

Fame or shame?

Norway and the Nobel Peace Prize

Fredrik S. Heffermehl

A high-angle photograph of a large, formal event taking place in a grand, ornate hall. The audience, consisting of many people in dark attire, is seated in rows of chairs, facing a stage. On the stage, a speaker stands at a blue podium on the left, while a panel of several people is seated on chairs to the right. The hall's architecture is classical, with a balcony level above the main floor and large murals on the walls. The lighting is bright, and the overall atmosphere is formal and significant.

If a system does not work,
don't work hard to improve it,
perhaps a different system is needed.

Tony Blair, British Prime Minister

I'll never tire of repeating:
we need to demilitarize world affairs,
international politics and political thinking.

Mikhail S. Gorbachev, Russian statesman
Time, April 15, 2020

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Part I

Behind the flamboyance lurks the flop

What do these four have in common?

- Mother's Day,
- Martin Luther King Day,
- Veterans Day,
- The Nobel Peace Prize.

Easy question, anyone can see that all four are about honor and celebrations. No, difficult. At a deeper level the four have something in common, something special and hidden. I doubt that any quiz team in the world would come up with the right answer. It is about a problem to which the authorities all over the world close their eyes – and ours.

Mother's Day has been a national day of celebration in the United States since 1918. The second Sunday of May every year is the day when Mother is being honored. My search for the origin of the day led me to the West Virginia State archives and the account of an unusual woman, Ann Jarvis. During the Civil War she lived in Taylor County, an intersection between the combatants. She encouraged women to declare themselves neutral and care for the wounded on both sides. When the war ended in 1865 the soldiers returned home. Soldiers who had fought each other at the front had to live side-by-side in the same cities. Jarvis organized a Mothers' Friendship Day for reconciliation and preventing new wars. This original purpose has long been forgotten.

Starting in 1919 the end of war and hope for peace was celebrated in many countries, and November 11 was declared Armistice Day. In 1926, in the Armistice Day resolution Congress called for «exercises designed to perpetuate peace through good will and mutual understanding. «The day was to be» a day dedicated to the cause of world peace». This unbecoming peace mode lasted 28 years. Reality was different. After Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Korea and the Cold War, and the placing of US bases all over the planet, Congress renamed it Veterans Day in 1954 – a day to celebrate US warriors and military power.

In Norway May 8 was celebrated for 65 years after 1945 as Liberation day, but in 2010 the government decided to rename it Veterans Day to celebrate the military and our war history, rather than our hopes for peace.

Defending peace is not easy. All challenges to war and militarism seem bound to fail, and over time succumb to the militarized world order. Fortunately, we have one exception to this, one day when peace is still being praised. Every year, on December 10, the Nobel Peace Prize is being handed out. The top brass of Norwegian society and foreign diplomats attend the celebration in the magnificent Oslo City Hall. The camera eyes of the whole world are directed towards Oslo where a unique lineup of peacemakers over the years have received the world's most prestigious prize. This is the world celebrating its common,

deep longing for peace. Everyone is present – except Alfred Nobel.

Perhaps you think I'm joking? What do I mean? An international medal for heroes provides a good illustration. On March 17, 2020, the media received the following release: «The Carnegie Hero Fund Commission today announced that 17 Americans and one Canadian have been named Carnegie heroes for entering into mortal danger to rescue others. They each will receive the Carnegie Medal – the highest honor for civilian heroism in the U.S. and Canada – for risking their lives while trying to save others from life-threatening perils that include an attacking dog, armed robbers, and a gunman who opened fire in a yoga studio.»

It is easy to understand why we celebrate heroes. It needs no explanation. Therefor everyone has forgotten the idea behind this medal. Why was it created? The media release omitted the most vital piece of information, it should have included this sentence: «The medal was instituted by Andrew Carnegie (owner of the Steel trust as part of his lifelong struggle to rescue humanity from war. The financial tycoon wished people to recognize civilian heroism, not only those in battle dresses and battlefields». As long as the awarders keep holding back the original idea behind the medal it means that Carnegie wasted his money, his bequest does not serve its intended goal.

Same with Nobel's prize. If the awarders had seriously wished to serve their mandate the awarders should have used every opportunity to announce and promote the antimilitarist cause that Nobel wished his prize to serve. Why is the Norwegian Nobel Committee so adamant about not explaining to the world what Nobel really wanted? When you know the answer to that question you know a lot more about the forces and roots of war.

This book is the result - and account - of my work to examine the purpose Nobel wished his peace prize to serve and make his Norwegian custodians respect and promote it. So far it has been in progress for over 13 years.

Oslo, July 2019

High summer, long table, nicely laid for a party for 50, in a lovely garden by the fjord, scents in the air, a warm and good atmosphere. My lady companion at the table politely asks me what I'm doing. It is good manners to be cautious with such topics as religion and politics, and in my case extra caution is called for. You think twice before you confess that you are one of those deceitful, naive jerks, who talk about peace and put us all in danger by not closing the ranks against a mean and evil neighboring country. Your companion is likely to get a restless glance and find someone else to talk to. But this time I took the plunge and told her that I was working for peace and disarmament and had almost finished a book on the military's power over politics. My big hope was to have a security policy not based on military force ... The lady reacted with horror: how could anybody think of such a thing? Her next question: «Do you have many who agree with you?» was a torpedo that struck in center ship.

I felt a flicker of inner shame - right there and then it was as if the thousands of people I've met and worked with had vanished; they constituted a world of which she had no idea. My escape was to counter with some questions: Do you honestly feel that the military really creates a safe world? Does it provide a guarantee against new wars? Would it perhaps have been better to bomb other countries with money than to flatten them with grenades? More humane and much more profitable too. Or spend the money in our own countries, on schools, hospitals, youth clubs, good living areas, urban development, good communications, police? (Eight months later, I would obviously have asked if we could not have found money for pandemic preparedness if we had not focused all our attention on military preparations.)

This time it went well. She thought, listened and nodded at what she had found absurd and completely out of the question just a few minutes earlier. If it is true that we are evil by nature, then it will only be so much more important that there are as few dangerous weapons out there as possible. Evil is so visible, easy to remember, but interaction, trust and co-operation are the propellants that make the world go round. Unfortunately, we are trapped in a tradition of enemy images and will to defend ourselves. She had believed that the continuing arms race, an eternal war for eternal peace, should not be questioned. When she could so quickly move from shaking her head to nodding, it seems to indicate that there are many others who may be suppressing their ideas, and may have latent doubts. The general belief in the need for armed forces may be fragile, but it is affirmed by the conviction that there is no alternative and peace is not an option. Isn't it time, then, to share our doubts and thoughts about the military, in families, at dinner tables, and during lunch breaks at work?

- Have you really spent twelve whole years fighting for your view on the Peace Prize to be heard?
- No, all my life, and actually not for the Peace Prize, but the idea behind it. The world needed Nobel's idea in his time, but much more so in our time. And then I'm fascinated by the great paradox
- Which is?
- Why it is so important for Norwegian politicians to cover up what Nobel really wanted. The words he used in the testament point directly to con-

temporary ideas on disarmament and the abolition of war. But that subject is taboo, we are all supposed to salute the army. The theme is so scary that it is no wonder people jolt and bolt when these issues come up. But we cannot escape the issue. Only by a continuous, free and open discussion of options and alternatives can we know if we are on the right track. And perhaps discover that we are being badly deceived. What has happened to our democracy concerning these issues?

The basis for the prize is a legal instrument, Nobel's testament, that is subject to the same legal rules and entitled to be respected, it's just the same as with any other will. I do not, of course, blame the recipients. Most of those who displaced the legitimate candidates were fine people who really deserve a peace prize. But to know whether the recipients deserved Nobel's prize you have to first check what Nobel intended, then whether their merits comply with the purpose he had in mind.

Everyone ought to feel concerned by these issues. They may decide life or death for humanity. My most fervent hope is that this book can start a conversation in which everyone will participate. The biggest obstacle to peace is the common belief that it is impossible to achieve. Trying to understand how people think as they do, I have been soaking up reactions and remarks from talks with family and friends. In my writer's den I have continued all these conversations in my own head. This book is my attempt to answer all the concerns I have met. Not to have the last word, but to get more people involved in the conversation. But, dear you, we came here for a party; so, is it not better that I send you the book when it's finally finished?

Armed but defenseless

By the time this book was submitted to the publisher, the world had suddenly seen the reality of the phrase «armed, but defenseless». In just a few weeks, a new, unexpected enemy, small and invisible, struck everywhere, with no respect for border controls. The emergency cry from Italy was answered from a most unexpected source. Three countries, China, Russia and Cuba, keeping to usual behavior, should have been the last to respond. The West has been pestering them for generations with threats and boycotts. And yet these enemies, turning the other cheek, were the first to answer Italy's emergency call. The Corona outbreak offered us new pictures of friend and foe, and of what security means. The world was learning new lessons, asking new questions, and needing new answers.

In 2003, the World Health Organization had expressed great relief that the SARS epidemic was under control. But it has been a lesson we should take seriously, said the then WHO leader, Gro Harlem Brundtland, asking for more trained personnel, hospital beds, better warning systems. The SARS experience is a call to action, «We may have little time and have to use it wisely.» Returning to the issue for the umptieth time, in September 2019, she noted, on behalf of an expert group, that little had been done, and the world was still not prepared for a pandemic even if the risk was rising. Asked for comment in March 2020, Dr. Brundtland called Covid-19 a «notified disaster». People had not been able to listen to what the world's chief doctor had said about a very real and concrete danger. Why?

