

Nuremberg International Human Rights Award 1997

Welcome by the Lord Mayor of the City of Nuremberg, **Ludwig Scholz**

In many parts of the world, the end of the Cold War raised hopes for a better future with peace, democracy and respect for human rights. But it soon turned out that these initial expectations were not justified: Political and religious intolerance, nationalism and racism have yet again won through in many people's thinking. In many parts of the world, this attitude has led to the horrors of persecution and expulsion, merciless terror and war. Human rights offences of all kinds, including genocide, are regular occurrences - their number even seems to be increasing.

There is, nevertheless, cause for optimism:

The discussion on Human Rights issues and Human Rights policies have taken on a new dimension. In spite of all contradictions and inadequacies human rights have become a subject of political dialogue at national and international levels.

The fact that two International Tribunals were appointed by the United Nations for the former Yugoslavia and for Rwanda and that the UN's efforts in establishing a "Permanent International Criminal Court" for the punishment of human rights crimes seem to be making good progress, reveal the increasing importance of this topic.

Our world is moving closer and closer together, not just as a result of economic globalisation and modern means of communication and transport, but also because of many problems which have taken on a global dimension: rapid population growth, poverty, starvation, unemployment, destruction of the environment, depletion of natural resources. Peace and respect for human rights are the prerequisites for the international co-operation which is needed, if we are to solve these pressing problems. This is why maintaining peace and winning universal respect for Human Rights will be even more important in the future: people can only live together in peace, once a basis of generally accepted legal maxims has been established. Immanuel Kant, the great philosopher of the Age of Enlightenment, linked his idea of a constitutional confederation [of states] to a question which has become very clear to us today: one day, humankind will be faced with the choice whether to adopt a set of laws uniting all nations or to destroy a civilisation built up over thousands of years.

The human rights idea could be such a basis of peaceful co-operation.

The City of Nuremberg is aware of the historic responsibility resulting from its special role during the National Socialist reign of terror. That is why it wants to and will do its part in bringing this goal a bit closer - peace and acceptance of human rights everywhere throughout the world.

The opening of the Way of Human Rights in 1993 and the establishing of the Nuremberg International Human Rights Award in 1995 were first steps on this path, on which we are determined to continue. This is why during today's second award presentation we also express our great concern about the endangered Near Eastern peace process, and would like to lend support to the world-wide desire for the continuation of a policy of reconciliation and understanding in this region. A recently arrived telegram from Yassir Arafat to the Israeli prize winner Abe Nathan congratulating him on the award, fills us with hope. In his letter, the Palestinian president confirms that - in spite of all resistance - there is no alternative to the peace process in their region.

As we approach the end of the millennium we must make it our duty to commemorate several important dates:

In 1998 we will celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the day on which the United Nations announced the "Universal Declaration of Human Rights". This date has a special meaning for Nuremberg:

The memory of this historic 10th December, 1948, cannot be separated from the darkest chapter in the history of our city - because it was in Nuremberg that the National Socialist Racial Laws were passed, laws with an undisguised contempt of humanity and which paved the way for the Holocaust. On the basis of the fundamental declaration of Human Rights given by the family of nations, our city has been striving to give a forward-looking answer to the terrible events during the National Socialist regime of terror:

The Way of Human Rights and the Nuremberg International Human Rights Award are a challenge never to forget the events of the past, but at the same time they are also a sign of hope, a contribution to the safeguarding of human dignity and inalienable rights.



