INTERVIEW WITH STÉPHANE HESSEL

The son of writer Franz Hessel, Stéphane Hessel was born in Berlin in 1917. In 1924, he and his parents moved to Paris. He became a French citizen in 1937, and began studying philosophy at the École Normale Supérieure. After joining Charles de Gaulle's Free French Forces, Hessel went to London in 1941 and returned to France as an agent. In July 1944, he was arrested by the Gestapo, tortured and deported to Buchenwald. Hessel was able to escape execution by exchanging identities with a comrade who perished in the camp and was later transferred to the Rottleberode and Dora concentration camps. When the Dora camp was evacuated in advance of the approaching Allied troops, Hessel finally succeeded in escaping from the transport train. Immediately after the end of the Second World War, Hessel joined the French diplomatic service, where his career included postings to the United Nations and to several North African nations.
Rainer Huhle interviewed Stéphane Hessel at his home in March 2009. The interview was conducted in German. The footnotes are by Rainer Huhle.

Rainer Huhle: In your book, you wrote that you became a diplomat as a result of your experience of the concentration camp. I found that quite surprising, since it's hard to imagine Buchenwald and Dora as the motivation for a diplomatic career. Could you elaborate on this a bit?

Stéphane Hessel: Two different factors played a role. On the one hand, many different nations were represented at Buchenwald. People from all over Europe were interned there, and we had a sense that together we needed to achieve something larger than that terrible concentration camp. There were also Germans at Buchenwald, and in fact the first inmates at Buchenwald were German. In the camps, it seemed that when we succeeded in speaking with each other – which wasn't always easy – we discovered that we all shared the same experience, the experience of suddenly being swept away by the horrifying wave of Nazi terror. So the concentration camp prompted my earliest identification with an international perspective. That was where I first assumed an international outlook, and the camps were responsible for awakening my interest in diplomacy.
On the other hand, I lived through one of the longest wars. I enlisted in the French army in 1939, and I wasn't at liberty again until May 1945 – six years later. After that long experience of war, I decided to abandon scholarship, to leave the École Normale and philosophy, and instead work on something I found personally meaningful, something in an international field. "Diplomat" is of course a complex term. In a sense, a diplomat strives

to remain aloof from direct action. But on the other hand, after that terrible war, it seemed to me that refusing to take part in international relations would mean remaining on the sidelines. As Frenchmen, we are naturally interested in what is happening in France, but we also need to remain engaged with what is happening outside our own country. So even then, as a former concentration camp inmate, I believed that Europe and the rest of the world were important as well.

RH: Did you experience Buchenwald as a sort of international microcosm?

SH: I arrived in Buchenwald with the "Group of 36." We were thirty-six altogether, and sadly thirty-one of us were executed and hanged. We were from Belgium, France and England, and there was also one American and one Irishman, so it was very international. The same is true of my rescuers: Eugen Kogon, a true German, and Balachowski, a Frenchman of Polish extraction. Buchenwald was not quite the Café du Dôme of 1939, but it was a gathering of immense diversity. I was also incredibly fortunate to be able to speak good German, which made it possible for me to speak with the SS man who arrested me when I escaped. I was able to persuade him to transfer me to a punishment commando rather than having me hanged. That was my first opportunity to speak with someone, to speak with an enemy and try to change his mind. When I was arrested in Paris, I also had the sense that I might be able to negotiate with the people who had arrested me, as I had already learned to negotiate and I spoke English as well as German and French. I was also fortunate in that I didn't give up my friends after my arrest, which also entailed a kind of diplomacy. So what was it that I as a young man faced, during my years of arrest and imprisonment in a concentration camp? As a young man, I perceived myself as someone with comrades, with whom I could share my experiences, but also someone with enemies, with whom I had to come to terms in some fashion.

RH: I see what you mean, and in fact it did strike me that you must have been a skilled diplomat in the concentration camp, since you twice succeeded in negotiating to save your own life. In later years, when you were at the United Nations, you were known to say that your greatest and most important challenge was your work with the Commission on Human Rights. Was the term "human rights" ever mentioned at Buchenwald or Dora? Did you and your fellow inmates have any sense that you were not only being subjected to horrific brutality, but that your human rights were also being violated? You are French, and human rights have always played a greater role in French national identity than elsewhere. Were you already aware of the concept of human rights in the camps, or did that come later?

SH: No – in hindsight, of course we realized that our human rights were grossly violated in the camps. But I can't recall ever discussing the fact that our human rights were being violated at the time. It's possible we did so, but unlikely. Our enemies were the Nazis – fascism and National Socialism. We talked about democracy and National Socialism.

