

Inaugural speech by Pierre Schori at the Award Ceremony of the Olof Palme Prize, Stockholm, Sweden, 30 January, 2020.

Dear all,

Very welcome to this 33rd celebration of the Olof Palme Prize and a special welcome to **David Cornwell**, accompanied by his wife **Jane** and family of three generations.

You are many who have come from government and parliament, media and the arts, diplomats, civil society organizations and human rights activists, and, not least, readers of great and suspenseful literature. We are happy to see you here.

Allow me to **acknowledge** the presence of Foreign minister **Ann Linde** and Minister for European Union affairs **Hans Dahlgren**.

And Sweden's former prime minister **Ingvar Carlsson**.

We greet former foreign minister **Hans Blix**, the 2003 awardee who continues working against the spread of weapons of mass destruction and for common security on the basis of international law.

With us here is also **Tomas Alfredson**, who directed *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*. Other Swedes, connected to the Le Carré's film industry, send their greetings, namely **David Dencik** and **Stellan Skarsgård**.

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Today our thoughts also go to **Waleed Sami Abu al-Khair** who received the 2012 Prize for his sustained struggle for human and civil rights in Saudi Arabia. For being the head of the "Monitor of Human Rights" he was sentenced to 15 years in prison. A couple of weeks ago, Waleed was transferred from the Dahban Central Prison in Jeddah to a hospital. His health has deteriorated after 30 days on hunger strike in a high security cell.

Last year, his wife **Samir Badawi** was arrested, and Amnesty International has reported that she and other women human rights activists have been tortured and sexually harassed during their detention.

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Ladies and gentlemen,

We live in a time when Australia is seen as ground zero for the climate catastrophe, the Amazon is on fire and Antarctica is losing ice at a rate, which threatens to raise global sea level.

We also witness a backlash of reason and humanity, climate change denial, unending wars and repression, questioning of democracy, spreading of lies and hate, also in the midst of our so-called enlightened and developed part of the world.

Never before in human history has distorted information reached such volumes, followed by attacks against professional journalism.

The Nazis adopted the term *Lügenpresse*, "lying press", for their propaganda against Jews, communists, socialists and later the foreign press. Now we hear the same word used in American political rallies.

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Three days ago we honoured the victims of the Holocaust and the people of the resistance against Nazism on *Holocaust Remembrance Day*. In Sweden, the 27<sup>th</sup> of January has been a National Remembrance Day since 1999. Yet, the Swedish Parliament is harbouring members, who, sullied by a racial past, speak of fellow citizens in terms of Swedes and not "real" Swedes. They thus deny the inclusive rights of citizenship but also of the acknowledged national minorities in our country: Sami, Swedish Finns, people from Tornedalen, Roma and Jews.

How dare they?

Present here today are the 2018 awardees, **Hédi Fried** and **Emerich Roth**, survivors of the Holocaust.

Hédi has written "good and evil exist side by side, separated only by a thin veil". She insists that the important thing is "to fight against prejudice and get to know your own prejudice, in order to act it out."

And Emerich has written that “a new-born child is like an empty vessel which can be filled by love or hate”. He sees education as the best antidote to hate and summarizes his view in this beautiful sentence: “The future sits at the school desk five days a week”.

In his speech on Christmas Day 1965 Olof Palme emphasized that seeing immigrants and refugees as individual human beings was crucial to successful integration in society.

” Our commendable solidarity with the poor and oppressed of this world must be accompanied by internationalism in everyday life. That is how we can prove our ideals to be a living reality”.

Embedded in Palme’s words are also century-old insights of war-driven migration and refugees. Roberto Saviano recalls his compatriot Machiavelli who wrote: “to build new castles means only new sieges”. It was in 1513, more than 500 years ago.

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Ladies and gentlemen,

Olof Palme was not only a politician in Sweden, he also played a role on the global stage. Similarly, David Cornwell is not only a spy writer. In his books spying becomes a metaphor for the human condition. And his agents, whose “acumen always astounds us”, engage in “surrealistic intelligence operations and Shakesperian dialogues”, to quote a Swedish reviewer (Torgny Nordin).

Even so in a post-cold world with its “wars on terror” “enhanced interrogations”; a world where decent people become casualties, “collateral damage”.

*Whom can we trust? Friend or enemy?* were constant questions for Smiley and Karla.

Today, in the new world “order” with its deceit and despair, the same questions remain. Yesterday’s ally can be tomorrow’s enemy.

Ask the Ingush in the Caucasus, “deprived of past and future alike”, as described in *Our Game* (1995). Those who gave them verbal and clandestine support changed policy and left them. Ask the Kurds, who fought against Daesh, now they are shamefully betrayed and abandoned.

Or ask the encircled Palestinians, now menaced by unilateral annexation on top of occupation, both acts in violation of international law.

In *Tinker, Tailor Soldier Spy* (1974) Smiley sees the Secret Service as the only genuine expression of a nation’s character.

In last year’s *Agent running in the field* our Awardee goes deeper and explores today’s “enemy within”. Not your Kim Philby, Aldrich Ames or Oleg Gordievsky. No, the focus is on the highest echelons of the most secret services in the United States and United Kingdom who are conspiring to create a new front between Washington and London against the European Union.

Clearly, John Le Carré is an author for our turbulent times.

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The affinity between Olof Palme and David Cornwell is evident. You find a certain kind of kinship of ideas and themes, a common lifelong passion for social justice and democracy, expressed in memorable, easily understood and delightful texts.

