

# critical currents

Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation  
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Can we save  
true dialogue  
in an Age of Mistrust?  
*The encounter of  
Dag Hammarskjöld  
and Martin Buber*

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# Can we save true dialogue in an Age of Mistrust?

*The encounter of  
Dag Hammarskjöld  
and Martin Buber*

*Lou Marin*

Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation

Uppsala 2010

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# Contents

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Preface .....   | 4  |
| Introduction.....   | 7  |
| I » The ‘Walls of Distrust’ within the ‘Age of Mistrust’:<br>The encounter of Dag Hammarskjöld and Martin Buber, phase 1 (1958/59) .....        | 9  |
| II » Perspectives on dialogue: The encounter of<br>Dag Hammarskjöld and Martin Buber, phase 2 (1961 and after) .....                            | 38 |
| III » Outlook: Can we save true dialogue in an Age of Mistrust?<br>Discussion of Hammarskjöld’s and Buber’s alternatives if dialogue fails..... | 67 |
| Literature .....  | 78 |

# Preface

Dag Hammarskjöld was known for his wide interests and contacts, and for his capacity to interweave nature, art, science and politics into a tapestry of varied but complementary colours and textures, creating a harmonious and integrated whole. For him, philosophy, poetry and politics not only had their first letter in common; combined, they constituted a passion, the fourth in this mutually reinforcing collection of ingredients that made him such a remarkable international civil servant with an enduring impact.

Hammarskjöld's impressive correspondence, which went far beyond the limits of his professional duties as narrowly defined, included exchanges with many individuals representing these various spheres of life and thinking. Among the thinkers he engaged with intellectually was Martin Buber. Evidence of this was even found in the debris from the plane crash near Ndola in then Northern Rhodesia, in which Hammarskjöld died in the early hours of 18 September 1961. A copy of Buber's *Ich und Du* was among the scattered items collected from the wreckage. During his last flight Hammarskjöld had been using the time to continue the translating of Buber's work into Swedish, which he had recently started: a task bordering on the impossible, but very much in keeping with the unlimited ambitions of Hammarskjöld's intellect.

Accepting on Dag Hammarskjöld's behalf the posthumously awarded Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo on 10 December 1961, the Swedish ambassador to Norway, Rolf Edberg, referred in

his short speech to this engagement, which was such clear evidence of the attraction of thought between the second Secretary-General to the United Nations and Buber:

... perhaps we can think that he found something that was essential to himself in the last book that he was engaged in translating, the powerful work *Ich und Du* [I and Thou], in which the Jewish philosopher Martin Buber sets forth his belief that all real living is meeting. He himself believed that there were invisible bridges on which people could meet as human beings above the confines of ideologies, races, and nations.<sup>1</sup>

The notion of dialogue promoted by Buber was similarly an integral and substantial part of Hammarskjöld's approach to life. In one of his postings on his Hammarskjöld blog, biographer Roger Lipsey draws attention to this: 'His respect for the word was immeasurably great. His recognition of its frequent corruption in public life was also great.'<sup>2</sup> Lipsey also reproduces an exchange from a press conference in January 1955, when a journalist enquired of Hammarskjöld what he would do with all the information from conversations after he had visited China. Hammarskjöld's recorded answer was: 'Well, the risk of mistakes and false initiatives may be reduced. The possibility of saying the right word at the right moment may be increased.'

1 [http://nobelprize.org/nobel\\_prizes/peace/laureates/1961/hammarskjold-acceptance.html](http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/1961/hammarskjold-acceptance.html).

2 <http://www.dag-hammarskjold.com/2009/07/dialogue-part-1-right-word-at-right.html>.

Maurice S. Friedman is by far the hitherto most authoritative author dealing with Martin Buber. He published several monographs comprising the most comprehensive work on the philosopher (frequently referred to in the following essay). In 1960 he added a postscript to chapter 23 (on ‘social philosophy’) to the revised edition of his pioneering study, *Martin Buber: The Life of Dialogue* (first published in 1955), in which he shared his observation that Dag Hammarskjöld echoed Buber’s call for renewed ‘contact and communications across geographical and political boundaries’.<sup>3</sup>

As Manuel Fröhlich summarised, ‘Buber’s analysis of the underlying forces that dominate the Cold War scenario, which for him basically was an age of distrust, also influenced a number of speeches by Hammarskjöld who shared Buber’s diagnosis that many of the political and military problems were in fact problems of human behaviour, trust and communication.’<sup>4</sup>

This essence of dialogue remains more relevant than ever in times where ‘otherness’ is all too often misconstrued as alien. Despite today’s much higher degree of mobility (physically as well as mentally, and in

terms of communication technology), the global divide has not been bridged, and antagonisms based on different religions and other identity-forming beliefs and convictions persist. More than ever, we are living in a world of fear and misunderstanding, in which differences dominate over commonalities. In this light, reflections on the relevance of dialogue, as testified in the communication between Hammarskjöld and Buber, are as relevant for politics today as they were half a century ago.

The ‘age of mistrust’ has not yet come to an end. It continues, despite efforts such as this to bring back into public discourse ideas that remain as relevant today as they were at the time of the correspondence between Hammarskjöld and Buber. But this is no excuse for not reminding ourselves and others that tools to address most of the issues confronting us in our search for a better future have already been thoroughly explored. After all, more dialogue rather than less might not be such a bad idea in our times either.

*Henning Melber*

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3 <http://www.religion-online.org/showchapter.asp?title=459&C=393>.

4 Manuel Fröhlich, “‘The Unknown Assignment’: Dag Hammarskjöld in the Papers of George Ivan Smith”, in ‘Beyond Diplomacy: Perspectives on Dag Hammarskjöld’, Uppsala: Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, 2008 (Critical Currents no. 2), p. 16. The publication is accessible for download at [www.dhf.uu.se](http://www.dhf.uu.se).



*In the course of a three-week visit in 1959 to the Middle East and Africa, UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld spent three days in Israel where he held talks with government officials. He also took the opportunity to visit the famous philosopher Professor Martin Buber.*

*Photo: UN Photo*

# Can we save true dialogue in an Age of Mistrust?

The encounter of Dag Hammarskjöld and Martin Buber

## Introduction

The personal encounter of Dag Hammarskjöld and Martin Buber was as short in duration as it was intense in intellectual exchange. It took place during the later years of both men's lives, between 1958 and 1961, and consisted of a short correspondence and three personal meetings. Buber lived longer than Hammarskjöld and gave some a memorial interview in Hammarskjöld's honour. This special relationship, which both men also characterised as a personal friendship, takes on a special significance in that one of Hammarskjöld's last acts before the fatal air crash in Ndola, Zambia, in September 1961, was to work on a draft translation of Buber's book *I and Thou*.

This essay is not the first on their encounter. Biographers of Buber and of Hammarskjöld have already paved the way, and to a great extent this text is based on their preceding research. I have sub-divided their encounter into two phases, each of them initiated by Hammarskjöld after reading a work of Buber's. Whereas, hitherto, information on their encounter has been gathered to show their similarities, I have focused as much on the differences between them, and the difficulties that were bound to arise when

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Since 2001 he has lived in Marseille as a journalist, author, translator and publisher. He is an administrative member of CIRA (Centre International de Recherches sur l'Anarchisme). His work includes *Albert Camus et les libertaires (1948-1960)* (Égrégories Editions, 2008), *Le don de la liberté (Les Rencontres Méditerranéennes Albert Camus, 2009)* and *Albert Camus et sa critique libertaire de la violence (Indigène Éditions, 2010)*. He is also the author of *Camus and Gandhi: Essays on Political Philosophy in Hammarskjöld's Times* (Critical Currents, no. 3, Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, 2008).



Hammarskjöld tried to interpret and transfer Buber's concept to a sphere it had not been written for. These differences became clear in the period immediately following Hammarskjöld's death, in the projects Buber undertook at that time, and will be presented in a final chapter, entitled 'Outlook', in order to start a discussion on topics that touch on today's problems and have to do with the legacy of both Hammarskjöld and Buber. I think the tension resulting from these different outlooks will be fruitful for further discussion.

The fact that it was Hammarskjöld who read and interpreted Buber much more than the other way round, justifies, I believe, a certain imbalance in this text with respect to the two men's works – that is, my decision to examine more extensively the content and intellectual background of those parts of Buber's texts that Hammarskjöld explicitly referred to in his letters and press conferences.

16 April 1950

Dear Professor Buber,

You do not know me personally, but I am afraid you have not been able to escape knowing about me.

My reason for sending you these lines is that I just read the newly published American edition of your collection of essays, "Painting the Bay".

I wish to tell you how strongly I have responded to what you write about our age of distrust and to the background of your observations which I find in your general philosophy of unity created "out of manifold". Certainly, for me, this is a case of "parallel ways".

Once in a while I have a way to Jerusalem. It would, indeed, give me very great pleasure if on a forthcoming visit I may call on you.

Yours sincerely,  
Dag Hammarskjöld.

Professor Martin Buber,  
Jerusalem.

181 Laurel Road,  
Princeton, N.J.  
April 22, 1958

Dear Mr. Hammarskjöld -

I thank so thank you for your two letters. What you tell me in your letter to Jerusalem is very important to me.

I think to go to New York April 29 for 3 days. Would it suit you if I came to see you there in the afternoon? (On April 30 I have no leisure at all.)

Yours sincerely,  
Martin Buber

12 September 1961

(copy with Swedish)

Dear Professor Buber,

I have now received a letter from the Swedish publisher (Albert Bonnier, Sveavägen 56, Stockholm C) whom I approached regarding the translation of "Ich und Du". He tells me that they will be happy to publish such a translation and wish to get in touch with you regarding such practical matters as would have to be settled. He adds that he would be grateful if I would arrange for this contact.

I believe that the most practical way to proceed, provided that you confirm your agreement to the translation and its publication in Swedish, would be for me to ask them to address you directly; this unless you could indicate to me the agent with which they should deal.

I shall send the publisher a copy of this letter, but otherwise I shall wait until I hear from you again.

Dag Hammarskjöld

Professor Martin Buber,  
c/o Hebrew University of  
Jerusalem,  
Jerusalem, Israel.

A few letters from Buber's and Hammarskjöld's correspondence

# I » The ‘Walls of Distrust’ within the ‘Age of Mistrust’

## The encounter of Dag Hammarskjöld and Martin Buber, phase I (1958–59)

When the great Jewish philosopher Martin Buber (1878–1965) spoke about his encounter with the second Secretary-General of the United Nations, Dag Hammarskjöld (1905–1961), in a speech for the Swedish Radio in 1962, entitled ‘Memories of Hammarskjöld’ (Buber 1962a: 57–59), he not only talked about their common understanding of the Cold War and the current incapacity of states’ representatives to take part in true dialogue, but went on rather mysteriously:

But I sensed, looking at and listening to him, something else that I could not explain to myself, something fateful that in some way was connected with his function in this world-hour (Buber 1962a: 58).

Buber continued with his account of their relationship instead of exploring in more depth what he meant by ‘something fateful’. Did he think that because of Hammarskjöld’s function his good intentions were doomed to failure? Or did he even mean that he sensed Hammarskjöld’s impending death? As for Hammarskjöld, was this sense of destiny, this inescapable duty concerning his office at this ‘world-hour’, something he started to regret during his encounter with Buber? Did he already feel that he might not survive this critical moment in the Cold

War? Did he have an unconscious hunch that his final project, resulting from his relationship with Buber – namely, translating Buber’s major work on dialogue, *I and Thou* – would not be accomplished, and that his desire for a wide-ranging, long-term and intensified contact with Buber, whom he admired, would be unfulfilled? In his letter of 26 August 1961 to Buber, Hammarskjöld was boldly outspoken about the kind of relationship he was hoping for:

If this all works out, may I tell you how much it would mean to me also by providing me with a justification for a broadened and intensified contact with you personally.<sup>1</sup>

It is surprising to see so much wishful thinking on the part of the usually realistic Hammarskjöld, who knew when he wrote this that Buber was already 83 years old.

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1 Kungliga Biblioteket Stockholm, Dag Hammarskjöld Samling (hereafter KBS DHS), Dag Hammarskjöld, Letter to Martin Buber, 26 August 1961. Some but not all of the letters that Dag Hammarskjöld and Martin Buber exchanged are published in Nahum N. Glatzer and Paul Mendes-Flohr (eds) (1991), *The letters of Martin Buber*, New York: Schocken Books, which is an abridged version of Martin Buber *Briefwechsel aus sieben Jahrzehnten* (1972/73/75), edited by Grete Schaefer, 3 vols, Heidelberg: Lambert Schneider.

The itinerary of the encounter and the letter exchange between Dag Hammarskjöld and Martin Buber has been well documented in German and English by several authors. They all agree that no direct influence of Buber's philosophy was discernable in Hammarskjöld's writings before Hammarskjöld contacted Buber for the first time in April 1958.<sup>2</sup> One of Hammarskjöld's biographers, Henry van Dusen, points out that the Secretary-General had even visited Jerusalem three times before (April–May 1956; May 1957; December 1957) without contacting Buber or showing any intention of visiting his house (van Dusen 1967: 215). Van Dusen even invited Buber's English translator and main biographer, Maurice Friedman, to examine carefully Hammarskjöld's posthumously published memoirs, *Markings* (1965), to prove that there was no evidence of influence by Buber in these. After reading them, Friedman made some remarks on similarities, for example that for both of them 'to live meaningfully meant to live in response to the demand of the situation'; that both showed respect for the word and would not allow it to be misused, as this would show contempt for man; furthermore, that their approach to conflict with another person included both

an objective detachment as well as a capacity 'to experience his difficulties subjectively'; finally, that both 'knew a realistic and active mysticism which does not turn away from the world' (Friedman 1988: 311). Nonetheless, Friedman confirmed van Dusen's judgement when it came to exploring the fundamental differences between them:

There are, however, *differences* between *Markings* and Buber's thought, one of which is that while Buber was also decisively influenced by Meister Eckhart, Hammarskjöld seemed to remain Kierkegaardian precisely in the way that Buber did not, i.e., focusing on the I–Thou relationship with God somewhat at the expense of that with man. There was, indeed, a Kierkegaardian quality of loneliness and isolation about Hammarskjöld even in the midst of his intense activity, which Buber did not share. Hammarskjöld, too, was concerned about the tension between 'being' and 'seeming', but he saw no resolution of this tension in authentic interhuman contact as Buber did. What is more, in Hammarskjöld's concern for God and others there was a note of denial of the self that was very foreign to Buber (Friedman 1988: 312).

2 See most notably: in German, Fröhlich (2002: 192–211), and occasional discussions on Buber's influence elsewhere in this book), Fröhlich (2005: 97–114), Friedman (1999: 489–501); and in English, Friedman (1983: 303–331), van Dusen (1967: 215–219), Hodes (1972: 153–171). Manuel Fröhlich explains that there were 'parallel ways' in the sense that Hammarskjöld's 'quiet diplomacy', established during his negotiations in China in 1955, were an implementation of central elements of Buber's philosophy of dialogue without his knowing it – a thesis which will be discussed in the section on the second phase of their encounter (Fröhlich 2002: 253–283; Fröhlich 2005: 108–111).

It is striking that in both phases of their relationship, it was Hammarskjöld who initiated the contact by writing to Buber. It was Hammarskjöld who read and interpreted Buber, not the other way round. Essentially, Hammarskjöld felt the urge for contact with Buber after reading English translations of his essays, so already in his first letter of 16 April 1958, only five days after his re-election for a second term as Secretary-General of the United Nations, he wrote:

My reason for sending you these lines is that I just read the newly published American edition of your collection of essays, 'Pointing the way'. I wish to tell you how strongly I have responded to what you write about our age of distrust and to the background of your observations which I find in your general philosophy of unity created 'out of the manifold'. Certainly, for me, this is a case of 'parallel ways'.<sup>3</sup>

He finished the letter by expressing the wish to visit Buber when he – Hammarskjöld – was next in Jerusalem. But only two days later, Hammarskjöld wrote again, having learned that Buber was currently in the United States:

Today I see from the papers that you are at Princeton for guest lectures. Please may I most warmly invite you to visit us at the United Nations if and when it might suit you. I would be happy and proud, indeed, to receive you here.<sup>4</sup>

He even gave the telephone number of his office. This fact and the devoted tone of his letter show Hammarskjöld's eagerness to meet Buber. He enclosed a copy of his first letter, sent to Buber in Jerusalem.

*Buber's speech at the Community Church and the first encounter with Hammarskjöld in New York, 1 May 1958*

Buber himself was on his third trip to the United States, which lasted from March to early June 1958. He and his wife Paula (*née* Paula Winkler) had been given a house for the duration of their stay in Princeton, New Jersey. Both were elderly: Buber had just celebrated his 80th birthday, and Paula was to die on their way back to Israel, in Venice. During his sojourn in the United States, Buber was holding informal conversations with chosen students of Professor Friedman at Princeton, but more important concerning his predisposition towards meeting Hammarskjöld was a speech he was about to give in New York 'at the end of April' (Buber 1958: 364) on Zionism and the Israeli-Arab question. The speech was to be given to the American Friends of Ichud ('Association' or 'Union') – a group formed by Buber and his friends in Palestine, in 1942) – who were having a big meeting to celebrate Buber's birthday as well as commemorating the 10th anniversary of the death of Judah Magnes, the former president of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem and a close friend of Buber's in the Ichud and the League for Jewish-Arab Rapprochement and Co-operation in Israel. This celebration was to take place at the Community Church in New York, attended by several thousand people (Friedman 1988: 236). A quarrel took place between Isidor Hoffman (the Jewish chaplain at Columbia and a leading American pacifist), Erich Fromm (who was anti-Zionist) and Friedman (then chairman of the US Ichud) as to whether Buber should speak as the last and main orator. The conflicts in

3 KBS DHS, Dag Hammarskjöld, Letter to Martin Buber, 16 April 1958.

4 KBS DHS, Dag Hammarskjöld, Letter to Martin Buber, 18 April 1958.

the aftermath of the celebration led to Friedman's resignation as chairman and to the splitting of the Zionist Ichud mother group in Israel from her more and more anti-Zionist daughter group in the US (Friedman 1988: 446). Friedman recounts that Buber's speech

...lasted for almost an hour and was an ambitious attempt to present an overview of the whole Zionist movement with the split between those who wanted to achieve Zion by diplomatic means and those like Buber and his friends, who believed in organic colonization and in Jewish-Arab good-neighbourliness and cooperation (Friedman 1988: 236-37).

Such had been the antagonism between Theodor Herzl and Martin Buber long ago at the very beginning of the Zionist movement. In this highly sensitive celebration speech, still unpublished as far as I know, Buber stated explicitly, according to his own notes for the speech:

In the days of Hitler the majority of the Jewish people saw that millions of Jews have been killed with impunity, and a certain part [of the Jewish people] made their own doctrine that history does not go the way of the spirit but the way of power.<sup>5</sup>

This passage provoked severe criticism by the Jewish press in the US and in Israel. In the months that followed, Buber repeatedly regretted having said that Hitler had killed 'with impunity', for Hitler had lost the war as well as his life and that was his punishment. But he remained decidedly

insistent about the essence of what he had said. In a 'rectifying communication' to the editor of *Ha-aretz*<sup>6</sup>, one of the few Israeli newspapers that didn't criticise him for his speech, he confirmed:

I must add now that the part of the Jewish people did not change this opinion even after Hitler's defeat. I oppose now as I opposed then, with all my force, those who believe in the doctrine of 'Not by the spirit, but by power' and act upon it.<sup>7</sup>

In response to this controversy, Buber felt obliged to write an article for the American Jewish press with the intention of further explaining his views. This was published in *Congress Weekly* and later included in the paperback edition of Buber's book *Israel and the World* (Friedman 1988: 237). Here, Buber still maintained:

Within a part of the Jewish people, gruesomely affected by the victory of the sub-human over the human, the false doctrine lasted, even as the sub-human had been toppled... It has been by the spirit that this people survived through all times, unbowed, challenging unfortunate destiny. With the methods of the spirit alone, the Zionist movement took her position in Palestine and has already achieved the first legal titles. Only by strictly following the guidance of the spirit could it hope to create something greater than merely one more state amongst the states of the world...

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5 Martin Buber, quoted by Friedman (1983: 237).

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6 *Ha-aretz*: Israel's oldest daily newspaper, founded in 1918, today published in Hebrew and English. The English edition is sold together with the *International Herald Tribune*, affiliated to the *New York Times*, and appears as a weekly.

7 Martin Buber, quoted by Friedman (1983: 237).

We only recognised how deeply the evil had already penetrated into a part of the people, when this fact could no longer be overlooked. Meanwhile, in opposition to the proposals [of Buber and the Ichud] for a bi-national state or a Jewish part within a federation of the Middle East, the unfortunate partition of Palestine has been carried out, the abyss between the two peoples has been torn wide open, battle has raged... But one day it happened that, contravening all orderly conduct of war, a gang of armed Jews attacked an Arab village and annihilated it...<sup>8</sup> Here it was a matter of our own, of my own crime, an assault of the Jew on the spirit. Even today, I cannot think of it without feeling guilty. Our fighting belief in the spirit has been too weak to prevent the outbreak and expansion of the demonic false doctrine.<sup>9</sup>

Thus Buber's political confession, reflecting his mental disposition in the aftermath of his speech, just before travelling from Princeton to New York to meet Hammarskjöld. Buber proposed the meeting with Hammarskjöld in his letter of 22 April 1958:

I want to thank you for your two letters. What you tell me in your letter to Jerusalem is very important for me. I think to go to New York April 29 for 3 days. Would it suit you if I come to see you May 1 in the afternoon? (on April 30 I have no leisure at all).<sup>10</sup>

From the dates given by Buber, it is clear – although neither Friedman nor Buber himself gives a precise date for the speech at the Community Church (Friedman [1988: 236] talks of 'spring' 1958 and Buber [1958: 364] of the end of April) – that Buber delivered the speech on 30 April, the day when he had 'no leisure at all'. Thus, Buber met with Hammarskjöld, who was essentially a diplomat, involved in power politics in the context of the Cold War at the same time that Buber was reflecting on his own experiences of nearly 50 years of involvement with the Zionist movement, and was publicly denouncing 'diplomatic means' (Friedman 1988: 237) as strongly as he had done many years before in his very early quarrel with the purely diplomatic approach of Theodor Herzl (Friedman 1982: 53–73). And yet, Buber showed no resentment about entering one of the towers of worldwide power politics and diplomacy to meet Hammarskjöld, even saying that the latter's impression when reading *Pointing the Way* had been 'very important' to him.

8 Buber is referring here to the incident on 9 April 1948 at Deir Yasin, an Arab village which was attacked by unified troops of Irgun ('National Military Organisation in the Land of Israel' and the Stern-Gang/LEHY ('Fighters for the Freedom of Israel')). During this attack 254 Arab inhabitants – men, women and children – were reportedly killed (Buber 1958: 368–369). From 1931 to 1948 Irgun operated as an armed group of revisionist Zionists under Jabotinsky, and after 1948 it was slowly integrated into the Israeli Defence Forces. The Stern-Gang/LEHY was an underground armed group opposed to the British Mandate of Palestine, which carried out political assassinations of the British authorities and Palestinian Arabs and killed UN mediator Folke Bernadotte in September 1948; it was then banned by the new Israeli government under a new anti-terrorist law, but LEHY activists benefited already on 14 February 1949 from a general amnesty granted by Israel.

9 Buber (1958: 367–368), translated from the German by Lou Marin as no English edition of 'Israel and the Command of the Spirit' was available to the author. The only English version is in the 1963 revised paperback edition of the original text by Buber (1948, hardcover), *Israel and the World. Essays in a Time of Crisis*, New York: Schocken Books.

10 KBS DHS, Martin Buber, Letter to Dag Hammarskjöld, 22 April 1958.

Before their meeting in Hammarskjöld's office at the UN building, which lasted about two hours, Hammarskjöld gave instructions that they should not be interrupted under any circumstances (van Dusen 1967: 216). Buber speaks about this first meeting in his memorial address:

When we then met in the house of the organization so remarkably named the United Nations, it proved to be the case that both of us were indeed concerned about the same thing: he who stood in the most exposed position of international responsibility, I who stand in the loneliness of a spiritual tower, which is in reality a watchtower from which all the distances and depths of the planetary crisis can be descried... We were both pained in the same way by the pseudo-speaking of representatives of states and groups of states who, permeated by a fundamental reciprocal mistrust, talked past one another out the windows. We both hoped, we both believed that still in sufficient time before the catastrophe, faithful representatives of the people, faithful to their mission, would enter into a genuine dialogue, a dialogue dealing with one another out of which would emerge in all clarity the fact that the common interests of the peoples were stronger still than those which kept them in opposition to one another (Buber 1962a: 57–58).

During their meeting Hammarskjöld also mentioned that he would like to quote Buber's remarks on the need to combat the prevailing mistrust. Hammarskjöld was already preparing for an address he was due to give in June 1958 at Cambridge University (Hodes 1972: 160). Furthermore, Hammarskjöld suggested

for the first time the possibility of translating 'Hope for this Hour' into Swedish, together with two or three other essays in *Pointing the Way* (Hodes 1972: 162).

Before examining that in more detail, we need to draw attention here to the fact that when Buber addressed himself publicly in terms of criticism he used the term 'representatives of states and groups of states', whereas when he spoke positively of his hopes and perspectives for the future he always used the expression 'representatives of the people'. These are not necessarily the same, and hint at a symptomatic difference in Buber's outlook, also hinting at the different spheres of his experience within the Zionist movement. Whereas, Hammarskjöld, for his part, was entirely concerned with the power politics of states' representatives.

### *Hammarskjöld: Respect for the word*

It is not that Hammarskjöld was unaware that there were other domains where the capacity for true dialogue needed to be restored. This awareness is evident in his letter to the poet and translator Erik Lindegren with whom he was working at the time on a translation of the poet Saint-John Perse:

I saw the other day old Martin Buber – he really is a great man – who said that he felt that we had come to a stage where the individual life had been completely gobbled up by political life and that political life now represents a world without any exit and without any entry. He talked about our de-humanised existence where language has ceased to have its normal function of communication in order to establish a living contact between human

beings. I think he is basically right, and I think that is one reason why the poets should add a new dimension to their task as guardians of straight human communication where the respect for the word is still maintained.<sup>11</sup>

Apparently, for Hammarskjöld this was a justification for his evaluation work on literature within the Swedish Academy as well as his translation work, which would soon turn to an interest in translating Buber into Swedish. One of Hammarskjöld's biographers, Manuel Fröhlich (2005: 101), points here to a phrase Hammarskjöld wrote in his diary (later published as *Markings*) on 1 August 1955:

*Respect for the word* is the first commandment in the discipline by which a man can be educated to maturity – intellectual, emotional and moral... To misuse the word is to show contempt for man (Hammarskjöld 1964: 101).

But Fröhlich (2005: 105–06) also highlights the fact that Hammarskjöld wanted to re-establish respect for the word first and foremost in his very own domain, international diplomacy. Another biographer, Emery Kelen, testifies— without giving a precise date – that at a press conference Hammarskjöld was defending his 'quiet diplomacy' with explicit reference to two philosophers of dialogue:

I do believe, to use what has become a famous term, thanks to Camus and Buber and others – I do believe that development in human terms of what they call dialogue is badly needed (Kelen 1966: 132).

For the moment, we can overlook the fact that Camus, too, did not write for the realm of diplomacy but for society, and that he was known as a philosopher of revolt as well as dialogue.

The corollary of absence of word and trust is fear and mistrust. In fact, when Hammarskjöld was seeking to make contact with Buber, the Cold War was in full swing, and more often than ever the Security Council was blocked because of vetoes by one or more of its members. Each conflict ran the risk of quickly accelerating into an imminent threat of nuclear war between the superpowers. In April 1958, at the time of the first encounter between Hammarskjöld and Buber, the Security Council quarrelled about a charge by the Soviet Union that the United States were overflying the Arctic region without their permission. As a reaction, the US proposed a monitored inspection zone, the proposal rejected in turn by the Soviet Union. Unusually, Hammarskjöld spoke out in this Security Council debate, implicitly referring to Buber's critique of the current crisis by stating that the basic reason

is the crisis of trust from which all mankind is suffering at the present juncture and which is reflected in an unwillingness to take any moves in a positive direction at their face value and a tendency to hold back a positive response because of a fear of being misled (Hammarskjöld 1958: 71a).

Hammarskjöld also spoke of the relation between governments and individual citizens in this statement, but in a fundamentally different way from Buber:

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<sup>11</sup> Martin Buber, Letter to Erik Lindegren, 3 May 1958, quoted by Fröhlich (2002: 202 and 2005: 101).



Each government is in close contact with the opinion of the man in the street in its own country. For that reason, I am sure that all governments are in a position to confirm my statement that the peoples are eagerly and anxiously expecting leadership bringing them out of the present nightmare. The government taking a fruitful initiative will be hailed as a benefactor by the peoples (Hammar-skjöld 1958a: 71).

This is an entirely different view from Buber's, the latter regarding 'the man in the street' as an atomised individual totally oriented to, and obeying, the large collective such as the nation or the state (via media propaganda), not acting as a conscious participant in a small community and hence as a true and independent personality in opposition to and demanding something from his or her government.

*Hammar-skjöld in Cambridge:  
'The Walls of Distrust', 5 June 1958*

The award of an honorary doctorate for Hammar-skjöld at Cambridge University was approaching, and Hammar-skjöld gave a major address there entitled 'The Walls of Distrust' (Hammar-skjöld 1958b: 90–95) on 5 June 1958. In this he quoted explicitly and at length from Buber's speech 'Hope for this Hour' (Buber 1952: 220–229), as he had already told Buber was his intention when they met:

In an address in Carnegie Hall in New York, in 1952, Martin Buber had the following to say: 'There have always been countless situations in which a man believes his life-interest demands that he suspect the other of making it his object

to appear otherwise than he is... In our time something basically different has been added... One no longer merely fears that the other will voluntarily dissemble, but one takes it for granted that he cannot do otherwise... The other communicates to me the perspective that he has acquired on a certain subject, but I do not really take cognizance of his communication as knowledge. I do not take it seriously as a contribution to the information about this subject, but rather I listen for what drives the other to say what he says, for an unconscious motive... Since it is the idea of the other, it is for me an 'ideology'. My main task in my intercourse with my fellow-man becomes more and more...to see through and unmask him... With this changed basic attitude...the mistrust between man and man has become existential. This is so indeed in a double sense: It is first of all, no longer the uprightness, the honesty of the other which is in question, but the inner integrity of his existence itself... Nietzsche knew what he was doing when he praised the 'art of mistrust', and yet he did not know. For this game naturally only becomes complete as it becomes reciprocal... Hence one may foresee in the future a degree of reciprocity in existential mistrust where speech will turn into dumbness and sense into madness...' Martin Buber has found expressions which it would be in vain for me to try to improve.<sup>12</sup>

So Hammar-skjöld, as Fröhlich (2005: 104) put it, made politics with Buber 'in the best sense of the word'. Hammar-skjöld's political application of Buber's thinking, as he inter-

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<sup>12</sup> Martin Buber (1952), quoted by Hammar-skjöld (1958b: 93).

preted it, was immediate, concerning his efforts to overcome the cleavage between East and West at the level of United Nations power politics. But wasn't that too quick? Did Hammarskjöld in his hasty interpretation of Buber really grasp his thinking in depth, and in all its aspects – to begin with, his analysis of crisis and his proposed solution?

### *Buber's 'Hope for this Hour'*

As surprising as it is to see to what length Hammarskjöld quotes Buber's 'Hope for this Hour', it is also important to look at what he didn't quote. Buber started his address by saying that the three principles of the French Revolution – freedom, equality, fraternity – had broken asunder. Fraternity had been deprived of its meaning, the encounter of human beings, so the two remaining watchwords had been turned against each other. Buber said this had become clear to him since World War I, when direct dialogue was becoming ever more difficult and rare. In another address, in 1953, 'Genuine Dialogue and the Possibilities of Peace', Buber depicted war as the great enemy of dialogue, and opposed war and speech:

War has always had an adversary who hardly ever comes forward as such but does his work in the stillness. This adversary is speech, fulfilled speech, the speech of genuine conversation in which men understand one another and come to a mutual understanding (Buber 1953a: 236).

So far, Hammarskjöld could surely agree. In 'Hope for this Hour', Buber went on to hail philosopher Robert Hutchins for stating that the essence of the Civilization of the Dialogue is communication, mutual respect and

understanding. Then followed the passages on the current age and the art of mistrust which Hammarskjöld quoted. Buber continued by asserting that despite the progressive decline of dialogue and a corresponding, universal growth of mistrust, there was still a basic need for man's existence to be confirmed by the other. As dialogue was blocked this basic need set out on two false ways:

...he seeks to be confirmed either by himself or by a collective to which he belongs. Both undertakings must fail. The self-confirmation of him whom no fellow-man confirms cannot stand. With ever more convulsive exertions, he must endeavour to restore it, and finally he knows himself as inevitably abandoned. Confirmation through the collective, on the other hand, is pure fiction...it cannot recognize anyone in his own being, and therefore independently of his usefulness for the collective (Buber 1952: 225).

In this way Buber criticised the contemporary atomisation of individuals, perceiving it as a corollary of the incapacity of state officials to communicate. Thus governments were *not* in close contact with the man on the street, and the man on the street was *not* able to express his basic needs. Moreover, in his essay 'The Question to the Single One', Buber described the 'man in the crowd' as being 'pushed', and as embodying 'non-truth' and 'un-freedom' (Buber 1936: 64).

Solutions begin, according to Buber, with the drawing of 'demarcation lines'. The opponent is not 100 per cent an ideologue; that is only one part of his wholeness and 'manifoldness' (we might even consider to find here in part of what Hammarskjöld refers to in his first

letter of 16 April 1958 as ‘unity created “out of the manifold”’). The ideological view of the opponent in the age of mistrust is a reduction of his personality. To overcome this reduction is a precondition for real dialogue between the two camps. But now followed the essential for Buber:

They who begin must have overcome in themselves the basic mistrust and be capable of recognizing in their partner in dialogue the reality of his being. It is self-understood that these men will not speak merely in their own names. Behind them will be divined the unorganized mass of those who feel themselves represented through these spokesmen. This is an entirely different kind of representation and representative body from the political (Buber 1952: 227).

Obviously, Buber didn’t expect solutions on the level of power politics and state representatives. And he went on:

These men will not be bound by the aims of the hour, they are gifted with the far-sightedness of those called by the unborn; they will be independent persons with no authority save that of the spirit... (Buber 1952: 227–28).

Buber wasn’t thinking of people like Hammarskjöld here; in fact, due to the obligations of his function, the latter was entirely concerned with the political principle; in his years as UN Secretary-General Hammarskjöld succeeded in furnishing the position with considerable ethical authority as well as political power (Fröhlich 2002: 347–351 and 361–372). Now it becomes clear why Buber’s main biographer and friend Maurice Friedman could write (1988: 333):

‘Buber was a social anarchist in the biblical sense.’

Buber concluded his address ‘Hope for this Hour’ with a hint of who these men (and women) are that oppose power politics only with their spirit:

The representatives of whom I speak will each be acquainted with the true needs of his own people, and on these needs will be willing to stake themselves. But they will also turn understandingly to the true needs of other peoples, and will know in both cases how to extract the true needs from the exaggerations. Just for that reason they will unrelentingly distinguish between truth and propaganda within what is called the opposition of interests (Buber 1952: 228).

There is no doubt that Hammarskjöld fitted into this description and that Buber was never so strict in his rejection of power politics that he was unwilling to embrace such rare men to be found in the political sphere. But it is equally clear that Buber was talking mainly of ‘representatives’ outside the political sphere – ‘independent persons’ capable of listening to their own and other people’s true needs – whom he was looking out for from his fabled ‘watchtower’, from which he observed the ‘planetary crisis’.

### *Buber’s conception of the ‘Crossfront’*

In other texts of *Pointing the way*, Buber was in this sense beginning to talk of a ‘cross-front’ to be forged, for example at the end of ‘The Validity and Limitation of the Political Principle’ (1953b):

There is, it seems to me, a front – only seldom perceived by those who compose it – that cuts across all the fronts of the hour, both the external and the internal. There they stand, ranged side by side, the men of real conviction who are found in all groups, all parties, all peoples, yet who know little or nothing of one another from group to group, from party to party, from people to people. As different as the goals are in one place and in another, it is still *one* front, for they are all engaged in the one fight for human truth... Those who stand on the crossfront, those who know nothing of one another, have to do with one another (Buber 1953b: 218-219).

In ‘Genuine Dialogue and the Possibilities of Peace’ Buber again referred to this concept of a crossfront for a solution, that is the re-structuring of true dialogue:

To the task of initiating this conversation those are inevitably called who carry on today within each people the battle against the anti-human. Those who build the great unknown front across mankind shall make it known by speaking unreservedly with one another, not overlooking what divides them but determined to bear this division in common (Buber 1953a: 238).

Hammar-skjöld was, in Buber’s understanding, part of the crossfront, but the main participants of the crossfront would stay outside the political – independent, free and unbound by the aims of the political sphere. I think that therein lies a certain and very humbly expressed regret concerning Buber’s relationship with Hammar-skjöld. For Buber the political sphere was far too poisoned by

the prevailing atmosphere of distrust, propaganda and non-communication for there to be any realistic hope that it would yield the solution. The best those working in the political sphere could achieve was to prevent the earth from being literally destroyed by nuclear warfare – sadly enough this would really mean something: the precondition of all life and social reconstruction. But in the long run, according to Buber, the toppling of the Cold War system as well as the related thinking and consciousness had to be initiated from elsewhere. I think Buber uttered this regret in his 1962 eulogy broadcast on the Swedish Radio, precisely through the word ‘but’ – the only ‘but’ in the entire eulogy – which I quoted near the beginning of this essay. Buber sensed in Hammar-skjöld ‘something fateful that was connected with his function in this world-hour’. Hammar-skjöld was, as it were, fatefully bound up with the political sphere due to his function.

Hammar-skjöld’s particular interpretation of Buber’s contemporary and political texts was very understandable due to the necessity of immediate application imposed by his function. But Buber’s philosophy meant more than this. Whereas Hammar-skjöld spoke of the ‘Walls of Distrust’, referring explicitly to the Cold War and the ‘Wall/Iron Curtain’ dividing Europe, Buber spoke of an more long-term ‘Age of Mistrust’, which went far beyond the Cold War situation. In order to explore what Buber meant by this it is necessary to discuss the basic stream of his thinking that was related to Zionism and his hope for a re-structuring of the Jewish community through the Kibbutz village communes.

*Buber's 'Paths in Utopia':  
Village communities as the basis  
of his worldview*

It is very interesting to see which of the books by (and on) Buber were in Hammar-skjöld's private library, as listed by Manuel Fröhlich (2005: 99, note 5). On the list are many of Buber's books on Hasidic literature and tales, as well as *Pointing the Way* and the first biography of Buber by Maurice Friedman – but none of Buber's writings on Zionism, Palestine and the Kibbutz communities. There is no surprise in this, as it is in his writing on the Kibbutz communities that Buber comes nearest to anarchism. Notably, in the most important of these works, *Paths in Utopia* (Buber 1950), he explored the history of practical community experiments from the first utopian attempts of Robert Owen up to the broad Kibbutzim movement in Palestine and Israel. Buber reminded his readers of the tradition of thinkers such as Proudhon, Kropotkin and Gustav Landauer (1870–1919) – the nonviolent anarchist who was murdered in 1919 during the reactionary repression of the Bavarian Republic of Councils and who, together with Franz Rosenzweig, was Buber's closest friend – and placed them in sharp contrast with Hegel, Marx and Lenin. For Buber, this represented the antagonism between a federalist socialism and a centralised state tradition of socialism. It was the contradiction between self-organised collectivisation and community, on the one hand and Soviet forced collectivisation and state nationalisation, on the other; the contradiction between Moscow and Jerusalem, as Buber put it symbolically at the end of his book. In the practical tradition of federalist socialism, based on voluntary efforts, a natural unity of all the different concrete implementations

of group and community life was emerging, whereas in the tradition of centralised socialism there was a prevailing dogmatic uniformity, compulsion, no diversity, no free will to federate 'out of the manifold' – that is, no constant creativity to meet the challenges of daily life.

Buber wrote *Paths in Utopia* in the midst of World War II, from about 1942 to 1945 (he settled in Palestine after persecution in Germany in 1938). One of the last chapters of this book is called 'In the Midst of Crisis'. Here, Buber developed from the core of his thinking – his analysis of the 'Age of Mistrust' – a historical vision of re-structuring society and community. Buber located the outbreak of the crisis as 30 years before – that is, at the beginning of World War I. But for Buber, this crisis was simply the result of man's historical development. Man had piled up more and more technical inventions but the core of *human* development had always been the creation of a social world through mutual aid (as defined by Kropotkin). According to Buber, this human development had fallen far behind technical progress in the historical development of man.

At an early stage, and until the middle ages, this social creativity developed within a social structure of groups, associations and communities, different and diverse as they were. Power centres were to be found at an early historical stage but:

to the political sphere in the stricter sense, the State with its police-system and its bureaucracy, there was always opposed the organic, functionally organized society as such, a great society built up of various societies, the great society in which men lived and worked, competed

with one another and helped one another; and in each of the big and little societies composing it, in each of these communes and communities the individual human being, despite all the difficulties and conflicts, felt himself at home as once in the clan, felt himself approved and affirmed in his functional independence and responsibility (Buber 1950: 131).

Here, the individual learned what responsibility is all about. This decentralised structure, where some states may have been existing on the margins but did not dominate communities, prevailed until about the middle ages, according to Buber. Then came the fundamental change:

‘All this changed more and more as the centralistic political principle subordinated the de-centralistic social principle’ (Buber 1950: 131).

The centralised state weakened the free communities and marginalised them. And the political principle infiltrated into communities, cooperatives and associations, into the consciousness of their members, thus over-politicising society. So society adapted to the state – not the other way round. Individuals and small communities submitted themselves totally to centralised power, in democratic as well as totalitarian ways.

Everywhere the only thing of importance was the minute organization of power, the unquestioning observance of slogans, the saturation of the whole of society with the real or supposed interests of the State (Buber 1950: 132).

Within the modern, centralised world, where the structure of associations and small

communities is weakened or even destroyed, individuals find themselves atomised. They are – Buber quotes Proudhon – but ‘a heap of dust animated from without by a subordinating, centralist idea’ (Buber 1950: 29). Without the former structure of communities and associations, and having nowhere where he/she feels ‘at home’, the individual becomes scared, is full of fear. Out of this fear the individual develops mistrust and hands him/herself over to a large collective, a state or a nation. The individual develops a will to obey unconditionally.

And the most valuable of all goods – the life between man and man – gets lost in the process; the autonomous relationships become meaningless, personal relationships wither; and the very spirit of man hires itself out as a functionary (Buber 1950: 132).

The functionary, the modern bureaucrat as a result of centralised statist society: that was literally the contrary of what Hammar-skjöld originally conceived to be the ethics of a functionary – being answerable not to one party or another, or any particular interest group, but only to the whole of a nation (or the planet). For Buber, by contrast, the emergence of the functionary, the bureaucrat, was the outcome of the false development of man, where the individual had become just ‘a cog in the “collective” machine’ (Buber 1950: 132). Whereas Hammar-skjöld conceived of his ethics as a functionary as ‘strictly un-political’ (Fröhlich 2002: 120) and as a continuation of his family tradition of Swedish officialdom (Fröhlich 2002: 214), the bureaucrat was for Buber the peak and the symbol of the political principle, unable due to his function to act on the basis of personal relations or true ethical judgements,

with the responsibility only for carrying out orders from above without regard for the person concerned (the Weberian ideal type). Of course, this is Buber's general analysis, not his personal judgement of Hammarskjöld. Buber never formulated his theories in an absolute way, in the sense that literally no one could be an exception. He regarded Hammarskjöld as an exception in the sphere of the political principle – but the norm within this sphere was definitely otherwise.

Thus, for Buber, the structured society of the past has been lost because of the dominance of the centralised state principle. This is the crisis, the 'Age of Mistrust'. The first task in re-structuring society should be, according to Buber, defying the sovereignty of the political principle over society. This could be achieved not through political organisation, but only through the strong will of the peoples to administer and develop the planet by working together, not against each other. In this way the question of contemporary socialism was posed for Buber. He rejected collectivisation in the sense of state socialism. He also rejected the principle of being represented, because true community, cooperation and association required active participation on common matters and couldn't survive without that will. A society could only re-structure itself through the organic co-operation of these associations and communities based on active participation. They were the groups 'out of the manifold' working together. By this process, the social structure would regain the power to expand the demarcation line and to push back the political principle. It was not actually a question of the absolute or nothing. The demarcation line had always to be tested and verified anew according to new historical situations – this was, according to Buber, the task for humanity's spiritual

conscience, and maybe also for the occupant of the spiritual 'watchtower' as Buber described himself in his Swedish Radio speech for Hammarskjöld (Buber 1962a: 33). For Buber, community was always an idea, not a fixed principle. It had become, for practical reasons, more a question of survival than of romance or enthusiasm. Buber was certainly thinking here of the the early Kibbutzim communities and the hardship their pioneers (Chaluzim) had to endure. Buber longed for a resurrection of village communes (Kvuzas), not those of the past, but contemporary ones with integrated agriculture, handicraft and industry (a concept derived from Kropotkin). There would surely be some sort of representation there, too, but not an abstract representation of amorphous de-structured masses of individual voters. There would be concrete representation based on common production and common experience. For Buber only such a community of communities was a 'Commonwealth'.

This notion of a 'community of communities' – as well as the historical concept of a structured communal society that existed until the middle ages, before the intrusion of the centralised state – derived from Buber's highly influential early friend, the nonviolent anarchist Gustav Landauer (Buber 1950: 46-57; Wolf 1994: 10; Seemann 1997: 74-91; Wolf 1997: 210-226; Wolf 2001: 35-48). In *Pointing the Way* there is one article dealing with this antagonism of centralisation and decentralisation ('Society and the State', Buber 1951: 161-76) and another commemorating the revolutionary and nonviolent legacy of Gustav Landauer ('Recollection of a Death', Buber 1929: 115-20) though not quite dealing with his historical community concept as in *Paths in Utopia*.

*Buber's 'Society and the State':  
What is Hammarskjöld's unity  
'out of the manifold'?*

It is not quite clear to me whether Hammarskjöld's agreement with Buber's 'general philosophy of unity created "out of the manifold"' derived from a reading of 'Society and the State'. There is no such literal formulation in that particular text. Nonetheless and at first sight, there are paragraphs that support the idea that Hammarskjöld was referring to that essay:

The society of a nation is composed not of individuals but of societies...groups, circles, unions, co-operative bodies, and communities varying very widely in type, form, scope, and dynamics. Society (with a capital S) is not only their collectivity and setting, but also their substance and essence... In so far as the mere proximity of the societies tends to change into union, in so far as all kinds of leagues and alliances develop among them – in the social-federative sphere, that is to say – Society achieves its object (Buber 1951: 173).

Here Buber leaves a task of unification to the State, which could have been regarded by Hammarskjöld as the part he was to occupy within Buber's general philosophy:

Society cannot, however, quell the conflicts between the different groups; it is powerless to unite the divergent and clashing groups; it can develop what they have in common, but cannot force it upon them. The State alone can do that (Buber 1951: 173).

But does that really fit into Hammarskjöld's description of a 'unity "out of the manifold"'? After all, the State steps in here as an outside agency to force a unity out of clashes and conflicts occurring within the manifold. This isn't quite a natural unity 'out of the manifold'. Instead, it was from the viewpoint and for the sake of society that Buber called for a limitation of government power and its reduction to mere 'administration', so that society acquired the space to form a unity of its own, a community of communities. Buber formulated this demand in 'Society and the State' in the following way:

All forms of government have this in common: each possesses more power than is required by the given conditions; in fact, this excess in the capacity for making dispositions is actually what we understand by political power. The measure of this excess...represents the exact difference between Administration and Government. I call it the 'political surplus' (Buber 1951: 174).

That a reading of 'Society and the State' in combination with a knowledge of Buber's emphasis on the Kibbutzim village communes almost certainly led to the anarchist base of Buber's thinking, laid down by Landauer, proves a letter from a young scholar, Hermann Meier-Cronemeyer, writing to Buber on 15 August 1963:

For more than a year I have been writing a dissertation here in Jerusalem on the Kibbutzim, to which I will give the title 'History, Spirit and Shape'<sup>13</sup>. Though I started this work without any preliminary

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<sup>13</sup> Hermann Meier-Cronemeyer (1969), *Kibbuzim. Geschichte, Geist und Gestalt*, Hannover.



assumption – which surely is a disadvantage for a scientific work – I am more and more captured by one question, that is whether the Kibbutzim cannot or at least couldn't be regarded as anarchism taking shape. Only after reading your little script 'Society and the State' was I awakened to the fact that the youth movement not altogether wrongly considered itself to be 'un-political' – an argument in the face of which modern critics, when confronted with it, appear completely helpless, it seems to me. And they have to be helpless, unless the difference between 'social' and 'political', which you emphasise, cannot be seen. Isn't the reduction of the 'political surplus' quintessentially anarchist?<sup>14</sup>

Buber answers Meier-Cronemeyer very briefly that the notion of 'anarchism' doesn't suit him, because anarchism

indicates an abolition of the power relation – which is impossible as long as the constitution of the human being is as it is, rather than a respective demarcation and reduction of this relation as far as possible.<sup>15</sup>

Compared to *Paths in Utopia*, 'Society and the State' was less radical, and did not deal

with the historical proponents of anarchist federalism and pluralistic socialism to describe crisis and the necessary re-structuring of society. In *Paths in Utopia*, Buber's philosophy of a unity 'out of the manifold' was much more explicitly based on the history of producers' and consumers' co-operatives, community experiments and the Kibbutz movement. There, 'unity' was the federation of the manifold groups, co-operatives and units. And it remained clearly within the responsibility of the federated society to create this unity. Already in his chapter on Proudhon, Buber wrote so beautifully:

...so long as society was richly structured, so long as it was built up of manifold communities and communal units, all strong in vitality, the State was a wall narrowing one's outlook and restricting one's steps, but within this wall a spontaneous communal life could flourish and grow. But to the extent that the structure grew impoverished the wall became a prison (Buber 1950: 27).

And further on, Buber wrote about Proudhon's federalism: 'He refuses to equate a new ordering of society with uniformity; order means, for him, the just ordering of multiformity' (Buber 1950: 36).

Then Buber criticised Lenin's centralism in a similar way:

In the planned, all-embracing State Co-operative [Lenin] sees the fulfilment of the 'dreams' of the old Co-operatives 'begun with Robert Owen'. Here the contradiction between idea and realization reaches its apogee. What those 'Utopians', beginning with Robert Owen,

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14 Hermann Meier-Cronemeyer, 'Letter to Martin Buber, 15 August 1963', in Buber (1975: 597); translation by Lou Marin. Unfortunately, neither this letter nor Buber's reply is included in the abridged English edition by Nahum N. Glatzer and Paul Mendes-Flohr (eds) (1991), *The letters of Martin Buber*, New York: Schocken Books.

15 Martin Buber, 'Letter to Hermann Meier-Cronemeyer, 22 September 1963', in Buber (1975: 608); translation by Lou Marin. Finally, in his letter to Meier-Cronemeyer Buber recommends for further reading his article 'The Validity and Limitation of the Political Principle' (Buber 1953b: 208-19).

were concerned about in their thoughts and plans for association was the voluntary combination of people into small independent units of communal life and work, and the voluntary combination of those into a community of communities. What Lenin describes as the fulfilment of these thoughts...is an immense, utterly centralized complex of State production-centres and State distribution-centres, a mechanism of bureaucratically run institutes for production and consumption, each locked into the other like cog-wheels (Buber 1950: 123).

Finally, describing the voluntary principle of the Kibbutz village communes, Buber wrote:

...nowhere, as far as I see, in the history of the Socialist movement were men so deeply involved in the process of differentiation and yet so intent on preserving the principle of integration (Buber 1950: 1945).

In fact, this is – more precisely than in ‘Society and the State’ – Buber’s ‘general philosophy of unity created “out of the manifold”’. Lest, Hammarskjöld most likely never read that book, and apparently didn’t give ‘Society and the State’ too much attention when he read *Pointing the Way*. After all, I suppose Hammarskjöld was thinking – when formulating this phrase ‘unity created “out of the manifold”’ to Buber in his first letter – more of Buber’s crossfront at the end of ‘The Validity and Limitation of the Political Principle’, where there are formulations such as: ‘As different as the goals are in one place and in another, it is still *one* front...’<sup>16</sup>. And there

is the explicit word ‘manifold’ – ‘We wish to perceive his manifoldness and his wholeness, his proper character...’<sup>17</sup> – but this relates to an individual personality. Besides, the reference to ‘Hope for this Hour’ also fits better with Hammarskjöld’s assumption that he and Buber are thinking in ‘parallel ways’. For him, what he read of Buber and the way in which he used him politically was very closely related to the idea of the political sphere trying to break through the ‘Walls of Distrust’ in the political communication of power politics. Practically, that meant at the same time widening the manoeuvrability of the United Nations and the leadership powers of the Secretary-General – which was quite different from the demand for merely administrative function as described by Buber in ‘Society and the State’. Buber, on the contrary, never thought that a real way out of the crisis, a re-structuring of true community and society, could come from the sphere of the political principle – hence his demand for a demarcation line with the political sphere to be pushed back as far as possible.

### *The Jerusalem encounters 1958/59: Buber’s ‘The Validity and Limitation of the Political Principle’*

Although Hammarskjöld and Buber were occupied with different spheres from which rescue in the ‘Age of Mistrust’ might be generated, they both considered themselves part of the ‘crossfront’, to use Buber’s term, so their encounter continued. On two occasions when Hammarskjöld visited Jerusalem they met at Buber’s house in the suburb of

16 See the quotation above (p.19) in this text; Buber (1953b: 218).

17 See Buber (1953b: 227).

Talbiyeh: in September 1958 (early in the month, as Hammarskjöld returned to New York on 13 September) and in January 1959 (again early on, as Hammarskjöld returned to New York on 9 January) (Hodes 1972: 160). There were two press conferences in New York, after Hammarskjöld's second Jerusalem visit, in which he referred to their meetings. At the press conference on 16 January 1959 Hammarskjöld stated that meeting Buber had been

one out-of-way tourism with a strong personal accent. I had the pleasure of paying a personal call on Professor Martin Buber for whom I have a sincere admiration (Cordier/Foote 1974: 322).

An interesting point emerges from the follow-up press conference on 5 February, when a journalist, Mrs Kay Rainey Gray from the *Greenwich Times* asked Hammarskjöld to say more about the content of these meetings:

After [the second Jerusalem visit], Professor Buber was quoted by the press as saying that your conversation concerned the relationship between philosophy and politics from Plato down to our days, in particular, discussion of his essay, 'The Meaning and Validity of the Political Principle' [correct title: 'The Validity and Limitation of the Political Principle'; L. M.] (Cordier/Foote 1974: 325).

Hammarskjöld, in his reply, first rectified a misunderstanding on Mrs Gray's part that he supposedly intended to translate the whole of the essay collection, *Pointing the Way*, into Swedish, saying that he would never have time for that, but then confirming his wish

to translate 'some three or four essays', notably in the final part of the book<sup>18</sup>. Already summarising his impressions after both meetings in Jerusalem, Hammarskjöld also went on more generally:

On very many points I see eye to eye with him; on other points, naturally there must be nuances. But as to the basic reaction, I think that he has made a major contribution and I would like to make that more broadly known.<sup>19</sup>

Thus, they had not been in complete agreement. Unfortunately, Hammarskjöld gave no hint as to where the differences and the 'nuances' lay, for example, when they discussed 'The Validity and Limitation of the Political Principle'. This article closes, as we have shown above, with an outline of Buber's concept of a crossfront, and as we suppose that Hammarskjöld could agree on that, we should mention that the first part of this essay does not deal with 'philosophy and politics from Plato down to our days'. Plato isn't even mentioned in this text. Moreover, in the first part Buber discusses Jesus and his statement about giving unto Cæsar what is due to Caesar, to God what is due to God; of course, the aim in discussing this edict of Jesus is to draw a demarcation line with the sphere of the political principle. Plato, on the other hand, is discussed at length by Buber, at the beginning of 'Society and State', in a very negative way as an early historical example of someone who confuses the social with the political sphere.

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18 Hammarskjöld, quoted by Cordier/Foote (1974: 325).

19 Hammarskjöld, quoted by Cordier/Foote (1974: 326).

*Buber's 'Plato and Isaiah':  
The power-entangled intellectual  
versus the powerless prophet*

There is one further reference that is connected with the second meeting in Jerusalem in January 1959. This was their last personal encounter, but also the most intimate, when Hammarskjöld stayed on to dinner and spent the whole evening at the house of the Buber family. Aubrey Hodes came to know Buber in 1953 as a member of a Kibbutz in the hills of Nazareth and became a regular friend and visitor. He wrote about this second Jerusalem meeting in January 1959:

Buber sometimes spoke with me about this evening – the last time he saw Hammarskjöld. And he has written that ‘in the centre of our conversation stood the problem that has ever laid claim to me in the course of my life: the failure of the spiritual man in his historical undertakings’ (Hodes 1974: 160).

That was the Plato topic. We can deduce from this that they spoke more about the general ‘Age of Mistrust’ than about the short-sighted, but contemporary Cold War ‘Wall of Distrust’ – more about the depth of the crisis and its solution than about short-term politics. Buber apparently defined the subject. Concerning Plato, Buber was not referring to the beginning of ‘Society and State’, but most likely to another essay, according to Hodes:

[Buber] illustrated this failure [of spiritual man in his historical undertakings] by Plato’s abortive attempt to establish his just state in Sicily, which broke down when his friend and disciple, Prince Dion,

was assassinated. This was a theme which always fascinated Buber. He returned to it again and again in conversation, and wrote about it in his essay ‘Plato and Isaiah’, which formed part of the inaugural lecture he delivered at the Hebrew University in 1938 (Hodes 1974: 160).

Buber’s lecture ‘Plato and Isaiah’ opposes two thinkers about the spirit and their relation to the political principle. The first part deals with Plato’s three visits to Sicily where he wanted to establish his spiritually enlightened just state. He was confronted with Dionysios II, a tyrant he became acquainted with. But Plato’s view was that government rule was in crisis and decay, so he wanted to convince the tyrant to govern in a new, spiritual, intellectual way to bring about a just state. Plato had a friend in Sicily, Dion, a prince who had become a Platonic philosopher himself and wanted to help him convince the tyrant. On his third and last visit to Sicily, Plato was disappointed by the tyrant’s inability to understand the intellectual truth Plato was convinced he himself possessed. After Plato’s return to Athens in 360 B.C., his friend Dion toppled the tyrant in order to establish the just state by himself. Soon Dion was accused of creating a new tyranny and was murdered in 354 B.C. In a letter to Sicily, Plato defended his friend Dion and his power politics.<sup>20</sup> In his text on the subject, Buber presupposed the historical story and was very critical of Plato, regarding his efforts as a failure. Buber quoted Kant in his critic of Plato:

[Kant] wrote: ‘Because the wielding of power inevitably destroys the free judge-

<sup>20</sup> For an extended historical discussion see for example: Michael Erler (2007), *Platon*, Schwabe Verlag: Basel.

ment of reason, it is not to be expected that kings should philosophize or philosophers be kings, nor even to be desired' (Buber 1938a: 104).

To Plato's approach to power, Buber opposed an alternative approach, the biblical one of the prophet Isaiah. With this opposition, Buber insisted on his judgment that philosophers and intellectuals such as Plato were not the owners of an everlasting truth – while saying that according to the Jewish prophets the spirit (philosophical truth) derived from God, not from any human being. Buber concluded:

Isaiah does not believe that spiritual man has the vocation to power. He knows himself to be a man of spirit and without power. Being a prophet means being powerless, and powerless confronting the powerful and reminding them of their responsibility... To stand powerless before the power he calls to account is part of the prophet's destiny. He himself is not out for power, and the special sociological significance of his office is based on that very fact (Buber 1938a: 108).

Buber, the religious socialist, spoke with the prophet of an 'invisible sovereignty' to which Isaiah felt responsible, the 'sovereignty of God':

But he knew nothing and said nothing of the inner structure of that dominion. He had no idea; he had only a message. He had no institution to establish; he had only to proclaim. His proclamation was in the nature of criticism and demands... But this sovereignty of God which he pro-

pounded is the opposite of the sovereignty of priests... That is why his criticism and demands are directed toward society, toward the life men live together... So, the criticism and demands are directed toward every individual on whom other individuals depend, everyone who has a hand in shaping the destinies of others, and that means they are directed toward everyone of us. When Isaiah speaks of justice, he is not thinking of institutions but of you and me, because without you and me, the most glorious institution becomes a lie... When the mountain of the Lord's house is 'established' on the reality of true community life, then, and only then, the nations will 'flow' toward it (Isa. 2:2), there to learn peace in place of war (Buber 1938a: 109–11).

Here we have already all the ingredients of the forthcoming, Landauer-inspired *Paths in Utopia* that Buber was still to write. If Buber was talking about his favourite subject in his conversation with Hammarskjöld in January 1959 in a similar perspective like he has written it down in 1938, then there was no or very little room for Hammarskjöld's functioning in the world of power politics as Secretary-General of the United Nations. When Buber spoke of renewal or re-structuring he always meant it to start from the bottom of society and face-to-face-relationships between ordinary citizens. Encounter, conversation, dialogue and unity 'out of the manifold' had to be realised through individuals turning to each other rather than standing in awe of the glorious institutions that should decide for them.

Hammar skjöld wanted, nevertheless, to try to renew and restructure the political sphere via the United Nations. In his function he had no choice to this effort. But he had no real understanding of the differences between the spheres and dimensions of politics and society. Engaging in dialogue in society or a community was not the same as doing so in an institution dealing with the interests of superpowers. I think this was what Buber meant when, in his commemorative address in 1962 for the Swedish Radio, 'Memories of Hammar skjöld', he spoke about sensing something 'fateful that in some way was connected with his function in this world-hour' (Buber 1962a: 58). I guess, that here we have a glimpse into the natural 'nuances on other points' that Hammar skjöld referred to at the press conference in New York after the Jerusalem meetings.

That notwithstanding, Buber had a deep sympathy with Hammar skjöld's efforts to tame the superpowers, notably in a time of crisis and danger when the planet was on the brink of nuclear warfare, for Buber knew that his re-structuring of society from below would take time and could suffer setbacks (as could be shown, for example, today in the case of the finally diagnosable failure of the Kibbutzim movement). He felt sympathy for Hammar skjöld as a man of action in the sphere of politics who 'suffered the inner torments of an ethical mystic who had to grapple with always complex and often sordid political problems' (Hodes 1972: 161) and who was, Buber thought, doomed to failure in the end because his mission was impossible.

## *Dag Hammar skjöld and Martin Buber on the Arab-Israeli conflict*

### *Attitudes to David Ben-Gurion*

Aubrey Hodes in addition proposed a more psychological interpretation of that sympathy, deriving from Buber's constant disappointment concerning his relations with, and the politics of, the Israeli prime minister David Ben-Gurion (1948-53 and again 1955-1963):

I gained the impression that [Buber's] relationship with Hammar skjöld gave him that contact with an active man of State which he had despaired of having with Ben-Gurion (Hodes 1972: 161).

As a matter of fact, according to Hodes, during the two Jerusalem meetings

the conversation touched briefly on Israeli-Arab relations, and more specifically on the problem of the Arab refugees, on which Hammar skjöld was concentrating at the time... On 15 June 1959 Hammar skjöld submitted to the U.N. General Assembly a comprehensive report on the Palestinian refugee problem<sup>21</sup>. This incorporated some of the ideas he had discussed briefly with Buber during their talks in Jerusalem (Hodes 1972: 161-162).

This hints at a mutual influence between Hammar skjöld and Buber on that problem. In fact, there is much more to say on Buber and Hammar skjöld concerning the

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21 Dag Hammar skjöld, 'Proposals Submitted to the General Assembly for the Continuation of United Nations Assistance to the Palestine Refugees, New York June 15, 1959', in Cordier/Foote (1974: 414-436).

Israeli-Arab question. Manuel Fröhlich quotes a letter Hammarskjöld wrote on 29 April 1958, only two days before their first meeting at the UN building in New York, to his friend and international civil servant of the UN, George Ivan Smith:

I am happy that Buber struck a chord in your U.N. soul as it did in mine. What a truly remarkable fellow and what an influence he might have on his own people if they really listened... If we could make him understand our philosophy on Israel it might be of value beyond the human and personal sphere.<sup>22</sup>

Apparently, we have to consider here the interesting fact that up to their first meeting in May 1958 Buber did not understand the reasons that the United Nations uniquely blamed Israel for the Suez crisis. According to Buber, there had likewise been a blockade by Egypt of Israeli shipping in the Suez Canal and the Gulf of Aqaba. Buber, for his part, had already publicly expressed opposition to Israel's military invasion of the Sinai, which Ben-Gurion had commanded in the autumn of 1956. Notably, Buber had protested in the name of Ichud in an open letter to Ben-Gurion against the army's massacre of the people of Kafr Kassem on 29 November 1956, where

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22 Dag Hammarskjöld, Letter to George Ivan Smith, 29 April 1958, quoted by Fröhlich (2008: 16). A comprehensive and comparative study of Hammarskjöld's and Buber's agreements and differences in relation to their overall perception of the Israel-Palestine problem would be very interesting, but by far exceeds the frame of this essay and must be left to further exploration.

workers and female workers who came on trucks home to their village [where a curfew was imposed] were torn off the trucks, put up on the roadside and shot by machine guns. It has been reported of a large number of murdered (Buber 1956a: 350).

In fact, 43 inhabitants of the village were killed, men, women and children alike. As a result of the protest by Ichud, eight soldiers who participated were sentenced to between seven and 14 years' imprisonment, but were released in 1959 following an amnesty (Buber 1956a: 351). Buber also held Ben-Gurion responsible for the disastrous consequences of the Suez war, for Israel: the reversal of the position of the United States versus Israel resulting from the Sinai war effort, and furthermore, that the Soviet Union had been brought by this into closest proximity through their military support for Nasser (Friedman 1988: 338). Maurice Friedman describes Buber's position at the time:

When I wrote Buber about the Sinai invasion, he responded, in December 1956, 'Of course, the situation is particularly heavy for me who cannot settle it in my mind by "opposing" principles to it. By the way, I had sharply opposed in Ichud (i.e. Ichud; L.M.) a more radical resolution thanking the U.N., an institution in which I cannot put any trust.' The U.N. had issued a resolution condemning Israel, and Buber could not go along with that any more than with Ben-Gurion's action (Friedman 1988: 338).

The most furious clash between Buber and Ben-Gurion occurred at the Jerusalem Ideological Conference in August 1957, when Buber responded to a speech by Ben-Gurion. Buber's response, 'Israel's Mission and Zion'<sup>23</sup>, is quoted by Friedman (1983: 341):

Behind everything that Ben Gurion has said...there lies, it seems to me, the will to make the political factor supreme... This 'politicization' of life here strikes at the very spirit itself. The spirit with all its thoughts and visions descends and becomes a function of politics.

Buber compared Ben-Gurion with some of the kings of biblical Israel (King Ahab, for example) who 'employed false prophets', and he refuted Ben-Gurion's claim that the Messianic idea was still alive within his politics:

In how many hearts of this generation in our country does the Messianic idea live in a form other than the narrow nationalistic form which is restricted to the In-gathering of the Exiles? A Messianic idea without the yearning for the redemption of mankind and without the desire to take part in its realization, is no longer identical with the Messianic visions of the prophets of Israel...<sup>24</sup>

Did Hammarskjöld really tell Buber during their meetings that he had had – after some initial suspicions – an excellent and friendly

relationship with David Ben-Gurion? In her memoirs, Golda Meir, who wrote that Hammarskjöld often talked with Ben-Gurion on 'Buddhism and other philosophical topics', even asserted that Hammarskjöld held 'Ben-Gurion for an angel'.<sup>25</sup> In a letter to Ben-Gurion of 4 September 1956, Hammarskjöld openly admitted that through their correspondence and their philosophical discussions he gave more attention to the Israeli side of the conflict, and he asked himself how long and to what extent he could still justify this (Fröhlich 2002: 369). Hammarskjöld and Ben-Gurion even still exchanged friendly notes at the end of September 1956 on their private understanding and philosophical talks, when Ben-Gurion had already drawn up plans for Israel's military invasion of the Sinai, which led to the Suez crisis (Urquhart 1984: 157-158).

#### *The problem of the Palestinian refugees*

Nevertheless, Hammarskjöld's strategy on 20 April 1958 – if there was one – to make Buber 'understand our philosophy' had seemingly, at least in part, paid off:

In his report to the General Assembly of the United Nations, 'Proposals Submitted to the General Assembly for the Continuation of United Nations Assistance to the Palestine Refugees, New York June 15, 1959' (Hammarskjöld 1958c), Hammarskjöld recommended the continuation of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) in Palestine and its work in the Palestine refugee camps within Arab countries. The report recommended not only aid for physical

23 This text is not available to the author, as it is published only in the revised paperback edition of Martin Buber's original (1948, hardcover), *Israel and the World. Essays in a Time of Crisis*, New York: Schocken Books.

24 Martin Buber, 'Israel's Mission and Zion', quoted by Friedman (1983: 341).

25 Golda Meir quoted by Fröhlich (2002: 305, note 339).



survival, but also argued that the refugees needed to be integrated into the economic life of the Near East, whether through repatriation or resettlement (Hammar-skjöld 1958c: 414-36).

In response to this report – and surely influenced by their Jerusalem meetings only some months before – Buber issued in the name of Ichud a press conference-statement on 15 September 1959, ‘On the Hammar-skjöld Report and the Arab Refugee Problem’. Besides, the UNRWA had been initiated by the first UN mediator, the Swedish Count Folke Bernadotte, during the first Arab-Israeli War of 1948-49 (Persson 2008: 22). The Ichud press conference was held in Buber’s home and the statement was edited by him:

‘Ichud’ welcomes the Hammar-skjöld report on the Arab Refugee problem... Drawing the problem out of its usual emotional, philanthropic and moralistic context and cleverly avoiding political bias and open political discussions he surveyed the economic facts which should make it desirable for the Arab States and Israel to work for a final solution of the Refugee-question. At the same time he showed that international money spent on UNRWA could be turned into a substantial help for the whole region’s development as providing training to the refugees which are ‘a reservoir of manpower which in the desirable general development will assist in the creation of higher standards for the whole population of the area’. For quite a considerable time we have demanded that in the approach to the Arab Refugee-Problem one should avoid its connection with final political

solutions in the area. Even before a peace solution and treaty are arrived at, one should start with practical work on the basis of real cooperation between all parties concerned: Israel, the Arab States, the refugees themselves, the U.N., the Great Powers and others... [By this], ‘progress regarding the political and psychological obstacles will be sought in a constructive spirit and with a sense of justice and realism’... We propose that Israel should formally invite all nations to join in an immediate and urgent action to resettle the refugees in Israel and the Arab States, according to the U.N.-resolutions and the principles of the Hammar-skjöld-report...provided they undertake ‘to live at peace with their neighbours’. Further, Israel will pay compensation to refugees settling in Arab States or elsewhere.<sup>26</sup>

Unlike this positive response from one of Israel’s major opposition organisations, the Arab reaction to the Hammar-skjöld report was much more critical. Arab representatives suspected that the continuation of UNRWA for an unlimited time amounted to an attempt to postpone a solution for the refugees and the Near East conflict as a whole. This reaction, in turn, spurred Hammar-skjöld to deliver a clarification in a ‘Statement on the Continuation of UNRWA in the Special Political Committee of the General Assembly, November 10 1959’ (Hammar-skjöld 1959a: 491-93). Here, Hammar-skjöld passionately repeated his plea for his recommendations in his former report and

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26 KBS DHS, Ichud, On the Hammar-skjöld Report and the Arab Refugee Problem. Statement made by the Ichud-Association at a Press-Conference held in the home of Prof. Martin Buber, Jerusalem, on 15.9.59.

the continuation of UNRWA ‘for all the time and to all the extent necessary’ (Hammar-skjöld 1959a: 491). Regarding the Arab criticism – which came, ‘frankly, somewhat to my surprise’ – he clarified:

When I have pronounced myself in favor of the ‘indefinite’ continuance of UNRWA, that obviously means that I do not – any more than anybody else, I guess – find myself in a position to say for how long such assistance will actually be needed. But I sincerely hope that the time will be short. As the recommendation aims at the continuance of the assistance until the underlying problem is resolved, it means that I try to relieve this issue of the fundamental uncertainty that has for so long enshrouded it (Hammar-skjöld 1959a: 492).

Thus, in these hostilities, Hammar-skjöld had a real and reliable ally in Buber and Ichud, especially during the period after their personal encounters. Unfortunately, a settlement on the refugee problem did not come about, as the ‘underlying problem’ could not be resolved and neither side was willing to separate the refugee problem from a final political solution, as Buber and Ichud had proposed. After Hammar-skjöld’s clarification and another 16 meetings, the Special Political Committee of the General Assembly extended the UNRWA mandate for three years, and after that again for three years, and so on up until today (Hammar-skjöld 1959a: 493).

Furthermore, Ichud – and Buber – had also a long tradition of protesting against the expropriation of land belonging to the Arab population now expelled from the territory

of Israel.<sup>27</sup> But all these demands had hurt themselves at the Ben Gurion government. We find further proof of the contrast Buber was made between statesmen like Ben-Gurion and Hammar-skjöld in a protest note he formulated in 1961, ‘To the Refugee Problem’. Buber criticised in the name of Ichud a speech of Ben-Gurion’s before the Knesset where the latter described free choice for the Arab refugees as an ‘insidious proposal’, urging the refugees instead to settle in Arab countries (Buber 1961: 370). In his very critical response to this, Buber wrote under points 2 and 4:

The position of the Prime Minister is not only contrary to repeated resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly, but also contrary to all principles that have been adopted by the civilised world, and contrary to the Declaration of Human Rights, on the basis of which masses of refugees, among them a considerable amount of Jews, have returned to their former residence... The solution of the Arab refugee problem is only possible in full cooperation with all parties concerned: Israel, the Arab States, the refugees and the UNO. To begin with, there should be established *common* technical committees. They should deliberate together the planning and the way of consolidation of the refugees with ‘constructive attitude and in the spirit of justice and realism’ (Hammar-skjöld), whereupon the economic, demographic, human and especially security conditions of such an operation have to be taken into account (Buber 1961: 371).

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<sup>27</sup> See for example Ichud (1953), ‘Ein Protest gegen die Enteignung arabischer Böden’, in Buber (1983: 334–37).

## *Hammar skjöld, Buber and Psalm 73*

So not only did Hammar skjöld use Buber in his practical political work, Buber also used Hammar skjöld in his criticisms of and demands directed at the Israeli government. But a considerable part of Buber's sympathy for Hammar skjöld did not arise from these political debates. Both had been influenced by Eckhart von Hochheim, known as Meister Eckhart (1260–1328), a medieval Dominican theologian. Eckhart was a Christian mystic who identified God with thinking, mental activity. For him, creation was an ongoing process – like thought – without beginning and without end. According to Eckhart, God could not be recognised through knowledge, but only in a mystical moment, a spark. Eckhart inspired Hammar skjöld to an understanding of mysticism that turned decidedly towards the world and that demands worldly deeds in order to follow Christ. Hammar skjöld took from Eckhart a concept of self-abandonment in the sense of opposing personal egocentrism; an understanding that God is ever anew born in the soul of a human being who is instinctively prepared and willing to sacrifice himself in order to receive the confidence of God, and to lead a spiritual life in this sense as 'habitual will' (Fröhlich 2002: 149–155; Nelson 2007: 102–06). As a Hasidim, Buber was interested in the more Jewish traditions of mysticism, but he already knew Eckhart's work very early in his life, notably from the rediscovery by his friend Gustav Landauer of this medieval heretic pursued by the Catholic inquisition, (Hinz 2000). Hodes raises this common interest of Hammar skjöld and Buber in his account:

Buber had a high regard for Hammar-

skjöld's intellectual abilities. Hammar skjöld, he told me, was an outstanding interpreter of the medieval German mystics, and in particular of Meister Eckhart. 'But he was not as austere as some people thought. In my talks with him I found him warm and capable of reaching a true understanding,' he said. 'Hammar skjöld told me,' he added, 'that there were two books he kept near him and read passages from almost every day. One was the writings of Eckhart. And the other was – can you guess? Not the New Testament. But the Psalms. He had a deep knowledge of the Psalms, and when I referred to Psalm seventy-three he quoted part of it to me. This is, as you know, my favourite among all the Psalms. And it was one of those to which Hammar skjöld too felt closest' (Hodes 1972: 161).

Psalm 73 was especially dear to Martin Buber. He read it at Franz Rosenzweig's funeral. Franz Rosenzweig (1886–1929), after Landauer, was the second most influential person and friend in Buber's life. During the Weimar Republic they both translated the Bible from the original Hebrew into German. Furthermore, four lines from Psalm 73 were inscribed on Buber's tombstone at his own request. These four lines are:

*And nevertheless I am always with you,  
You have taken hold of my right hand.  
You guide me with your counsel  
And afterward you take me into honor.<sup>28</sup>*

Buber gave an interpretation of this Psalm in one of his books, *Good and Evil: Two*

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<sup>28</sup> Quoted by Friedman (1983: 410).

*Interpretations*<sup>29</sup>, which has been summarised by Friedman (1983: 410–12). The psalmist says therein that if he – the psalmist – has a pure heart, God is always with him. This revelation, that God is continually with the psalmist is symbolised not as a word of God but as a gesture: that God has taken his ‘right hand’. Buber compared this to a father who takes his little son by the hand in the dark. God is giving a guiding ‘counsel’, but this doesn’t mean that the psalmist is relieved of the responsibility of directing his own steps and making his own decisions. The image was then applied to Buber’s perspective on death, identifying his own suffering with that of his people through the Holocaust and the war in Palestine – that suffering (as God, the continually Present One) now takes man away and accompanies him right up to his death. ‘Honour’, Buber finally claimed, does not lie in a heaven after death, nor in some glorious afterlife, but in the ‘fulfilment of existence’. The psalmist enters into a timeless eternity; the pure heart of man has vanished but so has the separation from God. So both Buber and Hammarskjöld were united in their knowledge of and interest in existential poetry and literature.

### *Hammarskjöld and his memorandum for the Nobel Prize Committee*

Given the assumption that a considerable part of their sympathy for one another came from their love of poetry and literature, it

is no surprise that Hammarskjöld wrote in June 1959 a four-page memorandum on Martin Buber for the Nobel Prize Committee in Sweden (Hodes 1972: 62–67; Nelson 2007: 97–102; Hammarskjöld 1959b). Hammarskjöld showed therein his admiration for Buber, but at the end – and somehow in contradiction to his evaluation prior to his conclusion – he proposed Buber for the Nobel Peace Prize (to be decided by a special committee appointed by the Norwegian Parliament) rather than the Prize for Literature. Hammarskjöld started his evaluation by characterising Buber’s philosophy as ‘humanistic internationalism built on basic elements of Jewish thought’<sup>30</sup>. Hammarskjöld was aware of the outstanding position of Buber within Jewish thought, which had been unjustly marginalised because of opposition to Buber within the Israeli establishment. Here, Hammarskjöld even stated that Buber was somewhat wiser in the long run than Ben-Gurion, maybe because of Buber’s clear and outspoken intentions to achieve reconciliation with the Arab population:

If Ben-Gurion and his predecessors have taken up the legacy of militant nationalism which characterized historic Israel, Buber can be said to have given new life to essential features of the prophetic inheritance. One might venture to predict that this time as well the voice of the prophet will be shown to penetrate further into the future than the voice of the military leader.<sup>31</sup>

29 Martin Buber (1953), *Good and Evil. Two Interpretations*, New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons. The interpretation can be found in the first of two essays, ‘Right and Wrong. An Interpretation of Some Psalms’, Ch. 4, ‘The Heart Determines (Psalm 73)’, pp. 31–50.

30 Aubrey Hodes gives the most extended account of the memorandum, including several quotations (1972: 162–67); this Hammarskjöld quote is on p. 162.

31 Dag Hammarskjöld, quoted by Hodes (1972: 163).

The hailing of the prophetic inheritance is astonishing here given the political implications of the prophetic tradition in Buber's philosophy, as has been widely discussed above. In his further review of Buber's writings Hammarskjöld paid for the first time special attention to *I and Thou* – the first edition for the United States was published in 1958 – and Buber's philosophy of dialogue, declaring the text to be a 'key work in Buber's philosophical writings'<sup>32</sup>. Echoing what he wrote to Erik Lindgren, Hammarskjöld went on:

Summing up the importance of Buber the philosopher in the context that interests us, one might say that...he has been fruitful and inspiring through his philosophical writings in spheres intimately connected with poetry. Further, on the basis of his philosophy, as a shaper of opinion, he has become one of those who has most eloquently defended those forms of contact between people which poetry wants to serve: and in so doing he has remained firmly rooted in spiritual realities... Nevertheless, the objections are obvious: he is a man of eighty, with his life's work behind him, and his creation falls only indirectly within the spheres covered by the Nobel Prizes... In spite of the admiration for Buber which these lines reflect, I would hesitate to see him rewarded with the Nobel Prize for Literature. A more natural form of recognition might be the Peace Prize.<sup>33</sup>

32 Ibid: 164. The topic of dialogue will be explored at length in the article on the second phase of their relationship.

33 Ibid: 164. To say that Buber's work falls only indirectly into the sphere of literature is – to my mind – to overlook the impact of his unique poetic art of freely adapting the Hasidic mystic tales and stories.

Hodes has his doubts that Hammarskjöld pushed this recommendation as far as he really could, for then he would have written himself to the special Norwegian committee (Hodes 1972: 165). The Swedish Committee duly transferred the recommendation to the Norwegian Parliament, but the Peace Prize would have been given to Buber only if there had been an Arab counterpart, equally engaged in Arab-Israeli rapprochement as Buber. The Egyptian writer Taha Hussein was mentioned, but then dismissed because he had not advocated peace with Israel in a comparable way to Buber. Thus, the proposal was dropped because Buber was too far ahead of his time! Already in 1949, Hermann Hesse had initiated a campaign for Buber to be awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature. At that time the proposal had been dropped because the Nobel Prize Committee did not want to award the prize to an Israeli as UN mediator Count Folke Bernadotte had been murdered on 17 September 1948 by members of the Israeli terrorist organisation, the Stern Gang (or Lohamei Herut Yisrael, 'Fighters for the Freedom of Israel', LEHY):

It is now well established that the decision to kill the UN mediator was made by the Central Committee of the LEHY, which included Yitzhak Yezernitzky-Shamir. LEHY saw Count Bernadotte as the main obstacle to an Israeli annexation of Jerusalem and to Jewish control of *all* Palestine<sup>34</sup>. [Yitzhak Shamir went on to

34 According to two plans of Folke Bernadotte from 27 June and 16 September 1948, Jerusalem should have remained an Arab territory (this first plan was rejected by both Israel and the Arab States) and then placed under UN control (this second plan was likewise abandoned after the assassination of Bernadotte) (Persson 2008: 22–24).

serve as Prime Minister of Israel in 1983–84 and 1986–92; L. M]. The man who held the gun is believed to have been Yehoshua Cohen (Persson 2008: 25).

Immediately after the assassination of Folke Bernadotte, Buber wrote an article criticising the fascination with the murder and the hero worship of the assassins within the Israeli population:

The heads of the assassins – or the assumed assassins – are today encircled in the eyes of the man in the street by the brilliance of lie, by the nimbus of abject romance. All of those who failed in the years of crisis to prepare and do the right thing, upraise now the real or alleged murderers into the status of heroes and standard bearers of the nation. But murder from ambush will always be only cruel and abhorrent, and every murder will only be crime and atrocity. A murder committed in the name of a people disintegrates the lives and the hopes of just this people. With the word ‘Thou shalt not murder!’ we also understand the commandment: Thou shalt not murder the soul of your people (Buber 1948a: 309).<sup>35</sup>

Furthermore, as we have seen, Buber and Ichud were appealing publicly for the continuation of the UNWRA refugee relief programme that Bernadotte initiated. Thus, in the cases of nomination for the Nobel Prize Buber was punished twice despite his outspoken national self-criticism and his efforts for Arab-Israeli reconciliation. Although he did not really want to admit it, Buber was of course disappointed and sad

about this insensitivity. Apparently, here, in the field of personal authenticity, of poetry and literature, Buber lost the distance that he was able to maintain very well in his political debates and human rights engagements. It seems to me that in this regard he was too trustful of Hammarskjöld, up to the point of becoming vulnerable – something which had been registered by his friends and led to some strange behaviour:

Ernst Blumenthal, a friend of Buber’s from Jerusalem, learned about Hammarskjöld’s memorandum in the summer of 1959, during a visit to Sweden. He revealed some of its contents to Buber. But he never told him about the final paragraphs and Hammarskjöld’s reasons for not proposing him for the Literature Award and suggesting the Peace Prize instead. Buber’s friends concealed this from him: and as far as we know he never discovered the truth. It is not clear whether the Nobel episode created any breach between Buber and Hammarskjöld. What is certain is that there was no contact between them for the next two years (Hodes 1972: 167).

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<sup>35</sup> Buber (1948: 309), translated by Lou Marin.

Hammar skjöld wanted, nevertheless, to try to renew and restructure the political sphere via the United Nations. In his function he had no choice to this effort. But he had no real understanding of the differences between the spheres and dimensions of politics and society. Engaging in dialogue in society or a community was not the same as doing so in an institution dealing with the interests of superpowers. I think this was what Buber meant when, in his commemorative address in 1962 for the Swedish Radio, 'Memories of Hammar skjöld', he spoke about sensing something 'fateful that in some way was connected with his function in this world-hour' (Buber 1962a: 58). I guess, that here we have a glimpse into the natural 'nuances on other points' that Hammar skjöld referred to at the press conference in New York after the Jerusalem meetings.

That notwithstanding, Buber had a deep sympathy with Hammar skjöld's efforts to tame the superpowers, notably in a time of crisis and danger when the planet was on the brink of nuclear warfare, for Buber knew that his re-structuring of society from below would take time and could suffer setbacks (as could be shown, for example, today in the case of the finally diagnosable failure of the Kibbutzim movement). He felt sympathy for Hammar skjöld as a man of action in the sphere of politics who 'suffered the inner torments of an ethical mystic who had to grapple with always complex and often sordid political problems' (Hodes 1972: 161) and who was, Buber thought, doomed to failure in the end because his mission was impossible.

## *Dag Hammar skjöld and Martin Buber on the Arab-Israeli conflict*

### *Attitudes to David Ben-Gurion*

Aubrey Hodes in addition proposed a more psychological interpretation of that sympathy, deriving from Buber's constant disappointment concerning his relations with, and the politics of, the Israeli prime minister David Ben-Gurion (1948-53 and again 1955-1963):

I gained the impression that [Buber's] relationship with Hammar skjöld gave him that contact with an active man of State which he had despaired of having with Ben-Gurion (Hodes 1972: 161).

As a matter of fact, according to Hodes, during the two Jerusalem meetings

the conversation touched briefly on Israeli-Arab relations, and more specifically on the problem of the Arab refugees, on which Hammar skjöld was concentrating at the time... On 15 June 1959 Hammar skjöld submitted to the U.N. General Assembly a comprehensive report on the Palestinian refugee problem<sup>21</sup>. This incorporated some of the ideas he had discussed briefly with Buber during their talks in Jerusalem (Hodes 1972: 161-162).

This hints at a mutual influence between Hammar skjöld and Buber on that problem. In fact, there is much more to say on Buber and Hammar skjöld concerning the

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<sup>21</sup> Dag Hammar skjöld, 'Proposals Submitted to the General Assembly for the Continuation of United Nations Assistance to the Palestine Refugees, New York June 15, 1959', in Cordier/Foote (1974: 414-436).

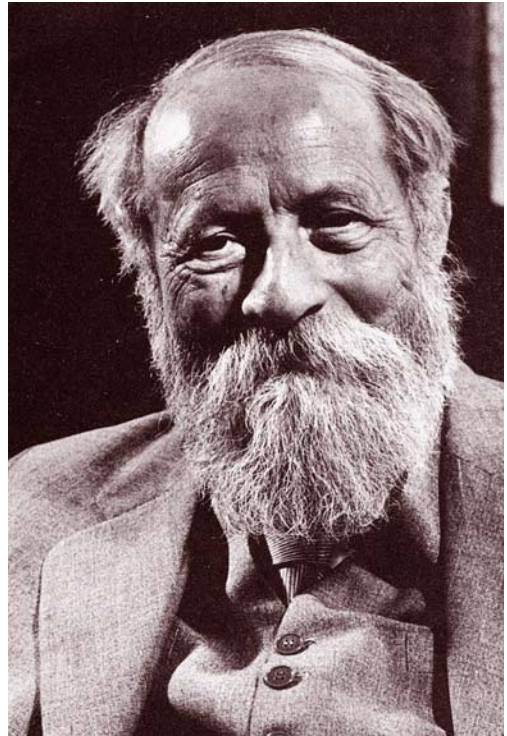
## II » Perspectives on dialogue

### The encounter of Dag Hammarskjöld and Martin Buber, phase 2 (1961 and after)

On 17 August 1961, after an interval of two years, Dag Hammarskjöld resumed contact with Martin Buber by writing a letter to him at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. Thus, again it was Hammarskjöld who took the initiative, and again it was after his reading of a book of Buber's, *Between Man and Man* (Buber 1955):

The last few days I have been reading some studies of yours which I had not seen before. They are the five papers which have been published in English under the collective title 'Between Man and Man', and I think especially of 'Zwi-  
esprache', 'Die Frage an den Einzelnen', and parts of 'Was ist der Mensch'.

After having finished reading these studies, I feel the need to send you again a greeting – after far too long a time of silence, understandable only in the light of the pressure of circumstances. In what you say about the 'signs', about the 'questions' and true response and about the Single One and his responsibility, with reference also to the political sphere, you have formulated shared experiences in ways which made your studies very much what you call a 'sign' for me. It is strange – over a gulf of time and a gulf of differences as to background and outer



*Martin Buber*

experience – to find a bridge built which in one move, eliminates the distance. This was all I wanted to tell you and I do not believe that any further comments would add or clarify anything.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>36</sup> KBS DHS, Dag Hammarskjöld, Letter to Martin Buber, 17 August 1961.



In the second part of his letter, Hammar-skjöld referred to his continuing intention of trying to translate Buber, although a first attempt to translate the first part of Buber's early mystical literature, published for the first time in German already in 1907, *Die Legende des Baalschem* (Buber 1907, 1956b), had apparently not been finished.<sup>37</sup> Hammarskjöld:

I still keep in my mind the idea of translating you so as to bring you closer to my countrymen, but it comes increasingly difficult to choose and of course I can not envisage any more extensive work. Also, the more I sense the nuances in your German, the more shy I become at the thought of a translation which, at best, could render only a modest part of its overtones.<sup>38</sup>

Martin Buber replied enthusiastically on 23 August 1961 from his house in the Talbiyeh suburb of Jerusalem :

I want to thank you for your letter. It is for me, even more than what you said in our first talk, a token of true integral understanding, – rather a rare gift in this world of ours.

Were I asked, which of my books a Swede should read first, I should answer: 'The most "difficult" of them all, but the most apt to introduce the reader into the realm of dialogue, I mean: "I and Thou".' As you may not know the Postscript to the new edition, I am sending you a copy, together with a paper on language I gave last year.<sup>39</sup>

37 See Urquhart (1984: 40-41 and 520).

38 KBS DHS, Dag Hammarskjöld, Letter to Martin Buber, 17 August 1961.

39 KBS DHS, Martin Buber, Letter to Dag Hammar-skjöld, 23 August 1961. The paper on language, mentioned additionally by Buber, has not yet been found by the author and therefore cannot be considered more deeply here.

It is astonishing here to witness that Buber, who in his philosophy of dialogue gives so much importance to awareness of and sensitivity towards the other, the You part of the dialogue, completely ignores the severe constraints Hammarskjöld refers to as a result of his duties as Secretary-General of the United Nations ('I can not envisage any more extensive work'). On the other hand, Buber's insisting on a translation of *I and Thou* as his key work on dialogue shows how dear this book still was to Buber, nearly 40 years after its first publication in 1923.

In fact, *Between Man and Man*, which was the original catalyst for Hammarskjöld's resuming contact with Buber, contains, in contrast to the German compilations of all Buber's writings on the principle of dialogue (Buber 1954/1962/1984), only two basic texts – that is 'Dialogue' (originally written in 1929) and 'The Question to the Single One' (originally written in 1936), referred to by Hammarskjöld in his letter by their original German titles. Whereas 'What is Man?', a series of inaugural lectures of Buber during his first year as a Professor at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, 1938, and published in German only in 1948 as 'Das Problem des Menschen', has not been considered an integral part of the canon of Buber's writings on dialogue, though it is related to the subject.

Notwithstanding the texts Hammarskjöld mentions in his letter of 17 August 1961, it would be appropriate here to start with Buber's cardinal work on dialogue philosophy, that is *I and Thou*. At the same time, we should also recall that Hammarskjöld had already developed his own concept of 'quiet diplomacy' as a dialogue philosophy for the political sphere.

*Hammar-skjöld's intention  
to refine his already existing  
concept of 'quiet diplomacy'*

This concept of 'quiet diplomacy' had been formed by Hammar-skjöld during the US-China crisis, in relation to the imprisonment of US pilots at the end of the Korean War in 1954-55, and was one that he practised and refined throughout his period of office as Secretary-General of the United Nations. The political scientist Manuel Fröhlich called it, instead, 'vertrauliche Diplomatie' (confidential diplomacy, but not in the sense of secret; see Fröhlich 2002: 279) and went into the details of the negotiations during the US-China crisis to deduce key elements that Hammar-skjöld developed there – quite some time before Hammar-skjöld came to know or got into contact with Buber, which led Hammar-skjöld later on, in his initial letter to Buber of 16 April 1958, to refer to their proceeding in 'parallel ways'. For Hammar-skjöld, the role of the Secretary-General in pursuing quiet diplomacy started with a belief in personal talks – at the time of his voyage to Peking China was not even a member of the United Nations (it joined the organisation in 1971). He was looking for an atmosphere of privacy, to some extent protected from public debate. In diplomatic negotiations, Hammar-skjöld interpreted in a preferably objective, unemotional and detached way the opinions of his counterpart. He wanted to show personal integrity and honesty in his demands as well as empathy for the other and a desire to save the latter's face when it came to solutions (Fröhlich 2002: 253-282). Hammar-skjöld was surely lucky to find a counterpart such as Zhou Enlai, who appreciated Hammar-skjöld's humble intellectualism during their Peking talks. One should not forget, however, that Zhou Enlai's political margins

during the negotiations at the time coincided with a new emerging Chinese interest in gaining more independence from the Soviet Union after Stalin's death.

When Hammar-skjöld contacted Buber three years later, the former's concept of 'quiet diplomacy' had undergone some changes in the light of experience. The tasks had become more and more difficult and at the time of the Congo crisis, 'quiet diplomacy' had come across certain limits.

Although it was *Between Man and Man* that made Hammar-skjöld resume his correspondence with Buber, it is very likely that he had already read and come to know *I and Thou* (Buber 1970) by this time – only one month before his sudden death. As has been mentioned at the end of the section on the first phase of their encounter, Hammar-skjöld, in his memorandum to the Swedish Academy, written in June 1959, described *I and Thou* as a key work of Buber's philosophy and

the work in which Buber best succeeded in presenting a coherent and pregnant formulation of his basic concept.<sup>40</sup>

One of the early biographers of Hammar-skjöld, Henry P. van Dusen, confirmed:

Hammar-skjöld was already familiar with *I and Thou*. He had included a fairly extended discussion of it in his commendation of Buber for the Nobel Prize (van Dusen 1967: 218).

The Australian journalist, then UN Information Director and close friend of Hammar-skjöld, George Ivan Smith (Fröhlich 2008), wrote in a letter to Buber in October 1961, a very short time after Hammar-skjöld's death:

40 Dag Hammar-skjöld quoted by Hodes (1972: 163).

I was a personal assistant to Mr. Hammarskjöld during a number of his trips to the Middle East and to Asia and, as well as being professional colleagues, we were also friends. He talked to me so often about your works and on several occasions gave me inscribed copies of them as gifts.<sup>41</sup>

As Hammarskjöld read *Between Man and Man* only a short time before his death, it is legitimate to suppose that *I and Thou* figured prominently in these talks mentioned by George Ivan Smith. Notably, in debates with the staff of the Secretariat on questions of awareness as a basic factor within the concept of ‘quiet diplomacy’, Hammarskjöld even organised sessions where they read selected parts of *I and Thou* together, as testified by Andrew Cordier (Fröhlich 2002: 279).

Thus, the immediate interest Hammarskjöld took in Buber’s philosophy of dialogue and *I and Thou* should be at first sight interpreted within the context of Hammarskjöld’s continuing efforts to develop and refine the instruments at hand for a successful conduct of dialogue within the political sphere and in diplomatic negotiations.

### *The mystery and romantic anti-romanticism of I and Thou*

Although Hammarskjöld admired the language of *I and Thou* from a poetic point of view, as a philosophical work the book is very hard to read, let alone to translate. In a prologue to his new English translation of *I and Thou* from 1970<sup>42</sup>, Walter Kaufmann

– approached by Buber’s son Rafael to do a new translation – several times described the book as ‘untranslatable’ (Kaufmann 1970: 1). Many contemporary readers were appalled by the style Buber employed in this work – his political and social writings, even his later works on dialogue are much more accessible – finding it imprecise, pretentious, almost romantic, and further marred by Buber’s habit of inventing new German words. Kaufmann seemed to confirm this view:

The style of *Ich und Du* is anything but sparse and unpretentious, lean or economical. It represents a late flowering of romanticism and tends to blur all contours in the twilight of suggestive but extremely unclear language. Most of Buber’s German readers would be quite incapable of saying what any number of passages probably mean (Kaufmann 1970: 24).

Kaufmann went on to say that because of his writing style Buber had been criticised for being concerned only with ‘Schöngeisterei’ (aesthetics), an assessment that contrasts sharply with Hammarskjöld’s praise for the work’s poetry, as we shall see below. But the content of this book is anything but romantic. Drawing attention to the Jewish cultural heritage of Buber, Kaufmann in his prologue goes to the heart of what the book is:

The sacred is here and now... The only possible relationship with God is to address him and to be addressed by him, here and now – or, as Buber puts it, in the present. For him the Hebrew name of God, the tetragrammation (YHWH), means HE IS PRESENT. *Er ist da* might be translated: He is there; but in this context it would be more nearly right to say: He is here (Kaufmann 1970: 25–26).

41 KBS DHS, George Ivan Smith, Letter to Martin Buber, beginning of October 1961.

42 A first English translation by Ronald Gregor Smith appeared in the UK in 1937. The first American edition, already revised (including some remarks made by Buberhimself) appeared in 1958 – the year in which Hammarskjöld made contact with Buber.

Buber distinguished in his book between the basic word pairs I-You and I-It and elaborates on all of their further significations (Buber 1970: 53). Only within the personal I-You relationship is God present. Every I-It relation deals with objects and objectification, even of human beings, and that is why He or She is a part of I-It. Buber divides the realms of true dialogue into three: (1) a person can have a dialogue with nature (a tree, Buber puts forward as an example), or an animal (Buber's takes the example of a cat); (2) a person can have a dialogue with men – that is, with other persons (into that relation language enters); and (3) a person can have a dialogue with spiritual entities (he/she feels addressed by such entities and responds with a creative act, not necessarily with language) (Buber 1970: 56-57). Thus, for Buber true dialogue is not necessarily something that only occurs between human beings. In his afterword of 1957, so eagerly sent to Hammarskjöld in his letter of 23 August 1961, Buber demonstrates this in the example of relations with pets:

Man once 'tamed' animals, and he is still capable of bringing off this strange feat. He draws animals into his own sphere and moves them to accept him, a stranger, in an elementary manner to accede to his ways. He obtains from them an often astonishing active response to his approach, to his address – and on the whole this response is the stronger and more direct, the more his relation amounts to a genuine You-saying (Buber 1970: 172).

Thus, according to Buber, true dialogue without language or conversation between a person and an animal is possible; here the animal is part of the I-You relation; whereas Buber also talks about the 'sickness of our

age' (Buber 1970: 104), where most relations between persons, human beings, are not true dialogue, because one person is usually either ignored or only experienced or used like an object – that is, subordinated by the other. Nevertheless, for Buber, the second realm of possible dialogue, the sphere of a dialogue between man and man, remains the most important for resolving this crisis of our times. Kaufmann explains:

The centrality of human relationships in this book is so plain that critics have actually noted with surprise and protested with complete incomprehension that there should be any mention at all of a tree and of a cat. The central stress falls on You – not Thou. God is present when I confront You. But if I look away from You, I ignore him. As long as I merely experience or use you, I deny God. But when I encounter You I encounter him (Kaufmann 1970: 28).

Thus, for Buber a real encounter happens within the realm of actual daily life with all its risks. The two persons who are meeting live entirely in the present and each other's presence. There is no precondition:

The relation to the You is unmediated. Nothing conceptual intervenes between I and You, no prior knowledge and no imagination... No purpose intervenes between I and You, no greed and no anticipation... Every means is an obstacle. Only where all means have disintegrated encounters occur (Buber 1970: 62-63).

We will keep this passage in mind when it comes to the discussion of whether diplomacy, negotiations or political talks with

their hidden or explicit interests, purposes and preconditions are possible realms of true dialogue. For Buber, the ideal situation of dialogue is within a loving relationship, as he himself experienced in his marriage to Paula Winkler (1877-1958), the latter coming from a Catholic background in Munich and converting to the Jewish faith:

Marriage can never be renewed except by that which is always the source of all true marriage: that two human beings reveal the You to one another (Buber 1970: 95).

But God isn't simply the beloved one in another person; he is more the invisible, unnameable *Between*, dissolving itself into responsibility for the other:

This is no metaphor but actuality: love... is between I and You. Whoever does not know this, know this with his being, does not know love... Love is responsibility of an I for a You... Relation is reciprocity (Buber 1970: 66).

For Buber, even an atheist who lives in a true dialogical relation with reciprocity – I would rather prefer the term 'mutuality' – can find God; naming is irrelevant here (Reichert 1996). That, again, is due to the Jewish tradition of his philosophy, as Kaufmann emphasises:

The Hebrews did not visualize their God and expressly forbade attempts to make of him an object – a visual object, a concrete object, any object. Their God was not to be seen. He was to be heard and listened to. He was not an It but an I – or a You (Kaufmann 1970: 33).

But here Buber showed his Hebrew humanism, because he also cites particular persons from literary, cultural or religious history like Socrates, Jesus, Goethe and Buddha as representatives of true dialogue, whereas Napoleon, the political conqueror, embodies the negative example:

– But what if a man's mission requires him to know only his association with his cause and no real relation to any You, no present encounter with any You, so that everything around him becomes It and subservient to his cause? How about the I-saying of Napoleon? Wasn't that legitimate?...

– Indeed, this master of the age evidently did not know the dimension of the You. The matter has been put well: all being was for him *valore*<sup>43</sup>... there was nobody whom he recognized as being. He was the demonic You for the millions and did not respond; to 'You' he responded by saying: It... (Buber 1970: 117).

Nonetheless, Buber was a rather optimistic philosopher: a final component of his philosophy of dialogue contains the optimistic possibility of *Umkehr* (return) for any individual, whatever sphere they live in. In Kaufmann's words:

One of the central concepts of the book is that of *Umkehr*. This is Buber's German rendering of the Hebrew *t'shuvah* and means return... The Jewish doctrine holds that a man can at any time return and be accepted by God... What the Hebrew tradition stresses is not the mere

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43 A note by Kaufmann – 'Value. But the Italian word can also mean worth, courage, fitness' – in Buber (1970: 117).

state of mind, the repentance, but the act of return (Kaufmann 1970: 35-36).

Now we have all the ingredients Buber thought necessary for true dialogue. It contains an I-You relationship, where the other is not regarded as a mere object. It requires the sensitivity that allows oneself to be addressed and to address the other in a manner characterised by awareness. It involves taking the risk of meeting the other without a preconception, without egoistical interest, without tactical strategy or preconditions, in order to create something new in common. It requires a desire for true dialogue on both sides, that is reciprocity or mutuality. It means taking responsibility for the other party in the encounter. If someone treats the other as a mere value or object, he is not dealing with dialogue, but with an I-It relation. Nevertheless, in principle, *Umkehr* is possible for everyone.

### *Buber's example of the ideal dialogue: The Forte Circle in Potsdam, 1914*

Buber originally had a plan for publishing several works on his dialogue philosophy (Kaufmann 1970: 49-50). He abandoned the plan, but his subsequent works on dialogue, after *I and Thou*, most of which are included in the book that Hammarskjöld read, *Between Man and Man* (Buber 1955), tried to exemplify in much more accessible language topics and problems that arose out of *I and Thou*. It is very interesting to see what Hammarskjöld concentrated on when he wrote to Buber: the 'signs', the 'questions' and 'true response' as well as 'the Single One and his responsibility, with reference also to the political sphere'.

In 'Dialogue' (Buber 1929), Buber gives an extended example, from his long political life, of an occasion when he felt he had experienced the ideal of true dialogue. Strangely enough, it is at the same time an early and – as it turned out – premature attempt to establish a kind of League of Nations or United Nations:

The date is Easter 1914. Some men from different European peoples had met in an undefined presentiment of the catastrophe, in order to make preparations for an attempt to establish a supra-national authority. The conversations were marked by that unreserved, whose substance and fruitfulness I have scarcely ever experienced so strongly. It had such an effect on all who took part that the fictitious fell away and every word was an actuality. Then as we discussed the composition of the larger circle from which public initiative should proceed (it was decided that it should meet in August of the same year) one of us, a man of passionate concentration and judicial power of love, raised the consideration that too many Jews had been nominated, so that several countries would be represented in unseemly proportion by their Jews... Obstinate Jew that I am, I protested against the protest. I no longer know how from that I came to speak of Jesus and to say that we Jews knew him from within, in the impulses and stirrings of his Jewish being, in a way that remains inaccessible to the peoples submissive to him. 'In a way that remains inaccessible to you' – so I directly addressed the former clergyman. He stood up, I too stood, we looked into the heart of one another's eyes. 'It is gone', he said, and before everyone we gave one another

the kiss of brotherhood. The discussion of the situation between Jews and Christians had been transformed into a bond between the Christian and the Jew. In this transformation dialogue was fulfilled. Opinions were gone, in a bodily way the factual took place (Buber 1929: 5-6).

This example has been called ‘the original experience of dialogic’<sup>44</sup> for Buber. It involved the so-called Forte Circle and the Easter meeting of 1914 took place in Potsdam. The Forte Circle existed from 1910-15 and was an international effort, begun by European intellectuals witnessing the danger of the coming war, to build a supranational organisation, a forerunner of the League of Nations, founded in 1920. The Easter meeting in Potsdam was an intense meeting that went on for three days. It was attended by the Dutch initiator, Frederik Van Eden (a social reformer and utopian, and a follower of Henry David Thoreau, who also kept up a vigorous interchange with writers and activists like Upton Sinclair, Mahatma Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore) and his fellow countryman Henri Borel (a writer); Martin Buber, Gustav Landauer (the nonviolent anarchist and close friend of Buber’s), Erich Gutkind (a German-Jewish philosopher of religion and science), Florens Christian Rang (lawyer and former protestant minister), all of them from Germany; and two Swedes, Poul Bjerre (psychoanalyst and writer) and Theodor Gustav Norlind (writer). The author and peace activist

Romain Rolland originally planned to join the meeting but could not attend. The clash of arguments Buber was describing above was with Florens Christian Rang. Thereby, Buber started a conversation on Jewry and Christianity with Rang that lasted until the latter’s death in 1926 (Friedman 1982: 180-184). The joint international effort of the Forte Circle was a failure, but represents one of the now forgotten prescient evaluations of the European situation before the war, and one which moreover had a vision of how to solve it. The Forte Circle dissolved in 1915 because some of its members – Gutkind, Rang and notably Buber himself – had suddenly taken up propaganda for the war on behalf of their country. That infuriated Gustav Landauer, who accused Buber of having turned into a ‘Kriegsbuber’ (War-monger Buber) (Friedman 1982: 193) and told him so bluntly in May 1916, according to Maurice Friedman:

[H]e denied Buber the right to speak publicly of the events of the war and ‘to incorporate these confusions into your beautiful and wise generalities’. ‘I confess that it makes my blood boil when you single out Germany without qualification as the only redeemer nation without reference to how Germany in the last decades had pursued colonization through conquest.’ ‘That is War Politics!’, Landauer exclaimed... ‘The community that we need is far from all that war means today’ (Friedman 1982: 200).

But Buber and Landauer remained in close contact, their relationship of dialogue remained intact and their friendship lasted until the reactionary murder of Landauer in 1919. Mainly because of Landauer’s criticism,

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44 The quoted formula comes from Manfred Voigts (2001), ‘Martin Buber – Entscheidung und Gemeinschaft’, in Richard Faber and Christine Holste (eds), *Der Potsdamer Forte-Kreis. Eine utopische Intellektuellenassoziation zur europäischen Friedenssicherung*, Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, p. 107.

but also for other minor reasons (such as the explicit census of Jews in the German Army in 1916, which led Buber back to his original Zionist position that the German War had nothing to do with the obligations of the Jewish community) he slowly gave up his pro-war position. That was a fundamental experience for Buber and the reason he no longer advocated a mysticism that could make one blind. Instead, Buber embraced the vision that dialogue is opposed to war and cannot go along with war propaganda. It is very likely that Hammarskjöld knew nothing about this background, this personal *Umkehr* of Buber's. For Buber, dialogue philosophy was a return to realism and a dissociation from pure mysticism, whereas for Hammarskjöld Buber remained a mystic even within the latter's books on dialogue.

It is interesting to read Buber's later version of this original and ideal dialogue experience when he described it in another philosophical work, without reference to the concrete historical background, which does not show Buber in a very favourable light. The fact, however, that Buber even repeated the account of this experience in another of his works on dialogue philosophy – which was not, unfortunately, included in *Between Man and Man* and therefore could not have been read by Hammarskjöld – shows how important this historical example was for Buber. We find this passage in 'Elements of the Interhuman', first published in German in 1953 (Buber 1954/1962/1984: 269-298)<sup>45</sup>, under the explicit chapter title, 'Genuine Dialogue'. Here, the passage on the particular dialogue he experienced in 1914 reads as follows:

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45 The first English translation was by Ronald Gregor Smith, in Buber, Martin (1965), *The Knowledge of Man*, London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., pp. 72-88.

But where the dialogue is fulfilled in its being, between partners who have turned to one another in truth, who express themselves without reserve and are free of the desire for semblance, there is brought into being a memorable common fruitfulness which is to be found nowhere else...The interhuman opens out what otherwise remains unopened.

This phenomenon is indeed well known in dialogue between two persons; but I have also sometimes experienced it in a dialogue in which several have taken part. About Easter of 1914 there met a group consisting of representatives of several European nations for a three-day discussion that was intended to be preliminary to further talks. We wanted to discuss together how the catastrophe, which we all believed was imminent, could be avoided. Without our having agreed beforehand on any sort of modalities for our talk, all the presuppositions of genuine dialogue were fulfilled. From the first hour immediacy reigned between all of us, some of whom had just got to know one another; everyone spoke with an unheard-of unreserved, and clearly not a single one of the participants was in bondage to semblance. In respect of its purpose the meeting must be described as a failure (though even now in my heart it is still not a certainty that it had to be a failure); the irony of the situation was that we arranged the final discussion for the middle of August, and in the course of events the group was soon broken up. Nevertheless, in the time that followed, not one of the participants doubted that he shared in a triumph of the interhuman.



One more point must be noted. Of course it is not necessary for all who are joined in a genuine dialogue actually to speak; those who keep silent can on occasion be especially important. But each must be determined not to withdraw when the course of the conversation makes it proper for him to say what he has to say. No one, of course, can know in advance what it is that he has to say; genuine dialogue cannot be arranged beforehand. It has indeed its basic order in itself from the beginning, but nothing can be determined, the course is of the spirit, and some discover what they have to say only when they catch the call of the spirit (Buber 1953c: 79–80).

Here again Buber has told this story without admitting that he himself was soon to be among those advocating war. But again it must be emphasised that Buber was only temporarily a proponent of war and that the insight gained from his personal failure led him to oppose dialogue and war in his philosophical thinking. So with the help of Landauer's severe criticism Buber came back two years later to his cherished Jewish motto, 'Not by might but by spirit' (Friedman 1982: 193).

Now we can deduce some further elements of true dialogue from the experience of the Forte Circle. The partners should turn to each other with truthfulness and should express themselves without reserve. Even very controversial views will always be judged with respect and understanding on the basis of truth. Furthermore, it is not necessary for every participant in true dialogue to speak, or speak much. But one should be able to respond in the presence of the other when addressed. No participant knows in advance

what his words will be; genuine dialogue has to be spontaneous and cannot be prepared beforehand.

What did Hammarskjöld do with these elements of Buber's philosophy of dialogue? How did he interpret and use them for his political sphere, the terrain of diplomacy? Are diplomatic negotiations even imaginable without intense preparation and the working-out of a tactical strategy beforehand?

### *The 'Signs' and the Mehé experience*

In his letter of 17 August 1961 Hammarskjöld wrote that he had read *Between Man and Man* 'with reference also to the political sphere'. It is quite obvious that he was instantaneously relating the philosophy of dialogue of Buber to his everyday life as Secretary-General of the United Nations, where he had to deal with diplomacy and negotiation talks with states' representatives or conflicting partners of new emerging states, as in the Congo crisis which was at its peak when Hammarskjöld resumed contact with Buber. Nevertheless, Buber made only small and occasional references to the political sphere in his works on dialogue, which were primarily written not for the political sphere but for the social sphere.

Thus, when Hammarskjöld approved what Buber wrote on 'Signs' it is very likely that he was reading it with special reference to his own situation within the political sphere. 'The Signs' is the title of a section in Buber's text 'Dialogue' (Buber 1929: 10–13), the sequel to *I and Thou* in the canon of his writings on dialogue philosophy – and the first text published in *Between Man and Man*. Here, Buber states that in contemporary

times men are not aware of the signs when they are addressed by the other for dialogue. They do not see, feel, observe these signs. They lack presence and attentiveness, because they live in an armour:

Each of us is encased in an armour whose task is to ward off signs. Signs happen to us without respite, living means being addressed, we would need only to present ourselves and to perceive. But the risk is too dangerous for us, the soundless thunderings seem to threaten us with annihilation, and from generation to generation we perfect the defence apparatus... Each of us is encased in an armour which we soon, out of familiarity, no longer notice. There are only moments which penetrate it and stir the soul to sensibility (Buber 1929: 10-11).

Signs are not something extraordinary; they address a person within the realms of daily life. But men have, in their armour, turned off their receivers most of the time. Nonetheless, signs signal what is happening in the world:

What occurs to me addresses me. In what occurs to me the world-happening addresses me. Only by sterilizing it, removing the seed of address from it, can I take what occurs to me as a part of the world-happening which does not refer to me. The interlocking sterilized system into which all this only needs to be dovetailed is man's titanic work. Mankind has pressed speech too into the service of this work (Buber 1929: 11).

Hammarskjöld undoubtedly rediscovered here within a philosophical concept the common ground he had found with Buber on the causes of the present 'Wall of Dis-

trust' within Cold-War political and diplomatic discourse. The representatives of the superpowers wear their armour and, thus, cannot read the signs of a real address, of true intention of dialogue. Buber went on already to make parallels between 'signs' and 'questions'. He explained what he meant by being addressed:

...it is said into my very life; it is no experience that can be remembered independently of the situation, it remains the address of that moment and cannot be isolated, it remains the question of a questioner and will have its answer<sup>46</sup>. (It remains the question. For that is the other great contrast between all the business of interpreting signs and the speech of signs which I mean here: this speech never gives information or appeasement) (Buber 1929: 12).<sup>47</sup>

As in *I and Thou*, Buber illustrated in 'Dialogue' this major task of recognising the signs of being addressed by a particular experience, but this time a negative experience. This example is given in the section 'A Conversation', immediately following the section 'The Signs'. It concerns an experience where Buber missed to read the signs. This experience

...was brought home to me by an everyday event, an event of judgement, judging that sentence from closed lips and an unmoved glance such as the ongoing course of things loves to pronounce.

46 The English translation is not very precise here. In the German original it is clear that the the questioner is looking for an answer, not that he will definitely get an answer (Buber 1954/1962/1984: 156).

47 The brackets are Buber's.

What happened was no more than that one forenoon, after a morning of 'religious' enthusiasm, I had a visit from an unknown young man, without being there in spirit. I certainly did not fail to let the meeting be friendly, I did not treat him any more remissly than all his contemporaries who were in the habit of seeking me out about this time of day as an oracle that is ready to listen to reason. I conversed attentively and openly with him – only I omitted to guess the questions which he did not put. Later, not long after, I learned from one of his friends – he himself was no longer alive – the essential content of these questions; I learned that he had come to me not casually, but borne by destiny, not for a chat but for a decision. He had come to me, he had come in this hour. What do we expect when we are in despair and yet go to a man? Surely a presence by means of which we are told that nevertheless there is meaning (Buber 1929: 13–14).

Again, Buber recounts the example in a very mysterious manner, with no names, no further information about the background or what actually happened to the young man, and omitting his own personal involvement. Again, it was an experience at the beginning of World War I, the period when Buber made one of the biggest mistakes of his life by advocating war on behalf of German nationalism (and by calling on Jews living in Germany to participate). Like many writers, poets and artists of expressionism, some existential mystics like Buber were also suddenly attracted by war as a means of liberating themselves from the so-called degeneration of society. Buber is not very courageous here in deleting the background. This is notwithstanding the fact that the encounter with the young man was part of Buber's *Umkehr* – turning away from his warmonger

position. The young man he mentioned had a name, Mehé, and the encounter with him happened in July 1914. Friedman tells the story as follows:

About this time...Buber was given to hours of mystic ecstasy. The illegitimacy of this division of his life into the everyday and a 'beyond' where illumination and rapture held without time or sequence was brought to Buber by 'an event of judgement' in which closed lips and an unmoved glance pronounced the sentence (Friedman 1982: 187–188).

Buber didn't read the signs of his encounter with Mehé. Later, he learned from a friend that Mehé had died; but why, under what circumstances? Mehé came to Buber not for a chat, but with a question. He had to decide whether or not to go to war if called up; that is, whether or not to love life:

The decision was one of life or death. But not in the sense that many assumed. Mehé did not commit suicide, as some commentators have asserted. Rather he died at the front in the First World War, as Buber himself wrote me, 'out of that kind of despair that may be defined partially as "no longer opposing one's own death".' Even in a psychologising age such as ours, the difference between actual suicide and such despair should be evident. The 'something monstrous that was getting ready to consume history and mankind' is the qualitatively different era that began with the First World War, continued with the Second, and outstripped imagination in the Nazi extermination camps, Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the 'Gulag Archipelago'. In such situations those who do not fight wholeheartedly against their death

will certainly be killed, whereas those who do *might* remain alive... Buber experienced this event as a judgement and responded to it with a 'conversion' which changed his whole life. Buber's feeling of guilt was not based on any illusion of omnipotence, as if he *should* have been able to remove Mehé's despair no matter what... In Mehé's case what made Buber personally guilty in the exact sense in which he himself later defined existential guilt was that he withheld himself, that he did not respond as a whole person to the claim of the situation... This withholding himself did not arise through any conscious decision or wilful detachment but through a habitual way of life which removed him from the everyday to a 'spiritual' sphere which had no connection with it... he still was not 'there' for Mehé, who had come to him in that hour. It is not that he did not *say* the right thing but that he failed to make real, insofar as was up to him, the possibility of genuine dialogue that that hour offered (Friedman 1982: 188-189).

Thus, out of this negative experience, Buber learnt lessons. When he realised, some years later what he had done, this reflection contributed to his recovery from a pro-war position and led to a rejection of mysticism in an isolated, individual manner of self-denial, without connection to the other. Buber wrote thus in 'Dialogue':

Since then I have given up the 'religious' which is nothing but the exception, extraction, exaltation, ecstasy; or it has given me up. I possess nothing but the everyday out of which I am never taken. The mystery is no longer disclosed, it has escaped or it has made its dwelling here where everything happens as it happens. I know no

fullness but each mortal hour's fullness of claim and responsibility (Buber 1929: 14).

Thus, here we have an example of what Hammarskjöld wrote in his letter to Buber on reading the 'signs' when a person is addressed, as well as the 'Single One and his responsibility'. I think, Hammarskjöld could easily transfer the necessity to be present and aware in encounters within diplomacy, the necessity to read the 'signs' in the political sphere – although for Buber the Mehé experience helped an *Umkehr* where he turned away from an isolated, individual inner mysticism, which lies at the core of Hammarskjöld's own religious philosophy of mysticism as depicted in *Markings*.

### *'Responsibility' and 'conscience' in Buber's 'The Question to the Single One'*

It is no surprise, then, that the follow-up text Buber wrote on his philosophy of dialogue, 'The Question to the Single One' (Buber 1936), was a critique of the individualist philosophies of Max Stirner (1806-1856) and Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855). In this critique, Buber challenged the modern interpretation of man as an isolated individual. Within this interpretation the individual always seeks a solitary relationship with God, as is the case with Kierkegaard's philosophy and biography. Thus, modern individualist philosophy neglects the relational character of the human being, symbolised in Kierkegaard's rejection of his possible marriage with Regine Olsen. For Buber, who embraced a personal, dialogic philosophy, a relationship with God is inseparable from the relationship with fellow human beings, thus

God can only be found through relations with human beings and not by isolating the Single One from these relations. Whether this interpretation of Kierkegaard by Buber is right or wrong is not of primary interest here.<sup>48</sup> We just have to consider the fact that Hammarskjöld obviously didn't reject the book because of Buber's critique of the mystical essentialism of Kierkegaard, which seemed to be close to Hammarskjöld's own concept of faith hitherto. Nonetheless, what Hammarskjöld hinted at in his letter of 17 August 1961 were passages of the book not necessarily connected with the parts where Buber criticised Kierkegaard.

When Hammarskjöld mentioned the 'Single One and his responsibility, with reference also to the political sphere', I am quite sure that he was referring to a section in Buber's 'The Question to the Single One', entitled 'The Single One in Responsibility' (Buber 1936: 65-71). Here, Buber elaborates on the relationship between community and personal responsibility. We know from the discussion of the first phase of the encounter between Buber and Hammarskjöld how important community was to Buber, whether the community of the Kibbutz or the larger community of the Jewish Nation. My view is that in the following passage he was thinking merely of the latter. Yes, Buber was a kind of Jewish nationalist, but he adopted a unique, pluralistic and very moderate nationalism without letting individual responsibility be subordinated. That is why he first describes in this text the fact that

the community to which a man belongs does not usually express in a unified and unambiguous way what it considers to be right and what not right in a given situation. It consists of more or less visible groups, which yield to a man interpretations of destiny and of his task which are utterly different yet all alike claim absolute authenticity. Each knows what benefits the community, each claims your unreserved complicity for the good of the community (Buber 1936: 67).

Now comes into play what Hammarskjöld might have called 'the reference to the political sphere':

Political decision is generally understood to-day to mean joining such a group. If this is done then everything is finally in order, the time of deciding is over. From then on one has only to share in the group's movements... The group has relieved you of your political responsibility. You feel yourself answered for in the group; you are permitted to feel it (Buber 1936: 67).

But this is exactly what Buber rejects. For him it is a negation of the I. The I within the I-You relationship is as important as the You. In other words: The You can be a person, but can also be God speaking through the individual *conscience*. For Buber, God is concerned with the entirety of all relationships; life within a group cannot be separated from life without that group or even demand that God is only valid without that group. That would render all dialogical I-You relationships within the group irrelevant and run counter to the notion of an all-embracing as well as all-in-between presence of God. Buber called that a curtailment of God's realm:

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48 There are scholars who think Buber's criticism of Kierkegaard denies some reverse tendencies and that there are possible bridges that could be built from Kierkegaard to Buber, see for example Henting (2002).

The relation of faith to the one Present Being is perverted into semblance and self-deceit if it is not an all-embracing relation. 'Religion' may agree to be one department of life besides others which like it are independent and autonomous – it has thereby already perverted the relation of faith (Buber 1936: 67–68).

Thus, the Single One is in constant dialogue with persons from his group or community as well as with God. In a given situation where the Single One is addressed, and called upon to respond, he cannot follow solely the rules of the group. That, precisely, is the individual responsibility of the Single One:

Certainly the relation of faith is no book of rules which can be looked up to discover what is to be done now, in this very hour. I experience what God desires of me for this hour – so far as I do experience it – not earlier than *in* the hour... My group cannot relieve me of this responsibility, I must not let it relieve me of it; if I do I pervert my relation of faith, I cut out of God's realm of power the sphere of my group. But it is not as though the latter did not concern me in my decision – it concerns me tremendously... I may before all have to do justice to it, yet not as a thing in itself, but before the Face of God; and no programme, no tactical resolution, no command can tell me how I, as I decide, have to do justice to my group before the Face of God (Buber 1936: 68).

The first two sentences in this quotation help explain why the great social scientist of Hasidic tradition, Gershom Scholem, called Buber a 'religious anarchist' and his philos-

ophy 'religious anarchism'<sup>49</sup>. Buber rejects here the Jewish religious law in the sense of a presupposed order or ethical norm to be blindly followed in a given situation of existential decision. Buber, however, is totally concentrated on the present moment and does not rely on norms because for him these norms have become mere rituals; they have been institutionalised and thus lack life and creativity:

That means: the presence of the encounter breaks through or undermines the rules provided by religion or social institutions for the relations to God respectively between man and man. Indeed, they challenge the codifying institutions themselves (Reichert 2002: 25).

However, the decision that demands an encounter, which has to be taken in the presence of the other and not by relying on prescribed norms, was not meant to be ethically arbitrary. There is a place, according to Buber, where decision is made, it is an inner place and it is called *conscience*:

He [who is addressed in a decisive situation] may even hold firm with all his force to the 'interest' of the group – till in the last confrontation with reality a finger, hardly to be perceived, yet never to be neglected, touches it. It is not the 'finger of God', to be sure; we are not permitted to expect that, and therefore there is not

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49 Gershom Scholem, here quoted by Reichert (2002: 26). The article by Scholem that the quote comes from is 'Martin Bubers Deutung des Chassidismus', in Scholem, Gershom (1997) *Judaica 1*, Frankfurt-am-Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, sixth edition, pp. 165–206, especially p. 197.

the slightest assurance that our decision is right in any but a personal way... The finger I speak is just that of the 'conscience'... I point to the unknown conscience in the ground of being... The certainty produced by this conscience is of course only a personal certainty; it is uncertain certainty; but what is here called person is the very person who is addressed and who answers (Buber 1936: 69).

Buber's recourse to a concept of 'conscience' showed that even in the presence of a given situation, the decision to be made cannot be devoid of ethical behaviour. There are always preliminary ethical decisions that shape 'conscience'. What is simply meant by this is that the ethical decision has to be renewed in each different situation. Thomas Reichert pointed to these ethical decisions:

Apparently, by uttering the basic word I-Thou, there have nonetheless been made pre-decisions about the activity to envisage, resulting from the presence and the recognition of the other and the way of being self, for example that one cannot torture the other, or murder him, or disrespect him as a human being (Reichert 2002: 31).

Finally, Buber summarised:

I say, therefore, that the Single One, that is, the man living in responsibility, can make even his political decisions properly only from that ground of his being at which he is aware of the event as divine speech to him; and if he lets the awareness of this ground be strangled by his group he is refusing to give God an actual reply (Buber 1936: 69-70).

Buber concluded this chapter with a vision of the 'crossfront' that we know already from 'The Validity and Limitation of the Political Principle' in *Pointing the Way* (Buber 1953b):

What I am speaking of has nothing to do with 'individualism'...I consider the human person to be the irremovable central place of the struggle between the world's movement away from God and its movement towards God. This struggle takes place to-day to an uncannily large extent in the realm of public life, of course not between group and group but within each group... Only those who are bound and free in this way can still produce what can truly be called community... His responsible decision will thus at times be opposed to, say, a tactical decision of his group. At times he will be moved to carry the fight for the truth, the human, uncertain and certain truth which is brought forward by his deep conscience, into the group itself, and thereby establish or strengthen an inner front in it. This can be more important for the future of our world than all fronts that are drawn today between groups and between associations of groups; for this front, if it is everywhere upright and strong, may run as a secret unity across all groups (Buber 1936: 70).

*What was Hammar skjöld referring to when he talked about the 'questions'?*

There is one other notion that Hammar skjöld mentioned in his letter of 17 August 1961: 'the "questions" and the response'. It is not absolutely clear to me to what text in

Between Man and Man Hammarskjöld was referring to here. As I see it, there are two possibilities. The last and very decisive section of Buber's 'The Question to the Single One' (Buber 1936) is called 'The Question' (but in the singular, not in the plural), whereas the last text in Buber's *Between Man and Man*, 'What is Man?', a series of lectures he gave at the Hebrew University beginning in 1938 (the first book edition in Hebrew was published in 1942), deals with the four anthropological 'questions' (plural) of Kant: (1) What can I know; (2) What ought I to do?; (3) What may I hope?; (4) What is man? It is possible to add the quest for 'response' to both of them. Hammarskjöld may have been referring more to the last chapter of 'The Question to the Single One', because he mentioned the topic at the same time as mentioning the topic of the 'Single One and his responsibility'; moreover, the need for a 'responsible response' (Buber 1936: 80) was expressed at the beginning of this essay. On the other hand, 'What is Man?' has also been related to Buber's writings on dialogue, although it constitutes more of an anthropological journey through philosophical history, and despite the fact that this text was not included in the German compilation of his works on dialogue, *Die Schriften über das dialogische Prinzip* (Buber 1954/1962/1984). Buber himself said in his preface to the 1948 German edition, *Das Problem des Menschen* that he wanted the major works on dialogue to be classified historically with 'What is man?' and set aside from his contemporary theories (Buber 1948b: 5).

In the first paragraph of his letter of 17 August 1961, Hammarskjöld already mentions

having read 'parts of "Was ist der Mensch"'<sup>50</sup>. Unfortunately, there is no hint as to which parts Hammarskjöld meant. Thus, in the following we will deal with just two chapters of 'What is man?' that very possibly chimed with Hammarskjöld's most urgent concerns.

### *Buber's chapter on 'The Question'*

But let us start with the first possibility: the last chapter of 'The Question to the Single One', called 'The Question'. Here, Buber discussed the contemporary crisis of man in relation to the person as well as to truth by taking up the necessity of decision in a given situation with the help of a person's 'conscience', which we discussed above in relation to the topic of the responsibility of the Single One. But this freedom of decision was actually threatened, especially before and in 1936 when Buber wrote the text while still living in the Germany of the Nazis.<sup>51</sup> It was threatened by what Buber calls collectivisation:

The question by which the person and the truth have become questionable to-day is the question to the Single One. The person has become questionable through being collectivized (Buber 1936: 80).

<sup>50</sup> Hammarskjöld spoke in his letter of the German title 'Was ist der Mensch?' for this text comprising lectures by Buber during the summer term of the Hebrew University in its first year of existence, 1938. But the German publication of these lectures had a slightly different title, *Das Problem des Menschen* (The Problem of Man), and was not published before 1948; see Buber (1948).

<sup>51</sup> After coming under much pressure from Nazi Germany Buber moved to Palestine in 1938, only a short time before the November pogrom in which his house and furniture in Heppenheim were destroyed.



During the decades around the turn of the century, Buber continued, there had been a fight against the Nietzschean concept of an arbitrary, self-centred I, which had led to the recognition of being bound 'to a people, to a family, to a society, to a vocational group, to a companionship in convictions' (Buber 1936: 80). But now, in the 1930s, this had gone off in a seriously wrong direction, according to Buber:

But it came about that a tendency of a quite different origin and nature assumed power over the new insights, which exaggerated and perverted the perception of bonds into a doctrine of serfdom. Primacy is ascribed here to a collectivity<sup>52</sup>. The collectivity receives the right to hold the person who is bound to it bound in such a way that he ceases to have complete responsibility. The collectivity becomes what really exists, the person becomes derivatory. In every realm which joins him to the whole he is to be excused a personal response (Buber 1936: 80).

Buber drew the conclusion in relation to truth, in the sense that this dispense of the personal response corrupts truth:

The truth, on the other hand, has become questionable through being politicized (Buber 1936: 81).

Buber now elaborated in a few paragraphs on the 'sociological doctrine of the age', which was guilty of contributing to this process of dispossessing the individual from the respon-

sibility for human truth. So instead of Max Stirner's saying 'True is what is Mine' (arbitrary), the collective says today: 'True is what is Ours' (politicised). Buber concluded:

But in order that man may not be lost there is need of persons who are not collectivized, and of truth which is not politicized.

There is need of persons, not merely 'representatives' in some sense or other, chosen or appointed, who exonerate the represented of responsibility, but also 'represented' who on no account let themselves be represented with regard to responsibility... That man may not be lost there is need of the person's responsibility to truth in his historical situation. There is need of the Single One who stands over against all being which is present to him – and thus also over against the body politic – and guarantees all being which is present to him – and thus also the body politic (Buber 1936: 82).

Hammar skjöld may well have seen a connection with his 'political sphere' here, but this might also have been a misconception, in great part due to an inappropriate translation of the German expression 'öffentliches Wesen' as 'body politic'<sup>53</sup>. But then again, Hammar skjöld may have read this passage as another early version of the 'crossfront' concept elaborated above in the discussion on the first part of his encounter with Buber.

<sup>52</sup> When talking of 'collectivity', Buber was always thinking of big collectives like states or nation states, that is nations without an inner dialogical structure of different groups.

<sup>53</sup> As a translator of German origin, I am not quite satisfied with the use of 'body politic' for the German expression 'öffentliches Wesen' here. Buber does not mean only the political sphere when talking of 'öffentliches Wesen', but is also referring to society and the discussions within the social sphere as opposed to the political sphere.

## *Buber's questions in 'What is Man?'*

Now let us turn to the second possibility. There is a high probability that we can identify more precisely the 'parts of "Was ist der Mensch?"' that Hammarskjöld mentioned in his letter of 17 August 1961 without giving a concrete hint of which parts he meant. As there are only two chapters where Buber did not go into more detail on the views of certain specific philosophers (Aristotle, Kant, Hegel, Marx, Feuerbach, Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, Husserl, Heidegger, Scheler) in respect of the four anthropological questions posed by Kant (of which the fourth is 'What is man?'), I propose to concentrate on the first part of the chapter entitled 'The Crisis and its Expression' and on the last chapter of the text, 'Prospect'.

In the 'The Crisis and its Expression' we find an early philosophical version of the more concrete analysis of contemporary crisis that Hammarskjöld had read two years before in *Pointing the Way* (1957). The fact that this early version had been written as far back as 1938 shows that Buber did not regard the fascist decades as an isolated crisis but as a continuum that began with World War I and stretched far into the post-World-War-II period.

According to Buber, the first reason for the contemporary crisis was a sociological one:

It is the increasing decay of the old organic forms of the direct life of man with man. By this I mean communities which quantitatively must not be too big to allow the men who are connected by them to be brought together ever anew and set in a direct relation with one another, and

which qualitatively are of such a nature that men are ever anew born into them or grow into them, who thus understand their membership not as the result of a free agreement with others but as their destiny and as a vital tradition. Such forms are the family, union in work, the community in village and in town (Buber 1938b: 157).

Thus, Hammarskjöld found here, in short, a summary of the more detailed *Paths in Utopia*, which he apparently never read and which has been discussed above in section on the first phase of their encounter. Some anarchist interpretations of Buber (for example, that of French libertarian sociologist Michael Löwy [Löwy 2001: 37–38]) rightly connect these segments of 'What is man?' to similar, but more extended and detailed passages in *Paths in Utopia*.<sup>54</sup> Moreover, in his analysis of 'What is man?', Löwy pointed to the use of an old Jewish cultural image by Buber when elaborating on the reasons for the contemporary crisis. This image is a man-made artificial monster, the 'Golem', which was believed to be possessed by an evil power (Löwy 2001: 37), a coldness without soul. It was a clay figure made by a Rabbi to prevent attacks on Jews, but ends up destroying or being destroyed by the Rabbi; the Golem could only destroy or be destroyed<sup>55</sup>:

The second factor can be described as one of history of the spirit, or better, of the soul... I should like to call this peculiarity

54 Löwy also published a study of Jewish messianism and libertarian thought; see Löwy, Michael, *Erlösung und Utopie. Jüdischer Messianismus und libertäres Denken*, Berlin: Karin Kramer Verlag.

55 This explanation comes from a note by the translator of *Between Man and Man*, Walter Kaufmann. It is note number 14 in Buber (1955: 208).

of the modern crisis man's lagging behind his works. Man is no longer able to master the world which he himself brought about: it is becoming stronger than he is, it is winning free of him, it confronts him in an almost elemental independence, and he no longer knows the word which could subdue and render harmless the golem he has created (Buber 1938: 158).

There were three realms where man was lagging behind his works, Buber said here. Firstly he made a critique of modern machinery. Although Buber was not anti-modern but advocated a future re-structuring of society, necessarily different from what has been before, nevertheless for Löwy Buber's critique was a romantic protest against modern capitalist-industrial civilisation (Löwy 2001: 38). So Buber wrote about technology that machines, originally invented in order to serve men in their work were now subordinating men to their service; they were no longer tools, extensions of men's arms, but men had become their extension. The second realm was the market economy, where the production and utilisation of goods 'spread out beyond man's reach and withdrew [themselves] from his command' (Buber 1938: 158). Thirdly, Buber pointed to the political sphere. There, World War I had exposed men to unleashed powers, the use of gas as a weapon for example, that exceeded all human purposes and brought unimaginable extermination to both sides:

Man faced the terrible fact that he was the father of demons whose master he could not become (Buber 1938: 158).

It is not too difficult to extend this analysis to the Cold War situation and the nuclear

threat Hammarskjöld was confronted with at the beginning of the 1960s in the United Nations, which eventually led to the Cuban missile crisis after his death.

The other part of 'What is man?' that Hammarskjöld might have been referring to in his letter of 17 August 1961 is the last chapter, entitled 'Prospect'. Here, at the end of his presentation of the history of anthropological philosophy, Buber juxtaposed the traditions of individualism and collectivism in the face of the actual, contemporary situation, the historical apogee of fascism and national socialism in the 1930s:

In spite of all attempts at revival the time of individualism is over. Collectivism, on the other hand, is at the height of its development, although here and there appear single signs of slackening. Here the only way that is left is the rebellion of the person for the sake of setting free the relation with others (Buber 1938: 202).

Now, after these totalitarian ideologies, a 'third alternative' was about to emerge, according to Buber; this was the time of dialogue – not a revival of arbitrary individualism but encounters between mature and present individuals who are bound to their community but are not willing to give up their responsibility for decision. Thus, the essence of human life is neither individualism nor collectivism, neither I nor Thou, but a third sphere, and that is the 'Between' (with reference to the title of the American edition, *Between Man and Man*). It had a spiritual connection to Buber's belief that God is present in every personal encounter, between I and Thou. Buber explained the 'Between' in more detail in the last pages of the book:

I call this sphere...the sphere of 'between'. Though being realized in very different degrees, it is a primal category of human reality. This is where the genuine third alternative must begin... The view which establishes the concept of 'between' is to be acquired by no longer localizing the relation between human beings, as is customary, either within individual souls or in a general world which embraces and determines them, but in actual fact *between* them... In a real conversation (that is, not one whose individual parts have been preconcerted, but one which is completely spontaneous, in which each speaks directly to his partner and calls forth his unpredictable reply)...a real lesson...a real embrace...a real duel and not a mere game – in all these what is essential does not take place in each of the participants or in a neutral world which includes the two and all other things; but it takes place between them in the most precise sense, as it were in a dimension which is accessible only to them both (Buber 1938: 203–204).

Given this new perception of the 'Between', Buber described this third sphere – which for him also constituted the sphere of the divine – as the initial point of a philosophical turning point where neither the individual nor the collective would be the focus:

In the most powerful moments of dialogic, where in truth 'deep calls unto deep', it becomes unmistakably clear that it is not the wand of the individual or of the social, but of a third which draws the circle round the happening. On the far side of the subjective, on this side of the objective, on the narrow ridge, where *I* and *Thou* meet, there is the realm of 'between' (Buber 1938: 204).

After this Buber gave an answer to Kant's fourth question, 'What is Man?', which Hammar skjöld may have been referring to in his letter of 17 August 1961 when he wrote of 'the "questions" and the response'. At the end of the essay, Buber conceived that dialogue and the sphere of the 'Between' was his own response to Kant's question:

That essence of man which is special to him can be directly known only in a living relation... We may come nearer the answer to the question what man is when we come to see him as the eternal meeting of the One with the Other (Buber 1938: 205).

### *Was Hammar skjöld's intending to resign in September 1961?*

In looking more closely at the topics that Hammar skjöld mentioned explicitly in his letter of 17 August 1961 after reading *Between Man and Man*, we rediscover early versions of topics that had been already discussed during their three personal meetings during the first phase of their encounter within a more obvious framework of current political matters. What was different was that this time, these topics were embedded in a more philosophical approach to dialogue. Hence we suppose that, again, Hammar skjöld had been reading these texts and signalling his will to occupy himself with the tremendous task of translating *Ich und Du* from German into Swedish, in order to draw directly on what he read – 'with reference also to the political sphere' (Hammar skjöld) – with the purpose of improving his practice of silent or quiet diplomacy. But was that really his purpose? We may experience quite a surprise in the following.

When Dag Hammarskjöld resumed contact with Buber, the Congo crisis with which he was concerned was not only far advanced but was also going in a dangerous direction. Hammarskjöld's skills were, of course, still badly needed, and diplomatic negotiations with the Katanga secessionists under Tschombé were still possible. But the danger of real entanglement by UN peacekeeping troops in warlike engagements with secessionist Katanga was getting more and more imminent. That is why Hammarskjöld flew to Ndola at great personal risk on 17 September 1961, a journey from which he did not arrive alive.<sup>56</sup> But had Hammarskjöld already realised that the intervention of UN peacekeeping troops in the Congo was doomed to disaster? What did Hammarskjöld mean by hinting, during the last weeks of his life, at a possible resignation from his function as Secretary-General after the Congo crisis? Brian Urquhart, then a staff member of the United Nations Secretariat, a close and confidential friend of Hammarskjöld's and one of those entrusted with administering the deployment of peacekeeping forces to the Congo, wrote of Hammarskjöld's penultimate voyage to the Congo, just after his renewal of contact with Buber:

In early September, Hammarskjöld decided to make another visit to the Congo. He did this in the belief that he must personally try to resolve the Katanga secession problem, which would otherwise poison the forthcoming session of the General Assembly as it had the pre-

vious one. His intention was to bring Prime Minister Adoula<sup>57</sup> and Tschombe together in an act of national reconciliation. I believe that he then intended to resign from his post as Secretary-General (Urquhart 1991: 174).

Hammarskjöld repeated this intention in early September 1961 to Mongi Slim, a possible successor as Secretary-General, as well as to Adnan Pachachi, the Iraqi ambassador to the UN. To the former, Hammarskjöld said he would resign only if his mission to solve the Congo crisis failed; to the latter he said in a more general way that he would resign anyway after the Congo crisis (Urquhart 1984: 565).

### *Translation problems and Hammarskjöld's new view of I and Thou*

We should keep this intention in mind when reading the continuation of the correspondence between Hammarskjöld and Buber. Just before leaving on this penultimate voyage to the Congo, Hammarskjöld answered Buber's letter of 23 August 1961, in which the latter had sent *Ich und Du* and made his proposal that Hammarskjöld should translate his most difficult work. Hammarskjöld responded on 26 August:

Yesterday I got your kind letter and also the last German edition of 'Ich und Du'

<sup>56</sup> For a full overview of the Congo crisis of 1960–62, involving the United Nations peacekeeping troops in direct warlike battles during the history of their existence, see especially the impressively detailed memoirs of Brian Urquhart (1984: 389–520 and 545–589; and 1991: 145–188).

<sup>57</sup> In midsummer 1961 Hammarskjöld managed to install a new prime minister after the murder of Lumumba and the Mobutu's first putsch in the Congo. The Congolese parliament was not yet completely out-manoeuvred and elected as president the moderate and sensible Cyrille Adoula, as someone who appeared prepared and willing to take up negotiations with Katanga (Urquhart 1991: 174).

with the postscript. I am certain that I am reading you correctly if I see reflected in your reply a silent 'Aufruf' that I try a translation of this keywork, as decisive in its message as supremely beautiful in its form. This decides the issue and, if I have your permission, I shall do it even if it may take some time.<sup>58</sup>

This was the first surprise, because apparently Hammarskjöld instantly took up Buber's proposal, notwithstanding the constraints of his office which he had referred to in his letter of 17 August. Had he already made up his mind to resign after the Congo crisis? It is not quite clear how decided he was about this perspective at that time, but things had been deteriorating very fast in the Congo for quite some time already, and they had become so bad that even one of his other closest friends, Albert Schweitzer (1875-1965), had written frankly to Hammarskjöld in a letter on 7 March:

As an old African, I hold the opinion that there will be a minor death toll, if one lets the Africans fight their vendettas against each other by their own, without outer interference.<sup>59</sup>

This letter led to a considerable cooling of the friendship between Hammarskjöld and Schweitzer. However, even if Hammarskjöld's intention of soon resigning as Secretary-General was not really serious – but then it would have made no sense to tell

it to Slim and the others – Hammarskjöld would probably have completed the translation of *Ich und Du* within his scheduled time of two months (!) for finishing a first version (Urquhart 1984: 41). It is amazing to see how Hammarskjöld could finish the most complicated translations alongside the tremendous amount of work he was engaged in as Secretary-General. In 1960, he had already completed the translation of Djuna Barnes' *The Antiphon*<sup>60</sup> and in summer of the same year he translated the poem *Chronique* by Saint-John Perse<sup>61</sup>, about whom Hammarskjöld himself, according to Urquhart, admitted that '[his] French was so complex as to make translation practically hopeless' (Urquhart 1984: 39).

We have already learnt that the second English translator of *Ich und Du*, Walter Kaufmann, thought, at first view, that Buber's main philosophical book would be untranslatable. Apparently, Hammarskjöld, even in the midst of the Congo crisis, saw this tremendous task rather as a personal challenge than a burden which he should refrain from taking on. Thus, Hammarskjöld continued in his letter of 26 August to Buber:

I am, in fact, today getting in touch with the main Swedish publishing firm asking them whether they would accept my of-

58 KBS DHS, Dag Hammarskjöld, Letter to Martin Buber, 26 August 1961.

59 Letter from Albert Schweitzer to Dag Hammarskjöld, 7 March 1961, quoted by Fröhlich (2002: 184). For more information on the relationship of Hammarskjöld and Schweitzer see Fröhlich (2002: 170-192).

60 Djuna Barnes (1892-1982) was an US-American novelist and playwright. Her last play was *The Antiphon* (1958), dealing with an incestuous relation between child and mother.

61 Saint-John Perse, a pseudonym for Alexis Saint-Léger Léger (1887-1975), was a French diplomat and poet and had been awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1960. There was an extended correspondence between Dag Hammarskjöld and the poet throughout the six years before Hammarskjöld's death. See for more information Marie-Noëlle Little (ed.), (2001), *The Poet and the Diplomat. The Correspondence of Dag Hammarskjöld and Alexis Leger*, Syracuse: Syracuse University Press.

fer. When I have their reply, I shall write to you again in order to have your final reaction and so that you might ask your agents to get in touch with the publisher for the necessary formal arrangements.<sup>62</sup>

At the end of the letter, Hammarskjöld expressed his hope of resuming thereby ‘a broadened and intensified contact’ with Buber.

The main Swedish publishing firm belonged – and remains today – to the Bonnier family. Hammarskjöld conferred at various times with different members of the family on matters to do with his translations and publishing projects: Albert, Jytte, and Gerhard Bonnier as well as Georg Svensson, another director of the publishing house. In fact, on the same day that he replied to Buber, Hammarskjöld wrote a letter to Jytte Bonnier. And here we have another big surprise, with special regard to the fact that *Ich und Du* has always been regarded all over the world as a philosophical work that explains and illuminates all aspects of an encounter and a dialogical situation:

You may know that for quite some time I have played with the idea to translate some of the key parts of Martin Buber’s work. It is at least as exacting from the point of view of form as Perse or Barnes, and in a sense German is worse than English or French. However, it has been a most challenging thought. Now Buber himself has, so to say, pushed me over the brink, as I have just received a letter from him which I may regard as a ‘call’ to me to translate ‘Ich und Du’ which of course is the culminating crystallisation of his mystical thought and, from the point of

view both of form and content, not only a key work in modern philosophy, but moreover one of the few great poems of this age. To such a ‘call’ I feel that I should respond, and for some time ahead I shall therefore, in odd hours, instead of reading, try to make this translation.<sup>63</sup>

What is really striking here is the fact that Hammarskjöld did not think of the validity of such a translation for true dialogue in terms of improving the approach to diplomatic negotiation. Instead, he stressed the beauty of the form, the literary style of Buber – in contrast to many readers of the time, as attested by his English translator Walter Kaufmann. Hammarskjöld even went on to underline his admiration for the style:

A book like that one is the very opposite to ‘box office’, and I guess most publishers would look at it with considerable scepticism, especially as I would not like it published as a philosophical or theological work but as a work of pure literature. However, Buber is Buber, and while Mann and Hesse are well known in Sweden, Buber, as the third in some sense the greatest one in Germany of that generation, has been left aside. That may justify the publishing venture, and perhaps the name of the translator might add a few copies to the sale.<sup>64</sup>

Hammarskjöld even ended the letter by expressing the additional intention of translating the Danish poet Paul La Cour<sup>65</sup> into

62 KBS DHS, Dag Hammarskjöld, Letter to Martin Buber, 26 August 1961.

63 KBS DHS, Dag Hammarskjöld, Letter to Jytte Bonnier, 26 August 1961.

64 Ibid.

65 Paul La Cour (1902–1956) was a Danish poet whose poetry changed with the mood of the times. After living in Paris in the 1920s, he brought modern influences into Danish literature. His reflections on art after World War II influenced other writers.

English and said, furthermore, that he envisaged translating Hermann Hesse's 'Morgenslandfahrt', describing this as 'another temptation of mine'<sup>66</sup>. Apparently, he envisaged he would have enough time for these endeavours in the near future – after resigning from his office?

We note here first and foremost Hammarskjöld's characterisation of Buber's *I and Thou* as 'pure literature'. What did that mean? Was Hammarskjöld thinking of his aborted translation of Buber's early literary work, *The legend of Baal-Schem* (Buber 1907, 1956b)? Or was he unconsciously regretting his memorandum to the Swedish Academy in which he had proposed Buber for the Nobel Prize Peace Prize rather than for the Nobel Prize for Literature? And why did he not mention the importance of Buber's key work on the philosophy of dialogue for his work of diplomacy and negotiation in the ongoing Congo crisis and after, that is for the 'political sphere', as he had always done before? Did he not believe in that any longer? Did he seriously want to resign?

A further letter, written a fortnight later, 12 September 1961, to Georg Svensson of Bonnier's, confirms this impression that the 'political sphere' was no longer of central interest to Dag Hammarskjöld:

Buber's prose is exceedingly difficult and I shall have to make a first version which makes the sense crystal clear and a second version representing a maximum approximation to his intensely beauti-

ful, intensely personal, but also intensely Old-Testament-German prosody.

I may end by saying that this is really something I am very happy to do – also for the publicly unavowable reason that this translation in a certain sense is a personal declaration.<sup>67</sup>

Thus, at this stage, Hammarskjöld definitely showed more interest in the mysticism and literary aspects of Buber's philosophy of dialogue than in its political implementation – which had still been his central interest when resuming contact with Buber after reading *Between Man and Man* – making his translation effort henceforth more than ever a 'personal declaration'. Did this amount to a kind of testimony that he would resign from his office as true dialogue no longer seemed possible to him within the diplomatic framework of the United Nations?

### *Hammarskjöld's recommendation of John Steinbeck to Buber*

Before we try to answer this decisive question, we turn to the fact that there was an interlude in the letter exchange between Hammarskjöld and Buber concerning the US-American writer and novelist John Steinbeck (1902–1968), a friend and neighbour of Hammarskjöld's in New York<sup>68</sup>, and also a regular visitor to Sweden and a per-

66 KBS DHS, Dag Hammarskjöld, Letter to Jytte Bonnier, 26 August 1961, Post-Scriptum. 'Morgenslandfahrt' can be translated as 'Oriental Voyage'. In this Post-Scriptum, Hammarskjöld also enquires about what works of Buber had already been translated into Swedish.

67 Dag Hammarskjöld, Letter to Georg Svensson, 12 September 1961, quoted here in Fröhlich (2002: 206, note 437).

68 The addresses of their private apartments in New York were 125 East 73rd Street for Hammarskjöld and 206 East 72nd Street for Steinbeck. Thus, they were living only one street apart.



sonal friend of the painter Bo Beskow<sup>69</sup> in Hagestad, who was painting portraits at that time of both Steinbeck and Hammarskjöld. Bo Beskow had known Steinbeck personally since the winter of 1936–37. Beskow also introduced Steinbeck to Hammarskjöld in 1953 (Hovde 1997: 98–99). Steinbeck was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1962. The extensive correspondence between Hammarskjöld and Steinbeck shows their close relationship (Hovde 1997: 103–129), which was deepened by occasional dinner invitations when the Steinbeck family spent evenings with Hammarskjöld in his own apartment and by Hammarskjöld’s visits to the Steinbecks’ more distant and isolated property at Sag Harbor, Long Island. Eventually, Hammarskjöld even went so far as to send Buber a letter of recommendation about Steinbeck when the latter was planning a trip to Israel. This letter of Hammarskjöld’s to Buber was written on 5 September 1961 and was entirely dedicated to introducing Steinbeck to Buber:

As my friend, John Steinbeck, is going to visit your country, I wish to send with him my warm personal greetings. Of course, he is in no need of an introduction. Such an introduction is provided by ‘The Grapes of Wrath’, ‘Of Mice and Men’, and most recently by ‘The Winter of our Discontent’, not to mention his other works. He is, as you will know, one of those observers of life in our generation, who feel that its survival will depend on our ability to know ourselves and to stick to basic human values with the will to pay what it may cost. I know that you may have no time to receive him, but I

also know that he would be very happy if you could – and so would I.<sup>70</sup>

Hammarskjöld had also sent letters of introduction concerning Steinbeck’s forthcoming trip to the Middle East to Abdel Nasser and David Ben-Gurion. Steinbeck had been in search of politicians in a position of authority, who brought ‘temperament and character’ to their offices, which were very rarely seen in Steinbeck’s view. Steinbeck wanted to find thereby natural leaders, ‘the truly moral man’ who could be trusted as not being opportunistic or corrupt (Hovde 1997: 99). On the same day that he wrote to Buber in Jerusalem (5 September), Hammarskjöld sent a letter to Steinbeck enclosing *Between Man and Man* and explicitly recommending the reading of ‘the first paper “Dialogue” and the last “What is Man?”’, which showed, by the way, a shift in Hammarskjöld’s focus of interest compared with his first letter to Buber referring to the book on 17 August 1961 – a shift towards the more historical dimension of the anthropological question, as well as to the community-oriented parts and the ‘Between’ –philosophy in ‘What is Man?’. However, neither the vast three-volume biography of Buber by Maurice Friedman nor the 1100-page volume by Steinbeck’s biographer Jackson J. Benson (Benson 1984) makes any mention of Steinbeck visiting Buber in Israel in late 1961. Apparently, they never met.

### *Hammarskjöld at work on I and Thou on his last flight*

The last letter Hammarskjöld sent to Buber was written on 12 September 1961, the day that Hammarskjöld left New York for his

69 Bo Beskow (1906–1989) studied art in Stockholm, Rome, Paris and Portugal. He was a painter and writer. His paintings used Christian motifs.

70 KBS DHS, Dag Hammarskjöld, Letter to Martin Buber, 5 September 1961. See also Hovde (1997: 129).

last and fatal journey to the Congo. Hammarskjöld informed Buber of the positive response he had received from the Bonnier publishers, this time from Albert Bonnier:

I have now received a letter from the Swedish publisher (Albert Bonnier, Sveavägen 56, Stockholm C) whom I approached regarding the translation of 'Ich und Du'. He tells me that they will be happy to publish such a translation and wish to get in touch with you regarding such practical matters as would have to be settled. He adds that he would be grateful if I would arrange for this contact.

I believe that the most practical way to proceed, provided that you confirm your agreement to the translation and its publication in Swedish, would be for me to ask them to address you directly; this unless you could indicate to me the agent with which they should deal...<sup>71</sup>

Buber received this more formal letter of Hammarskjöld's, on the procedure for the envisaged Swedish translation of *Ich und Du*, in Jerusalem only on 18 September 1961,

an hour after he had heard over the radio about the latter's death in the plane crash in the Congo. Thus the dialogue between the two men was a present reality from both sides even after Hammarskjöld's death (Friedman 1988: 318).

In his letter of October 1961, quoted above<sup>72</sup>, George Ivan Smith indicated that Hammar-

skjöld was talking to his colleagues about Buber right to the very end, but no longer about implementing parts of Buber's dialogue philosophy into his strategy for political encounter, diplomacy and negotiation:

By a series of chance I was not with him on his last trip to Africa. Dr. Linner<sup>73</sup> told me that before Dag boarded the aircraft, almost the last conversation he had with Linner concerned your work. He was translating some of it into Swedish while he was at Leopoldville and almost certainly in the aircraft on the way to Ndola. Linner said that the last words he remembered him saying before the aircraft took off referred to your work and to medieval mystics. 'For them', Dag said, 'love meant a surplus of energy and an overflowing of strength which filled them when they lived in true selflessness'...

Forgive my intrusion but I did feel that Dag would have wanted me to share with you this knowledge of how closely you and your work were with him at the very end of his life.<sup>74</sup>

In this last quotation from Linner, Hammarskjöld's language was more that of his own mysticism in *Markings* (Hammarskjöld 1964) than Buber's dialogical approach. Whereas Hammarskjöld still used 'selflessness' in the sense of a renunciation of the self, for Buber it was a mature personality – the 'Single One', with an upright opinion and 'conscience' – that could serve best for a

71 KBS DHS, Dag Hammarskjöld, Letter to Martin Buber, 12 September 1961.

72 KBS DHS, George Ivan Smith, Letter to Martin Buber, beginning of October, 1961.

73 Dr. Sture Linner, Sweden, was the 'Chief in Office' of the United Nations Operations in the Congo (ONUC) from 1960-61.

74 KBS DHS, George Ivan Smith, Letter to Martin Buber, beginning of October, 1961.

personal encounter with the other in a dialogical situation. In the Congo, Hammarskjöld even discussed with Linner details of his translation and requested Linner to go through the typewritten draft pages he had already finished (Fröhlich 2002: 205–206).

At almost the same time as receiving Smith's letter Buber received another letter – on 5 October 1961 from Dag's nephew Knut Hammarskjöld, also about the draft translation:

Now that I have brought the body of my uncle Dag Hammarskjöld back from Africa, I regard it as my duty to report to you that among the few personal effects he had with him on his last flight were two texts (in German and English) as well as twelve typewritten pages of your *I and Thou*. The latter was the beginning of the first draft of his translation of your work into Swedish that he had completed shortly before his departure from New York.<sup>75</sup>

Knut is confusing many things here. Hammarskjöld carried a German and English book version of *I and Thou* with him on his trip to the Congo, as well as a 12-page typewritten draft in Swedish, which he left in Leopoldville, and a further, seven-page handwritten draft, also in Swedish, very likely the continuation, which he took with him on his flight to Ndola and which was found in scattered pages at the site of the plane crash. Thus, it is clear from various sources that Hammarskjöld was working on the translation during his last flight (Fröhlich 2002: 206). Urquhart wrote:

Hammarskjöld's briefcase, which survived the crash intact, gives the only known detail of what went on in the aircraft during the flight. Hammarskjöld continued his translation of *Ich und Du*, his flowing script filling the pages of the yellow legal-size pad. The writing was firm and neat, and there were very few corrections (Urquhart 1984: 588).

Martin Buber responded very emotionally on 10 October 1961 to George Ivan Smith's letter:

I want to thank you for what you tell me in your letter and particularly for the information about Hammarskjöld's translating some of my book even at Leopoldville and it seems, even after it. This is a fact most dear to my heart. I had a letter from Bonnier's about his wish to bring the book into Swedish by finding another translator. In my answer to him I suggested to put at the head of the book the words: 'At the wish of Martin Buber this translation is dedicated to the memory of Dag Hammarskjöld, who planned to do it himself and began to work at it few days before his death.'<sup>76</sup>

The Bonnier publishers kept their promise. The new translators were Margit and Curt Norell, and the dedication Buber requested appears on the first page of the publication, and has done ever since the first edition of the book in Swedish in 1962.<sup>77</sup>

75 Knut Hammarskjöld: 'Knut Hammarskjöld to Martin Buber; Geneva, October 5, 1961', in Glatzer and Mendes Flohr (1991: 641–642).

76 KBS DHS, Martin Buber, Letter to George Ivan Smith, beginning of October, 1961.

77 See for example the current Swedish publication of Martin Buber (1990), *Jag och du*, reprint of the 1962 Bonnier edition, Ludvika: Dualis Förlag.

At the end of September 1961, an article in the Stockholm newspaper *Dagens Nyheter* had confirmed the plan to publish the translation of *I and Thou* by another translator as an act in honour of Hammarskjöld (Friedman 1988: 318). Only a few days later, on 1 October 1961, the *New York Times* published a similar article. It read:

When he died Sept. 18, Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld left an unfinished literary project that had occupied his mind even as he prepared to depart for the Congo. The project was a translation he had planned of a work by the contemporary Jewish philosopher Martin Buber, 'Ich und Du' ('I and Thou'). The day before he took off for Africa, Mr. Hammarskjöld wrote to Dr. Georg Svensson of Stockholm's leading publishing house, Bonnier's, that he planned to work on the translation in the months ahead and would have it completed by January. He wrote that he anticipated that the project would not be easy because it would be necessary to have Buber's meanings clear and to find just the right linguistic form for what he termed 'Buber's intensely beautiful, intensely personal and Old Testament German prose'. The letter to Dr. Svensson reflected Mr. Hammarskjöld's admiration for the Vienna-born Jewish philosopher, whose essays have a marked mystical element. The Secretary-General said that he wanted to do the translation because it would mean something of a personal declaration for him. He indicated that he had found that Buber's ideas often corresponded to his own...<sup>78</sup>

On 22 October 1961, a front page story in the *New York Herald Tribune* predicted that the Nobel Prize for Literature would be awarded to Buber, in response to a 'final recommendation' by Hammarskjöld as expressed to the Bonnier family in his letters on the translation plan (Friedman 1988: 319). But again, and for the third time, Buber did not receive the award. The 1961 Prize for Literature was given to the Bosnian writer Ivo Andric. And the Peace Prize was awarded – posthumously, for the first and only time – to Dag Hammarskjöld.

In 1962 Buber gave the speech on the Swedish Radio, 'Memories of Hammarskjöld' (Buber 1962a), already quoted at the very beginning of this text on phase I of their encounter. Again, in 1963, Buber tried to give a Dag Hammarskjöld Memorial Lecture at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, entitled 'Serving Spirit in the Realm of Power'. This lecture had been planned as part of a public series of about 30 distinguished lectures dedicated to the memory of Hammarskjöld on five continents. Each lecturer could choose a university in his country as his platform. Unfortunately, Buber's health did not permit him to give the lecture (Friedman 1988: 319).

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78 KBS DHS, 'Translation of Work by Buber was planned by Hammarskjöld', copy of the article with no signature or hint of authorship, in *New York Times*, 1 October 1961.

# III » Outlook: Can we save true dialogue in an ‘Age of Mistrust’?

## Discussion of Hammarskjöld’s and Buber’s alternatives if dialogue fails

Hammarskjöld had his own interpretation of Buber and, furthermore, this interpretation varied according to his intentions in the changing situations of the last years of his life. The reduction of Buber’s philosophy of dialogue to ‘mysticism’ and ‘pure literature’, as revealed in Hammarskjöld’s last letters to the Bonnier family, was already present in some parts of the memorandum Hammarskjöld wrote on Buber to the Swedish Academy in June 1959. Then, Hammarskjöld wrote:

The mysticism of personal spiritual life<sup>79</sup> – the terminology is warranted however less than adequate – which Buber developed during the influence of Hasidism as well as from Christian medieval mysticism, separates itself in a decided way from the rational materialism...as from the formalistic orthodoxy and religious intolerance...<sup>80</sup>

By resuming and amplifying this interpretation in his letters to the Bonniers, Hammarskjöld neglects the biographical fact that Buber’s *I and Thou* as well as his other dialogical writings are in great part due to Buber’s explicit turning away from mysticism, due to his *Umkehr*, triggered by the Mehé

Experience and Landauer’s severe criticism of Buber’s political position on World War I and its causes. *Die Legende des Baalschem* which Hammarskjöld had already tried but not succeeded in translating was originally published in 1907, before Buber’s turning away from mysticism (Buber 1907).

### *Buber’s perception of Hammarskjöld as an exception in the political sphere*

As far as Buber’s interpretation of Hammarskjöld is concerned, we can deduce from his public appraisals after Hammarskjöld’s death that Buber was finally able to have trust in the United Nations because of his personal encounter with him. During the Suez crisis he still distrusted the United Nations, but for some years after Hammarskjöld’s death he even quoted statements of Hammarskjöld’s on the Arab–Israeli refugee problem. But his trust remained very much connected with the unique personality of Hammarskjöld. When Buber entitled the speech he planned to give in 1963 ‘Serving Spirit in the Realm of Power’ he may have substantiated his argument with quotations from his own *I and Thou* his view that a statesman or a businessman who serves the spirit is a possibility (Buber 1970: 98). Likewise, he could again answer the question he had already answered in the last section of ‘Dialogue’:

79 The term ‘mysticism of personal spiritual life’ (in Swedish, ‘personlighetsmystik’ was taken by Hammarskjöld from the protestant theologian Nathan Söderblom (1866–1931).

80 Hammarskjöld (1959), quoted by Nelson (2007: 99).

You ask with a laugh, can the leader of a great technical undertaking practise the responsibility of dialogue? He can (Buber 1929: 38).

But this he can do only as a Single One, as an exception to the rule. It was in this sense, I believe, that Buber perceived his friendship with Dag Hammarskjöld: as a ‘covenant of peace’, as Buber’s biographer Maurice Friedman called it (Friedman 1988: 303). As Hammarskjöld died, the covenant too died. And Buber felt, according to Friedman, that Hammarskjöld had been abandoned within the United Nations:

In Hammarskjöld, Buber saw a man of good will who tried to do something but who had been abandoned. ‘Doing his utmost,’ Buber said to Meyer Levin<sup>81</sup>, ‘Hammarskjöld still lacked the technical means to carry out his peace mission, and so he was martyred in his death’ (Friedman 1988: 318).

I don’t know what Buber meant by ‘technical means’ here, whether he agreed with the military engagement of the UN in the Congo or whether he was referring to moral, political or financial support from some states (France, Great Britain and the United States threatened to withdraw their financial contributions to the UN during the Congo crisis a few days before Hammarskjöld’s death and had already started to do so). I imagine that Buber knew little about the complicated matters on the ground during the last week of Hammarskjöld’s life in relation to the Congo

crisis (Urquhart 1984: 545–589). Therefore, I would like to draw attention here to Buber’s more general perception of Hammarskjöld’s having been abandoned in the sense that recalls Buber’s words in his Swedish Radio speech of 1962, about ‘something fateful’ being connected with Hammarskjöld’s ‘function in this world-hour’, as quoted at the very beginning of this text. I hold that Buber thought that maybe some few and exceptional personalities could keep to ‘the spirit’ within the realm of power, but that the realm of power politics in general had still not become a sphere where he, Buber, wanted to act in the future and above all, a sphere from which he expected a re-structuring of society and an *Umkehr* to true peace to emerge. The events of subsequent years, the further developments in the Congo, the Cuba crisis and the nuclear threat, confirmed the impression that for Buber diplomatic means, negotiation and dialogue in the political sphere had come to the end of their possibilities. That is why Buber was obliged to reflect on what to do, when dialogue – at least within the realm of power – failed. And he definitely had some answers: amongst these were education and civil disobedience.

### *Buber’s first alternative: Education*

In *Between Man and Man* Buber included two texts on education: ‘Education’ (Buber 1955: 83–103), written already in 1926, and ‘The Education of Character’ (Buber 1955: 104–117), written in 1939. Education had always been an important part of Buber’s life and activities, notably in his profession as an assistant professor and honorary professor of the ‘Freies Jüdisches Lehrhaus’ (Free Jewish Teaching Institute) in Frankfurt-am-Main between the two World Wars, from 1924 to 1933. Buber reopened the ‘Frankfurter Lehrhaus’ in 1933

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81 Meyer Levin (1905–1981) was a US-American journalist and novelist, one of the first writers of ‘documentary novels’. He became aware of Anne Frank’s diary and was one of the first to recognise the literary and dramatic potential in it.

after the seizure of power of the Nazis and taught Jewish culture to his students as well as the basics of Zionism in order to prepare them for their exile in Palestine (Friedman 1999: 280). Then again, he taught in Palestine from 1938 to 1951 at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. At the end of his text 'Society and the State', Buber already proposed education as an alternative in a time of crisis and distortion of the political sphere:

But there is a way for Society – meaning at the moment the men who appreciate the incomparable value of the social principle – to prepare the ground for improving the relations between itself and the political principle. That way is Education, the education of a generation with a truly social outlook and a truly social will (Buber 1951: 175–76).

Apparently, for Hammarskjöld education was not a sphere where he wanted to be or where he could have been active if dialogue failed. Thus, he didn't mention the two texts on education in *Between Man and Man* in his letters to Buber.

### *Buber's second alternative: Civil disobedience*

Buber advocated a second alternative in case true dialogue failed: civil disobedience. Within a situation of nonviolent resistance or civil disobedience there certainly is a kind of coercion of the opponent, but the word is still respected, dialogue is not abandoned or rejected and can be resumed at any time. During the last years of Hammarskjöld's life, the world witnessed the rise of Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929–1968) and his civil rights movement for the emancipation of African Americans in the south of

the United States. Martin Luther King was directly influenced by Buber as well as by Albert Camus. Buber's biographer Maurice Friedman wrote in relation to the imprisonment of Martin Luther King during the civil rights campaigns in Montgomery in 1956 and Birmingham in 1963: The two books that King took with him to prison were Camus' *The Rebel* and Buber's *Between Man and Man* (Friedman 1988: 450).

Friedman was, among many other things, a creative interpreter of Buber's philosophy and wrote two books, *Problematic Rebel* and *The Hidden Human Image* (Friedman 1963 and 1974), in which he elaborated on his theory of an opposition between the 'Modern Promethean' type of rebel who advocated an 'all-or-nothing rebellion', like the Black Power Movement, marked by despair, and the 'Modern Job' type of rebel who advocated a 'trust-and-contending rebellion', like King, Thoreau, Gandhi and Camus (Friedman 1974: 348). Friedman wrote in his biography on Buber:

In 1961, I sent Buber a copy of the baccalaureate address that I gave at the University of Vermont in which I pointed for the first time to that common attitude of Buber and Camus that in *Problematic Rebel* (1963) I was to identify as that of the 'Modern Job' – the attitude in which dialogue and rebellion, trust and contending are inseparably coupled... In 1958 in a panel which we shared on Buber and Literature at a University of Michigan intercollegiate conference, the distinguished American literary critic R. W. B. Lewis told me that at the Salzburg Festival in Austria, Camus had said to him that he did not mind being called religious in Buber's sense of the term (Friedman 1988: 153–154).

Here we have a more contemporary understanding of Camus as a philosopher of revolt as well as of dialogue. As far as Martin Luther King is concerned, on several occasions, in his writings and speeches, the influence of Buber's philosophy is explicit, as Friedman shows:

Nonviolence 'does not seek to defeat or humiliate the opponent, but to win his friendship and understanding.' Its goal is the 'creation of the beloved community'... Nonviolent resistance, to King, is the narrow bridge between acquiescence and violence... 'We who engage in non-violent direct action are not the creators of tension,' King points out. 'We merely bring to the surface the hidden tension that is already alive'... But again like the Modern Job, the rebellion is not for the sake of any one person or group but for the sake of the brotherhood of all men. 'Segregation, to use the terminology of the Jewish philosopher Martin Buber, substitutes an 'I-it' relationship for an 'I-thou' relationship and ends up relegating persons to the status of things'.<sup>82</sup>

When writing his essay on Gandhi, Buber was already impressed by Gandhi's decision not to give up nonviolence even in the midst of the independence movement's increasing tendency to use violent means (Buber 1930). Friedman says the same of Martin Luther King when the latter was challenged by a 'nihilistic philosophy born out of the conviction that the Negro can't win'<sup>83</sup>:

Willing like Job to stand alone even against his friends, King repeatedly stated: 'If every Negro in the United States turns to violence, I will choose to be that lone voice preaching that this is the wrong way' (Friedman 1974: 350).

It must be mentioned here that this stand of Martin Luther King's was supported by Abraham Joshua Heschel (1907-1972), a life-long friend of Buber's who had worked with him in Jewish education at the 'Freies Jüdisches Lehrhaus' in Frankfurt. Heschel had fled from the Nazis to the United States and later participated as a Rabbi, in solidarity with the civil rights cause, on the marches led by Martin Luther King. There is a famous photograph showing Heschel next to Martin Luther King, Jr., in the front row of the famous Selma-to-Montgomery-marches in 1965. Heschel's participation in the campaign showed the high level of cooperation between US-American Jews and the Black civil rights movement (Heschel 2000: 20-38).

These liaisons show how close Martin Luther King, Jr., Gandhi and Buber were, although Buber did not want to be regarded as a pacifist by principle. Moreover, he disliked the vision of mass movements of civil disobedience, because he feared that the crowd at a mass demonstration cannot be a true community and instead was an accidental mingling of atomised individuals, a meaningless sample of molecules. Thus in 1962, Buber wrote in a short address for the centenary of the death of the inventor of this concept, the US-American anarchist Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862), that

Thoreau did not formulate a general principle as such; he set forth and grounded

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82 The special quotations are from various writings of Martin Luther King, Jr., the quote as a whole from Friedman (1974: 346-48).

83 Martin Luther King, Jr., quoted by Friedman (1974: 349).



his attitude in a particular historical-biographical situation (Buber 1962b: 191).

In this sense, the strong influence of ‘conscience’ on a true decision made in a dialogical situation of responsibility by the Single One was the core of Buber’s understanding of civil disobedience. No surprise then, that ‘conscientious objection’ has often coincided with campaigns of civil disobedience and led, for example, Martin Luther King to his critique of the Vietnam War. Despite his hesitations concerning crowds and mass movements, Buber advocated more openly this kind of civil disobedience shortly after Hammarskjöld’s death, in face of the growing threat of a nuclear war at a time when his trust in exceptional personalities within the political sphere had vanished. Thus, in a second text on civil disobedience, in 1963, Buber wrote:

It is the possibility that in the course of the mutually outstripping bellicose surprises on the side of both partners, so to speak – with the seeming continuation of human institutions – the most dangerous of our powers will autonomously continue the game until it succeeds in transforming the human cosmos into a chaos beyond which we can no longer think.

Can the rulers of the hour command a halt to the machinery which they only seemingly master?... But if, as I think, the rulers of the hour cannot do this, who shall come to the rescue here while there is still time if not the ‘disobedient’, those who personally set their faces against the power that has gone astray as such? Must not a planetary front of such civil disobedients stand ready, not for battle like other fronts, but for saving dialogue? But

who are these if not those who hear the voice that addresses them from the situation – the situation of the human crisis – and obey it? (Buber 1963: 193)

We should think of the big international peace movements of the 1980s as well as the Eastern European dissident movements, and their working together within cross-bloc campaigns such as the Campaign for European Disarmament initiated by Edward P. Thompson, as examples of Buber’s planetary front and ‘crossfront’ and as the real saviours of dialogue and the real prohibitors of nuclear war within Europe. Only due to these movements and their relentless pressure did politicians finally decide to listen to each other, which led to the removal of the Iron Curtain and the fall of the Berlin Wall, that is the end of the Cold War.

### *Hammarskjöld: Dialogue and the spiralling-down dynamics of extended political leadership*

As for Hammarskjöld, he also based his understanding of dialogue on the legacy of Buber and Camus<sup>84</sup> (6). In a response to a question in a press conference on 19 May 1960 Hammarskjöld alluded to these two thinkers and then elaborated on his concept of dialogue in the political sphere, that is

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84 Camus wrote a series of articles in the aftermath of the Second World War, *Neither Victims nor Executioners*. The French original had been quickly translated into English by Dwight Macdonald, an American. Therein, Camus opposed the word to war and characterised the current time as an age of fear, but he did not really write on the philosophy of dialogue; all in all Camus should be regarded, rather, as a philosopher of revolt/rebellion, see for example Lou Marin (ed.) (2008), *Albert Camus et les Libétaires (1948-1960)*, Marseille: Egrégores Editions.

his concept of so-called private, or silent or quiet diplomacy:

...dialogue requires quite a few things: objectivity, a willingness to listen, and considerable restraint. Those are all human qualities. No one of them is very remarkable, but they are all called for, and if they lead to a 'dialogue' I think it is very reasonable to let that dialogue develop within the more or less traditional framework, that is to say, a little bit out of the glare of publicity, which robs you of a few headlines but helps us all.<sup>85</sup>

Another preoccupation for Hammarskjöld in respect of diplomatic dialogue was Buber's demand for awareness. In a letter to Eyvind Johnson<sup>86</sup> on 31 January, Hammarskjöld wrote that any participant of political dialogue

must push his awareness to the utmost limit without losing his inner quiet, he must be able to see the eyes of the others from within their personality without losing his own.<sup>87</sup>

Andrew Cordier attested for the staff at the Secretariat that it was at exactly this point Buber that had been discussed by all of them:

We read together and discussed selected portions of I and Thou, relating to this basic factor in effective negotiation.<sup>88</sup>

Furthermore, Hammarskjöld's biographer Manuel Fröhlich pointed to principles like confidentiality, or in Hammarskjöld words 'discretion, tact and prudence', concluding that this 'is a rule everywhere in political and diplomatic negotiations'<sup>89</sup>. Hammarskjöld invented the 'Peking Formula', which meant that he could step aside from the immediate execution of a General Assembly resolution although he had an official mandatory responsibility for this resolution, claiming that he was equally responsible to the written and approved UN Charter as the basis of his negotiations. That gave him the possibility of taking a seemingly objective or neutral position during his personal talks with Zhou Enlai and the Chinese side. If one wants to, it is possible to see this negotiation strategy as an interpretation of the Buberian concept that the Single One was not only responsible to the norms of the community he had to represent, but also to his 'conscience'.

Nevertheless, the Peking Formula had been the starting point for a controversy about the personal sphere of independence and leadership power of the Secretary-General of the United Nations that led to the phrase habitually used in relation to United Nations crisis resolution matters, 'Leave it to Dag', which points to an ever-extending power sphere for the Secretary-General. At the end of Hammarskjöld's term of office, this independent interpretation of his acts more due to the written Charter and its legal obligations than his role as a direct executioner of resolutions of the General Assembly or the Security-Council had developed into a source of severe criticism. Brian Urquhart remembered

85 Hammarskjöld, quoted by Cordier/Foote (1974: 606).

86 Eyvind Johnson (1900–1976) was a Swedish writer and translator of Camus and Sartre into Swedish; he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1976.

87 Hammarskjöld, quoted by Fröhlich (2002: 278).

88 Andrew Cordier, quoted by Fröhlich (2002: 279).

89 Hammarskjöld, quoted by Fröhlich (2002: 260).

the opposition Hammarskjöld encountered as a result of his conception of an enhanced power role for the Secretary-General:

Today, everybody thinks Hammarskjöld was a huge success story. In reality, he had been completely paralysed. The Russians and the French didn't talk to him any longer, and a bunch of other people did no longer want to have anything to do with him. At the end of his mandate he was done.<sup>90</sup>

Alan James, a researcher on the role of the Secretary-General, even described this mood among politicians after the Hammarskjöld term:

Why, to put it harshly, was he allowed to get away with so much for so long?<sup>91</sup>

Thus, an increase in power for the Secretary-General didn't improve conditions for dialogue in the political sphere in the long run. With more power for the Secretary-General, at times even states' representatives turned away from true dialogue with Hammarskjöld. But, according to Buber, a key precondition for true dialogue is reciprocity or mutuality in the will for dialogue. After the initial success story during the US-China crisis, quiet diplomacy no longer worked as the one and only means of conflict resolution. And the tactics of Moïse Tschombé, the then President of the secessionist Republic of Katanga, deliberately agreeing to and then again withdrawing from negotiation, finally led to the death of Hammarskjöld.

90 Urquhart, quoted by Fröhlich (2002: 357-358); translation by Lou Marin

91 Alan James, quoted by Fröhlich (2002: 358).

Moreover, an excess of power for the Secretary-General of the United Nations stood in contradiction to Buber's concept of reducing the power politics of the political sphere to mere administration. Furthermore, the other conditions Buber held necessary for genuine dialogue, such as taking the risk of meeting the other without preconceptions, without egoistical interest, without tactical strategy or preconditions, in order to create something new in common – these are social aspects that are almost impossible to realise within the power- and interest-driven political field and could be matched, if ever, only in some distant approximation.

Last argument: World War II had shown all the problems of what then was called 'secret diplomacy', which ended up in the secret amendments of the Hitler-Stalin Pact. A new beginning for democracy after World War II was therefore demanding open diplomacy, open and visible dialogue, controlled by public institutions and the people, in the political sphere as elsewhere. That is why the first Secretary-General of the United Nations, Trygve Lie, preferred the concept of 'public diplomacy' or 'parliamentary diplomacy', with no secret protocols or reticence in front of journalists and the press as was the case with Hammarskjöld since the successful negotiations with Zhou Enlai during the US-China crisis, although Hammarskjöld did not want to equate his 'quiet diplomacy' with 'secret diplomacy'. It is true that the press or sensationalist journalists can distort the achievements of face-to-face dialogue within politics, but this question is also a task for society, and has to do with an appropriate press code and an ethics of journalism as well as an ethics of public debate. That is why some of Hammarskjöld's successors as Secre-

tary-General did not always want to pursue the Hammarskjöld legacy in this respect, refraining from an extended role for the office-bearer. Rather, they interpreted their role in a more reluctant manner (Fröhlich 2002: 378–409 and Urquhart 1991: 189–369). Additional factors like an occasional overestimation of his own capacities of decision-making and a lack of willingness to delegate tasks, or an unfortunate tendency to recruit the wrong people for difficult tasks (like choosing the Irish military officer O’Brien for the command of the UN troops in Katanga) led to a sort of Buberian reversal of the *spiral of trust* to Hammarskjöld’s disadvantage at the end of his term. According to Buber, true dialogue and reciprocity of dialogue partners can lead at best to mutual confidence and positive dynamics, a ‘spiral of trust’. In contrast, unilateral decisions by political leaders with an ever-extending sphere of their claimed leadership tend to damage mutual confidence and lead to negative dynamics, a reversal of the ‘spiral of trust’ (Fröhlich 2002: 361–372).

Thus, I come to the provisional conclusion that while Buber agreed that an interpretation and implementation of his philosophy of dialogue as conceived by Hammarskjöld as a part of quiet diplomacy, with as many as possible face-to-face-encounters with adversary politicians, was desirable in principle, Buber thought at the same time that it was very difficult to implement this thoroughly and that the initial successes of quiet diplomacy were due to Hammarskjöld’s extraordinary personality. Originally, Buber did not conceive his philosophy of dialogue for the political sphere, but for groups and communities forming integral parts of society and defending themselves against a politicisation of their realm.

### *Hammarskjöld’s alternative: The peacekeeping forces – and their consequences*

In case all his sophisticated tactics of dialogue as quiet diplomacy failed, Hammarskjöld, at a very early stage of his period of office, invented something else as an alternative to dialogue: the military instrument of a presence of the United Nations through troops with a blue helmet, that is the peacekeeping forces which have nowadays developed into peace-enforcing-forces as witnessed in the bombings of former Yugoslavia or the occupation of Afghanistan since 2001. In contrast to Buber’s alternatives, discussed above, the problem with peacekeeping forces as military units is that the United Nations has thereby been introduced to a military option that runs the danger of cutting across or even abandoning a process of dialogue within the political sphere, as the word – as proclaimed by Buber and Camus and occasionally also by Hammarskjöld – is opposed to war.

The first great initial success of the peacekeeping forces, as it has been heralded in almost every historical account, was the deployment of the first-ever UN troops in an attempt to solve the Suez crisis, that is to contain the war between the occupation forces in the Suez Canal (Israel, France and Great Britain) and Egypt in 1956. Already here, very few observers have examined the fact that in reality these United Nations troops only led to a temporary cessation of tensions, not to a real solution. Thus, in 1967, in the first real crisis after the deployment of UN troops, these troops were expelled by Egypt, which rapidly led to the disastrous 1967 war with Israel (Urquhart 1991: 131–140 and 209–216).

Already the death of Hammarskjöld has been connected with the military engagement of UN troops in Elizabethville (today Lubumbashi) against Tschombé's Katangan militias (Belgian and French mercenaries). Since then, in the course of time, the implementation conditions of UN peacekeeping, and then peace-enforcement, forces has been continuously enhanced. The use of this alternative when dialogue as quiet diplomacy fails has invaded strategic consciousness, finally even prompting humanitarian and human rights-organisations to think in military-strategic ways and to demand ever more military protection or even military invasion, as each failure of such a mission has been attributed to insufficient military equipment or numbers of UN troops (Foley 2008). None of this really fosters the possibilities for dialogue within the political sphere of our times. Besides, out-of-the-box speeches, misunderstandings, inability to engage in dialogue, as well as a mood of mutual distrust, all prevail or are even growing, and not only in the Middle East and Far East.

### *Buber's third alternative: From World Peace Brigades to Peace Brigades International*

Buber, in addition to his alternatives for saving true dialogue in the sphere of society through education and civil disobedience, was participating at the time of Hammarskjöld's death in another alternative that might be regarded as a sort of counter-concept to that of military peacekeeping units. He was involved in the founding of the World Peace Brigade in 1961, according to Friedman:

Two such 'civil disobedients', Anthony Brooke, an exile from Sarawak and the British Commonwealth, and Michael Scott, an exile from South Africa, attempted to form a World Peace Brigade made up of unarmed volunteers sent to areas of conflict to help the refugees and wounded and endeavour to bring the combatants together through passive resistance and persuasion. They decided to hold the founding conference of the brigade in the resort town of Burmana in Lebanon at the end of December 1961 and asked Buber if he would be able to attend. Charles Malik<sup>92</sup>, the former Lebanese ambassador to the United Nations, had taught a course in Buber's philosophy at the American University in Beirut for many years. (In fact, Malik and Hayim Greenberg of Israel once met at the United Nations to discuss *I and Thou*.) But no Israeli citizen had ever openly been allowed to enter by an Arab state. If Buber had gone, he would have become the first Israeli citizen to be invited to an international conference in an Arab country. In his reply, Buber made it clear to Brooke and Scott that the first meeting should be held only in a country which would admit every single one of the sponsors, without discrimination, and he was ready to demand that the conference be transferred somewhere else if Lebanon did not admit him (Friedman 1988: 329).

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<sup>92</sup> Charles Malik (1906-1987) was a Lebanese philosopher and diplomat and supported the Reinhold Niebuhr and Maurice Friedman initiative of 1962 to propose Martin Buber for the Nobel Prize for Literature. Malik wrote on this occasion: 'Buber is greater than even the fine eulogy you compiled for him in your draft letter' (Malik quoted by Friedman 1988: 331).

But Buber then fell ill, and an exhausting journey anywhere was out of question. Aubrey Hodes remembered the determination of an 83-year-old Buber to go there and assist with any effort that could contribute to a new Israeli-Arab dialogue. Eventually, the founding congress of the World Peace Brigade took place as planned in Lebanon, without Buber, but some of the participants went afterwards to his house in Jerusalem to visit Buber and to talk with him (Friedman 1988: 330).

The World Peace Brigade, which existed from 1961 to 1964, had some forerunners such as the Peace Army (1932–1939) initiated by Maude Royden, an Anglican minister. Royden was inspired by Gandhi's idea of a 'Living Wall', which the latter had proposed against external aggression in an independent India. It was proposed to the League of Nations that the Peace Army be institutionalised, but the League declined to support it. It should have intervened in the fighting between Japanese and Chinese forces in Shanghai in the 1930s, but failed to raise enough recruits and money.

Another forerunner was the 'Volunteers for International Development/Peaceworkers', a students' and veterans' initiative after World War II to build a 'UN Peaceforce', but they too were denied institutional backing. The World Peace Brigade of 1961 (WPB) had been proposed originally at the Conference of War Resisters' International in India in 1960, to internationalise the Shanti Sena (Peace Army) of Gandhian origin working with some success at the same time within India. The World Peace Brigade, finally created in Lebanon in 1961, was divided into three sections (Asia/India; Europe/Britain; America/US) with each section to

form small Brigades to be sent to the scene of international conflicts, as decided jointly. The WPB established a training centre in Dar es Salaam, Tangayika, in 1962 and coordinated an international Freedom March into Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia) to support nonviolent calls for independence from British rule and a local campaign of civil disobedience. The march was finally abandoned because of a change of events that turned in favour of the independence movement. A second campaign was mobilised to the Indo-Chinese border in 1963, where there had been a border war in 1962. The plan was to march from Delhi to Peking, but it received very hostile reactions from both governments. Finally a multi-national group walked across India before being prevented from crossing the border into China. A last, officially undertaken WPB campaign took activists with a sailing boat to Lenin-grad and the Arctic Ocean to protest against Soviet nuclear testing (the boat eventually had to be rescued by the Soviet navy, but the voyage was successfully completed). After the dissolution of the WBP in 1964, some activists kept their vision alive and were involved in the subsequent founding of the follow-up Peace Brigades International (PBI) in 1981, which exists until today. It has grown into an international organisation with 15 country sections. The main task of their activists is to accompany social workers, trade unionists or other persons within regions where there is heavy governmental violence or civil war and to monitor violations of their rights. Among the many projects have been the international monitoring in Nicaragua in 1981, Guatemala in 1983, El Salvador (1987–1992) and Sri Lanka (1989–2009), the escorting of Native Americans in the United States in 1992, and projects in

Haiti in 1993, Colombia in 1994 and Chad in 1994. One of their projects concerned Israel/Palestine in 1989 at the outbreak of the first Intifada (Moser-Puangsuwan 2009). So, finally, PBI contributed to a revival of joint Israeli-Arab activism at the grassroots level, which was growing independently with international support, notably since the building of a Wall of Separation, a new 'Wall of Distrust' in the West Bank in 2003. The new emerging nonviolent and grassroots resistance is the only area nowadays where Palestinian and Israeli citizens as well as activists can meet in face-to-face-encounters in order to reduce their prejudices and start true dialogue in a way that Buber would undoubtedly have supported (Kalicha 2008).

During his time, Buber's hope for this capacity for dialogue was placed in the Kibbutz movement, which finally was not entirely justified. The majority of the Kibbutz communities did not really want to enter into serious relationships with the neighbouring Palestinian villages and today most of the Kibbutz communities have adjusted their way of living to the capitalist norm of Israel society. They have been absorbed in a negative way by the violent values of the normative society – devoid of Buber's original socialist aspirations for the second and the

third Aliya<sup>93</sup> of the first decades of the 20th century (from about 1903, at the time of the Russian Kishinev pogrom, to about 1923), then mainly inspired by poor and working-class settlers coming from the Jewish milieu of Eastern Europe where Jewish Hasidism was still alive (Friedman 1982: 272).

Thus, a very brief summary of the respective alternatives of Dag Hammarskjöld and Martin Buber to failed dialogue would be that Hammarskjöld created the concept of peacekeeping forces by the United Nations, with the ever-prevailing danger of replacing the word by war, whereas Buber concentrated on three alternative activities, starting with education, and creating a planet-wide civil disobedience movement and a World Peace Brigade to intervene unarmed in civil war conflicts.

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93 Aliya literally means 'ascent' in Hebrew and refers to ascending to the temple of Jerusalem, in the sense of a pilgrimage. Since the Holocaust it has been the name given to several waves of immigration into Palestine in the history of the Zionist movement. In the first Aliya (Bilu, 1882–1903, involving up to 30,000 people) Arab workers were hired for the early Kibbutzim, who worked like slaves for the Jewish settlers; the second Aliya (1903–1914, up to 40,000 settlers) had Kibbutzim entirely composed of Jewish workers; the third (1919–1923, up to 35,000 settlers) which brought Jews from Russia and Rumania, as well as the youth movement of Hashomer Hatzair (Young Guards), also founded Kibbutzim, from which in 1946 a party sprang up, which in 1948, together with another organisation, Ahdut Ha'Avoda, formed the Mapam (Workers Party); the fourth (1924–1931, up to 80,000 people), is known as the Aliya of the middle classes; the fifth (1932–1938, up to 200,000 people) consisted of refugees, notably from Germany and Central Europe as a result of the seizure of power by the Nazis, and European Fascism; and then the Aliya Bet (second ascent in the sense of illegal immigration, until 1948) included the survivors of the Holocaust.

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Dag Hammarskjöld and Martin Buber met three times between 1958 and 1961. They conferred about the possibilities of true dialogue in the political and cultural setting of a United Nations confronted by the Cold War and an atmosphere of general mistrust. Hammarskjöld observed ‘Walls of Distrust’ between the superpowers’ representatives at the United Nations and in their propaganda-filled speeches. Buber described the social atmosphere created by nuclear threat, the Palestinian question and the Cold War as an ‘Age of Mistrust’. Both were in search of a common understanding of the political blockages of the time, while their perspectives on re-structuring society differed.

What significance does their exchange have for today’s problems? The Cold War has ended, but the atmosphere of mistrust prevails. The crucial questions of the Middle East remain unsolved. Only the concept of what constitutes the enemy has changed: fundamentalist terrorism has replaced the Soviet Union as a challenge for the West, while the West’s answer to all challenges remains war – the opposite of the word, as both Buber and Hammarskjöld affirmed. True dialogue seems to be as impossible as it was in Buber’s and Hammarskjöld’s times. However, remembering their discussions about the chances of true dialogue is simultaneously an inspiration for the quest for solutions in our times.

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