

UNIVERSITY OF VIENNA: HONORARY DOCTORATE FOR ERIC J. HOBSBAWM

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Press release from: [University of Vienna](#)

Vienna, 8 April 2008 - On 15 April 2008, the Rector of the University of Vienna, Georg Winckler, will present an honorary doctorate to the renowned historian Eric J. Hobsbawm. Since the 1960s, Hobsbawm has been producing works of outstanding value for historical and cultural research. His first-hand experience of major historical events, the international nature of both his life and work, and his skills as a researcher and author make him one of the leading authorities on the history of the 19th and 20th centuries.

HOBSBAWM - A MODERN HISTORIAN

An historian and political thinker, Eric Hobsbawm brings together economic, social, political and cultural history in works that are both complex and comprehensive. However, compiling individual studies in an absorbing and broad-based overview is not Hobsbawm's only talent. His "epic histories" are also unparalleled in their ability to convey an innate fascination for historical research.

FOUR PUBLICATIONS - FROM THE FRENCH REVOLUTION TO THE END OF THE 20TH CENTURY

Hobsbawm rounds up the entire history of the 19th and 20th centuries with his internationally renowned tetralogy. In it, he explains the failure of socialism:

- The Age of Revolution: Europe 1789-1848 (1962)
- The Age of Capital, 1848-1875 (1975)
- The Age of Empire, 1875-1914 (1987)
- The Age of Extremes: the Short Twentieth Century, 1914-1991 (1994)

In "The Age of Extremes", he also presents a personal view on the events of recent history. On the one hand, he posits that conditions were better than ever before in terms of personal freedom and widespread economic prosperity. On the other hand, the age of the Holocaust and Stalin's Gulag system also brought a century of unprecedented barbarity.

WITNESSING THE 20TH CENTURY FIRST HAND

"Eric Hobsbawm is a 'wanderer between worlds'. That does not just apply to his own biography - born in Alexandria in 1917, schooled in Vienna and Berlin and university educated in Britain - but to his academic work too," declares Dieter Stiefel, Professor of economic and social history at the University of Vienna, in his speech in honour of the renowned social historian. Hobsbawm has experienced many events of the 20th century first hand: the turbulence of the interwar years, the rise and fall of Nazism, decolonialisation, the Cold War and the experiment of real socialism - right up to the opening up of the East and the return of the region to western-style democratic structures and the market economy.

A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY

The son of Jewish parents, Eric Hobsbawm was born in Alexandria, Egypt, on 9 June 1917. At the beginning of the 1930s, following the death of his parents, he and his sister moved to Berlin to live with their uncle. There, while attending grammar school, he became a member of the Socialist Schoolboys organisation, part of the Communist Party of Germany. In 1933 he moved to London and from 1936 to 1939, he studied at King's College, Cambridge. After serving in the British army (1940-46), Hobsbawm lectured at Birkbeck College, University of London. He held the position of visiting professor at several prestigious universities such as Stanford, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the Universidad Nacional Autonoma in Mexico. He has been professor of politics and society at The New School for Social Research in New York since 1984.

Hobsbawm is a member of the British Academy and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and has been awarded numerous honorary doctorates. He won the Leipzig Book Prize for European Understanding in 1999, the Ernst-Bloch Prize in 2000 and the Balzan Prize in 2003. He was made an honorary citizen of Vienna in 2008.

PRESENTATION OF THE HONORARY DOCTORATE TO ERIC J. HOBSBAWM

TIME: Tuesday, 15 April 2008, 9.30 a.m.

VENUE: University of Vienna, 1010 Vienna, Dr.-Karl-Lueger-Ring 1, Main Ceremonial Chamber

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The University of Vienna is the oldest university in the German-speaking world and one of the largest in Central Europe. At present, about 71,000 students are enrolled at the University of Vienna, in more than 130 courses. With close to 8,000 employees, 6,000 of which are scientists and academics, the University of Vienna is also the largest teaching and research institution in Austria.

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