominator, in a certain sense a closely related key that can be easily described by a line from one of Bertolt Brecht's poems **"And you see the ones in brightness. Those in darkness drop from sight"**. First and foremost, this applies to the truly philanthropic afternoon music projects for senior citizens but also for the foundation activities I initiated for prisoners, collectively described under the term Amnesty National, because I am convinced that the current criminal law is primarily based on the sanction principle according to the Old Testament (an eye for an eye ...) and thus not only highly uncivilized but also ineffective as high crime and relapse rates show. In the area of art and culture, my primary intention is much more about the support of rather unknown compositions and stage works, and, above all, the support of socially and often culturally discriminated persons, i.e. it is less about so-called talented persons that are one way or the other in the limelight and receive support in many ways. When asked by a former employee, how I feel in my function as founder and Member of the Foundation Board, my answer is: "I feel good, I would have never thought that spending money requires as much effort and struggling as making money."