

Irwin Abrams:
Reflections on the first century of the Nobel Peace Prize

Det Norske Nobelinstituttets Skriftserie
The Norwegian Nobel Institute Series
Vol. 1 – No. 5

Table of Contents:

<u>Introduction</u>	5
<u>Categories of laureates</u>	6
<u>Prizes for institutions</u>	8
<u>Prizes for statesmen and political leaders</u>	11
<u>Prizes for human rights</u>	16
<u>Campaigns</u>	18
<u>Recent prizes</u>	24

Introduction

I have been reflecting on the Nobel Peace Prize for a long time, and much of what I have to say is not likely to be very new.¹ My first reflections were published in 1962, almost forty years ago, entitled “The Nobel Peace Prize. A Balance Sheet”.² It had been inspired by my analysis of the correspondence between Alfred Nobel and Bertha von Suttner, which showed how she had influenced him to establish this prize.³

I began this balance sheet with Nobel’s much quoted remark to her, “My factories will perhaps make an end to war sooner than your congresses. The day that two army corps can annihilate one another in one second, the civilized nations will shrink from war and discharge their troops”. I was writing in the days of the cold war when that time had arrived. The invention of nuclear weapons had actually brought about a state of potential mutual annihilation between the superpowers. They were shrinking from war but not discharging their troops.

The inventor of high explosives who endowed a peace prize was himself a man of contradictions. As Baroness von Suttner wrote him in one of her last letters, he was a man “passionately in love with the far horizons of human thought and profoundly distrustful of the pettiness of human folly”. This distrust is evident in the letter he wrote her about his projected peace prize. It should be awarded only for thirty years, he said, for if the international system had not been reformed by then, the world would be headed straight back to barbarism. Fortunately, he did not put that in the final form of his will in 1895, for in less than twenty years civilization was to be suffering through the first world war.

It was against a grim background of barbarism that I was drawing up my balance sheet of the prize in 1962. The six decades of the prize had seen two world wars and the Holocaust, and now we were in a time of “mutual terror”, as Winston Churchill called it. But I noted that “If skepticism shared place with hope in Nobel’s spirit”, there was much in the last sixty years that would nourish them both. “The prize has come to be the highest recognition one can receive for service to mankind in humanitarian endeavor”, I wrote, and after discussing all the awards, I concluded, “Who could despair of a civilization that could produce a Nansen, a Jane Addams, or an Albert Schweitzer? Or qualities such as

¹ For a bibliography of Irwin Abrams’s writings on the Nobel Peace Prize, see www.irwinabrams.com

² *American Journal of Economics & Sociology*, 21 (July 1962), pp. 225-243.

the heroism of a von Ossietzky, the dedication of an Arthur Henderson, the infinite patience of a Ralph Bunche, even the humility of a Cordell Hull? Perhaps it has been the greatest service of the Nobel Committee over the years to hold up before men the hope and promise of what they can become”.

Fresh from working with the Nobel - von Suttner correspondence, I explained in this early article on the prize that it was only by going beyond Nobel’s original wishes that the Norwegian Nobel committees had made of it “a higher distinction than he could ever have hoped for”. Some twenty years later when I began to work on the book, my first publication was entitled, “The Transformation of the Nobel Peace Prize”, which became a key chapter.⁴

In the very first awards of 1901 the committee recognized Nobel’s intention to assist the organized peace movement with its prize for the veteran peace activist, Frédéric Passy, but at the same time the committee made perhaps the most important decision in the history of the prize by using a broad interpretation of Nobel’s phrase in his will, “fraternity between nations” to give an equal award to Henri Dunant, humanitarian founder of the Red Cross.⁵

Categories of laureates

Future Norwegian Nobel committees were to expand even further this interpretation of Nobel’s phrase. In 1930, Committee Chairman Fredrik Stang could declare, “It is incumbent upon the Committee to seek out everything which gives a promise for the future”.⁶ More recently this is the way the late Committee Chairman Egil Aarvik explained to me the addition of prizes for champions of human rights, “Nobel’s will does not state this, but it was made in another time. Today we realize that peace cannot be established without a full respect for freedom”.

It is not easy to seek out everything which gives a promise of peace. In the 1974 award ceremony Committee Chair Aase Lionæs spoke of the “onerous task” of choosing

³ “Bertha von Suttner and the Nobel Peace Prize”, *Journal of Central European Affairs*. 22 (October 1962), pp. 286-307, especially pp. 296, 298, 300. Hereafter cited as “Bertha von Suttner”.

⁴ “The Transformation of the Nobel Peace Prize”, *Peace and Change A Journal of Peace Research*. 10 (Fall/Winter 1984), pp. 1-25; *The Nobel Peace Prize and the Laureates. An Illustrated Biographical History, 1901-1987*. (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1988. First printing), pp. 19-30. Hereafter cited as Abrams, *Peace Prize*.

⁵ Abrams, *Peace Prize*, pp. 34-40. Dunant often used the Anglicized form of his name, Henry.

⁶ *Les Prix Nobel en 1930*. Stockholm: Norstedt, 1931, p. 85. Part of Stang's toast in honor of the laureates Kellogg and Söderblom at the evening banquet.

the prizewinners. In that year she also had the onerous task of defending the much criticized choice of Premier Eisaku Sato of Japan, which had followed the even more unpopular selection the year before of Henry Kissinger and Le Duc Tho. So she spoke of how over the years it was to be expected that committee decisions would give rise to what she euphemistically called “discussions”. “This eloquently proves”, she said, “how difficult it is to define the concept of peace”. There were such a “great many varied fields” in which the prizewinners had worked for peace: “they have included statesmen negotiating round the conference table, defenders of human rights, experts on international law, rebels, humanists, idealists, pragmatists, dreamers”.⁷ Conspicuously left off this list of Mrs. Lionæs were the peace activists who had been foremost in Nobel’s mind. She probably counted them among the dreamers.

I thought it would be helpful to readers of my book if I included tables listing laureates by category, but I found this very difficult to do. Consider the most recent award of 1999 to Doctors Without Borders. Should the Doctors be grouped with the humanitarians for their efforts to relieve suffering or with defenders of human rights, which is what makes them different from most other humanitarian workers in conflict areas?⁸

Many individual laureates are multi-talented and serve the peace cause in different ways. Lord Boyd Orr (1949) can be classified with the humanitarians for his work with the Food and Agriculture Organization, but he was also prominent in work with peace organizations. Seán MacBride (1974) was given the prize for his work for human rights, which he first promoted as foreign minister of the Republic of Ireland, but he also served with and presided over the International Peace Bureau. Lord Cecil of Chelwood (1937) worked for international organization as a representative of Britain in the founding of the League of Nations and in its meetings in Geneva, but he later resigned his office and headed the League of Nations Union and the International Peace Campaign. Alva Myrdal (1982) worked for disarmament as the representative of Sweden at the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva and only later in a private capacity. René Cassin (1968) won the prize for his human rights contributions, but he could also be classified with the international jurists.