RH: That's why it's interesting that you so quickly turned to the issue of human rights. In Germany and in much of France and the rest of the world, the lesson appeared simple: anti-fascism. But you were quick to recognize the international context, and from that you took up the question of human rights. Did you meet Mr. Laugier by chance, or had you already envisioned taking that path?[1]

SH: That was sheer chance, or rather a happy coincidence. I should mention that my father-in-law, Mirkine-Guetzevitch, was a lawyer and a Russian expert on the French revolution. (I had already known my wife for

1 Henri Laugier (1888-1973) was a physician and academic who founded the Centre national de la recherche scientifique (CNRS) in 1939. In cooperation with de Gaulle's government-in-exile, Laugier tried to save French researchers from the Nazis and established the foundation for the reorganization of French science after the war. In 1946, Laugier became Deputy Secretary-General of the UN. He was involved in founding the WHO, UNESCO and UNICEF and also contributed to drafting the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

two years when we married in 1939.)[2] My father-in-law and I often debated whether Robespierre or Danton was more important to the Revolution. So I was already fairly familiar with the concept. Laugier, who became my employer, was a friend of my father-in-law. In this sense, the French Revolution and the 1789 Declaration of the Rights of Man played a significant role in our relationship. I also greatly admired Franklin Roosevelt, and even before the end of the war, I had heard of the Four Freedoms of the Atlantic Charter, which marked the emergence of human rights.[3] Establishing the United Nations was important to me, and of course the fact that the UN was founded on the declaration of human rights was of great interest to me as well. Then in 1946, my father-in-law was put in charge of the *Annuaire de droits de l´homme*, and was responsible for selecting and editing the texts. The UN Charter mentioned the term human rights, and when I arrived in New York, I knew I wanted to be involved with human rights. The fact that it was Laugier who employed me, and Laugier who directed his team in their collaboration with the drafters of human rights – this was a coincidence, but a happy one.

RH: To begin with, the UN met in a suburb of New York, at Lake Success on Long Island…

SH: Yes, in a basement factory. That was a strange feeling for me, because I had only just left another basement factory, at the Rottleberode concentration camp, and both of these factories were used for military aircraft production.[4]

RH: The Nuremberg Trials had begun by the time you started working there. Did you follow the trials from Lake Success?

SH: Of course. The trials were immensely important. The project of reconstruction, the invaluable effort of founding the UN, the UNRRA, which rebuilt the European and Asian states, and the Nuremberg trials – these were the key issues of the time.[5] We followed them very closely, and we had friends in Nuremberg. My wife's uncle Léon Poliakov, for example, attended the trials in Nuremberg with Edgar Faure.[6] So we were aware of the trials, and naturally we followed them from afar.

RH: One of the reasons I'm interested in this question is because it often seems there were two separate and distinct worlds: one world centered around Nuremberg and other places where criminal prosecutions took place, and a second world centered around the United Nations, populated by individuals who were engaged in more forward-looking and constructive human rights and international work. I would even say there was competition between the two worlds. Raphael Lemkin, for example, disapproved of the members of the Com-

2 Boris Mirkine-Guetzevitch was a Russian lawyer. After the February Revolution, Mirkine-Guetzevitch became a representative of the Mensheviks. He was forced to flee after the October Revolution. During his exile in France, he became a famous constitutional lawyer and a founder of political science in his adopted home. He was also a fervent defender of human rights, and joined the Ligue des droits de l'homme. Mirkine-Guetzevitch was forced into exile again in 1940 and went to New York, where he became a co-founder of the International League of Human Rights. For the rest of his life he taught at several institutions in New York, including Columbia University and the New School for Social Research. Nonetheless, Mirkine-Guetzevitch continued to publish his many academic writings in French. In 1946 he began publishing the *UN Yearbook on Human Rights*.

3 In his State of the Union address in January 1941, President Roosevelt propounded the Four Freedoms (freedom of speech and expression, freedom of religion, freedom from want, freedom from fear). In August of the same year, Roosevelt and Churchill proclaimed these freedoms in the Atlantic Charter, which established a vision for the new postwar world order.

4 The camp in Rottleberode on the edge of the Harz mountains was a sub-camp of Buchenwald and Dora-Mittelbau. In Dora, inmates assembled V-2 rockets; in Rottleberode they assembled aircraft parts.