NÜRNBERG
STADT DES FRIEDENS
UND DER
MENSCHENRECHTE

NUREMBERG
CITY OF PEACE
AND HUMAN RIGHTS



In his message of greeting for this year's award presentation, the Secretary General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan, referred to the opportunities which the commemorative year 1998 offers, to "mobilise public opinion in favour of human rights". The City of Nuremberg will therefore use this memorable year to support the world organisation in its endeavours. The third Nuremberg International Human Rights Award in the autumn of the following year, 1999, will herald an event which is of outstanding importance for our city, its identity and its prospects for the future: in the year 2000, Nuremberg will be celebrating its 950th anniversary. This jubilee on the threshold of the third millennium gives us the opportunity to take a look at both the past and the future and to consider the way we see ourselves as citizens of this city. The topic of "Peace and Human Rights" will be given special emphasis in the years 1999 and 2000, because Nuremberg was also the location for a historic European peace agreement: in the year 2000 it will be 350 years since the famous "Friedensmahl" (Peace Banquet) and the signing of the peace agreement in our city, which finally put an end to the Thirty Years' War. This subject will play a central role in our City's programme for its jubilee year.

The planned opening of a "Documentation Centre at the former Nazi Party Rally Grounds" is a further signal that Nuremberg is fulfilling its historical responsibility. We are very confident that we will be able to realise this project of national importance by the year 2000 and thus make the former Nazi Party Rally Grounds a central place for debate of the Nazi Party ideology's contempt for humanity.

The Nuremberg International Human Rights Award is also a call for individual commitment. Nuremberg can only permanently fulfil the considerable demand of being a city of peace and of human rights if its citizens make human rights their very own business. Many have already done so and are, for example, looking after people who were imprisoned for their convictions or are being persecuted in some other way. I would like to take this occasion to assure them of my respect and my gratitude.

In one of his best known novellas, set during the turmoil of the Spanish Civil War, the writer Stefan Andres has a soldier return as a prisoner to the monastery where he had lived as a monk years before. Locked up in his old cell, the dreams of his past catch up with him again: his Island of the Blessed, his Utopia, the place the young man fled to while doubting God and the world. And he remembers the words of a fellow monk: "We are God's Utopia, but one just in the making!"

In other words: It is up to each and every one of us to make this world a little more peaceful and humane.

Ladies and gentlemen,
in the name of my fellow mayor, of the members of the City Council and of all citizens I would like to welcome you warmly to the second Nuremberg International Human Rights Award ceremony. I am very happy and honoured to be able to welcome you here, in our Opera House, today.

I should like to extend a particularly warm welcome to this year's winners of the Nuremberg International Human Rights Award, Khémaïs Chammari and Abe J. Nathan, who deserve our deep respect and admiration and our gratitude.

A warm word of greeting also goes to the first winner of the Nuremberg International Human Rights Award, Sergei Kovalev, and a word of thanks for expressing his attachment to our City in this way.

I would like to extend a particularly warm word of welcome to the vice-president of the European Parliament, Ms Ursula Schleicher, who will be addressing us during this award ceremony.

Also, I should like to welcome the President of the Slovak Republic, Mr. Michal Kováč.

A particularly warm word of welcome and thanks goes out to the Minister President of the Free State of Bavaria, Dr. Edmund Stoiber who will be addressing this assembly immediately after me.

I also welcome the Minister of the Interior of the Free State of Bavaria, Dr. Günther Beckstein, as well as the personal adviser of the President of the Czech Republic, Minister Pavel Tigrid.

And I extend a greeting to all members of the Federal Parliament, the Bavarian State Parliament, and of Regional and City Councils present today, to former Lord Mayor Dr. Peter Schönlein who instigates this award, as well as Dr. Oscar Schneider and Dr. Heinz Sebiger who were given the freedom of the City of Nuremberg, and all holders of the Citizens' Medal. I would like to greet and say thank you to Maître Daniel Jacoby who will pay tribute to the winners as well as to the jury members who joined us today.

I would also like to extend a particular welcome to the President of the Confederation of Jews

in Germany, Mr. Ignatz Bubis, as well as to the Head of Sinti and Roma Community in Germany, Mr. Romani Rose.
And my greetings also go to all ambassadors and representatives of the diplomatic corps. My wish today is that this award ceremony might be a sign of hope and encouragement for many people. Can there be anything more important than striving with all our might for a more peaceful and humane world?