In a recent Swedish Television interview our awardee answered the question of his politics with a short and sharp resumé: “Two things are important for me when it comes to defining what is a good country: the way it treats its losers, and the way it chooses its elite”.

In 1972, Olof Palme expressed similar views when speaking of the need for economic growth that does not lead to social exclusion, neither in Sweden nor in the world at large.

Eight years later, at the Swedish Chimney Sweepers Congress, Palme elaborated:

“It would sound false if we worked for equal rights and social justice within our own country but ignored the starving masses of the world. Likewise, it would sound false if we spoke of help to the poor of this world, and we at the same time allowed the class distinctions and economic inequalities to grow in our own country. There must be an inexorable connection between what we work for in our own country and what we stand for internationally. That is what gives context and roots to politics”.

For Palme the politician the threat of a nuclear war was a constant in his major speeches, for Cornwell the writer it was expressed in an unforgettable account, called *Fingers on the trigger* in *The Pigeon Tunnel*, of the meeting between the prominent German Social Democrat Fritz Erler and prime minister Harold Macmillan.

It was in 1963 and Erler, his party's expert on security policy, wanted to raise the issue of US nuclear missiles in Germany. The burning question was how much say should the Bonn government have in the decision to launch the missiles in the event of a nuclear war.

The account makes you both laugh and feel panic. Macmillan's only reaction to Erler's Angst was to note that both of them had suffered in wars and added: “You and I know that the bombs will fall wherever they are going to fall”.

The surreal situation in 10 Downing Street illustrates the truth that Palme coined in a famous phrase: “The nuclear powers hold the rest of the world as hostages. We the non-nuclears must also have a say”.

But it also reveals who are the real masters of the nuclear trigger.

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Today's challenges and dangers are more destructive than ever. The question put by the Danish Prince 420 years ago is still valid:

“Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer  
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune  
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,  
And by opposing end them”.

The United Nations and non-governmental organizations, concerned citizens, writers and scientists have taken up the challenge.

But where are the politicians with compassion and passion, plans and persistence? Some politicians (present company excluded) we hear of almost every day, but not with the message needed.

In Shakespeare's *Henry the VI* Jack Cade led a rebellion against the King. Cade's speeches appealed to people's resentment against elitism. When someone in the crowd shouts “The first thing we do is, let's kill all the lawyers”, Cade replies: “Away! Burn all the records of the realm, my mouth shall be the Parliament of England”.

This was written in 1450. But it is not difficult to see the parallel to today's supreme commander of fake news and anger.

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In the TV interview our former secret agent revealed that, during the cold war with its arms race and destructive propaganda, some spies including himself, had a strong feeling that there was a voice missing and that we could not go on relying on threats and mutual mass destruction.

For him Olof Palme was such a voice. Palme's lead theme was *common security*, meaning that you have to sit down with your enemy and negotiate mutually, balanced and verifiable arms reductions, instead of racing towards nuclear confrontation.

Palme asked former Secretary of State Cyrus Vance; David Owen, the former British Foreign Secretary; Georgi Arbatov, a senior adviser to Leonid Brezhnev, and 13 others from East and West, North and South

to join him in his *Independent Commission on Disarmament and Security Issues*.

The Palme Commission was the natural complement to Willy Brandt's *Ostpolitik*, initiated by Brandt as foreign minister and then chancellor. It was a policy of détente and dialogue with Soviet-dominated countries, recognizing the East German government and expanding commercial and cultural relations with the other side of the Wall.

Declassified Soviet and American documents have indicated that without Brandt's *Ostpolitik* and Palme's *Common security* it would have been difficult for Brezhnev to convince his hardcore colleagues in the Central Committee of a softer Soviet *Westpolitik*, which in turn paved the way for Mikhail Gorbachev's *perestroika* and *glasnost*.

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So, we must now ask the obvious question: why is such a policy not possible today, when it was feasible during the Cold War and the Berlin Wall?

Why is the nuclear arms race escalating again? Of the original five nuclear states, we have now nine, and more may come.

Ahead of last year's session of the UN General Assembly, over 100 members of a European network of political, diplomatic and military figures stated the following:

“The risks of nuclear accident, misjudgement or miscalculation have not been higher since the Cuban Missile Crisis. Only through cooperation on existential common interests can we build trust and stability”.

The statement was signed, among others, by Ingvar Carlsson, Gro Harlem Brundtland, Wolfgang Ischinger, Alexey Arbatov, Malcolm Rifkind and Javier Solana.

What the world needs now is the mobilisation of the many voices missing. From governments and citizens.

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Ladies and gentlemen,

The Olof Palme Memorial fund is not a Nobel committee – thank Goodness- but we are honouring a person with a noble cause and a golden pen.

The 2019 Olof Palme Prize goes to **David John Moore Cornwell**, also known by the pen name John le Carré, for his engaging and humanistic opinion making in literary form regarding the freedom of the individual and the fundamental issues of mankind.

Attracting world-wide attention, he is constantly urging us to discuss the cynical power games of the major powers, the greed of global corporations, the irresponsible play of corrupt politicians with our health and welfare, the growing spread of international crime, the tension in the Middle East, and the alarming rise of fascism and xenophobia in Europe and the United States of America.

In the spirit of Olof Palme, David Cornwell thus gives an extraordinary contribution to the necessary fight for freedom, democracy and social justice.

Thank you!