5 The United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) was founded during the war by the Allies for future reconstruction and support of refugees. It was subsumed into the UN after the UN was founded. All member states contributed to it on a fixed-rate basis.

6 Léon Poliakov was born in St. Petersburg in 1910 and fled to France with his parents in 1920. He studied law and later became a leading historian of anti-Semitism. His best-known work is the four-volume *History of Anti-Semitism*. He was a co-founder of the Centre de documentation juive contemporaine, which began documenting Nazi atrocities in 1943. Poliakov also served as consultant to the French delegation at the International Military Tribunal in Nuremberg. In 1951 he published the first comprehensive study on the Holocaust in France, the *Bréviaire de la haine*, compiled with reference to the material available to him in Nuremberg. Edgar Faure was a lawyer, a member of the French Resistance and a member of General de Gaulle's government in exile after he fled France. He served as French counsel for the prosecution at the Nuremberg Trials. He also served twice as French Prime Minister and as a minister in various governments.

mission on Human Rights, and believed they were stealing his thunder.[7] And conversely, many of the people involved with the Commission on Human Rights weren't interested in what was happening at the Nuremberg Trials. What was your impression at the time?

SH: The people who drew up the Universal Declaration of Human Rights quite clearly did not want to be influenced by Nuremberg. They believed Nuremberg belonged to the past, whereas they were looking to the future. Of course there were also some personal issues at stake. Lemkin, for example, was strongly supported by my boss, Mr Laugier, and made every effort to push through the United Nations Convention on Genocide on the day before the Universal Declaration on Human Rights.

So in that sense, there were two conflicting priorities: how to come to terms with this terrible enemy we had defeated, and how to shape and create our new future. I can no longer remember how much of this might have been tied up with personal issues. At the time, it seemed to me that no one was terribly interested in that. We were glad for the Nuremberg trials, but preferred to focus on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

RH: In addition to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, there were two other very important issues at the time – drafting the Human Rights Convention, and establishing a framework for human rights implementation. Of course, the criminal prosecutions were central to the issue of implementation, although it seems that Nuremberg played only a minor role in that respect. What was René Cassin's role at the time?

SH: Cassin actually played a very important role. For a start, when it came to drafting the text, Cassin was the best writer in our group. We had to decide whether to write in French or English. Lauterpacht and the other British contributors to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights favored a draft that was very different from the one envisaged by Cassin.[8] Cassin was substantially influenced by the French Declaration of the Rights of Man of 1789 and was always urging us in that direction. He was popular with other members, especially the Latin Americans. So Cassin certainly played a key role. John Peters Humphrey was known to claim that he was the key figure in the process, rather than Cassin, and of course Humphrey was correct to an extent. The Secretariat laid the groundwork for the declaration, and when you lay the groundwork it is only natural to believe the groundwork is the most important thing. And there is a great deal of truth to this. But the difficulties we encountered in formulating the articles, the different ideas that had to be debated – these were mainly a conflict between East and West. After all, the Russians played an important role (in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights).

But to return to Cassin: first, he was a personal friend. Cassin and I were both in de Gaulle's government-in-exile in London, where he was very influential. Cassin was also a friend of my father-in-law, and that relationship was also very important to me. I collaborated with Cassin very closely, and I was always there when he was trying to push things through. But it's hard to say who was the most important person there. Eleanor Roosevelt was very important, for example. She maintained cohesion and made sure that we didn't stray too far apart, which was no easy task. In 1948, the tension between East and West was palpable, and in fact they (the Russians and the socialist states) abstained in the end.

RH: While we're on the subject of Cassin, there is one thing that troubles me somewhat, which is seldom mentioned in his biographies: I don't understand how Cassin was able to reconcile his work for human rights with

7 Raphael Lemkin was a Polish lawyer of Jewish descent. His 1944 study on the Nazis' extermination policies in Europe, *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe*, coined the term "genocide." Lemkin played a key role in achieving recognition of the crime of genocide in international law.

8 Hersch Lauterpacht (1897-1960) was born to Jewish parents from Galicia in East-Central Europe. He studied law in Lviv and then in Vienna. After emigrating to London in 1923, Lauterpacht became one of the most influential experts on constitutional and international law of his generation. In 1951, Lauterpacht was appointed to the United Nations International Law Commission and from 1954 until his death in 1960 he was a judge at the International Court of Justice. During the war, Lauterpacht helped develop British policy on war crimes. He was critical of the work done by the UN Commission on Human Rights because he believed it failed to anchor human rights adequately in binding legal norms.