⁷ *Les Prix Nobel en 1974*. Stockholm, Norstedt, 1975, p. 51.

⁸ Abrams, “Doctors Without Borders” (“Médecins Sans Frontières”) in Nobel Channel (www.nobelchannel.com). *Encyclopedia Americana*, new edition to be published in 2001.

International civil servants like Hammarskjöld and Bunche working with the United Nations could have a separate category for themselves, but I have preferred to characterize them as statesmen, as their work was with states and governmental bodies. Entitling this group as “Statesmen and Political Leaders” takes account of such political peacemakers as Nelson Mandela and Frederik W. de Klerk in South Africa (1993) and John Hume and David Trimble in Northern Ireland (1998).

A number of laureates were prominent figures in organized religion, such as the Dalai Lama (1989), Archbishop Tutu (1984), Martin Luther King, jr. (1964), Father Pire (1958) and Mother Teresa (1979). Only one laureate, however, worked for peace entirely through ecumenical channels, Archbishop Nathan Söderblom (1930). Rather than placing him as the single member of a box for Religion, I will use a separate box for Leaders of Organized Religion, which will include such laureates as those mentioned.

Prizes for institutions

Nobel never would have wanted his money to go to institutions, but they were added to the statutes of the Nobel Foundation as one of the compromises to which the executors had to agree to get the will probated. When Bertha von Suttner heard what was being done, she wrote to a fellow activist that she knew Nobel had wanted to endow only individuals, that institutions were “only a form, a body --- but the soul of a society always resides in an individual. It is the energy, the dedication, the sacred fire which fills the heart and spirit, that is what propels a movement”.⁹

Carl Lindhagen, the young lawyer who was advising the executors, explained to the baroness that her evidence that Nobel was thinking only of individuals was entirely convincing, but because of the opposition to the will, it was impossible to arrange matters in any other way. She had to realize, he wrote, that Nobel had “only stated an idea, without indicating the practical implementation, which he left, with confidence, in other hands”. It was by demonstrating in court that this was the way Nobel ran his affairs that Lindhagen succeeded in getting the will approved.¹⁰

Paragraph 4 of the Nobel Foundation statutes permitted each of the prize-awarding bodies to confer the prize upon an institution or association, but only the Norwegian

⁹ Baroness von Suttner objected to institutional prizes. These words were actually written to her fellow peace activist, Fredrik Bajer of Denmark. “Bertha von Suttner”, p. 301.

¹⁰ Abrams, *Peace Prize*, p. 8; “Bertha von Suttner”, pp. 302-303

Nobel Committee has made such awards. The first such award was in the fourth year of the prize, to the Institute of International Law in 1904. The most recent was the 1999 award to Doctors Without Borders, the nineteenth to an institution.

It was with an institution, the American Friends Service Committee, which shared the 1947 prize for humanitarian work during and after World War II, that I had my only personal association with a Nobel peace prize.¹¹ Yet I have no question but that the greatest significance of the Nobel Peace Prize lies in the Committee's best awards, those which have given us an array of individuals propelled by that "sacred fire which fills a heart and a spirit", individuals, who through the examples of their lives, can give us hope for humanity.

I was naturally glad about the prize for the American Friends Service Committee, but I must recognize that this did little to enhance its image or the image of peace. The prize money was useful for several peace activities during the cold war, and the Nobel medal did appear on papers it issued and appeals for funds, as was the case with other laureate institutions. But 1947 was the last year that the peace prize could have been granted to a much more qualified individual candidate, Mahatma Gandhi.

The reason why this was not done is complicated. After John Sanness, former Nobel Committee Chairman, gave me the clue to look at the chronology, I found that just about when the members of the committee were considering Gandhi's candidacy, the newspapers had a story, later proved to be incorrect, that Gandhi was supporting the Indian army in the Kashmir conflict. As I wrote in my book, this could account for a committee action to postpone a decision until the following year, "after the dust had settled".¹² Now Øyvind Tønnesson, a member of the staff of the Nobel Electronic Museum, has written an excellent account of the full story.¹³

When the Quakers received the 1947 prize and with it the privilege of submitting nominations, they immediately nominated Gandhi for the 1948 prize. Other nominations for him followed. Unfortunately, that was the year when Gandhi was assassinated. The Norwegian Nobel Committee did explore the possibility of granting Gandhi a posthumous prize but on the advice of the Swedish Nobel prize committees, decided against this. Even

¹¹ Irwin Abrams, "The Quaker Peace Testimony and the Nobel Peace Prize", in *The Pacifist Impulse in Historical Perspective*. Edited by Havey I. Dyck (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1966), pp. 207-222; Abrams, *Peace Prize*, pp. 148-150.

¹² Abrams, *Peace Prize*, p. 137.

¹³ Ø. Tønnesson: "Mahatma Gandhi, the Missing Laureate," www.nobel.se/essays/gandhi/index.html

though what happened is understandable, Gandhi's absence from the Nobel lists stands out as the most serious omission in the Nobel Peace Prizes of the century.

What has been the lasting impact of the institutional prizes? When I am lecturing on the prizes, it is when I tell about the lives of certain laureates that I can see eyes shining and sense that hearing about those lives might be making a difference. Only compare the lasting inspiration of Fridtjof Nansen (1922) with whatever can be said of the Nansen International Office for Refugees (1938), which no longer exists. Or what Father Pire did for refugees as an individual as compared with the institutional role of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, which has twice received the prize (1955, 1981). It is, of course, of no small importance to call the attention of the world to the plight of the refugees through these prizes, and Nansen and Pire would be happy about that. But is this the best use of the prize?

Or consider the moving story of Joseph Rotblat, who for conscience's sake walked away from making the bomb at Los Alamos, and has spent the rest of his life trying to save civilization from the use of the bomb and making important contributions in nuclear medicine. How would that compare with a description of the institutional Pugwash Conferences, his co-laureate in 1995?¹⁴ Or think of the life of Léon Jouhaux (1951), the impoverished match maker's son who rose through the ranks to become a leader of the French trade union movement and a founder of the International Labor Organization (1969), an account of which is far less likely to set a young person dreaming of bringing about social justice in the world, than would be an inspiring story of Jouhaux's pathway to peacemaking.¹⁵

Many of the same peace activists who had been outraged that the Nobel Committee gave the 1904 prize to an institution, the Institute of International Law, instead of to an individual, Bertha von Suttner, apparently worked together in 1910 to persuade the committee to give the prize to the International Peace Bureau, because it needed the money. These veteran peace workers are now long forgotten, but among them were a number from whose lives today's readers could draw inspiration. The IPB barely survived World War I and ceased to exist after World War II, but its assets were given to a new international peace organization, which took the old name and is very much alive today. It is recognized by the Nobel Committee as a valid successor, and its Council is authorized

¹⁴ Irwin Abrams, "Joseph Rotblat and the Pugwash Conferences on World Affairs", in *The Nobel Prize Annual 1995* (N.Y.: IMG Publishing, 1996), pp. 61-69; Joseph Rotblat, "Leaving the Bomb Project," in *Ending War. The Force of Reason*, eds. Maxwell Bruce & Tom Milne (N.Y.: St.Martin's 1999), pp. 9-15.

to submit nominations for the prize, as other laureates are able to do. In 1995 the IPB nominated Rotblat, who received the award.¹⁶

At the award ceremony for the UN Peacekeeping Forces (1988), I was thrilled at the spectacle provided by the young soldiers of peace on the stage with their UN flags, and I appreciated the addresses by Egil Aarvik and UN Secretary-General Pérez de Cuéllar¹⁷, but I regretted that the Nobel Committee had not selected my nominee, Sir Brian Urquhart, who had succeeded Ralph Bunche to become the guiding spirit of UN peacekeeping operations for many years and who, I thought, clearly belonged in the Nobel Pantheon of Peace. After retiring from the UN, Urquhart has gone on to be an elder statesman for the UN, and many words of wisdom about the world and the UN came from his office in the Ford Foundation in New York across from UN headquarters. Meanwhile, more recent UN peacekeeping operations have met with many difficulties. It could be argued that a Nobel prize for Urquhart in 1988 would in the long run have better served the UN and the cause of peace. It is true that the Nobel Committee usually takes less risk with an institutional selection, which can offer the committee members an opportunity for compromise and which at the time generally draws little public criticism.

Prizes for statesmen and political leaders

The Oslo Committee made its first award to a statesman in 1906, to President Theodore Roosevelt of the United States for his mediation in bringing an end to the Russo-Japanese War, beginning a series of awards to statesmen and political leaders which, with the 1998 prizes to David Trimble and John Hume of Northern Ireland, brings the total in this category to 32, compared to 29 peace activists and organizations.

When Bertha von Suttner replied to Nobel's letter of 1893 about setting up the peace prize, she disagreed with the idea itself, saying that there was no need of incentive to work for peace, what was needed was money for the movement. "What if the Queen of England convoked a conference, would she not be the one for the prize?" was her

¹⁵ Abrams, *Peace Prize*, pp. 155-157, 195-198.

¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 69-71; "Je me souviens", in *Catalogue of the International Peace Bureau Centenary Exhibition 1892-1992*. United Nations Library, Geneva (Geneva U.N. Office. May-June 1992), pp. 2-5.

¹⁷ Abrams, "The Work of the United Nations Peace-Keeping Forces", in *The Nobel Prize Annual, 1988* (N.Y.: IMG Publishing, 1989), pp. 79-93.

rhetorical question. Nobel did not respond, but it is very doubtful if he had any idea that Queen Victoria or any regal personage should get the prize for such an action.¹⁸

Indeed, it was only a few years later that Emperor Nicholas II of Russia did convoke the First Hague Conference of 1899. Fortunately, he was not actually nominated in 1901, only suggested for an honorary prize by a group of five Austrians, so members of the first Nobel Committee did not have to deal with his candidacy.¹⁹ Fortunately, because they would not have known what documents subsequently published have revealed, that the origin of the conference did not arise from high-minded ideals of the tsar, but rather from *Realpolitik* thinking of his ministers, who were looking for a way to keep Austria-Hungary from building more armaments.²⁰

This illustrates the risk which the Nobel Committee runs in giving prizes to statesmen. As I wrote in my book, although Theodore Roosevelt claimed that his main motive was “the disinterested one of putting an end to the bloodshed”, we know that he was more interested in stabilizing the balance of power in the Pacific. In his memoirs he declared that his greatest service to peace was sending the United States battle fleet around the world in 1907. He had not planned to go to Kristiania to give the Nobel lecture until Andrew Carnegie cabled him in Africa, where he was on safari, that if he did not do this, it would prejudice the Norwegians against giving future prizes to Americans. When Roosevelt did give his lecture, he sang the praises of the “virile virtues”.²¹

The Roosevelt award was welcomed by cartoonists who had a field day in drawing Roosevelt with the Dove of Peace on his shoulder and the Big Stick in his hand. Also we now know from recent research that the Nobel Committee was aware of Roosevelt’s warlike propensities from the critical report on Roosevelt of its adviser, Halvdan Koht, but that in the Committee there was “foreign policy” interest in gaining friendship with the United States for Norway.²²

¹⁸ “Bertha von Suttner”, p. 298.

¹⁹ Norwegian Nobel Committee Archives. Nominations, 1901

²⁰ Abrams, “A History of European Peace Societies”, Thesis Harvard University, 1938, pp. 412-415; Arthur Eyffinger, *The 1899 Hague Peace Conference* (The Hague, London, Boston: Kluwer Law International, 1999) pp. 20-25; Jost Dülffer, *Regeln gegen den Krieg? Die Haager Friedenskonferenzen von 1899 und 1907* (Frankfurt/M. Ullstein, 1978), pp. 30-33. (Eiffinger and Dülffer give more weight to the personal influence of Nicholas II in the convoking of the 1899 Conference.)

²¹ Abrams, *Peace Prize*, pp. 40-41, 56-59.

²² Asle Sveen, “The Peace Prizes awarded to Theodore Roosevelt (1906) and Elihu Root (1912)”. Addendum to Ivar Libæk, “The Nobel Peace Prize. Some Aspects of the Decision-making Process during the years 1901-17”. Norwegian Nobel Institute Research Seminar, 2000; Øyvind Tønnesson, “Controversies and Criticism”, <http://www.nobel.se/1895/prize/peace/controversies/index.html>

The statesmen awards present the Nobel Committee with a difficult problem. On the one hand, as Mrs. Lionæs pointed out in the award ceremony for Willy Brandt in 1971 as “an active statesman of international stature he has a greater chance and a greater responsibility than others of making a contribution that may bear the longed-for fruits of peace”.²³ Moreover, a statesman is likely to be named for a recent action, which is consistent with Nobel’s directive in his will that the prize be given for a contribution in the preceding year. On the other hand, this precludes a longer perspective and the examination of documents which could tell more about the statesman’s actual motives and what actually happened. The king in the *New Yorker* cartoon tells the queen who was berating him, “Let history be my judge”. But it was really going to be the historians.

Does a prize not reward a statesman for what in his office he should be doing anyway, keeping the peace? And is it not his highest responsibility to preserve the national interest of his country? At the very best, his policy could be motivated by enlightened national interest, but hardly by that spirit of altruism which characterizes laureates who spend dedicated years of effort for peace. All these objections to statesman awards may be valid, but when the Nobel Committee considers its candidates for international peacemakers, who else but statesmen can by their actions bring about a pacific resolution to an international conflict?

But what does it do for the prize when a statesman of not very high moral standing, like former Premier Sato of Japan receives it?²⁴ Would it be unreasonable to recommend that the Nobel Committee consider this factor when making statesmen awards? Presumably it would enter into the Nobel Committee considerations when the candidacy of President Clinton is being considered. He has earned credit for his peacemaking policies and has been nominated more than once. Many Europeans scoffed at the puritanical qualities of my countrymen during Bill Clinton’s recent Time of Troubles, but I would be surprised to see in a future Nobel Pantheon of Peace Bill Clinton standing next to Mother Teresa.

Until the most recent decades, it was the period between the wars when most statesmen awards were granted. Few of them have stood the test of time. Even the award for President Woodrow Wilson for his contribution to the establishment of the League of Nations has not been uncontested. It made its way through the Nobel Committee with some difficulty and was finally approved only by a divided vote.

²³ *Lex Prix Nobel en 1971* (Stockholm: Norstedt, 1972), p. 79

Wilson's prize illustrates how decisions for active statesmen can be influenced by ongoing events. We happen to know how the committee treated this particular candidacy because one of the members, Halvdan Koht, was a historian and could not refrain from taking notes, which later became available to researchers and have been made good use of by members of this seminar.²⁵

Wilson might have done better if the Nobel Committee had considered him in 1918 before the war ended, when the League was one of his war aims and he was promising "peace without victory". However, the committee had made only one choice while the war was on, an easy institutional one, for the International Red Cross Committee (1917), and there was no award in 1918. When the committee discussed Wilson in 1919, the Versailles Treaty had been negotiated, through which Wilson got his League but at the expense of agreeing to a very harsh treaty with Germany, which liberals and peace activists considered a betrayal.

From Koht's notes we know that there was strong disagreement about Wilson in 1919, and it was decided to postpone the decision until 1920. By then Wilson had failed to secure United States adhesion to the League because of inept domestic policies which have been much criticized. There was worldwide support for his candidacy, however, and by a divided three to two vote the committee finally decided to grant Wilson the postponed 1919 prize.

The statesmen of the 1920s did achieve a measure of reconciliation between the enemies of World War I, but they have generally not been kindly treated by historians. Sir Austen Chamberlain (1925), Aristide Briand and Gustav Stresemann (1926) were celebrated for the Locarno Pacts, which stabilized western European borders but did nothing for eastern ones, where the next war was to begin. Chamberlain was no friend of the League of Nations, and there is still some doubt among historians as to whether Stresemann had given up all his annexationist war aims of the First World War. Of the three, Stresemann was the only one to go to Oslo to give a Nobel lecture, something which not many of the early statesmen winners did.

The Nobel Committee gave half the 1929 prize to Frank Kellogg, U.S. Secretary of State, the co-author with Briand of the Paris Pact for the Outlawry of War. This was the

²⁴ Abrams, *Peace Prize*, pp. 210-212.

²⁵ Ibid., pp. 81-82, 84-88; Asle Sveen, "The Nobel Peace Prize. Some Aspects of the Decision-making Process during the years 1919-1931". Norwegian Nobel Institute Research Seminar, 2000.

last statesman prize during the period of post-war hopefulness, but while it was widely supported by public opinion and other statesmen found it difficult not to sign it, the treaty did not call for any sanction against violators and only wars that were not wars of defense were outlawed, with the war-making states left to make the distinction. In the Nuremberg trials after World War II, a court of the victors convicted the Nazi leaders of the crime of violating the Paris Pact, but there is no agreement among international lawyers that this was justified.²⁶

Among more recent statesmen awards, several have done very poorly in public opinion, the most unpopular of all having been the 1973 award to Henry Kissinger and Le Duc Tho. Le Duc Tho declined his prize, and Kissinger tried to return his when the war ended with North Vietnam having conquered South Vietnam. Kissinger was told that the Nobel Foundation statutes did not permit him to do this. If he had returned the prize, the record of the committee would be better, as would Kissinger's. It is not generally known that he sought to give back his prize, nor has he been given credit for using the prize money to establish a scholarship fund for children of American servicemen killed or missing in Vietnam, which he would have continued if he returned the prize money.²⁷

The Nobel Committee's loss of its first Asian laureate when Le Duc Tho rejected the prize may have been a factor in the ill-advised prize in 1974 for former Premier Eisaku Sato of Japan, for which the Tokyo press offered "the best black humor award" to the Nobel Committee. Critics of the prize suspected that the Nobel Committee had been influenced by the campaign in Sato's behalf which his wealthy supporters had organized. On the other hand, Olav Njølstad, Research Director of the Norwegian Nobel Institute, has pointed out how the Sato prize was consistent with "the general pro-Western world view of the committee".²⁸

Four years later when the Nobel Committee awarded the 1978 prize to Menachem Begin of Israel and Anwar el Sadat of Egypt, rumors circulated in Oslo that the pro-Israel sentiments of Committee Chair Mrs. Lionæs, had been a factor in adding Begin to what would have been a more justifiable individual prize for Sadat. It had been Sadat's dramatic visit to Jerusalem which had opened the way for the peace negotiations at Camp

²⁶ Abrams, *Peace Prize*, pp. 82-84, 100-105; Robert H. Farrell, *Peace in Their Time: The Origins of the Kellogg-Briand Pact*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952.

²⁷ Abrams, *Peace Prize*, pp. 203-208.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp 210-212; Olav Njølstad, "A Long and Winding Road to Nuclear Abolitionism", Norwegian Nobel Institute Research Seminar, 2000.

David, which President Jimmy Carter had brokered six weeks before the Nobel Committee announced the prize.

The negotiations were to have led to a peace treaty, but on the very day that the Nobel Committee made its announcement, October 27, these treaty negotiations were at an impasse, and the negotiating session planned for that afternoon was called off. Sadat did not attend the award ceremony. Begin was there, but out of concern for his safety, the event had been moved from the university hall to the Akershus castle-fortress, where police and soldiers with sub-machine guns could provide effective security.

Subsequent events strengthened the case for Sadat's prize and weakened the claims of Begin. Sadat was assassinated by religious fanatics, angered by his policy toward Israel as well as by suppression of their activities, making him a martyr to peace. On the other hand, Begin's government started a war in Lebanon, which led to calls in the Norwegian parliament to revoke his Nobel peace prize. One more evidence of the risky business of granting this prize to statesmen.²⁹

It will be interesting to know more about the Nobel Committee's discussion of the 1978 prize when and if documents become available. From the memoirs of Baron Stig Ramel, former executive director of the Nobel Foundation, we know that the Nobel Committee wrote him to ask whether Carter could be included with Begin and Sadat even though Carter had not been properly nominated by the deadline. Baron Ramel, with whom I have discussed this, discouraged such a move, inconsistent with the statutes.³⁰

Among the more justifiable prizes for national statesmen, along with those for Cordell Hull and Arthur Henderson already mentioned, there could be those for statesmen whose peacemaking continued after they left office, such as Elihu Root (1912), Willy Brandt (1971), Oscar Arias Sánchez (1987), and Nelson Mandela (1993).

Prizes for human rights

The first prize for human rights is sometimes considered to have been the 1935 award to Carl von Ossietzky, the anti-militarist journalist who was imprisoned in a Nazi concentration camp, but while this was a major factor in the campaign for the prize, the Nobel Committee is not on record for granting the prize to Ossietzky as a victim of the

²⁹ Abrams, *Peace Prize*, pp. 221-226.

³⁰ Stig Ramel, *Pojken i dörren*. Stockholm: Atlantis, 1994, pp. 256-258; Irwin Abrams, Interview with Stig Ramel, Stockholm, 11 May, 1999.

Nazis, even though this was the first prize granted to someone considered beyond the pale by his own government.

The first prize winner to be given the award for human rights outright was Albert Lutuli, leader of the African National Congress and its non-violent struggle against apartheid in South Africa. This was followed by such awards for 14 other individuals, most of them dissidents, and one institution, Amnesty International. If Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders) were to be classified here, this would make a total of 16. Six of these prizes were granted in the final decade of the last century, clearly a favorite category of recent Nobel committees.

In granting prizes for dissidents in conflict with their own government the Nobel Committee has usually explicitly acknowledged that this was a non-violent struggle, like Lutuli's. For *Protest, Power and Change: An Encyclopedia of Nonviolent Action* I was asked to write about Lutuli, Adolfo Pérez Esquivel (1980), Lech Walesa (1983), Desmond Tutu (1984), the Dalai Lama (1989), Aung San Suu Kyi (1991), Rigoberta Menchú Tum (1992) and Nelson Mandela (1993).

Mandela was often nominated during his long prison sentence for his leadership in the struggle against apartheid, but while Lutuli and Tutu were granted the prize for their part in this struggle, Mandela was finally granted the prize not for human rights but for his efforts with Frederik W. de Klerk for the peaceful termination of apartheid and for laying the foundations for a new democratic South Africa. Before he went to prison Mandela had headed the armed wing of the African National Congress, and I suspect that he was not named earlier for the prize because of his commitment to the way of violence.

There has been controversy about the prize for Rigoberta Menchú Tum, a Mayan Indian, who was given the prize for "her work for social justice and ethno-cultural reconciliation". She says in her autobiography that in her struggle for social justice she had not chosen "the armed struggle", and this passage was quoted in his presentation address at the award ceremony by Chairman Francis Sejersted of the Nobel Committee. Critics of her award claimed that she had indeed at one time joined the violent movement of the Guatemalan guerrillas.

In 1999 an American anthropologist, David Stoll, published a critical examination of Rigoberta's autobiography, in which he found many factual inaccuracies. In the volume I edited on Nobel Peace Lectures, for the biographical section from *Les Prix Nobel*, to which the laureates are asked to contribute themselves, I reprinted the biographical summary published by the Rigoberta Menchú Foundation in 1997, which repeats some of

the inaccuracies of the autobiography. Stoll's book and mine were both published in 1999. If a new edition of the Lectures were to be published, I would want to add a footnote to the biographical summary.³¹

Stoll approves of her Nobel Prize and has no question about the atrocities committed by the Guatemalan army, although he feels that her autobiography does not give a correct picture of the relationship of the Mayan peasants to the revolutionary movement. Whether or not Rigoberta approved of the violent struggle at one time, what Sejersted emphasized in his presentation was Rigoberta's contribution today in "maintaining a disarming humanity in a brutal world".

In response to critics who demanded that the Nobel Committee revoke the prize, which could not be done under the Nobel Foundation statutes, Professor Geir Lundestad, Secretary of the Nobel Committee, explained to the press that the decision to award Rigoberta the prize "was not based exclusively or primarily on the autobiography". As in other such cases in recent times, the Nobel Committee engages an expert to write a special report on candidates on the short list about whom the committee's own advisers have no special information. In any case, both the chair of the Nobel Committee, Professor Sejersted, and Professor Lundestad are historians, and when historians use an autobiography as a source, they are quite aware of the factor of selective memory. In Rigoberta's case, the circumstances of the interviews she gave, which provided the foundation for the book, must be taken into consideration, as well as the cultural approach of a Mayan Indian to tribal memories.

Campaigns

The Nobel Committee frowns upon campaigns organized on behalf of candidates. After a short period when the nominees were publicly identified, the committee no longer has released the names and discourages nominators from making their nominations public. Many of these names make their way to the press anyway, so apparently the committee's wishes are not always followed.

³¹ *Les Prix Nobel. The Nobel Prizes 1992* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1993), pp. 31, 157-8; Abrams, "The Work of Rigoberta Menchú Tum" in *The Nobel Prize Annual 1992* (N.Y.: IMG Publishing, 1993), pp. 77-87; Abrams, ed. *Nobel Lectures Peace 1971-1995* 3 vols, Singapore & London: World Scientific, 1997-1999), III, pp. 25, 35, 50; World Scientific, 1997-99, III, 25, 35, 50; David Stoll, *Rigoberta Menchú and the Story of All Poor Guatemalians*. Boulder: Westview, 1999.

It may be of interest to explain why the AFSC committee on which I served, which recommends nominees to the AFSC board, decided to publicize the names of our nominees and the reasons for the choice. This is done not as part of a campaign for our nominee, but solely with the hope that it might be of some help to the nominee in his or her own efforts for peace. Several of our nominees have told us that not only did this mean much to them personally, but that word of Quaker support had actually gained them adherents in their work.³²

Despite the committee's position, there have been a number of successful campaigns. For the very first prize in 1901 there was a campaign for Dunant, organized by Rudolf Müller, a German teacher, and Hans Daae a Norwegian military doctor, who recruited nominators and submitted more pages of documentation than did the nominators of Passy, who had been working for peace for more than thirty years. Dr. Daae also personally convinced Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson, a member of the Committee, who had already decided on Passy, to support Dunant as well.³³

I have studied three other successful campaigns, those for Norman Angell (1933), Carl von Ossietzky (1936) and Emily Greene Balch (1946), in each case having been able to study the records of the organizers. Angell's papers are at Ball State University in Indiana, the archives of the Ossietzky committee are at the International Institute for Social History in Amsterdam, and the Balch campaign records are at the Swarthmore College Peace Collection in Pennsylvania. Angell orchestrated the campaign himself, getting Jane Addams to nominate him and recruiting other nominators. He drafted a letter of nomination for himself to be sent by a friend, which was not in keeping with the letter or the spirit of the Nobel Foundation statutes, which do not permit candidates to nominate themselves.³⁴

The Ossietzky campaign is unique in the history of the peace prize, and I have given it much study.³⁵ It was organized by German exiles in Paris, who did a skilled job of

³² Abrams, "Who Deserves the Nobel Peace Prize? How the AFSC makes its Nominations", in *Friends Journal* (December 1997), pp. 15-17.

³³ Abrams, *Peace Prize*, p. 45; Willy Heudtlass, "J. Henry Dunant and the Events Leading to the Award of the First Nobel Peace Prize". *International Review of the Red Cross* (June 1964), pp. 283-296.

³⁴ Abrams, *Peace Prize*, pp. 120-123.

³⁵ Abrams, "Carl von Ossietzky Retrospective", in *The Nobel Prize Annual 1989* (Boston: N.Y.: G.K.Hall and IMG, 1989), pp. 13-23; "The Multinational Campaign for the Nobel Peace Prize for Carl von Ossietzky", Paper presented at The International Conference: "Peace Movements 1919-1939. A Comparative Study". Stadtschlaining, Austria, September 1991.; "Carl von Ossietzky and the First Nobel Peace Prize for Human Rights" paper presented at the Joint Annual Convention of the British International Studies Association and the International Studies Association, London, March 28 – April 1, 1989. As this current seminar paper indicates, today I would qualify the title of this 1989 paper.

recruiting nominators and arranging for letters of support from eminent intellectuals and politicians. They circulated a brochure with information about Ossietzky, the case for his selection, and a sample letter of nomination, with details about procedures. In this task they were able to call upon a network of German exiles like themselves in England, Sweden, Czechoslovakia, Switzerland, the United States and elsewhere. Willy Brandt, whom I interviewed, was their man in Oslo, recruiting supporters, especially among his Labor Party friends, and sending reports and advice to Paris. They carefully concealed their own part in the campaign so that the German government would be impressed by the quality of the international support. The German government never found out who was running the show.

The primary purpose at the start of the campaign was not to win the prize for Ossietzky, but to turn the spotlight of publicity upon his situation in the concentration camp, hoping to stop his mistreatment and save his life. When I talked recently with Konrad Reisner, the only survivor of the Paris campaigners, he confirmed this once again. It was as the campaign developed that the Paris group realized that what they were doing was a way to speak to the conscience of the world that was far more effective than making general appeals against Nazi atrocities.

The campaign publicity got results. The Nazi government feared that if Ossietzky were to die in the concentration camp, the plans for a great propaganda demonstration at the Berlin Olympic Games would be jeopardized. They ordered their diplomats abroad to support the candidacy for the prize of Baron Pierre de Coubertin, founder of the modern Olympic Games, and called Ossietzky a traitor, because he had been convicted of publishing revelations about the secret rearmament of the Weimar government. Ossietzky was finally given a proper medical examination and then transferred to a hospital in Berlin. But his physical condition had so deteriorated that the campaign, while it did win him the prize, could not save his life. He lived on only for some months in a sanatorium in Berlin before he died.

Agents of the Gestapo saw to it that his ashes were buried in secret, but the news of his death brought outstanding expressions of tribute to his memory from intellectuals and politicians who had taken part in the campaign for his prize. Thomas Mann said that “the figure of this brave and pure minded journalist could grow in time to a fighter for humanity and a martyr of legendary proportions”. To Heinrich Mann the campaign for Ossietzky’s prize had been historic. He declared, “In one moment the conscience of the world arose and the name which it spoke was his”.

That Thomas Mann's predictions have come true was evident in the ceremonies in both East and West Germany in 1989 celebrating the one hundredth anniversary of Ossietzky's birth. When Willy Brandt himself received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1971, he said that Ossietzky's Nobel Prize "was a moral victory over the ruling powers of barbarism" and he wished to express "belated thanks" to the Nobel Committee for making that choice.

In the long view of history there is truth in what Brandt said. At a time when the Nazi and Fascist leaders were riding high internationally, the Nobel Prize for Ossietzky did strike a blow against Hitler in world opinion, and the Nobel Committee was indeed acting courageously in the face of German governmental opposition to its choice. Since the German government assumed, as other governments have mistakenly believed before and since, that the Norwegian Nobel Committee was responsible to the government and not independent, the German Foreign Office ordered its diplomat in Oslo to put pressure on the Norwegian government to prevent the award. However, partly due to this very pressure, but also because of the opposition of conservatives in Norway and other reasons, the Nobel Committee was very careful in its pronouncements to treat Ossietzky as simply an opponent of German rearmament and to avoid even mentioning where he happened to be at the time.

Breaking tradition, the king of Norway and the royal family did not attend the ceremony, either because of not wanting to harm Norway's relations with Germany or because of some sympathy with the conservative opposition in Norway to the prize. Recent research in this seminar has shown that when in 1935 the Nobel Committee had discussed Ossietzky, no member had declared for him. It was only when the campaign picked up steam in 1936 and the committee composition changed that Ossietzky was selected.

Under these circumstances, Chairman Fredrik Stang in his presentation address at the award ceremony, which the German government had not permitted Ossietzky to attend, spoke only of Ossietzky's extraordinary work for peace as a journalist, which had been testified to by "no less than six previous recipients of the Nobel Peace Prize". Stang did not even mention Ossietzky's persecution by the Nazi government. Ossietzky "is not just a symbol", Stang declared, "He is something quite different and something much more. He is a deed; and he is a man. It is on these grounds that Ossietzky has been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, and on these grounds alone".

The Committee had clearly been influenced by the international campaign, although on the record the prize was not granted simply to strike a blow against Hitler. It is in retrospect that this award ennobled the prize.

Emily Greene Balch was, with Jane Addams, co-founder of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and her successor as honorary international president. In the fall of 1945 the WILPF asked Mrs. Mercedes Randall to organize a campaign for the Nobel Peace Prize for Balch. As Chairman Jahn of the Nobel Committee said at the award ceremony, "the name of Emily Balch may not be familiar to many of us here". Randall, indeed, was working from scratch, and she had only six weeks to get everything submitted by the deadline. The job she did was exemplary, enlisting the help of the noted American philosopher John Dewey, using the European network of WILPF branches, and generating a stream of letters to Oslo from a distinguished list of scholars and public figures. Balch took no part in this, but when Randall shared with her some of the results, she commented that she was both "flattered and abased. It is as good as going to one's funeral without having to die first".³⁶

The case of Father Pire (1958) presents a good example of how a campaign can influence the Nobel Committee. Pire actually took the initiative, when looking for funds for his refugee work, to write a begging letter to the Nobel Foundation in Stockholm along with letters to the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations. The Nobel Foundation replied that it gave no grants but the Norwegian Nobel Committee had given prizes for refugee work. Pire then naively began to send descriptions of his refugee projects to Oslo. More to the point was naming one of his refugee villages after Nansen and inviting the Norwegian ambassador to the inauguration. This ambassador and the Belgian ambassador to Norway, as well as some of Pire's well connected friends, now took matters into their own hands, arranging for Pire to be invited to the Norwegian embassy in Brussels when a member of the Norwegian Nobel Committee happened to be there, and to be invited to give a speech in Oslo shortly before the Committee was to meet. They even managed to have King Olav

³⁶ Abrams, *Peace Prize*, pp. 142-146; "The First Quaker Nobel Peace Prize Winner", in *Friends Journal* (December 1996), pp. 18-19; Mercedes Randall, *Improper Bostonian: Emily Greene Balch*. N.Y.: Twayne, 1964. Elinor Murray Despalatovi and Joel M. Halpern, "Emily Greene Balch - Balkan Traveler, Peace Worker and Nobel laureate", in *Black Lambs and Grey Falcons. Women Travellers in the Balkans* eds., John B. Allcock and Antonia Young (Bradford: Bradford University Press, 1991), pp. 35-64.

in attendance. The result was the prize of 1958. Had Pire not been so highly qualified, someone who in his person dignified the prize, this may well not have happened.³⁷

An extensive campaign was mounted for Elie Wiesel (1986), whose nomination parliamentarians from both the United States and the Federal Republic of Germany as well as others were systematically urged to support. Wiesel had nothing to do with these efforts. In attending the very moving award ceremony, in which Committee Chairman Egil Aarvik spoke so eloquently from the heart, I felt that the choice was made entirely on Wiesel's own merits and what he represented as a Holocaust survivor.

In another case the candidate took what seemed to him to be all the right steps, going to greater lengths than anyone else in the history of the peace prize. Armand Hammer was a businessman who became Lenin's favorite capitalist and later took over Occidental Petroleum in 1956 and made it one of the largest industrial companies in the United States. His biographer, Edward Jay Epstein, has impressively documented how he spent vast sums from the Occidental treasury in his vain efforts practically to buy the prize. As Epstein writes, "He wanted the prize because it was an honor so brilliant it would obscure all his past offenses: his money laundering for Soviet intelligence, his bribing of government officials, and his personal use of corporate funds".³⁸

Hammer established the Armand Hammer Conference on Peace and Human Rights, which held meetings in world cities to promote dialogue between the Soviet bloc and the West. At the first conference in Oslo in December 1978, he displayed the Armand Hammer Art Collection there and invited the members of the Nobel Committee to a gala reception. In Stockholm he also exhibited the collection and invited the Swedish royal family and other celebrities to the opening.

Needing a prestigious person as nominator, he asked President Jimmy Carter, who refused. Then he sought to get Prince Charles to persuade Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher to nominate him. Since Prince Charles was a sponsor of United World Colleges, Hammer financed the United States campus for the school. When Prince Charles finally declined to support Hammer's candidacy, he courted Begin with gifts and promises for Israel, and Begin nominated him in 1988. A remaining obstacle was Hammer's conviction for certain crimes in 1976. To clear his name he gave large gifts to the Republican Party, seeking a presidential pardon. President Ronald Reagan disappointed him, but in August

³⁷ Abrams, *Peace Prize*, pp. 167-170.

³⁸ Edward Jay Epstein, *Dossier. The Secret History of Armand Hammer*. NY. Random House, 1996. "The Quest for the Nobel Prize", pp. 333-343.

1989 Hammer received a pardon for compassion from President George Bush. However, in December 1990 Hammer died of cancer at the age of ninety-two.

Recent prizes

In the decade of the nineties the Nobel Committee gave a diversity of prizes, 4 for individual champions of human rights in 1991, 1992, and 1996; one more for an institution, if the Doctors are counted; 8 statesmen and political leaders, 2 in 1993, 3 in 1994, and 2 in 1998; 4 for the organized peace movement, an individual and an institution in each year, 1995 and 1997.

Of these, the human rights prizes stand out. In each case, Aung San Suu Kyi in 1991,³⁹ Rigoberta in 1992, and Bishop Belo and Ramos-Horta in 1996,⁴⁰ the recipients were worthy persons, and their causes were aided by the prize. Suu Kyi is still restricted in her movements by the military dictators of her country, but she is no longer under the same house arrest and she and her cause have been given worldwide publicity. Tragically, her dying husband was refused a permit by the military government to visit Suu Kyi before his death. For me, she remains one of the noblest figures in the Nobel Pantheon of Peace, courageous, dedicated, deeply spiritual, prepared to make untold personal sacrifices for her Buddhist convictions.

Despite the controversy about Rigoberta's book, the prestige of the prize helped her to move toward greater leadership of the indigenous peoples of the world, aiding them to gain status with the United Nations. Now leading a more settled life with her husband and son, she has written the second installment of her autobiography, this time perhaps with more control of the content.

Of these human rights prizes, the awards to Bishop Belo and José Ramos-Horta may have had the most immediate influence, bringing support to their little country of East Timor at the time when it was most needed. Now in the transition to independence, both laureates are much aided in taking leadership by their Nobel prize status.

The prizes of the nineties for statesmen and political leaders, unsurprisingly, have done less well than these human rights prizes. Best of all were the awards to Mandela and de Klerk of South Africa for their successful joint efforts in ending apartheid and planning

³⁹ Abrams, "The Work of Aung San Suu Kyi", in *The Nobel Prize Annual 1991* (NY: IMG Publishing, 1992) pp.77-85.

elections, but there were strained relationships between the two soon after they left Oslo, if not before. As head of state Mandela has gone on to world stature, and in his personal life is happily remarried. De Klerk has had to deal with questions of his responsibility for certain excesses of his government during apartheid. He has withdrawn from political life, and his complicated marital affairs have received public attention.⁴¹

The other political awards represent less than a success story. Nobel peace prizes have featured the Middle East since the well-earned prize in 1950 for Ralph Bunche,⁴² and continuing with the 1978 awards to Begin and Sadat. To many observers this process reached a high point with the prizes for Arafat, Rabin and Peres in 1994, celebrating the “Oslo Accords” reached by secret negotiations in that city.⁴³ After the murder of Rabin, however, the peace negotiations were stalled during the government of Netanyahu, and now even though Rabin has a successor in Ehud Barak, they are moving very, very slowly, and the United States has had to be brought in to serve as mediator. It is difficult to see how fundamental issues like the return of Palestinian refugees, the status of Jerusalem and the Israeli settlements can be fairly dealt with in negotiations between a powerful Israel and a weaker Palestinian Authority. Meanwhile, Arafat’s Palestinian government resembles an autocratic state more than a democracy.

In Northern Ireland, the Good Friday agreements for which the 1998 prize was given to John Hume and David Trimble have been in a state of suspension for many months, although there have been some hopeful signs in very recent news.⁴⁴ The non-political award of the 1976 prize to Mairead Corrigan Maguire and Betty Williams recognized an important effort for reconciliation between Catholics and Protestants,⁴⁵ but the spectacular marches ended, and there is no agreement as to whether there was any lasting effect. However, as individuals the two laureates have continued their work for peace. Betty Williams gives much appreciated lectures for peace in the United States,

⁴⁰ Abrams, “Bishop Belo and José Ramos-Horta”, in *The Nobel Prize Annual 1996* (NY: IMG Publishing, 1997), pp. 56-67

⁴¹ Abrams, “The Work of Nelson Mandela and F.W. de Klerk”, in *The Nobel Prize Annual 1993* (NY: IMG Publishing, 1994): pp. 58-69; Mark Gevisser, “Strange Bedfellows”, in *Foreign Affairs*, 79, no. 1 (January/February 2000), pp. 173-178; *Mandela: The Authorized Biography* by Anthony Sampson (NY: Knopf, 1999) and *The Last Trek – A New Beginning: An Autobiography* by Fredrik W. de Klerk (NY: St. Martin's, 1999), a perceptive review essay by a South African journalist.

⁴² Abrams, *Peace Prize*, pp. 152-155. This entry is revised in the new edition of this book to be published in 2001; “Ralph J. Bunche” in *Der Friedens-Nobelpreis von 1901 bis heute*. 12 vols. (Munich & Zug/Switzerland: Edition Pacis, 1987-1993), 6, pp. 88-97.

⁴³ Abrams, “The Work of Yitzhak Rabin, Shimon Peres and Yasir Arafat”, in *The Nobel Prize Annual 1994* (NY: IMG Publishing, 1995), pp. 58-69.

⁴⁴ “David Trimble” and “John Hume” in new edition of *Encyclopedia Americana*, to be published in 2001.

⁴⁵ Abrams, *Peace Prize*, pp. 216-219.

where she now lives. Mairead has remained in Northern Ireland, still working with a diminished Peace People organization, but in her own person having attained significant stature through her international work for peace.

As for the two peace organizations which received the prize, in 1995 it was a remarkable individual, Joseph Rotblat, who stole the show and conspicuously continues his work, while the Pugwash Conferences, his co-laureate, has remained little known to the public. The consequences for Jody Williams and the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, who shared the 1997 prize, have been somewhat different. The ICBL has continued to be a dynamic movement, with many national ICBL branches working hard for the implementation of the Ottawa Treaty and communicating through a very active cyberspace network. Jody Williams, who was awarded the prize for her very significant work as coordinator of the ICBL, now serves as ambassador with speeches and diplomatic duties, but no longer provides the same leadership as before.⁴⁶

Looking at the work of the Norwegian Nobel committees throughout the century, I feel that the high regard in which the peace prize is held everywhere is well deserved. In revising my Nobel Peace Prize book of 1988, I will not change my judgment that the Norwegian committees have tried to remain faithful to the highest aim of Alfred Nobel “however the circumstances and the thinking of the time may have influenced a particular award and whatever the criticisms from advocates of different conceptions of peace”.

Recent research has begun to reveal more about the discussions under the great candelabra in the committee conference room at the Norwegian Nobel Institute which were always supposed to be kept confidential. We are hearing more about individual differences and what were called “unpleasantnesses”. To me, what is most important are the results of those discussions, and in this regard the general record of committee decisions over the years is a very good one.

Whether it was the spirit of Alfred Nobel looking on from his portrait in the conference room, the presence of laureates past in their pictures on the wall or some other Guardian Angels whose guidance so often prevailed, we cannot know. Perhaps it was summed up best by Professor John Sanness, then committee chairman, when he said in his presentation address of 1980, “The Norwegian Nobel Committee has frequently been accused, both at home and abroad, of looking at the world through Norwegian spectacles, from the standpoint of Norwegian attitudes and interests”. Sanness gladly accepted the

accusation. I think that it is true and that Norwegian spectacles have had much to do with the success of the Norwegian Nobel Committee. Nobel knew what he was doing when in his will he confided the awarding of his prizes for “champions of peace” to Norwegians.

The statesmen and political leaders who have won the recent prizes, except for Mandela, whose high stature was not increased by the prize, do not impress me as do Suu Kyi, Rotblat, Rigoberta, Bishop Belo, and Ramos-Horta. Sadly, Rabin has joined Ossietzky, Martin Luther King, jr., Hammarskjöld and Sadat in that regretted number whose work for peace led to their martyrdom.

As in 1962, for me it is still the individuals who represent the greatest glory of the Nobel Peace Prize. In speaking of individuals and institutions, Bertha von Suttner wrote of “the energy, the dedication, the sacred fire which fills the heart and spirit --- this is what propels a movement”. It is this sacred fire which fills the heart and spirit of so many of those to whom Norwegian Nobel Committees have granted the peace prize. It is these great spirits whom the Nobel Committees have set before us --- it is they, despite the barbarism and the “pettiness of human folly” of which Nobel wrote and which we still see too much around us --- it is they who can still give us faith in and hope for humanity.

⁴⁶ Abrams, “The International Campaign to Ban Landmines and Jody Williams” in *The Nobel Prize Annual 1997* (NY: IMG Publishing, 1998), pp. 54-67.

