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REMEMBERING FREYA VON MOLTKE

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I rise to speak in memory of Freya von Moltke, an extraordinary woman and long-time resident of Norwich, VT, who passed away this January 1 at the age of 98.

In 1929, at the age of 18, Freya met the young lawyer Helmuth von Moltke, and 2 years later she married him. Freya earned her own law degree in 1935 but never practiced; law had already begun to lose its meaning as Hitler and the Nazi party tightened their grip on power. It was for the same reason that Helmuth gave up his dreams of becoming a judge and of working closer to the family estate in Kreisau, in Silesia, now a part of Poland. Instead, he opened a small law office in Berlin, where he could remain independent of the regime without drawing attention to himself. He and Freya divided their time between the family estate and his apartment in Berlin.

In the last years before the war, they traveled to South Africa to visit Helmuth's mother's parents in South Africa. On those trips they spoke openly of what the Nazi regime was capable of, and were constantly urged not to return to Germany. But they felt responsible, for their broader family, the estate, and Germany's fate; they felt they had no choice but to return. Helmuth's work as an attorney came to an end at the outbreak of the war in 1939, when he was drafted into the German army's intelligence service. Freya settled into overseeing the farm in Kreisau in his absence, and the flood of letters between them began. Helmuth came home whenever he could. They welcomed their first son Helmuth Caspar, in 1937 and their second, Konrad, in 1941.

It was clear to the von Moltkes from the beginning that the Nazi regime was criminal, but moving from opposition to active resistance was a giant step. When Helmuth told Freya that he knew he had to do what he could to resist, she gave him her complete support. Slowly Helmuth gathered a loose group of friends and friends of friends, people who could be trusted, people who represented almost every class and interest group outside the Nazi party. He spent his evenings in Berlin meeting with them in small groups, discussing what would eventually have to be done to undo the damage to Germany by the Nazis. Only on a few memorable occasions did they all dare to meet together; Freya and Helmuth invited the whole group to gather for seemingly innocent weekends in Kreisau. There they were able to hammer out together their plans for the longed-for day when the Nazi regime would finally fall--their plans for a new Germany, a democratic Germany embedded in a renewed and democratic Europe. Freya not only participated in the discussions; she also took care of everyone's room and board.

Early in 1944, Helmuth was imprisoned for warning an acquaintance of his imminent arrest. In July of that year, many of his friends participated in an attempt to assassinate Hitler. It failed, and many of them lost their lives immediately. In the aftermath, the Gestapo began to uncover the connections leading from one resistance group to another, including the one they called the "Kreisau Circle." Most of the surviving members of the group soon joined Helmuth in prison. Most were tried before the infamous People's Court, convicted, and sentenced to death. Helmuth himself was executed in January of 1945.

Between her trips to Berlin to make appeals for Helmuth's life, Freya took in a growing group of their friends' widows and children at Kreisau. In the face of the Soviet advance, she moved them all into nearby Czechoslovakia, only to find that it was safer to move them home again. Through the intervention of British friends, she and her children at last managed to leave Kreisau for Berlin, but they soon left Germany for South Africa, where Freya made her living as a social worker.

In 1956, unable to tolerate apartheid any longer, Freya returned to Germany. In Berlin she began her work to keep the

memory of the German resistance to Hitler alive; she also began to transcribe Helmuth's letters, which, along with the minutes of the Kreisau Circle's meetings, she had hidden from the Gestapo in the beehives on the estate. She published Helmuth's final letters from prison very soon after the end of the war. In 1988, many of the thousands of letters he had written her between the summer of 1939 and his death appeared in English as "Letters to Freya."

It was in September of 1960 that Freya moved to Norwich, VT. She moved to Norwich to join her close friend--and her husband's--Eugen Rosenstock-Huussy, whose wife had died the year before. Freya lived with him until his death in 1973, and after his death she founded a nonprofit to keep his books in print; she was president of that group until the 1990s, by which time they had over 60 titles in print. Freya served for years on the board of the Co-op supermarket in Hanover, NH, and with friends from the Co-op board she went on to found the Twin Pines Cooperative Housing Foundation, the first group to try to develop affordable housing in that part of Vermont and the first in the State to establish a tenant-owned housing cooperative.

At 75, after many years in Norwich, Freya became an American citizen and an active member of the League of Women Voters. At 93 she agreed to speak in Berlin on the 60th anniversary of the failed assassination attempt, but for many years she had spoken in Vermont high schools about what she and her husband and their friends had done and the need for courage in the face of injustice in any society. Students from one school she visited for years sent flowers to her funeral.

It is no simple feat for a foreigner to become accepted as a "natural" part of a small town in northern New England, but Freya did it. In 1985, the owner of Dan & Whit's general store in Norwich ran into her in the post office. He reacted to the flood of unfamiliar faces by telling her, "Let them come. We were here first." His gallant inclusion of her as a "native" after only 25 years in town moved Freya deeply. Her own hospitality is reflected in the sign she tacked to her unlocked kitchen door at the age of 90: "To Everybody! Please, walk in! Push hard. Find me upstairs if I don't respond."

Freya was firm in her belief that the territory Germany had lost, the land her family had lost, was the price Germany had to pay for the crimes of the Nazi regime. But she had hopes for what had been the family estate. In 1988, a group of young people in East Germany had the idea of making the former von Moltke estate a place where people from divided Europe could meet and get to know each other; they found friends in Poland, but also in West Germany, in Holland and the United States. Only a year later, a friend of their Polish friends became the prime minister of Poland and invited the chancellor of Germany to meet him for a mass of reconciliation in Kreisau. The two men agreed to fund the restoration of Kreisau, now called Kryzowa. The German chancellor had invited Freya to accompany him, but she said she would wait until the Poles invited her, which they soon did. In her final years, she lent her name and her blessing to a foundation to support the new Kreisau, which with support from the German and Polish governments has grown in 20 years from the dream of a few young people to an international meeting place that hosts about 100 events a year, attended by some 10,000 young people from all over Europe.

Freya von Moltke was an inspiration to all who knew her. She was a wonderful friend and neighbor, and she enriched the lives of countless citizens of our State. She lived a long and fruitful life; she will be missed by admirers around the world, but most of all by the Vermonters who knew and loved her.