French foreign policy in those years. Cassin had already been a senior civil servant in Algeria, and Algeria and Africa as a whole were the springboard for de Gaulle's return to Europe in the Second World War. De Gaulle frequently mentioned the topic of empire, and I've never found any suggestion that Cassin was disturbed by French colonialism. Cassin's name never appears in the debates on the struggle against colonialism. How is it possible to reconcile the proclamation of universal human rights, while at the same time continuing to exercise colonial rule in Vietnam, Algeria, Tunisia and sub-Saharan Africa?

SH: Cassin was a patriot and at that time the French took colonialism for granted. The French told themselves, "We are a great empire, a colonial power, and we take this very seriously. Our motives are entirely honorable, and we are bringing freedom to the unfortunate Africans." Later, of course, this would change. In the 1950s, Cassin and many of my friends pushed for decolonization. Cassin often urged the end of colonialism, particularly in the case of Algeria. During the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Cassin and Madame Roosevelt were able to convince the authors that the preamble should apply not only to the member states, but also to the populations of their dependent territories. In other words, it was already clear that decolonization, which was underway in India, would be the pre-eminent issue of the next half century, or at least the next twenty-five years. In this sense, Cassin was not someone who opposed decolonization. But Cassin was not the official representative of France. Like everyone else, he was just one individual within this larger group. In fact, that was one of the innovations at the time: the Secretary General personally selected the members of the Commission on Human Rights, naturally in consultation with the principal nations.[9] There was always tension between Cassin and Alexandre Parodi, who was the French ambassador to the UN. It was Parodi's job to make sure that nothing in the declaration would create difficulties for France with its colonies. And in fact, the rights of colonial populations were formulated in a very oblique manner in order to ensure that no objections would be raised. This was an issue not only for France, but for Great Britain and the Netherlands as well.

To return to Cassin: he was a true democrat who helped found not only the national commission but also the European Court of Human Rights. He also lobbied for the Council of Europe. He was a true defender of human rights. So it was of course clear to him that many human rights were not being respected in the colonial states. But at the time, there was still no awareness that this was a major problem that should have been addressed long ago. We were full of confidence and we believed France was at home in Algeria, that France had treaties with Morocco and Tunisia, and that France had colonies. We took pride in this colonization.

RH: From today's point of view, it's very disturbing. This wonderful declaration of human rights was drafted in 1947-48, at the very same time that the powers who had contributed in such a positive fashion to its drafting were carrying out massacres in Madagascar, Indonesia and Malaysia. How could it have been possible to continue with the former, without calling a halt to the latter, as if these were two separate planes of existence? The British simply excluded their colonies from the scope of the declaration. That was quite apparent, and in a certain sense it was also honest. But in the Netherlands, for example, it was completely swept under the carpet. As far as France was concerned, it appears this contradiction was never really addressed.

SH: No. I think you're absolutely right although I'm not sure if "addressed" is the right word. Rather, I would say that the issue was perceived differently by different nations. For example, at the time many believed the French empire was in need of modernization. The methods that dated back to the 1884 Berlin Conference were obsolete, and the nations had to be brought together. France had colonies in West Africa and Central Africa,

9 That method of appointment was employed only in the initial phase, especially in 1946, when the core commission was comprised of only nine members. Beginning in 1947, the now 18 members of the Commission on Human Rights were appointed by their respective governments.

and France also wanted to keep giving Algeria another chance. An attempt to gradually modernize the colonial states was already underway. Pressure from the UN was ultimately decisive in bringing about decolonization in a very brief period of time, and all the colonies gained their independence in a span of less than 17 years. The UN turned up the pressure, but France, the Netherlands, Spain and Portugal continued to resist decolonization. But this did not entail denying the colonies human rights, as the British had done. Instead they hoped to do a better job tending to the colonies, and to recognize human rights there gradually.

RH: You mentioned Roosevelt and the Atlantic Charter. The Atlantic Charter ended up being something of a time bomb in the colonies. As a young man, Nelson Mandela embraced it enthusiastically, and the Charter spurred Ferhat Abbas to write his first declaration for Algeria. The Charter was quite explosive, and Churchill was rather displeased by that. In this respect, it's not surprising that human rights became finally visible at an international level. They represented a tremendous boost to the colonies' efforts to gain independence. That's why I find it all the more astonishing that so many Europeans remained so blind to the situation.