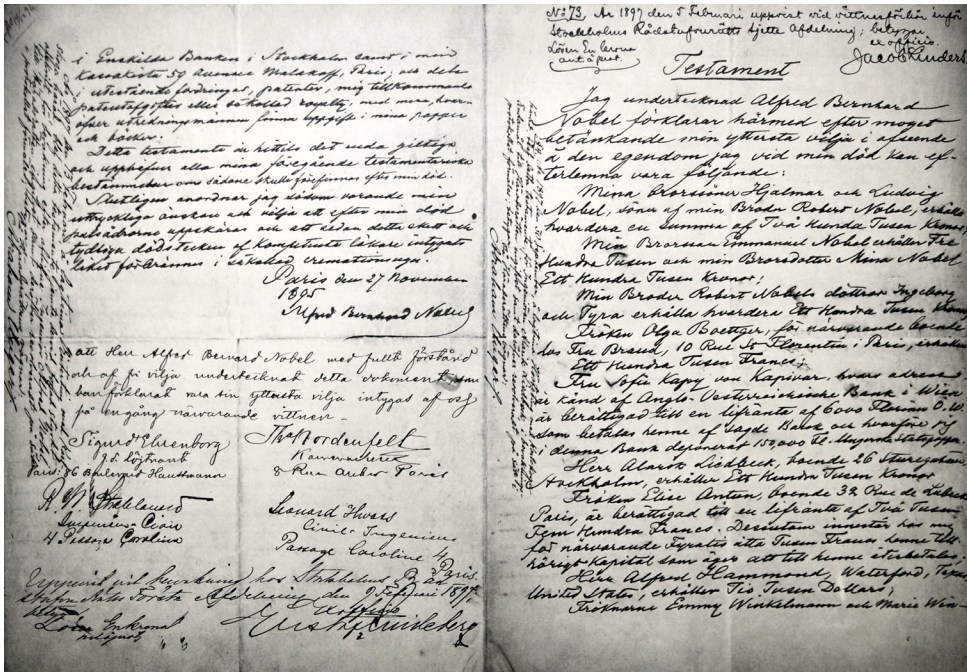
We do not have as open a democracy as we like to believe. Security has only one meaning: full throttle in the acquisition of further military armaments. Peace and cooperation may weaken our country, expose us to danger. (As if arms races, with nuclear weapons, is not a the paramount danger.) Good patriots have learnt to have no such ideas, think no such thought, and at least never mention them to others. They are unwanted competition and therefore social taboo. The military has established a mental no-fly zone. Our brains are occupied territory.

We needed a Covid-19 to understand that all our military preparedness had left us defenseless in the face of other, entirely foreseeable threats. In April 2020 it again became evident once more how dangerous nuclear weapons are. Coronavirus had quickly spread to 500 of the crew aboard the USS aircraft carrier Theodore Roosevelt. The Navy would have preferred to evacuate the entire crew of 5,000, but that was not possible. The ship was full of weapons, expensive aircraft, a nuclear reactor, dangerous substances, most likely also nuclear weapons. At least 1,000 crew members had to remain on board, come hell, high water or Corona virus.

No matter how unpleasant a surprise the pandemic was, the disaster was small compared to the danger of an exchange of nuclear weapons. The 2020 pandemic could have created peace history as well. Countries in Europe needing emergency help got it from buddies they did not know they had. It must have surprised many that China, Russia and Cuba sent masks, protective equipment, and medical teams. Enemies acting as friends must of course have been welcomed with both hands and warm thanks? Many peace-minded people saw an opportunity, a hope. Here was a reminder of the saying that an enemy is a friend yet to be made. Such opportunities certainly got lots of media coverage?

The recognition, if there was any at all, was lukewarm. But it is easier to see what is happening than to notice what is not. The lack of expressions of gratitude was startling, so far from good manners that it is was hard to understand. To anyone thinking that the goal of decent politicians is peace and a better world it must appear totally unreasonable. Russian aircraft landing in New York with help for a US in crisis was so outside the customary expectations that it was too confusing to handle. Who was now my friend and who my enemy, who and what to fear? True, history tells of Trojan horses, we have learnt to be suspicious. So, Western responses to the aid received during the Corona crisis were remarkably cold – just as unenthusiastic as when Gorbachev in the 1980s tried to launch a race for disarmament. As long as friendly acts disturb our worldview and frighten us, we will not make much progress in getting rid of war.

The testament and its custodians—facts



Alfred Nobel's last testament, signed in Paris on November 27, 1895, consisted of five handwritten pages. He decided that his remaining realizable estate should constitute a fund, the interest on which should be annually distributed in the form of five prizes to

those who, during the expired year, shall have conferred the greatest benefit on mankind. The interest shall be divided into five equal parts, which shall be apportioned as follows: one part to the person who shall have made the most important discovery or invention within the field of physics; one part to the person who shall have made the most important chemical discovery or invention; one part to the person who shall have made the most important discovery within the domain of physiology or medicine; one part to the person who shall have produced in the field of literature the most outstanding work in an ideal direction; and one part to the person who shall have done the most or the best work for creating the brotherhood of nations, for the abolition or reduction of standing armies, and for the holding and promotion of peace congresses.

Signature: A. Nobel November 27, 1895.

Nobel wrote the will in Swedish, the above is my translation based on my work over 13 years devoted to interpreting Nobel's intention. The Norwegian committee never made a translation into Norwegian. In the official translation into English by the Nobel Foundation¹ «folkens förbrödrande» becomes «advance fellowship among nations». I believe Nobel had in mind a specific contemporary idea: Military armaments and power games must be replaced with advanced systems of co-operation among nations or states, a German term for this is «Völkerverbrüderung».

Some BASIC FACTS:

- Alfred Nobel's testament of 27 November 1895 became final by his death 10 December 1896.
- The Nobel Foundation, established 1900, bears the superior responsibility for implementing the will, handing out the five prizes, and keeping within the purpose Nobel had in mind with the five prizes described in the will.
- Nobel established five prizes. (A prize for economic science has no basis in the testament and is not a genuine Nobel prize).
- Swedish committees assist the Foundation in selecting the winners of the prizes in physics, chemistry, medicine, and literature. Five persons selected by the Norwegian Parliament, The Norwegian Nobel Committee, assist the Foundation in picking the recipients of «the prize for the champions of peace».
- The right to propose, nominate, candidates for the Nobel Peace Prize is restricted to certain categories, members of parliaments and governments, professors in certain fields (such as law, history, theology, and social sciences). The deadline for nominations each year is 31 January, the annual prize is announced in October, and then awarded at a ceremony on 10 December, the date of Nobel's death in 1896. Strict secrecy surrounds the selection work, but certain researchers may be granted access to the committee archives after 50 years.

2007: After 107 years, high time to check Nobel's intention

One day in August 2007 I made a discovery that would become the starting point of 13 ½ years of research and campaigning. I was on holiday on a small farm at a fjord in Western Norway, but one piece of unfinished business kept nagging at me. So much so that I had to spend a few hours using the computer of the general store to formulate an op-ed. Had the Nobel Peace Prize gone astray, and could former Vice President Al Gore win the prize for his climate efforts? Seeking for arguments and words in that back office, at a desk cluttered with invoices, fliers and the occasional bank note here and there, it struck me: What does Nobel's testament say?

Just a short glance made it clear that it must be a very long time since anyone had looked at it. In an article in *Aftenposten* (Norway's leading newspaper) on 14 August, 2007, under the title *The Peace Prize is in danger*, I wrote that the time had come for the committee to reconsider its loyalty to Nobel's vision:

Alfred Nobel instituted a peace prize, neither an environmental prize nor an economics prize, nor a prize for humanitarian work. If the Nobel committee loses sight of this, it will ... be a serious violation of the directives Nobel gave in his will of 1895. There are many perceptions of what peace is and how it can be secured. The Nobel Committee ... is in no way free to choose winners of the prize at its own discretion. Nobel stood for a radical change of the international political system, he wished to search out roads to building a world without war and abuse of power.

What persons and activities did Nobel have in mind? A testament is a binding legal instrument, so any effort to understand it must start with its wording. First of all, the expression Nobel used to name it, «the prize for the champions of peace», which puts a name on the recipients as well. He then described their work more closely by three concepts. Holding peace congresses is language that brings us back to the 1890s when great gatherings to end war were a new and visible phenomenon. Inspired by the ideas of Immanuel Kant and Bertha von Suttner these congresses appealed for disarmament and co-operation between states. The expression brotherhood of nations has to do with good relations. But not with all and everything that is nice and kind: the combination with the concept peace congresses points to the new forms of deep unity among states discussed there. Then abolition or reduction of standing armies, this is clear language about a world without military forces. Lastly, the greatest benefit on humankind signals high, global ambitions for all five prizes. At the time a global community of disarmed nations was the most distinctive, main innovative idea in the field of peace.

This is the elementary and natural reading placing the testament in its time and space. The spontaneous conclusions from that first short reading have only been confirmed by 13 years of further research. But I must admit to having had an advantage. After 25 years in the peace movement I knew the historical background. So also did the early Nobel committees and in the first two decades most of the prizes were awarded to the peace movement. However, the reasonably good compliance of the two first decades would not last, in 1922 the

prize lost its connection with Nobel and the direction and purpose he had in mind.

My article in 2007 was the first time the testament had been put forward as a legal constraint, and ignoring it as a serious violation. That the article was spontaneous, without basis in thorough research, highlights a very important fact: a few hours sufficed to get a precise impression of the intention of Nobel. The expressions in the testament are easy to understand and permit immediate and correct conclusions about the core of its purpose. As Nobel's intention is easy to reach, the directly understandable content is sufficient for most purposes. Needless to say, the meaning is also that Parliament should be guided by it in the selection of committee members, and the committees in their selection of the annual winners. The two bodies cannot perform their task without this knowledge and yet they have paced along without it for 120 years. After all those years the reminder was, however, unwelcome knowledge, and it soon became clear that the awarders would not budge one iota.

However, my spontaneous reading above can only be put forward as a hypothesis. Few people realize their limitations and pronounce bold opinions on the meaning of a will. They overlook the fact that law is a science and there are thick textbooks discussing the rules on testaments. Lawyers can spend months in court over the meaning of a sentence in a testament. A reliable conclusion as to what Nobel had in mind requires a thorough examination of all relevant evidence. I shall now explain the evaluations of law and evidence that lead to the summary of my interpretation on pages yy, hoping many will find it rewarding to be able to follow – and check – the required reasoning about the law, the testament, and Nobel's history that is needed.

A testament is also called a last will, clearly meaning that of the testator. To follow his bidding is the whole point of it, a duty prescribed by law. Interpretation, to understand what Nobel meant by his words means first of all to imagine his person and the period he lived in, and imagine the specific situation at the exact point when he signed the document. One must familiarize oneself with the spirit, ideas and language of the period, as well as Nobel's own ideas and language habits, his personal life. That one has to imagine the idea or intention Nobel had in mind, is an obvious and fundamental guideline for interpretation of his testament – and yet almost universally forgotten.

Peace protagonist Bertha von Suttner, his good friend, was a mighty influence at the time and very much so for Nobel. Everyone agrees on that and yet Suttner's decisive importance for the interpretation of the will has largely gone unheeded, at times even been deliberately denied. Suttner's novel *Lay Down Your Arms*, published in 1889, became the great bestseller of the period. The enthusiastic letter Nobel wrote to thank her is a key piece of the evidence that helps us understand what he intended his prize to achieve.

In our time many readers may find Suttner's novel somewhat old-fashioned, self-centered, simply constructed novel. However, for a lecture in Prague in October 2019 to celebrate the book's 130th anniversary, I had to read it again and now found the introduction a hard-hitting, very convincing condemnation of the military zeitgeist. Suttner's images of national consensus, obedience, patriotism, tributes to the armies, dedicated will to prepare for war and to fight, really catch the collective madness of a period when dying in war was the

greatest honor and happiness.

Confronting these patriotic death fantasies, Suttner presents the realities of war. She puts living people on stage in the contemporary war theaters. Men full of anticipation, ready to fight, either to win once again or to get revenge for an earlier defeat. The air is filled with idealization and heroism, sacrifice to honor both oneself and the nation. The female lead gets married to an officer, her own father dreams of a heroic death – for his son-in-law! This euphoric herd mentality leads to stupidity, lack of realism, and, inevitably, to disasters, for the nations, the individuals, and the families. Mentally poisoned by history, nations run around in a vicious and unhappy circle.

The main character of the novel (Bertha calls her Martha) overhears a heated discussion between her husband and her father. Facing an imminent outbreak of war, the two get lost in strategy and war plans. She does what one shouldn't, she thinks, her mind fills with worry:

But the human problem - the blood that would flow, the tears - was not mentioned in a single word. The interests at stake were seen as so important, so lofty, that everything else became trivial. I was ashamed for being so petty in my thinking. ...

But what if the enemies were to win, I ventured into this question in a circle of friends, but then I got a lesson! The slightest shadow of doubt was the worst betrayal, contrary to the love of the Fatherland. One of the soldier's most important duties is precisely to believe in his own superiority.

The militarized love of the fatherlands is easily recognizable to us who are living now. Moreover, the period, called «la belle époque», was characterized by hope and optimism, major changes, great faith in the future. Reason, new knowledge and new discoveries were creating a new world. By his testament Nobel wished to honor those who had «conferred the greatest benefit on humankind». In the field of peace, he must have meant the contemporary hopes of transforming the world by co-operation in a new brotherhood between states.

A most important advance for the cause was when the Russian tsar, inspired by Suttner and Jan de Bloch (a railroad engineer and superb military analyst), convened all nations for two major peace conferences at The Hague in 1899 and 1907. Here world leaders gathered to discuss the international reorganization that the peace movement called for, with global disarmament as the most controversial challenge to the existing order. Two diametrically opposed views of armor and military power collided, well formulated in a report from the 1899 conference:

In the debate about abolishing armaments, two world views became clearly visible: Those who believed in the path of trust and cooperation stood against those who warmly defended the old belief that nothing but weapons can resolve international conflicts. Supporters of the latter view did their best to sabotage the negotiations.

The call for disarmament, a choice between two diametrically opposed roads forward, was the great question of the period. By his will Nobel took a stand in this fundamental conflict. That Suttner was the most ardent anti-militarists of the period did not stop him from supporting her work and ideas. Quite the contrary.

In our time Nobel's idea may appear undoable and impossible, but

do we have an alternative? We should realize that the word impossible is not part of the vocabulary of an inventor. On the contrary, the word triggers their creative power, it incites and stimulates them. In fact the ideas of inventors have revolutionized the world time after time?

The mandatory background check

When Alfred Nobel invited four Swedish friends to the Norwegian-Swedish club in Paris on November 27, 1895, he did so with a motive – he wished witnesses to sign a will he had prepared. It provided generous sums for a long list of 19 of his family, friends, former employees. But their share had been reduced to three percent since his will of 1893. Now almost all of the estate was to go to a fund and five prizes, each for the one «who has conferred the greatest benefit on humankind». One of them should go to the person who shall have done the most or the best work for creating the brotherhood of nations, for the abolition or reduction of standing armies, and for the holding and promotion of peace congresses.

In the former chapter I put forward a simple reading of this language. A small, construed example will show that it is not that easy:

The common meaning of the word garage is the place where you keep your car. And yet a beneficiary of a testament saying «my best friend Cornelia shall have everything in the garage» may decline to take the decrepit car and instead lay claim to the valuable collection of fine wines, some leather chairs, lamps, books and paintings that decorate the testator's wine cellar. That is if she can prove that she and her deceased friend, a connoisseur with a fine wine cellar, had a habit of excusing themselves from the rest of the party to gossip and sip wine together. She was always jokingly invited downstairs «to spend an hour in the garage».

People tend to instinctively take the words at face value and insist on a very literal reading of the exact words of a will and nothing more. That is making several major mistakes.

It is normal to claim to understand the right meaning of an expression and defend this by invoking that «The dictionary defines ...», «this is the common understanding of ...», «this is what most people mean by ...». But with testaments this is a roaring error. If we are talking about the last will of a testator, it is his or her understanding of the words one has to seek. I believe this is the principle for the reading of testaments that is fundamental in laws on inheritance everywhere. This is simply the crux of the matter.

A fundamental gaffe, but one everybody makes. Even lawyers. At least they should have learnt never to express a definite view of a will without stressing «Without a thorough check, the meaning seems to be ...». But it is very common for lawyers to forget to mention this reservation. Frankly, I also committed this sin myself in that first article on Nobel's will in August 2007.

The next error is to think that the words of the testament say it all. In the autumn of 2019, I got an email from a sympathizer who warned: «We must stick strictly to the will, if we mention points outside Nobel's words, we shoot ourselves in the foot.» True, the words are important, but however long you stare at the text and seek the meaning with your own brain as tool, you will only find your own ideas. To get inside the brain of the testator requires an ex-

amination of all relevant evidence. Clues to what Nobel meant may lie in a letter or a few words to a niece at a Christmas party, in correspondence, witnesses, previous wills, or his language habits and personality.

Much may be relevant, but not this, that and everything. To be relevant evidence must help us determine what Nobel intended at the exact moment when the will was signed. In this case two letters from Nobel are of the greatest evidentiary value. The first was one in January 1893, written to Bertha von Suttner to inform her about his plan to institute a peace prize. In the other one, of December 1895, only ten days after he signed the will, he asked a nephew in Stockholm to buy a newspaper, *Aftonbladet*. A few words in this letter explaining his motive for becoming a newspaper owner are crucial evidence in understanding his testament, he wished to use his influence «against armaments and such medieval relics.»² The letter tells us that Nobel in the very weeks around the signing of the will was such a strong opponent of military armaments that he wanted to own an entire newspaper to counter them.³

Another unfortunate instinct is to dissect the text and treat each expression as separate and independent. In the book *Nobels vilje (Nobel's Will)*, in 2008, I used too much energy treating Nobel's expressions as «criteria» instead of focusing on his overall intention.

I can thank three people, two Swedes and one Norwegian, for help to free the interpretation from treating the will as «criteria» and refocus on the overall content of «what the testator meant». First, two highly competent lawyers, one in Sweden, one in Norway: In 2013 *Tidsskrift for rettsvitenskap*, a prestigious law journal, published an article with some legal remarks about my 2010 book. Torgny Håstad, a justice of the Swedish Supreme Court (and President of the Nobel Foundation's board of supreme trustees), wrote about decisions by Swedish authorities regarding my complaints. Almost inadvertently Håstad touched the basic rule for interpretation: The content of a will is «what the testator intended, regardless of how he expressed himself.» Evidence of Nobel's intention applies and prevails no matter what words he used.

The same point had actually been suggested to me five years earlier by the highest legal authority in Norway, the retired president of the Norwegian Supreme Court, Carsten Smith – leader of the third, judicial, branch of government. Now Håstad's comment helped me understand, deep down, that interpretation of wills is not about «criteria» but about the overall meaning.

To anyone who may feel tempted to question my legal competence I have a piece of credentials to present: With his permission I shall reveal here an email where the former Chief Justice regretted that he did not have time to review my book in 2008; but at the same time had this to say about its content:

You have written a fine book. What I can immediately say is: It contains a strong argument for your interpretation of the will. Many of your statements will keep living by their clarity. As when it concerns the Stortinget's task «like anyone else who undertakes the role as executor of a will» (p.72). Or the danger of, in a process of interpretation, «giving new concepts a life on their own « (p. 90)

It has been extremely fascinating, a privilege, to explore uncharted history and be able to roam around making discoveries. No moment of jubilation, however, can match the moment when, writing the first Nobel book, it

dawned upon me that one expression used by Nobel was of immense value for the interpretation, but had been overlooked by all. He had called the award he entrusted to Norway's parliament «the prize for champions of peace». This expression is extremely useful for deciding whether someone was qualified to win, I wrote. But it was Per Axelson, my Swedish editor at Leopard publishing house who saw its full importance: «But this is the key, the champions of peace, they cannot escape that one.»

But if you cannot pass, you can bypass. Official Norway has for 12 years refused any mention of the «champions of peace».

Back to the lunch where Nobel had gathered four friends as witnesses to the testament. Had I been present, I believe I would have pulled the emergency brakes. Any lawyer should have done so. Nobel himself was educated in chemistry and physics, and the testamentary witnesses included an inventor and two engineers. No lawyer had been consulted. Nobel had had his fill of lawyers in his life and yet had not understood that law also is a science, and how risky it was to think that everyone can master it.

In addition, his choice of main trustee was outlandish. To handle assets in many countries, his homes in three different countries, factories around the world, a number of patents, license agreements, negotiations with businessmen, lawyers and authorities in several countries, even with a head of state and a parliament, required top-notch legal expertise. Ragnar Sohlman, a 26-year-old engineer who had worked for Nobel for a couple of years had neither the expertise nor the experience.

On the other hand, asking the Parliament of Norway, the Storting, to elect a committee for the peace prize would seem to serve his intention well in two ways. Norway did not have a foreign policy of its own, she was in a union where her foreign relations were handled by Sweden. Moreover Norway's Parliament was a pioneer in supporting the expanding peace movement, the peace congresses and major international reforms – disputes between nations must be settled in courts, not on the battlefield.

Fortunately, I was not there. Delays are a risk, and I was wrong, thoroughly, on all three counts. The will would have sunk in a French court. It was a narrow escape. Under French law his description of «a fund» was too vague, the whole fortune would have gone to Nobel's relatives. Sohlman managed to rescue the will by a legal technicality, the question of jurisdiction. In what country the winding up of an estate belongs depends on the last domicile – where did the deceased person live? Nobel was an intricate case. He had lived for 20 years in his stately house on Avenue Malakoff in Paris, but he died in his villa in San Remo, Italy, and he had recently bought an estate at Bofors, Sweden. In the end he was considered a resident of Sweden. The detail that became decisive in rescuing his bequest for humanity from his family may have been that Nobel had moved his riding horses to Bofors – Sweden.

But Sweden was also dangerous territory. King Oscar II did not like the idea of prizes landing all over the world, good currency would be leaving Sweden. Even worse, the Norwegians would no doubt use the peace prize in their determined efforts to get out of the union. The king tried to enlist the Nobel family in an action to have the will annulled, and it was only thanks to Emanuel Nobel, son of a brother, that this did not happen. Called to the royal palace,

Emanuel, a man in his mid-thirties, stood up against the king, defending his uncle's initiative for progress in science, literature and peace.

The peace prize survived the two first hurdles, but not his third audacity. To entrust it to Norwegian politicians was not a good idea. Understandably, he failed to see that politicians are great at realizing their own policies, but not the ideas of others. This oversight was fatal, meaning that the prize and the attendant transformation of international relations Nobel had in mind would never happen. For one hundred years the Norwegians have been misusing Nobel's prize and name to serve their own interests. This did not change even when the Stortinget received a professional interpretation. My book on the will in 2008 only changed the lawmakers from negligent to deliberate sabotage of the law.

Sohlman really was up to the task. He immediately traveled to Paris. Before France could take jurisdiction he managed to take all securities out of French bank vaults and send them to Sweden. Representatives of the Nobel family arrived in Paris a few days later, with plans to have the securities seized in France and thus secure a settlement of the whole estate there. The atmosphere at the dinner in the elegant restaurant must have dropped quite a bit when Sohlman could report that the funds were already in Sweden. During the first month after Nobel's death, the efficient Sohlman also traveled to Norway, since the approval of the Stortinget was essential. In addition, in order to work in Sweden, Sohlman had to do his military service. He did however, gain access to the regiment's only telephone, in the officers' mess, where Private Sohlman spent much of his time in talks with governments, the Nobel family, parliaments and commercial contacts, all over Europe.

With rare skill, wisdom and efficiency, he managed to secure the funds, get in place the five committees to decide who would receive the awards, get The Nobel Foundation established after a tug of war with the Nobel family, write statutes (Grundstadgar) approved by the king himself. What he managed is unbelievable and included getting in place rules about nomination, deadlines, announcement of the prizes. It had to fail somewhere. Unfortunately, it did so on the most fundamental of all points: To carry out Nobel's last will, it is certainly necessary to know what that last will actually was. Thorough research is needed, and guessing will not do.

What did Nobel mean by «conferring the greatest benefit on mankind»? The words immediately signal the dimensions of his ambitions, major discoveries and changes, implying a better world, and better lives for people. None of the five prizes could serve war purposes and the Foundation must avoid investing its money in weapons and war. What was the «best idealistic literature»? A prize for the fine art of novels and poetry, or did he have something more practical and political in mind? To find reliable answers to all such questions required a major systematic effort to examine all the evidence available, and a knowledge of law. It would take years and be neither practical nor possible for each committee member to carry out on their own. A thorough interpretation should have been provided by the Foundation. Sohlman often retained lawyers, but on this crucial point he failed to request legal advice.

Knowing Nobel's intention from the start would have done much to set the awards off on the right course. A great favorite in 1901, Leo Tolstoy, could have won the first literature prize. His being one of the greatest pacifists in his-

tory should have been seen as a strong additional qualification. Henry Dunant, founder of the Red Cross, would not have received half of the first peace prize.

It is easy to understand why at the time Sohlman did not see the need for a professional interpretation. In physics, chemistry and medicine there was hardly much to interpret. Likewise, with the peace prize, most people were familiar with the peace movement ideas. The first two decades went reasonably well without an interpretation. But this state of affairs was not to last.

2020: A more proper name: The Nobel Disarmament Prize

My first book (2008) contained this interpretation of the overarching purpose of the prize and held that the «Lay Down your Arms» award could have been a good name:

Its most distinctive content, that had made Nobel hesitate so long before he decided, can be summed up in one word: disarmament. The precondition for this to become possible – a new level of law and order, cooperation, trust - is expressed in the two other terms he used, «brotherhood of nations» and «peace congresses».4

Furthermore, with the term «champions of peace», Nobel must have borne in mind the wider circle of Suttner's political fellows, people active in the peace associations of the period, for instance in the Austrian Association of Friends of Peace, or the many enthusiasts in the International Peace Bureau and the Inter-parliamentary Union.5

After 125 years, Nobel's intention, as in 1895, is the central, unchangeable and legally binding directive for the selections. I wrote in the 2008 book:

The great changes the world has undergone do not mean that the committee today is free to do what it wants. The task is, now as in 1895, to implement Nobel's purpose with the will... what the testator meant by the words when they were written.

These observations should be easily understandable, but they collided with Norwegian politics. When two opposite views face each other, the choice of one excludes the other. This was highlighted in my book in 2010:

It is thus a fundamental, very important fact that Nobel when he created his will took a stand and chose one of the two sides. He wanted disarmament to replace military power games. This is a basic requirement, determining who can be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.6

The Norwegian Nobel Committee, unwilling to implement disarmament as the most distinctive aspect of the will, has argued that Nobel switched between different views of military power. It is true that he told Suttner about his doubts with respect to disarmament, but the committee draws wrong conclusions from such facts. Interpretation is not about Nobel's beliefs and doubts during a long life, but what he intended when he signed his testament. He once had defended peace through deterrence. Helped by Suttner he had changed his view and become an eager advocate of disarmament; his doubts were now only about tactics, and he feared that moving forward too fast might hurt the progress towards disarmed peace.

Yet, the Nobel Committee disagrees that the Nobel Prize was directed against militarism. This position is the startling core of the Nobel Committee's 18-page response to the Nobel Peace Prize Watch, published in 2015 on its website nobelpeaceprize.org. The letter, signed by committee chair Kaci Kullmann Five and the then new Nobel Secretary Olav Njølstad, was posted on the the nobel.no website for a few years, but was removed long ago. Perhaps the new committee chair from 2017, Berit Reiss-Andersen, a lawyer, saw how untenable the restatements of the law this letter contained were. Nobel's explicit mention of disarmament, even totals abolition of standing armies, makes the denial of disarmament as his goal a rather brazen, outlandish position to take. In fact, a better, more informative name, the Nobel Disarmament Prize, would have served the purpose better.

The concepts Nobel used in his will were drawn from the peace movement of the period. His mention of the peace congresses and two central themes in these embodied the political ideas of the 1890s in the will. But the Nobel committee has a point when it claims that there were many nuances and differing views in the movement. Who can say exactly which of them Nobel wished to favor? One obvious answer is that Nobel provided precise guidance in the three expressions about the «champions of peace» he had in mind. And still I would have liked to be able to identify even more precisely what Nobel had in mind.

The committee wrote in the letter in 2015 that it was committed to follow the testament and Alfred Nobel's will: «as far as this is possible to determine 120 years after Nobel's death». Most probably with an ironic grin, the remark made a person expressing definite opinions about Nobel's intentions appear something between impudent and ridiculous. A not too risky sarcasm it would seem, as new evidence rarely appears after so many years. I thought so too. Again wrong. Two years later, in 2017, I found that I had for years had a treasure trove of evidence right before my eyes. Failing to fully understand what it contained, I had left its full potential untapped.

«...to see a miracle happen between the nations»

Many have studied the correspondence between Alfred Nobel and Bertha von Suttner, but probably never a lawyer. So, I started checking whether the historians, never taking the legal dimension into their analysis, could have overlooked important points? They had! I found pearls in dense clusters. These letters that led to the prize are a crucial body of detailed evidence of what Nobel must have meant by his will.

The two exchanged many letters, and a total number of 70 have survived. Some letters from Nobel, not preserved, may be inferred by Suttner's next letters, reflecting what he must have written or answered. In most of the letters for eight years, from 1888 to two weeks before Nobel's death in 1896, Suttner, asked for money for her work, described the development of the peace movement, and came up with arguments and explanations about results and plans. Nobel answered, sending money and expressing his support for her work. Her letters and the pamphlets they contained must have formed Nobel's image of the peace activists he called the champions of peace.

Lawyers tend to see «preparatory material» as vital help to understanding a document, whether it is a law, a contract – or a will. The managers of the prize may invoke the excuse that the correspondence was not easily available. But this changed in 2001, with a book, *Chère baronne et amie - cher monsieur et ami* (Dear baroness and friend – dear Sir and friend). German historian Edelgard Biedermann had collected and published the letters in their original language form - the two used four languages, primarily French, then German, some English, some expressions in Russian. Her own scholarly comments are in German. For 19 years, the Nobel Institute has had this material available – without showing any signs of thirst to understand what they tell us about Nobel's intention.

The letters have a clear tinge of flirtation, elegant linguistic play, and a sense of humor that shows both closeness and friendship, with financial support for Suttner's peace work as a constant undertone. Disarmament and the end of all war are a main theme from the very beginning. In one of the first letters (01.04.1890) Nobel, thanking Bertha von Suttner for her book, calls her anti-militarist novel *Lay Down Your Arms*

... your admirable masterpiece. They say that there exist two thousand languages – that is 1999 too many - but there should not be a single one of them into which your wonderful work is not translated, read and contemplated. ... You must tell me when I shall have the privilege of shaking your hand – this hand of an amazon that so bravely fights the war against war. ... the grace of Your style and the greatness of your ideas. [Italics added].

Two years later (02.02.1892), Suttner writes: «They just have to admit that the question of abolishing war in recent times has made enormous progress – if only the idea could please the powerful and arouse the excitement of the masses, then – dynamite will only be used to blow up rocks.»

Another year later, Nobel (07.01.1893) shares with Suttner his plans for a peace prize:

I will by testament use a part of my fortune for a prize ... to him or her who has made the greatest steps for advancement in the pacification of Europe. I do not speak of disarmament because that would have to be done cautiously and slowly, not even the question of an absolute duty of arbitration. But one can and should rather reach this result that all nations make a solidary commitment to attack the one that attacks first. This would be to make war impossible and force the most brutal power and the most unreasonable to seek arbitration or keep quiet. If the triple alliance would include all states, instead of three, peace would be guaranteed for centuries.»⁷

This last remark, about securing peace through a global alliance of all states, is an interesting pointer to the meaning of his mention of a «brotherhood of nations» in the final will of 1895. His ambition was not just to make adjustments here and there, but to bring about a fundamental change to the international system and a peace order in Europe.

Suttner, in her response (27.01.1893), is far from enthusiastic:

Pacifists are dedicated to the elimination of war and they do it for the cause – they need money to cover the work to win the public opinion, not prizes ... I hope to live and see a miracle happen between the nations.» She sees

the matter as urgent and hopes to prevent new wars from forestalling peace efforts. But then «all those who are engaged, and they are many, must put all their energy into it. Governments will not be able to withstand a push from their peoples in this direction, and they themselves will take the initiative for a conference addressing the pacification of Europe.

She hopes that the information and the work of the International Peace Bureau will «make public opinion an irresistible force ... Oh, the idea of eliminating from the future that horrible scourge is so beautiful, so blissful that even without stimulation one has to do everything for it.»

These are probably the most important letters in the entire correspondence. By sharing this information with her Nobel showed how central Suttner and her work were in his planning for a peace prize. He actually made a will in 1893, complying with her dislike for a prize he included a legacy of one percent of the whole estate for Suttner.

Suttner wanted to have a conference to ensure durable peace. That she expected this to have the support of Nobel becomes clear in another letter (08.02.1893) where she mentioned that an official conference had been called to discuss means to combat the scourge of cholera. «... From there to a conference with the aim of ending the scourge of war, a hundred times worse - just one step. A long step, I must admit, but the world is marching, and what is a march other than a succession of steps? «This is how Suttner speculated about conferences two years before Nobel used the term peace congresses in his will.

Only two days later (10.02.1893) she admonished him: «Don't always call our peace plans a dream. Progress towards justice is surely not a dream, it is the law of civilization. The amount of savagery and stupidity in the world is certainly still very great, but the amount of kindness and gentleness and reason is growing every day.» She ends the letter wishing Nobel «could invent a little pill to blow up all fortresses and barracks at a single stroke.» Theme: Blow up the fortresses, end war.⁸

Over a year later (14.06.1894) she returns to the topic from earlier letters of a weapon invented by a certain Turpin, a horrific instrument, so scaring that it could mean the end of war: «That invention fills me with joy because, if it lives up to the promises of the inventor, it would make war almost impossible. However, I would have preferred that a similar invention, killing war, would have been made by you.»

Again and again the letters are about ending weapons and wars, and a deep, radical reform of how countries relate to each other. She writes, for instance, in 1894 (23.09.1894) that:

I am convinced that the new system will be introduced: a legal order between nations (*l'état juridique entre les nations*). The effort must be accelerated, the movement must be like a hurricane. We must pressure governments to deal with petitions, appeals, press articles, public demonstrations, delegations, etc

In an undated letter (1890s), Suttner wrote:

It is no longer just about developing the ideals for future generations – the task that has to be accomplished is: The prevention of the next war; is the initiation, already now, of a new institution.

Governments of all countries must come together in a conference and declare the creation of an international legal order, and initiate its implementation. What we, organisations, do in this, is only the swelling of public opinion to such a strength that the governments will be forced out of their egoistical and militarised indifference.

You see, what I need is an assistant like you, who works with heart and soul for the cause – and who, at the same time, also has the means to accomplish the things that are necessary. Would this not be a splendid task? One should be able to travel – in Paris, Berlin, Petersburg create centres which strengthen the movement; it is necessary to appear more forcefully also in Vienna.

... if two or three years would go by without the armament madmen [causing an explosion], it would be possible during this time, with intensive, accelerated action, to reach the goal – a law-based international order and [arbitration] tribunal must be established, and the court operative,... - the billions that go to preparations for war could be used to improve the economic situation ... (Italics added). 36 37

The similarity of the concept «creation of an international legal order» in this letter from Suttner and «creating the brotherhood of nations» in Nobel's testament is a piece of valuable evidence. She is mindful of the economic gain of avoiding further wars. Noting (27.02.1896) that torture has been abolished in Austria, she hopes for further progress: «Be aware that the minds are ready – that people are burning to shake off the yoke of militarism, and the monstrous taxes that follow from war budgets; not to mention the prospect of being crushed or hit by explosive bombs or torpedoes; they make no one smile. The air is saturated with scattered wills for pacifism, the question is just how to gather them, compact them and make them break out. ... »

Suttner often writes about her book *Lay Down Your Arms* and its progress; the translations, «Book of the Year» in the USA, new editions in Germany (16.02.1892), and details the progress of the peace movement. Arbitration (states committing to judicial decision and abstaining from war) is a recurring theme, as is Suttner's constant questions about money for her work and for the organisations she has set up. It first happens in 1891 when she (24.10.1891) asks for financial support to participate in the great peace congress in Rome. Nobel (31.10.1891) wonders what the peace work really needs money for, but as usual he «does not hesitate to enclose a contribution of 80 pounds sterling for this purpose.»

The main impression left by the letters is that they are about the peace work and the ideas of the peace movement and that they enable a wealth of conclusions about Nobel's testament, much too plentiful to document more than a little selection here. In a letter dated June 7, 1893, Suttner goes against the well-known slogan «If you want peace, prepare for war.» She rejects «this idiotic phrase from ancient Rome» which serves so strongly to drive armaments. Parliaments should do the exact opposite, she writes, prepare for peace, «Si vis pacem, para pacem.» There can be no doubt, to support this fiery antimilitarist is what Nobel wished, and global co-operation on disarmament is the purpose of the award.

In the last letter from Suttner (28.11.1896), twelve days before Nobel

died, she thanks him again for his support, and repeats that none of what she had achieved could have happened without his financial support. Obviously unaware that he had made a will and indicating in great detail how much more she could do if the money was available, Suttner concludes with an urgent appeal; she folds her hands, she writes, in a prayer to Nobel:

«Never stop giving us your support - never, not even beyond the grave that awaits us all.»

Concluding interpretation:

Who are the Nobel «champions of peace»?

All of Nobel's five prizes reflect his desire for great and innovative changes in the world. As just shown above, with his prize for the champions of peace, Nobel wanted to support Suttner, her political ideas and her political friends in their work for an international peace order, a full break with war traditions.

His goal was to replace armaments and military power games with a global collaboration to liberate the nations of the world from weapons, warriors and military power.

This interpretation is the reliable main conclusion. Other formulations can enrich, supplement and deepen this main formulation of the purpose:

- The solution lies in a global peace order, creation of a brotherhood of peoples, cooperation to abolish national armaments and to develop international law and international institutions.
- The award is meant to support the dissidents, the grassroots activists, not military and political leaders. The young and destitute talents should be given opportunities to contribute to a better world.
- The point was prevention, or abolition, of war; not to make wars more «humane», reduce suffering, or to provide humanitarian aid to the victims.
- Arbitration (court decisions) and courts were to replace use of armed force.
- Global cooperation on disarmament was to replace the arms races between nations.

The interpretation also includes points that are obvious, understood, even without express mention in the testament:

- The main task and responsibility for the awarders is to promote the peace idea in the will, not primarily focus on selection and promotion of persons (or organizations).
- The responsibility of the Stortinget is to choose the most suitable members of the Nobel Committee, qualified by their knowledge and commitment to the award's purpose.
- For the Nobel Committee, the choice of winners is not the goal, but a tool to serve the goal.

Nobel had one intention, only one interpretation of his will can be the correct one. The answer to what Nobel's intention actually was depends on the evidence. My works are still the only attempts at a professional interpretation

based on available evidence. The Nobel Committee and Norwegian parliamentarians have a legal obligation to always utilize the best available interpretation.

Can the passing of time have changed Nobel's will?

Many will hesitate to take an old testament too seriously. Time has passed, and conditions have changed. The content must be outdated. But is it, here? Once you know the actual purpose, could anything be more desirable than a global disarmed peace order? True, humanitarian aid, democracy, resource conservation, the fight against poverty and child labor, for the environment, climate, human rights, education, and micro-finance are among the valuable purposes the Norwegian committee has honored. With its own reward, not Nobel's prize. Were his idea of global disarmament to succeed, all these good causes would benefit, everywhere, every year.

Again and again a wish to include causes that Nobel could not foresee have come up; can one then expand the purpose? The answer is no, Nobel's view of how to create world peace is legally binding – and also better than all competing purposes. As long as there still are recipients that fit Nobel's purpose the prizes must serve his idea. Should that no longer be the case, the law permits an adjustment of the purpose. But trustees cannot do this on their own, the Nobel Foundation would have to apply and the authorities grant permission. As Part II will show, there was never a shortage of candidates of the kind Nobel wished to support. An application for so-called «permutation» would never have had a chance. Moreover, it would not open the gates to all kinds of prizes, and the authorities would have to set a new purpose as close to the original idea as possible.

The original purpose thus is the central, sacrosanct and unchangeable, core of the will. even if public opinion and reality may shift. Certain adaptation to new realities will, however, be in line with the original purpose. Based on Nobel's letter to Suttner of 7.1.1893 mentioned above, it seems that Nobel thought in terms of Europe – his «world» peace did not include the colonies. Today, the family picture of the world is different. New states must necessarily belong in his disarmed community of all nations and conferring the «greatest benefit on mankind» cannot, and should never have been, limited to Europe.

In the letter he describes a prize aiming at the pacification of Europe, saying that without this «reform of the system we will be right back in complete barbarity.» This is also a confirmation that his prize had a profound antimilitarist change of the [international] system in mind. Again, Nobel showed his imagination and foresight. The barbarization that Nobel predicted if in 30 years if the world had not changed course came to pass – in World War I, and then in World War II, the end of which inaugurated the nuclear age. More than ever before, disarmament – now nuclear disarmament – has become an imperative. The changes of the world do not call for changing the will. Instead realizing it has become a deadly imperative urgency.

By the will Nobel fulfilled a promise to Suttner in August 1892 to «do something great for the movement.»⁹ She had not even hesitated to beg him for support after his death; Nobel broached his plans about a peace prize to her; his first will (1893) contained a significant legacy for peace work, where a

percentage of the fortune was to go to Suttner, her work and her Austrian peace association. Add to all that their personal friendship, and also that the telephone was barely invented. Communication over distance was by letter. They rarely met in person, and the letters must be the almost the entirety of the exchange between them about peace, money and testament. That makes the letters the main key to interpreting the Peace Prize.

A common idea often heard is that if Nobel had lived today he would have altered his will. They see altering the original idea as helpful respect for his will. Even if the intention may be good, this is far from what the law prescribes. The will, also called the «dead hand» becomes final when death occurs. A related problem is that in some cases conditions have changed before death, the testator may get other friends, interests or political attitudes. No such thing took place with Nobel's support for the peace movement. The will was barely one year old when he died, and the cause was close to his heart until the very end. Just three weeks before his death, in a last letter to Suttner (21.11.1896) he confirmed:

But let this be enough about me, and my small discomforts. I am thrilled to see the peace movement enjoy progress. It is thanks to the masses becoming more civilized and especially to those who drive away prejudice and darkness, among whom you have a high rank. Herein lies your true nobility. Heartily yours, A. Nobel

Nobel's will in Norwegian pockets?

In 2001 the secretary of the Norwegian Nobel Committee, Geir Lundestad, wrote a centenary article, The Nobel Peace Prize 1901-2000, published on the Foundation's website, nobelprize.org. With unmistakable pride he noted that

... the prize would never have enjoyed the kind of position it has today had it not been for the decent, even highly respectable, record the Norwegian Nobel Committee has established in its selections over these 100 years. One important element of this record has been the committee's broad definition of peace, enough to take in virtually any relevant field of peace work.

Nine years later, in October 2009, Thorbjørn Jagland as chairperson ended his announcement of the award to US president Barack Obama with these words:

For 108 years, the Norwegian Nobel Committee has sought to stimulate precisely that international policy and those attitudes for which Obama is now the world's leading spokesman.

Ninety years before the centenary article, in 1910, the committee chair, Jørgen Løvland, had said about the prize for 1910 to the anti-militarist International Peace Bureau:

We are convinced that this award is entirely in the spirit of Alfred Nobel's plan; he wanted his money to be used to support, accelerate, and promote the peace movement.

A prize for a militarist statesman, a prize for absolutely all kinds of peace work, or a specific prize to support the peace movement? Three such different interpretations cannot all be correct. The committee has not often pronounced views about the idea and purpose of their work. The few attempts over the years have all confirmed a sad reality: The Norwegian awarders have

ignored the will and used the prize as their own. It became a Nobel prize in name only. Some examples (with crucial expressions in italics):

Chair Aase Lionæs, speaking in honor of Sean McBride and Eisaku Sato in 1974, said that the prize had led to discussions in all of its seventy years:

This eloquently proves how difficult it is to define the concept of peace. ... the Nobel Committee has selected laureates whose efforts on behalf of peace have covered a great many varied fields: they have included statesmen negotiating round the conference table, defenders of human rights, experts on international law, rebels, humanists, idealists, pragmatists, dreamers. They have all been controversial figures.

At the ceremony for Lech Walesa in 1983 Egil Aarvik said that «the committee once again draws the international community's attention to its own definition of the term peace.» He also elaborated how Alfred Nobel's will was «the guideline for the committee's work»:

Therefore, the Nobel Peace Prize can never be anything more - but also never anything less than an outstretched hand to individuals and groups who under different conditions are exponents of the longing for peace and freedom of all peoples – no matter where in the world they live. We believe it is in the spirit of Alfred Nobel that the Peace Prize should be a sign of solidarity with those who, in the service of peace, are waging their struggle for the highest ideals of humanity.

Speaking in honor of the US Secretary of State, Frank Kellogg, in 1929, Johan Ludwig Mowinckel said:

Alfred Nobel himself had no illusions about the difficulties of peace work and the complexity of the problems it offered. Therefore, he also placed no strict restrictions on the Peace Prize. Any noble and serious effort to advance the cause of peace could qualify for the prize. ... It is thus entirely in accordance with Alfred Nobel's view of peace work not to set limits for how this work is carried out. Nor can it be different. The spirit and the hand are equally important in this context.

Plain for anyone to see, the committee has made its own concept of peace, and its own definition. Free fiction, no one bothered to check Nobel's own concept of peace. With this attitude to the laws, how can lawmakers expect the public to be much better? Their misuse of entrusted funds for so many years, is no small scandal. At least since my reminder in 2007 the award policy must be seen as a deliberate illegality.

There are two exceptions. In the first two decades, Suttner's ideas were still in the air and even without a professional interpretation the Norwegian awarders had a fairly good understanding of the purpose. When, in April 1906, Nobel Committee chair Jørgen Løvland, introduced Bertha von Suttner's belated Nobel lecture, he said she deserved eternal honor for attacking war with her battle cry Lay down your arms – the world wishes to get rid of destructive armies, oceans of people will permanently drown the sound of war drums and trumpets. And then the tidbit:

Our task is clear: to combat any act of violence, any war of aggression, and so render even the justifiable defensive war unnecessary. We shall rouse the conscience of man, put justice and morality in the place of war.

Returning to the three quotes opening this chapter, which one is right?

In the centenary article Lundestad, with his «broad definition of peace ... any relevant field of peace work», gave an entirely correct description of an entirely wrong practice. The betrayal of Nobel could hardly have been revealed more clearly. So one would think. But Lundestad added an even more revealing comment: «Although the Norwegian Nobel Committee never formally defined 'peace', in practice it came to interpret the term ever more broadly.» After ten years as the committee secretary he believed that his task was to interpret 'peace', maybe even define this word. He did not have even the remotest hunch that Nobel's own concept could be of interest. He still didn't when, in 2015, he retired after 25 years in the post. Since 2007 I had persistently reminded him and all of Norway of the testament. To no avail, the awarders continued roaming around with their own ideas as their compass.

Løvland's words speaking for Suttner in 1905 and for the IPB in 1910, two clear pronouncements of the antiwar and disarmament purpose of the prize, seem to be the two only examples of the committee actually offering loyal support for Nobel's idea.

Norwegian trustees behaving as owners

In January 1897, a month after Nobel's death, Sohlman's travel to Oslo was vital to get Norway's Parliament, the Stortinget, onboard as one of the five awarding committees. Only three months later Parliament consented and the President proclaimed with enthusiasm: «The prize shall be his monument, it will not crumble, it will stand intact through the ages, and shine brighter and brighter over the world».

On the surface what then happened must have seemed a genuine dedication to serving Nobel's will. The foremost Norwegian politicians took a seat on the Nobel Committee. Those who ruled Norway also ruled the Nobel Peace Prize. In reality, however, Parliament from the very beginning took full control and made the prize its own. First, in Parliament, it was decided to transform the prize and betray its central purpose. Then, having treated themselves to a majority of the committee seats they deprived the champions of peace of the money and recognition they were legally entitled to.

The result was, in fact, very much Norway and very little Nobel. Norwegian politicians had their minds occupied elsewhere, were dreaming of an independent state, where they were not subordinates of the Swedish king. They were overjoyed when the Nobel Prize fell into their lap. Foreign relations were a prerogative for Sweden and to Norway. Norwegian politicians wished for their own contacts with other nations. The attractive prize became a very welcome lifeline enabling contact and interaction with other countries.

The award arrived without a manual. The Stortinget had to figure out how to approach an extraordinary and unprecedented task. The invitation received, became a matter for the Presidency, the six-member group of Speakers and deputies for the Plenary, and each of the two sub-chambers. We cannot know all the thoughts and internal discussions among the presidents, but it seems to me certain that Nobel's words on the «reduction or abolition of standing armies» must have presented a major difficulty: Norway had in the early 1890s been in the vanguard among European nations in supporting the new

movement for peace through disarmament. It had e.g. been the first to allocate money for the IPB. However, the independence struggle had in 1895 led to a distinct shift in attitudes, away from favoring disarmament to preparing instead for a possibly armed confrontation to get out of the union with Sweden.¹⁰

We may safely presume that it was decided to quietly drop the will's most potent measure for peace, disarmament. This also made it necessary not to talk much about interpretation of the will and what Nobel really wanted. The chief lawmakers must have made a deliberate decision to break the law, and drop the core innovation of inventor Nobel's will. Nobel's prize was dead four years before its arrival.

The premise for this conclusion is the comprehensive national debate on disarmament during the 1890s. It ended with a split of the main peace organization, the Norwegian Peace Association, where those who stood firm won a decisive vote. But those who were more pragmatic and thought the disarmament must come when the time was opportune left the association – some of those with a pragmatic view of disarmament soon got key roles in the management of the Nobel Prize.

Even without express language in the will, Parliament was obliged to select a committee of people loyal to Nobel's purpose, but the Presidency group ensured that the first committee was reliably opposed to disarmament. Taking up three of the five seats in the first committee the presidents of Parliament became a majority. One «civilian» was included, the national poet Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson, known all over Europe for his struggle for oppressed nations. From one of his letters to Suttner, we know that even if Nobel regarded Bjørnson highly as a poet, he considered him too soft in his advocacy of peace. In fact, Bjørnson, had shifted sides the year before and ridiculed the peace movement in an article on «Peace-sheep». Having distanced himself from the idea of Nobel may have qualified him in the eyes of the Presidency.

The first committee chair from 1897, a highly respected lawyer, correctly wished the committee to be as separate and independent as possible. However, he died in 1901, and his successor, a central national politician, Jørgen Løvland, had the opposite policy. He tried to link the award as closely to the Stortinget as possible. This policy of Parliament making the award its own was a policy pursued with open frankness. Parliament was added to the committee's name (the Norwegian Stortinget's Nobel Committee). The first prize was announced in a meeting of the Stortinget itself, on December 10, 1901 – by the President of Parliament (and deputy member of the Nobel Committee). Parliament role was to select the award committee, but Løvland reformulated the task: «Dr. Alfred Nobel entrusted to the Stortinget through five selected men the honorable task of conferring ... ».

It has been so common to select leading politicians as committee members that many today believe that the testament requires members that are politicians (Table 1).

Since the 2010 award (Liu Xiaobo) created a gross conflict with China, official Norway has done its utmost to create the impression of an independent award, for which Norway is not responsible. This pretension is not consistent with history and a long tradition of Norwegian politicians using the prize for their own interests. In 1902 a central figure, Halvdan Koht, thinking that «Nor-

way had an old debt of honor to settle with a faithful friend», recommended using the Peace Prize to remunerate K. P. Arnoldson (a former member of the Swedish parliament) for his efforts for peace with Norway in the union conflict. Koht said he «deserves the highest award that Norway [!] can give him».

In 1905, the event of announcing the prize for Suttner was held in the elegant, recently acquired mansion of the Norwegian Nobel Institute. Committee chair Løvland again stated: «Nobel left it to the Stortinget to award the prize». Then the President of Parliament – and committee member – Carl Berner spoke of the important task that Nobel had placed in the hands of Parliament. Such solemn declarations by the political leaders of Norway in front of both the King and Queen, Parliament, Government – and foreign ambassadors – gave the world a strong, almost indelible, signal that the prize was given by Norway and its Storting.

Following a complaint from an MP, against moving the award ceremony to the Nobel Institute, the «mistake» was corrected in the next year, 1906, when the US ambassador was invited into the hall of Parliament to speak in English to express gratitude for the award to Theodore Roosevelt.

When today's Norwegian politicians loudly proclaim that the prize is independent and not a reflection of Norwegian politics, this is definitely not true for the initial period. Did it become true later, and if so when? The answer can only be found by a closer look at the Nobel decisions of Parliament and the Nobel Committee during 123 years – in Part II.11

The peace movement is used to being ignored and not listened to, but the Nobel Prize is a potential exception. The rights of the «champions of peace» to receive the money and acclaim that go with Nobel's prize are not a political matter of taste. As it is based in a testament, a political position here enjoys a legal right. If the awarders do not respect this the right of the designated recipients is entitled to legal protection in the judiciary or administrative branches of society. Part III will examine how well, if at all, this protection works when military security is involved, then look at the social and psychological obstacles, the national consensus that the peace ideas are up against, and present a world view that makes it possible to liberate the nations of the world from the yoke of militarism.

Endnotes

- 1 nobelprize.org, Doi: Aug 3, 2020.
- 2 Translated in H. Schück and R. Sohlman, *The Life of Alfred Nobel*, London, 1929, p. 208
- 3 But an addition shows him less than optimistic about how soon the change would come: Nobel went on: ' ... to urge that if they are to be manufactured they should be manufactured at home ...' He must have felt that as long as there was arms production he/Sweden should benefit.
- 4 Heffermehl (2010), p. 26.
- 5 Ibid. P. 34.
- 6 Heffermehl (2010), p. 22.
- 7 The letters have been translated from German and (this one) French by the author.
- 8 This is a rare example of her writing to Alfred Nobel in English. The year, 1893, is not certain.
- 9 Biedermann (2001), p. 47.
- 10 Leira (2004): «Besides Bjørnson and Koht, also men like Christian Lous Lange, Jørgen Løvland, John Lund, Hans Jakob Horst and Viggo Ullmann himself.»
- 11 Some references to official documents in Norwegian in have been omitted here – and also elsewhere in the book. This chapter (pages 46-51 in the original text) also omits some elements of interest mainly to Norwegians.

Part II

Who won, and who should have won, 1901–2019?

Sample years:

1989

Laureate: The 14th Dalai Lama, born 1936: religious and political leader, Tibet. Reasons: «Dalai Lama in his struggle for the liberation of Tibet consistently has opposed the use of violence. He has instead advocated peaceful solutions based upon tolerance and mutual respect in order to preserve the historical and cultural heritage of his people. ... has developed his philosophy of peace from a great reverence for all things living and upon the concept of universal responsibility embracing all mankind as well as nature. In the opinion of the Committee the Dalai Lama has come forward with constructive and forward-looking proposals for the solution of international conflicts, human rights issues, and global environmental problems.»

A «universal responsibly embracing all mankind as well as nature», as beautiful as it sounds, once again is about a general peace prize, not about all nations disarming, the idea Nobel had in mind. This requires efforts to befriend and include, not alienate, China.

The Nobel committee should have shared the prize for 1989 between three nationals of New Zealand (Aotearoa): 1) George Armstrong, 58 (born 1931), leader of the national anti-nuclear movement, 2) Helen Clark, 39 (born 1950), MP and Chair of the Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee, and 3) David Lange, 47 (1942–2005), Prime Minister.

In June 1987 New Zealand became the first Western-allied nation to adopt legislation banning nuclear-armed or -powered warships from its territory. Doing so the nation rejected nuclear deterrence and made a revolt against the country's subservient role as a junior member of the ANZUS treaty alliance.



George Armstrong

In New Zealand the US Navy made regular visits between 1976 and 1984 with nuclear-powered and possibly nuclear-armed, ships. Armstrong earned the sobriquet «renegade priest» for having invented a most efficient form of protest, the «Peace Flotilla.» Through the mobilization of an armada of small boats to fill the harbor citizens sought to deny access to visiting US nuclear-armed vessels.



Helen Clark



David Lange

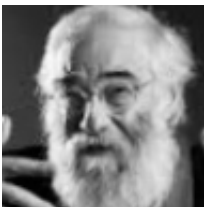
Presumably Lange was nominated for having led his Labour government to pass the pioneering nuclear free legislation, adopted June 1987. Clark's role as MP was vital in getting the legislation drafted and passed by Parliament. They were pushed by and supported by a broad mobilization of the country's population. A vast array of people dedicated to the abolition of nuclear weapons had been mobilized in New Zealand over decades, many were worthy of Nobel honor.

These foreign and defense policy changes reflected a New Zealand shift in identity from ally of the US and UK, away from traditional military means to more neutral peacemaking nation. NZ pointed the way to major renewal in international affairs with its renewed loyalty – giving priority to responsibilities to its smaller South Pacific neighboring island states and showing a strong commitment to the United Nations, multilateralism and international law.

As a general rule, statesmen, political and military leaders, are not the types of «champions of peace» that Nobel had in mind, but Lange and Clark are exceptions. They challenged the traditions that keep the world locked in the firm grip of militarism.

2007

The prize was shared between 1) Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), and 2) Albert Arnold (Al) Gore Jr. 59 (born 1948), former Vice President, USA. Reasons: «... for their efforts to build up and disseminate greater knowledge about man-made climate change, and to lay the foundations for the measures that are needed to counteract such change.»



Barry Sanders

The committee's selection for 2007 reflects its desire to associate itself with

trendy, «hot» issues. They failed to make the obvious connection between the climate issue and militarism. When I tried a simple check by Internet (search string: military emissions pollut 2006), I immediately found a good Nobel candidate for 2007: Barry Sanders, 69 (born 1938), a US professor of medieval literature in Portland, Oregon. Sanders is a versatile academic, creative artist, and political thinker. In a TV interview, he explained what happened when, in 2003, he posed a simple question:

In 2003 I woke up one day and realized that we're asked to recycle, ourselves, little paper cups and all. And then I wondered, as a plane was flying overhead, about the military. So I came to understand this idea that I was told as a kid, it's a military secret, I can't tell you, and all of this is military secrets. ...

But as I was doing this research, I came across a website I had never seen before. I just stumbled on it. In this site called WikiLeaks, there were numbers and there were leaked memos. So it was a slow, arduous process. You know, the military does keep it under wraps. There are so many different kinds of vehicles one doesn't finally know what to use.

The small question resulted in a book in 2009 about militarism as the largest single source of pollution in this country and in the world: the United States military—in particular the military in its most ferocious and stepped-up mode—namely, the military at war. ... When we declare war on a foreign nation, we now also declare war on the Earth, on the soil and plants and animals, the water and wind and people in the most far-reaching and deeply infecting ways.

War is so deeply embedded in the democratic system...that we may need to grab it where it lives, and dies, and that's at the level of money ... eliminating its funding is the way to halt the military's omnicide, funded by our tax dollars.

We must begin to see war as an outmoded method of solving political problems ... The anti-war movement must become a No-War movement working alongside those who believe that, if we act now and with determination and without equivocation, it may still be possible to live on this planet for decades and even centuries from today.

The Sanders story also offers a most instructive example of what happens with anyone who has the bravery to seriously criticize the military – worth covering in some detail. In an article in Huffington Post in 2007, *The Military Addiction to Oil*, Sanders had claimed that ... the military counts fuel consumption in terms of «gallons per minute,» and «barrels per hour.» And «One quickly realizes that military `assets', as the Pentagon likes to call its rolling arsenal, operate in a world all their own, free of restraints of any kind — both in the fuel they consume and the pollutants they exhaust.

Feeding the appetites of these voracious machines, with gasoline or diesel or kerosene, requires intricate logistical planning and support from some 2,000 trucks, a battery of computers, another 20,000 GIs, and, according to an Associated News report for September 2007, as many as 180,000 workers under federal contracts—more contract workers, in fact, than soldiers.

As a result, the average cost per gallon (3,7 liters) of military fuel is \$300, and the operating cost of the Abrams tank \$90 000 per hour. An aircraft carrier at the top speed of 25 knots burns 5,600 gallons per hour. «The Independence» took 14 days to reach the Persian Gulf in 1991, burning two million

gallons of fuel, total cost: \$ 600 million – one way.

It had required a major effort to reveal facts that the military does its best to keep hidden. Without the stamina of Sanders, his dedicated and genuine patriotism, and WikiLeaks, the American public would not have got insight into these exorbitant emissions of greenhouse gases. Sanders deserved recognition and high praise. Instead he got to see the high killing capacity of the military propaganda machine. In the ultra-conservative Evening Standard, journalist Michael Goldfarb, ridiculed The Huffington Post for routinely «allowing its authors to write about subjects with which they are completely unfamiliar, largely uninformed, and generally ignorant ... but today's post by Barry Sanders sets a new standard.»

True, Sanders set a new standard, Goldfarb practised the old one that excludes the general public from debating military issues. If only the specialists and experts are admitted there is no democratic debate. There is, no doubt, a certain need for military secrecy, but every so often it is comfortable to withhold information to avoid democratic debate and control. Goldfarb had only been able to point out insignificant errors, his real errand was to discourage members of the public and keep the military free from democratic scrutiny.

One detail is interesting, not to say mystifying. Did not the counterattack, within 26 hours, come suspiciously fast? One may easily get the feeling that a substantial team had been mobilized to work with Goldfarb on crushing Sanders' work as inaccurate and worthless. Were taxpayers' money used to protect the military's obscene overuse of their own money?

It was admirable of Sanders, the amateur, to manage to uncover realities that the military wished to shield from view. He had done the job that HuffPost editors should have done. Instead they disavowed Sanders and discontinued his series of «Green Zone» articles. A Nobel prize for him could have stimulated individuals to speak up against military excesses.

Table 3: Nobel Peace Prizes
Breakdown by recipient's nationality

	Actually awarded	In compliance	
	Norwegian Nobel Committee		Author
USA	21	4	44
UK	9	6	21
France	8	4	6
Germany	5	1	11
Sweden	5	4	9
N. Ireland	4		0
South Africa	4		1
Belgium	3		1
Israel	3		0
Switzerland	3	2	3
Argentina	2		1
Austria	2	2	3
Bangladesh	2		0
East Timor	2		0
Egypt	2		0
India	2		1
Israel	3		0
Liberia	2		1
Norway	2	1	5
Russia / Soviet	2	1	3
Canada	1		0
China	1		0
Congo	1		0
Costa Rica	1		2
Denmark	1	1	4
Ethiopia	1		0
Finland	1		0
Ghana	1		1
Guatemala	1		0
Iraq	1		0
Iran	1		0
Ireland	1		1
Italy	1	1	3
Japan	1		3
Kenya	1		0
Mexico	1	1	2
Myanmar	1		0
The Netherlands	1	1	2
North Vietnam	1		0
Pakistan	1		2
Palestine	1		0
Poland	1		1
South Korea	1		1
Tibet	1		0
Tunis	1		0
Yemen	1		0
Australia			4
Marshall Islands			1
New Zealand			4
Sri Lanka			2
SUM	112	29	143

Table 4:

Number of female laureates

	1901–1910	1911–1920	1921–1930	1931–1940	1941–1950	1951–1960	1961–1970	1971–1980	1981–1990	1991–2000	2001–2010	2011–2019	
The Norwegian Nobel Committee	1			1	1			3	1	3	1	4	15
The author's list	1	3		3	2	2	1	2	4	7	4	3	32

Table 13:

The Nobel Peace Prize: Laureates and compliance – Ninth decade (1981–90)

The committee's main responsibility: to promote the peace vision of Alfred Nobel

The Norwegian Nobel Committee Laureates					The author's list of laureates		
The prize was awarded to:	Age	Country	Category	Year	Should have won	Age	Country
UN High Commissioner Refugees, UNHCR			Humanitarian Prize	1981	Ruth Leger Sivard	66	USA
Alva Myrdal	80	Sweden	Nobel Peace Prize	1982	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	80	
Alfonso García Robles	77	Mexico	Nobel Peace Prize		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	77	
Lech Wałęsa	40	Polen	Cold War Prize	1983	Edward P. Thompson	59	UK
					END, European Nuclear Disarmament		
Desmond Tutu	53	South Afrika	Democracy Prize	1984	Olof Palme	57	Sweden
International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War			Nobel Peace Prize	1985	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Elie Wiesel	58	USA	Humanitarian Prize	1986	Petra Kelly	39	Germany
					Bruce Kent	57	UK
Oscar Arias Sánchez	46	Costa Rica	General Peace Prize	1987	Oscar Arias Sánchez	46	Costa Rica
United Nations Peace-Keeping Forces			General Peace Prize	1988	FNs fredsbevarende styrker		
14de Dalai Lama	53	Tibet	General Peace Prize	1989	George Armstrong	58	New Zealand Aotearoa
					Helen Clark	39	New Zealand Aotearoa
					David Lange	47	New Zealand Aotearoa
Michail Gorbachev	59	Russia	Nobel Peace Prize	1990	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	59	
<i>Average age</i>	<i>58,3</i>				<i>Average age</i>	<i>57,0</i>	
Of 11 decisions: 4 Nobel prizes , 7 other purposes					9 did not yet receive the prize they should have received		
Percent compliance: 36 %							

The committee's awards that the author considers acceptably within Nobel's intention are marked with and count in the average age of the author's winners.