SH: I agree, although "blind" is perhaps too strong a word. I think countries such as France, the Netherlands, Portugal and so on soon realized that colonial rule had run its course. Now that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was on the table, it was time to work towards the liberation of the colonized nations. Nevertheless, for the colonial states of the period, the conditions of this liberation, and the time-frame in which it was to be accomplished, were important political concerns. The general sense at the time was that the various options and possibilities should be explored with care, and that this would require time, and that ultimately liberation would become reality. Thus when de Gaulle gave his speech in Brazzaville in 1944 in which he said that in the future everyone would become free, this meant the end of the colonial era.[10]

RH: There are some historians who believe that de Gaulle had already decided to grant Algerian independence in 1958, and that de Gaulle in essence set off the Algiers coup. What do you think?

SH: I don't know whether that's in fact true, but I do believe that de Gaulle had known since Brazzaville that things were headed in that direction. But how would it be possible to ensure that our beloved France would retain special relations with her former colonies? The British maintained relations via the Commonwealth, and the Queen was the head of the Commonwealth.

RH: Returning again to France: when the Algerian War broke out, the great human rights issue in France was torture and the struggle against torture. Were you involved with this at the time through your connections with human rights organizations? And what about the other members of the Resistance, who had fought the Nazis inside and outside France (for example in London)? Did they all take part in the struggle against torture in France or were there differences of opinion?

SH: Yes, there were. I myself joined the Club of 1958, also known as the Club Jean Moulin.[11] I worked with them, and our first priority was the liberation of Algeria. We sent letters to the parliament saying that it was time to liberate Algeria.

RH: But you didn't sign the Manifesto of the 121?[12]

10 On January 30, 1944, de Gaulle opened the Brazzaville Conference in what is today the capital of the Democratic Republic of Congo and what was at the time the temporary seat of the French government-in-exile. At the conference, he made a number of ambiguous references to the possibility that the African states might be granted greater rights. See http://www.charles-de-gaulle.org/article.php3?id_article=399, accessed on April 14, 2009 (original in French).

11 The Club Jean Moulin was named after the famous French Resistance fighter Jean Moulin, who was murdered by the Nazis. It was founded by former members of the Resistance, including Hessel, after the events of 1958 triggered a political crisis in France. Made up of leftist and liberal intellectuals and politicians, the Club was frequently very influential in France and its *Bulletin* was regularly reprinted in Le Monde. The Club was dissolved after the political upheavals of May 1968.

12 The *Déclaration sur le droit à l'insoumission dans la guerre d'Algérie* was signed in 1960 by 121 leading French intellectuals, including Claude Lanzmann, Simone de Beauvoir and Jean-Paul Sartre as well as other figures from the arts such as the actress Simone Signoret and composer Pierre Boulez. The call for civil disobedience alleged that the war in Algeria was not lawful. Many of the signatories lost their jobs as a result.

SH: No. For some reason I wasn't in Paris at the time. Perhaps I was already in Algeria, but at any rate I did not sign the 121. Well, I was not personally involved but of course I was always in touch with the various groups working for decolonization. I was especially interested in Algeria. I lobbied to be sent to Algeria to help establish a new relationship between a free Algeria and France. The term "decolonization" is extremely complex, and entails not only liberation but also a certain responsibility: are these nations ready to maintain their own independence? Do they need more help? If so, what kind of help and for how long? We couldn't simply say, "We're leaving now, and they'll have to set everything up themselves."

RH: These were certainly difficult political issues, but the human rights question was of course bound up primarily with the torture issue. I assume that Cassin and others were also involved. Were you in the Ligue des Droits de l´Homme?[13]

SH: Yes. I was always a member, since the end of the war. Both the Ligue and also Cassin and Teitgen were trustworthy organizations, trustworthy people.[14] But we weren't satisfied. We always sensed the French government was influenced by the colonialists and it was hard to get away from that. Pierre Mendès-France was a good friend of ours and we liked the way he treated Bourgiba, for example.[15] But Mendès-France did not call for immediate independence either. Instead he pushed for greater freedom and autonomy, which would lead to the ultimate goal of independence. We felt we could not simply walk away. It was a complex situation.

RH: You've written there came a time when you were very disappointed by the UN, and were then glad to be able to leave. How do you see the development of human rights work at the UN since?

SH: I still view it very favorably, and believe their work is extremely important. There is no other place apart from the UN where human rights can find their rightful place. The centrality of human rights in the UN Charter means that whatever happens, how the various institutions develop depends on the states. The institutions are run by states and states can behave badly. For example, the majority of states in the Human Rights Council at the moment are not democratic states, and they can cause difficulties, as was demonstrated by the Durban Review Conference against Racism. It's possible there will be many more conflicts. That is sad, very sad. It can also be tragic, but on the whole, progress is still being made. For one, the Council is now calling those states to account, which is very important.[16] And we now have a number of international tribunals, one of which has indicted Omar al-Bashir, the first head of state to be indicted while in office.[17] In other words, High Commissioner Pillay, the Human Rights Council and various non-governmental organizations are continuing to build upon the architecture of human rights.[18] Much work is being done within the aegis of the UN to protect human rights, but it continues to be limited by state sovereignty. So the struggle remains a difficult one.

13 Founded in June 1898 in the wake of the Dreyfus affair, the Ligue des Droits de l´Homme is one of the oldest civic organizations for human rights.

14 Pierre-Henri Teitgen (1908–1997) was a member of the Resistance and of de Gaulle's government-in-exile and transitional government. As Minister for Justice in 1945–1946, Teitgen organized the trials of leaders of the Vichy Government. Later he made a significant contribution to drafting the European Convention on Human Rights.

15 Pierre Mendès-France (1907-1982) was a member of Léon Blum's Popular Front government in the 1930s. During the war, Mendès-France was a member of the Resistance and of de Gaulle's government-in-exile. After the war he served as a minister in de Gaulle's provisional government. A fervent anti-colonialist, when French forces were defeated by the Vietnamese Communists at Dien Bien Phu in 1954, Mendès-France formed a government to address the French withdrawal from Indochina. As a result, Mendès-France was subjected to an anti-Semitic smear campaign, with Jean-Marie Le Pen as one of its leaders. Mendès-France led talks on Tunisian independence with Habib Bourgiba, leader of the Tunisian independence movement, and over Algeria he broke with the majority of his party, who backed the war and later de Gaulle's Fifth Republic. This break spelled the end of Mendès-France's political career.

16 The Human Rights Council, created in 2006 to replace the Commission on Human Rights, introduced a process known as the Universal Periodic Review (UPR). This involves a review of the human rights records of all 192 UN member states, including the members of the Council themselves, once every four years.

17 The International Criminal Court indicted Omar Hassan Ahmed Al Bashir, President of Sudan, on March 4, 2009, and issued an arrest warrant against him on counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Darfur.

18 South African judge Navanethem Pillay first served as judge in the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda in Arusha and then on the International Criminal Court in The Hague. Her four-year term as High Commissioner for Human Rights began in 2008.

RH: If the Charter were a soccer match between the principle of sovereignty and the principle of human rights, we would have to say the debate resulted in a draw. The relationship between sovereignty and human rights remains unresolved in the Charter.

SH: Yes, we have both Article 2(7) and Article 55.[19]

RH: In fact, we're still in much the same place as before. The two articles co-exist.

SH: The two articles are still in force because they were part of the original Charter, which has never undergone real reform.

RH: If my memory serves me correctly, the original plan was to hold a conference ten years later to review the Charter and consider amendments. But this conference never took place.

SH: The conference didn't take place. Twenty years into the Charter, another attempt was made to conduct a review, but this again failed to materialize. Today we are still in the same position as 1945. But there's also a great willingness to adapt. The Security Council has the power to do more, and sometimes it exercises this power. We are making progress. Today the 192 nations include many more democratic governments than 50 years ago. The example of Amnesty International is quite interesting in this respect. Every year, Amnesty International publishes a report on abuses in individual states. Today, only a few states commit a significant number of abuses, and even those states generally do not commit extremely serious abuses. Governments and heads of state are heavily influenced by public opinion and by pressure from states that wish to promote developments within the UN.

Looking back at development of the UN, the most wonderful period was the formative years from 1945 to 1948. We were still buoyed by the battle against fascism and the hope for a new and better world. That was followed by a long period until about 1989, which was marked by the Cold War and the impasse between the two power blocs. But even during this period, there were significant advances, including the major human rights pacts. After 1989, the UN was shaped by a series of major thematic conferences, including the 1993 Human Rights Conference in Vienna and the Climate Conference in Rio, which set the course for new developments. Finally, the Bush administration marked a new ice age, which we hope has now come to an end.

19 Article 2(7) of the UN Charter proclaims the sovereignty of all its members: "Nothing contained in the present Charter shall authorize the United Nations to intervene in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state or shall require the Members to submit such matters to settlement under the present Charter; but this principle shall not prejudice the application of enforcement measures under Chapter VII." Article 55 (c) sets as a goal for the United Nations "universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion."