

The Council Chambers in the UN Building in New York

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SOURCE: Scandinavian Journal of Design History, vol. 15, 2005, pp. 8-39.

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(FN=footnotes)

The United Nations Headquarters in New York is well known to most people through frequent photographs in the press, television and other media. Less well known is the fact that three Scandinavian architects designed some of the most important interiors in the complex. These were Sven Markelius from Sweden, Finn Juhl from Denmark and Arnstein Arneberg from Norway. Although functionally, aesthetically and symbolically these interiors constitute an extremely important part of the United Nations Headquarters and represent an important phase in the history of modernist architecture and design, no special study of them has previously been made.(FN1) That is what I shall seek to do in the following article.

The work of the United Nations is carried out all over the world and organised through six main organs: The General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council the Trusteeship Council, the International Court of Justice and the Secretariat. The International Court of Justice is based in The Hague in Holland, the other five organs in New York. The numerous other UN organisations, councils, committees, commissions, programmes and so on are administratively subject to the main organs but are situated in many different places in the world.

The UN Headquarters in Manhattan in New York was mainly built at the beginning of the 1950s and consists of four separate buildings, three of which belong to the original complex. The fourth, the Dag Hammarskjöld Library, was built some years later. The three original buildings are the Secretariat, the General Assembly Building and the so-called Conference Building. This latter building contains three large conference chambers, one for each of the councils listed above, and it is these large rooms in which the Scandinavian countries, Norway, Sweden and Denmark, undertook

to be responsible for the interior design. They are the chambers housing the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council and the Trusteeship Council.

That the three small Scandinavian countries were given the task of designing some of the most important and prestigious chambers in the headquarters building can be interpreted as an expression of the important political, diplomatic and symbolical position assigned to these countries during the first phase of the United Nations Organisation. Further evidence of this is the fact that the first two Secretaries General were Scandinavians, first Trygve Lie from Norway, followed by Dag Hammarskjöld from Sweden. That Scandinavia was appointed to make its mark on the three conference chambers can also be explained by the fact that since the 1920s these countries had achieved a solid international reputation for architecture and design.(FN2)

I will concentrate below on the interiors as they were when they were finished at the beginning of the 1950s. Much has been changed since then as a result of the organisation's constantly having developed. The number of member countries has grown greatly (there were originally 57 member countries, and in 2003 this had increased to 191), and the organisation has become more extensive and complicated in administrative terms. The chambers have been redesigned so as to be capable of being used in other ways than those originally envisaged. The Security Council Chamber is the best preserved and the one that is used most by the organ for which it was intended. The Security Council of course is in continuous session, while the other two councils meet more rarely, perhaps no more than once or twice a year, and so the chambers are used for many other purposes.

The UN Headquarters in literature on the history of architecture and art

As it stood in the 1950s, the UN Headquarters was an important example of modernist architecture, but despite this, relatively few studies have been made of it in the context of the history of art and architecture. During the planning and building phases, 1946-1952, however, there were countless references to and articles on the

project in periodicals devoted to architecture and design. At that time newspapers and other news media reported regularly as the work progressed. These are naturally useful sources for the study of the complex as architectural history. Particularly well known are the architecture critic Lewis Mumford's highly critical articles in *The New Yorker*. Many of them were also published in the book entitled *From the Ground Up* (1957). Of later literature, special mention must be made of Victoria Newhouse's book on the architect Wallace K. Harrison (1989). Harrison was head of the international group of architects, the so-called Board of Design Consultants who made a collective proposal for the design of the UN complex in 1947. He subsequently had the main architectural responsibility for the actual building as head of the Headquarters Planning Office. Newhouse dedicates several chapters to the UN Headquarters, which represents a major work in Harrison's oeuvre. Another important source is George A. Dudley, *A Workshop for Peace. Designing the United Nations Headquarters*, which was published in 1994. Dudley was Harrison's secretary during the planning phase in 1947, and the book is based on very thorough notes taken at the many meetings of the design group. Although it was not published until 50 years after the events described, this book was the subject of a great deal of attention and was very well reviewed when it appeared. However, Dudley is only concerned with the planning process. There is no analysis of the finished building. The only major work I know that places the UN Headquarters in a context of architectural history and politics is a doctoral dissertation from Harvard written in 1998 by Linda Phipps, *Constructing the United Nations Headquarters. Modern Architecture as Public Diplomacy*, a very thorough, well documented and interesting analysis that deserves to be published in a more easily accessible form than merely as the duplicated text of a university dissertation.

A more popular and easily read work on the complex is Adam Bartos and Christopher Hitchens' *International Territory. The United Nations 1945-1995*, London and New York 1994. This book contains many fine photographs, mostly in colour, portraying interiors and everyday life in the Headquarters.

During the summer of 1995, the Museum of Modern Art in New York held an exhibition, “The United Nations in Perspective”. The person responsible for the exhibition was the museum’s architecture and design curator, Peter Reed, who had also written a slender volume, little more than a brochure, briefly sketching the history of the building of the headquarters.

In 1999, the photographer Ezra Stoller published a small book containing splendid photographs of the complex both inside and outside. It also contains an interesting introductory text by Jane Loeffler.

In this connection, mention should also be made of the fact that in his book on his seven years as UN Secretary General (1946-1953), *In the Cause of Peace* (N.Y. 1954), Trygve Lie devotes a whole chapter to the work of building the headquarters.

The purely visual, artistic decoration of the UN buildings is treated in several books. The first, by Jacob Baal-Teshuva, with a foreword by Andrew W. Cordier, appeared in 1964 and deals exclusively with the art in the New York headquarters. It contains a catalogue with numerous illustrations — mostly in black and white, a few in colours — and biographical information on the artists behind each individual work. 1995 saw the publication of the large and expensive book by Edward B. Marks with a foreword by Boutros Boutros-Ghali and introductions by Brian Urquhart and Diana D. Brooks, *A World of Art. The United Nations Collection*. While Baal-Teshuva’s book only deals with the art in the headquarters building in New York, Marks includes works owned by the UN throughout the world. The book is furnished with fine colour reproductions and a useful catalogue arranged by locality and material groups. It provides a good impression of how extensive this art collection is and of how many of the great contemporary artists are represented: Picasso, Matisse, Moore, Giacometti, Chagall, to mention only a few of the best known.

The Building of the UN Headquarters

The United Nations was founded officially on 24 October 1945 as a continuation of, or perhaps rather replacement for, the League of Nations, which was set up after the First World War in 1919 and which, like its successor, had the aim of working for peace and liberty in the world. The League of Nations, however, was never a success, primarily because many nations, including the USA, did not join.

One of the first decisions the new organisation, the United Nations, had to make, was where its headquarters should be located. Many countries around the world wanted to host it. But it relatively soon became clear that there was wide consensus on somewhere in the USA. Many cities were mentioned, Boston, Chicago, Philadelphia and San Francisco merely to name a few. New York was a strong candidate, but there were problems as to where to place the complex. The powerful and influential Mayor of New York offered a large area, Flushing Meadows, in Queens, north of Manhattan. This was where the great world fair in 1939 had been situated, and the city authorities now saw a possibility of a new and effective use for the area. For a brief, temporary period the organisation was indeed accommodated in Flushing. But many people thought this site was too far out of the way and that the permanent headquarters of the UN ought to be more centrally situated. On account of all the to-ing and fro-ing, it began to look as though New York had lost its opportunity. Finally, only hours before the agreed deadline, however, the financier and politician John D. Rockefeller Junior cut through it all. The Rockefeller family had bought an area in Manhattan near the East River, and John D. Rockefeller Jr. offered it to the organisation as a gift.(FN3) It was an 18-acre site in what was known as Turtle Bay, between 42nd and 46th Streets. The area had been the home of abattoirs and light industry, but was now entirely neglected, virtually a slum and ripe for redevelopment. The City of New York also donated ground in addition to Rockefeller's gift.(FN4)

The next step concerned the actual building. It was obvious that something new and sizeable should be erected. And on this point, the memories of Geneva had people

worried. When, almost twenty years earlier, in 1926, a building was to be erected for the League of Nations, an architectural competition was arranged that was won by the Swiss-French architect Charles Le Corbusier. But because many of the leaders of the organisation were strongly opposed to Le Corbusier's modernist bid, the task was given to two architects who had submitted a far more traditional proposal. After a very long and troublesome building process, the result was a pompous complex in the neo-classical style. Many people, both architects and laymen, regarded both the handling of the competition and the final architectural result as a scandal. All the trouble concerning the building in Geneva and its genesis was seen very much as a symbol of the failure of the League of Nations, its powerlessness and final demise.

But everything was to be done differently this time. Those responsible for the building of the new headquarters for this new, peace-creating organisation were very keen not to make the same mistake as before and they were very conscious that the architectural framework around the organisation also had an important symbolical. Instead, it was decided that the headquarters should be designed by an international group of architects drawn from the member countries. A collective work, it was maintained, would stand as a tangible expression of the ideals that the organisation itself was working for: international co-operation, democracy, commonalty and mutual respect. There was also a strong, conscious desire that the building should be completed quickly. Drawn-out building processes were unfortunate as they could give the impression of incompetence and disorder. The headquarters had to be finished quickly and in a well-organised manner and thereby be the expression of the determination, vitality and energy of the new organisation.

Despite a great deal of agreement on the ideological and theoretical levels, it turned out, not surprisingly, to be more difficult when the ideologies were to be put into practice. To begin with, it was not at all without problems to compose a representative group of architects. There was a great deal to which regard had to be taken. Primarily, the chosen architects had to belong to the international leaders in the field. Then there

were political and diplomatic assessments. Some names that might appear quite obvious, for instance Walter Gropius and Mies van der Rohe, had to be left out of consideration for political reasons. They were too closely associated with Germany, one of the countries against which the war had been fought. Alvar Aalto, whom many wanted to include, was also out of the question because Finland was not a member of the UN. The final group, known as the Board of Design Consultants, consisted of altogether ten architects from Europe (including the Swede Sven Markelius), North and South America, Australia and China.(FN5) The American architect Wallace K. Harrison was appointed leader of the team.(FN6) Among the buildings that had previously attracted attention to him was the elegant Rockefeller Centre in Manhattan, which was completed just before the war.(FN7) Harrison had also been the chief architect for the 1939 World Fair in New York. In that connection he had become well acquainted with the foreign architects who had designed the participating nations' exhibition pavilions, including Sven Markelius. Harrison apparently had an influential say in the matter when it came to deciding which architects to invite to join the design group.(FN8) As director of the Headquarters Planning Office, he also had the main responsibility for the actual building and interior design process.(FN9) He is described(FN10) as a very competent and effective administrator with a great ability to collaborate with others. He had well-developed diplomatic skills, something for which there was plenty of use during the meetings of the design group, for it turned out not to be so easy to persuade individual creative architects to abandon their own pet ideas and work as a collective. It was the leading expert Le Corbusier who had the greatest difficulty with this. Starting out from and against the background of the catastrophe with the League of Nations building, he considered himself to be the obvious architect for the UN and even before the official composition of the group had been decided, he had gone to New York on his own account and set up an office in Manhattan, where he was well advanced with design proposals for the headquarters. He even had these proposals published. Nevertheless, the planning group worked satisfactorily under Harrison's leadership. Even Le Corbusier agreed that the UN building should be a collective work, and many were the eager and

interesting discussions and exchanges of opinions that took place during the altogether 45 meetings of the design group in the spring of 1947.(FN11)

Agreement was finally reached on the main concept, a skyscraper of 39 storeys (reduced from the original 45 for financial reasons) for the secretariat and, by way of contrast, two lower buildings, the General Assembly Building and the Conference Building.

The foundation stone was laid by the Secretary General, Trygve Lie, on 24 October 1949, four years to the day after the official founding of the organisation in 1945. The enormous building complex was completed at record speed. The Secretariat Building was taken into use between August 1950 and June 1951, less than a year after the foundation stone had been laid. The General Assembly met for the first time in its own Chamber on the opening of its seventh ordinary session, that is to say during the seventh year of the organisation, on 14 October 1952. The Conference Building was taken into use in spring 1952 and was completed by that autumn. Actually, the building process fulfilled the intention that the headquarters should be a symbol of the organisation's determination, ability to collaborate, belief in the future and optimism. The head of the Headquarters Planning Office, Wallace K. Harrison continually maintained that the principal intention was not that the building should be a symbol, but that it should primarily function well. The words he spoke at the inauguration of the headquarters, "The world hopes for a symbol of peace. We have given them a workshop for peace" were quoted on many occasions.(FN12)

Brief Description of the Buildings

The headquarters consists of four quite different buildings linked to each other by means of corridors, stairs and galleries. Three of the buildings belong to the original complex, which was finished in 1952. The fourth, the Dag Hammarskjöld Library so called after the organisation's second secretary general, is at right angles to the Secretariat Building along 42nd Street. It contains four storeys in addition to

basements and was finished almost ten years after the other three. Before this was built, the library was housed in a still existing building on the same site. At the beginning of the 1980s, a large new cafeteria was constructed at the foot of the Secretariat Building towards the north east and the river. The building is not visible from the land side.

The best known and most frequently photographed of the headquarters' buildings is the Secretariat Building, a high-rise block of 39 floors, in which the longitudinal façades to the east and west are of glass and aluminium and the narrow, windowless façades to the north and south are clad with marble. The building was the first in the world to have completely glass façades, so-called curtain walls. The other two original buildings in the complex are built low and with a horizontal format, in conscious formal contrast to the skyscraper building. Along First Avenue and, like the Secretariat Building, with a north-south orientation, stands the striking trapezoid building housing the UN General Assembly. It is placed parallel to the street and is easily recognisable by the window-less, slightly concave longitudinal façades to the east and west. These façades are highest to the north, curve down towards the centre and rise a little again towards the south. The roof is also lowest at the centre. Here there is an obliquely placed, slightly "lost" dome, which provides skylight to the large Main Assembly Hall beneath.(FN13) The long façades are devoid of windows, but are provided with a row of small doors that are accessed from a ramp. These doors act as emergency exits direct from the assembly hall. Access to the building for delegates is from the west. The entrance is at the southern end of the façades towards First Avenue. It is marked by a large, heavy canopy above the door into a lobby with large windows facing south and a view of the small park in front of the Secretariat Building.

The public entrance is via an entrance hall at the other, northern, end of the building. The hall occupies the entire width and height of the building (four storeys) but has relatively little depth. The first thing to strike the visitor on entering this high-ceilinged room is the dominant, whitewashed front of the balconies opposite the

entrance doors, which stretch in a gentle curve across three floors of the hall. The four-floor-high north wall, which you have behind you when you enter, consists of opaque glass surrounded by broad marble frames. This provides a quite special, almost sacred light in the hall inside. From the balconies there is access to the General Assembly Chamber. A striking, curved ramp leads to the first balcony. The others are reached via stairs or lifts. The public area extends further into the first floor of the building beneath the balconies. Here there are exhibition areas, information stands etc. The guided tours of the complex for tourists also start here.

The third of the buildings in the headquarters, the Conference Building, links the Secretariat and the General Assembly Building. It is situated behind the others, towards the river. It has four storeys and is built partly above the busy Roosevelt Drive (formerly East River Drive). The building contains three large conference chambers on the first floor. Above these are three large meeting rooms, each of almost 1500 square metres. The chambers extend through the second and third floors and are the meeting places for the councils that together with the General Assembly and the Secretariat constitute the basis of the UN organisation. These three large rooms are important “stations” on the guided tours for tourists in the headquarters, and Scandinavian tourists will be just a little proud to be informed that the interior furnishings and the artistic decoration of the rooms was once presented as a gift to the UN by the three Scandinavian countries, Denmark, Norway and Sweden.

Interior Design and Decoration

Already at an early stage in the building process it was suggested that member countries, institutions and private individuals should be asked to contribute to the interior furnishings and decoration of the headquarters.(FN14) Countries that had not been represented on the Board of Design Consultants now had an opportunity to make their mark on the building. It was argued that in this way the headquarters would really become an expression of the united will of the nations to collaborate with each other. At the same time it was assumed that the contributions would be a help to cover the

expense of furnishing the buildings. The request received an overwhelming response. Most offers consisted of individual works of art, paintings, tapestries, sculptures etc., but by no means everything offered could be used. A great deal had to be refused because for various reasons it did not fit in. It gradually became clear that, as Trygve Lie put it: "It was important to ensure that the gifts were appropriate and that, if they were found acceptable, they would be properly utilised".(FN15) The Secretary General thus found it necessary to establish a separate committee, the Headquarters Art Panel, which was an international jury to assess the offers.(FN16) In addition to more serious and official proposals, letters also poured in from artists and private individuals from all over the world who had works of art, antiques and other things that they would like to give or — most often — sell. Most received a polite refusal from the Executive Officer, G.E. Bennett, who obviously had a big job sending out such replies: "... we are deluged with offers of all kinds from artists interested in doing something in our buildings."(FN17)

The Council Chambers

Although many other countries have given major decorations, paintings, tapestries, mosaics, sculptures and so on, the Council Chambers are the sole example in the UN complex of single nations having the main responsibility for fitting out and decorating an entire chamber. It is somewhat unclear how the idea for this was born. Trygve Lie writes in his book that he "... was pleased when it was decided that decoration and furnishing of the Council Chambers should be entrusted to the three Scandinavian countries, which were the first to offer such assistance".(FN18) It does not emerge who decided on this or how it was decided. It is an obvious conclusion that Lie himself had a say in these decisions, at least when it came to the part played by Norway. But he hides his tracks in general and imprecise formulations.(FN19) More on this in the following section.

The three Council Chambers are in what is known as the Conference Building.

It stands rather back to the east and is partly hidden from the land side by the more

striking buildings housing the Secretariat and the General Assembly. The Conference Building is only fully visible from the east and from the river. Here, the building also corbels over the busy Roosevelt Drive (originally East River Drive). Lewis Mumford, who wrote various very critical articles on the UN complex in the *New York Times*, says of this building that: "Perhaps the most important factor about the Conference Building is that it is almost invisible".(FN20)

The three Chambers are almost identical in conception. But because the eastern facade of the building is slightly skewed in order to follow the river bank, one of the Chambers (that of the Security Council) is slightly smaller than the others. The difference is, however, insignificant and scarcely noticeable. The dimensions in each chamber are c. 48 × 25 metres of floor space, that is to say they are quite long and narrow rooms and difficult to furnish and decorate. The rooms have one of its short sides facing the east and the river. The wall here is eight metres high and consists of windows over the entire width and height of the Chamber, overlooking a terrace. This orientation, allowing daylight in through large windows, led to major problems, as will be seen. Each Chamber is divided transversely into two roughly equal parts, one for delegates, associates and secretaries, and one for the press and public. This latter section is built up in tiers like a theatre, with the seats for the public at the top and those for the press at the bottom. Each Chamber contains some 120 seats for the press and 400 for the general public.(FN21)

The delegates are placed on the main floor in the front section of the chamber, as though on a kind of stage. The different levels have their own entrances, and the section for the delegates and those for the others are rigidly separated from each other with balustrades and railings, except in the case of the Trusteeship Council Chamber, where the architect has chosen a different, more open solution. We shall return to this below. On account of the amphitheatre-like structure of the seating for the general public, the rear wall, at the top of the public gallery, is only three metres high, that is to say there is a difference in height of five metres from the facing curtain wall. In the

section reserved for the delegates, the side walls are provided with two rows of low windows in to adjoining rooms containing seating for simultaneous translators, sound and television recordings etc. The delegates and their advisers are seated around a large table, circular in the Security Council Chamber, horseshoe-shaped in the other two.(FN22) Secretaries and advisers were placed immediately behind the delegates. The orientation of the rooms made it natural for the chairmen of the meetings to sit at the end of the delegates' tables, facing the chamber and with their backs to the window. This arrangement, however, was problematic on account of the strong light from the window, which meant that they were seen here as silhouettes. As we shall see, the architects tried to solve this problem in various ways.

The task put before the Scandinavian architects was to determine the treatment of walls and ceilings, choose carpets and curtains, propose lighting and fittings and to design doors, panel walls and railings between the different sections for delegates, press and public. As for movable furnishings, tables and chairs were to be designed or chosen for delegates and their advisers. Chairs for secretaries, press and spectators were fixed and identical in all the Chambers.(FN23) All the architects could do here was decide on the colours of the upholstery. These chairs, which are still in use, are without armrests and stand on a tubular base through which are introduced cables and leads for earphones linked to the simultaneous interpreting service.(FN24)

So the tasks entrusted to the three architects corresponded to each other in every respect. In a very thorough evaluation of the interior furnishings in the American periodical *Interiors*,(FN25) the author compares the task with classical school exercises in interior design: The instructor specifies an architectural shell, site, orientation, allowed structural alterations, physical requirements, budget and so on. Although the students solve the problem individually, the results are usually disappointedly uniform. Very seldom masters have to compete under identical conditions. This was, however, the case with the three Council Chambers in the UN building, proclaims the *Interiors* representative. And as such, the three rooms are model answers. Although the

framework was fixed, the problems are solved in very different ways. The result is three chambers each with its own individual character. Two of them are strongly influenced by modernism, the third is more traditional in approach, conservative, some would rather say history-less, maintains the writer of this article.

The Security Council Chamber

In principle, the three main Councils in the United Nations Organisation are of equal importance. However, the Security Council is rather special, partly because it has the five great powers as permanent members with the right of veto. This is in sharp contrast to the egalitarian structure in the remaining UN organs, and it gives the Security Council a special status. The fact that this Council is in permanent session, as opposed to the other two Councils, which only meet once or twice a year, also contributes to its being seen as more important than the others. This was obvious from the very earliest days of the organisation.

As said above, I have not been able to find any sources to provide information on where the idea came from to allow the three Scandinavian countries to be responsible for the furnishings in the three Chambers or how the work was divided up between the countries. In minutes from meetings, letters etc., the decisions are hidden beneath the neutral phrase "It was decided that...". For instance, why was Norway given the Security Council Chamber? It is a likely conclusion that the Norwegian UN Secretary General, Trygve Lie, wanted Norway to have the responsibility for the interior design of the most important Chamber. Lie was fully aware that even from the very beginning the Security Council was the most prestigious, and like the strategist he was, he presumably also foresaw that this Council would attract greater public attention than the others, and that the Chamber would be photographed and reproduced in the media in the future to a far greater extent than the other two Chambers. Thanks to his close contacts with the Labour government at home, Lie also had ample opportunity to influence and effect the idea of partly covering the cost by means of gifts from the Norwegian government. There is reason to believe that Lie played an important role

here and that he arranged things so that Norway came into the picture at an early stage and before the matter had passed through all the formal channels, both in the United Nations Organisation and in the government administration at home.

The decision regarding the Norwegian contribution and the appointment of an architect appears to have been made almost a year earlier in the case of Norway than in that of Denmark and Sweden. Nor is it clear who appointed Arnstein Arneberg to be responsible for the prestigious project. Not that the decision was unreasonable.

Arneberg was one of the best known architects in Norway at the time, responsible for a vast amount of building throughout the country. In his autobiography, Lie writes: "The Security Council Chamber had been assigned to Norway, and my good friend the architect Arnstein Arneberg was charged with its planning and design".(FN26) There is nothing to suggest that an architectural competition was announced or that, for instance, the National Association of Norwegian Architects, *Nor-ske Arkitekters Landsforbund*, was involved in this.(FN27) Could this have been a matter primarily between Lie and Arneberg? As said, they were friends. Arneberg had earlier designed Lie's country cottage, *Lieset*, on Lake *Rugel* near *Røros*. This was a gift to Lie from the Norwegian people on his 50th birthday in 1946. Lie also had a cottage on *Nesodden* near *Oslo*, where Arneberg had been responsible for some rebuilding. Arneberg was, then, involved in the interior design plans at the UN at a time when it had not officially been agreed to ask individual countries to contribute to the interior decorations. The official letter from Trygve Lie to member countries, asking them to contribute to the interior decorations is dated 20 April 1950.(FN28) However, confidential negotiations had probably been carried out before this. During the autumn of 1948, there had at all events been contact between the head of the planning office, *Wallace K. Harrison*, and Arneberg concerning the interior furnishing of the Security Council Chamber. In September that year, the two met in *Paris* to discuss the matter.(FN29) The first, more official letter I have found from the Headquarters Planning Office to Arneberg is dated 21 December 1948.(FN30) So there was contact

while the design of the Headquarters was still at the planning stage and more than a year before the foundation stone was laid. In January 1949, Arneberg received the first drawings and descriptions from the Planning Office along with a letter from Harrison asking him to come to New York at the expense of the UN, to study conditions on the spot. In a letter to Arneberg from the Planning Office in February 1949 there is a reference to “the work you are now doing for us”,(FN31) and on 30 March that year Arneberg sent the first sketches to Harrison.(FN32) In April 1949, that is to say six months before building started, Arneberg was in New York to study the site, plans etc., and naturally also in order to present his own proposals for the interior design of the Security Council Chamber. Arneberg was engaged by the UN long before the Norwegian government had granted the money for the interior decoration and long before the architects for the other two Chambers were involved. He was well acquainted with the project while it was still in the planning stage and made his first sketches on the basis of that. Several details in the main architectural design were, however, changed while building was in progress. This meant that Arneberg’s first proposals and sketches gradually had to be changed.

While work was in progress there were also many other things that had to be clarified, not least financial problems. Who was going to pay for what? What was covered by the UN’s own budget and what was to be covered by the expected gift from the Norwegian government? It is clear that right from the start there was a good deal of uncertainty and confusion regarding these questions, and it soon became obvious that the first visions of what could be achieved were too optimistic. Some restraints had to be introduced. The UN operated with a budget of \$120,000 for the Security Council Chamber.(FN33) That was to cover the treatment of walls and ceiling, furniture, railings and marble work. Arneberg’s first proposal exceeded this amount quite considerably, even though the cost of artistic decoration was not included. So he was asked to reduce the costs.(FN34) This was done, though with regret,(FN35) partly by reducing the use of marble and by painting the railings instead of using stainless steel etc.

When the idea of letting individual countries be responsible for parts of the interior decoration was launched, the intention was not merely politically symbolical, but the idea was that the countries' contributions should also cover some of the entire UN building budget and thus reduce the costs to the Organisation. But that was not how things went. The Norwegian contribution, granted by royal decree on 7.1.1950,(FN36) totalled 109,000 kroner (ca. \$15,000). Because it soon emerged that there was a good deal of misunderstanding and uncertainty as to what the gift from Norway was to be used for, the Department of Foreign Affairs issued a press statement(FN37) in which it is expressly announced that the gift from Norway was only to be used for artistic decoration, i.e. painting and sculpture.(FN38) It was clearly stated that the remaining costs relating to the interior decorations must be the responsibility of the UN. Nor did the grant from the Norwegian government include fees to the architect, something that was to lead to a number of problems.

The correspondence between Arneberg and the Headquarters Planning Office in 1950-52 reveals other major and minor problems en route. Alongside the financial questions there was the major problem of New York's very stringent regulations concerning fire safety in the materials used. The idea of using Norwegian pine for the delegates' table, for instance, had to be rejected on account of problems with fire safety. But the most difficult problem of all related to the textiles to be stretched on the walls. Before they were put in place, they had to be fire-proofed. To the despair of the architects and producers, it turned out that the fabrics woven in Norway(FN39) shrunk and contorted as a result of this treatment. For a long time it looked as though it would be impossible to overcome these difficulties. But finally, the fabrics were in place, although Arneberg complained that they had not been well mounted.

Arneberg insisted right from the start that he wanted to include artistic decorations, preferably both painting and sculpture. He proposed first a large wall painting plus a ceiling painting. The latter was abandoned on the recommendation of Harrison, but the

large wall painting was retained. It was obvious from the very first that the UN could not finance such a decoration and that the money for it had to come from elsewhere, i.e. the Norwegian government. Presumably after consultations with Trygve Lie, Arneberg suggested Per Krogh as the artist.(FN40) For a long time it was also the intention to have sculptural decorations in the form of reliefs. The sculptor Emil Lie was contacted in this connection and he also worked out some sketches. However, the reliefs never came to anything, mainly for financial reasons.(FN41)

Arneberg chose to give the chamber a unitary appearance by making the two zones, the delegates' and the spectators' sections ("stage and auditorium") differ from each other as little as possible in a purely visual sense. The design of the ceiling and the ceiling lighting are the same in both sections of the chamber.(ftgs.6,8) In both sections, too, the longitudinal walls are covered with the same wall fabric, blue damask with motifs — corn, hearts and anchors — in yellow. The rear wall behind the public gallery is clad with straw wall covering. Although the Chamber is conceived as a single unit, there is a very striking panel wall between the section for the public and the press and the delegates' seating. This panel wall is of marble.(FN42) The same material was also used in the lower part of the walls. The white ceiling covering the entire chamber is fitted with spotlights and with indirect lighting ("streamline") in the transition between ceiling and wall. The carpet(FN43) is grey. The delegates' and secretaries' chairs, 44 in all, are covered with a blue woollen fabric. The chairs were designed by Arneberg's young assistant, Finn Nilsson, and made in Norway by the master cabinetmaker Johan Fr. Monrad. The materials are elm and mahogany. The wooden doors, of pale ash, are decorated with intarsia patterns in pewter and fitted with large, square wooden handles.(FN44)

When it came to the problem of the light from the back, Arneberg's solution was radical in relation to the other architects: He has blocked out the window towards the river and thereby shut out the daylight and the view.(FN45) The large painting by Per Krogh has found its place on this latitudinal east wall. The embrasures between the

painting and the side wall are covered by thick curtains of the same material as the wall coverings.

Per Krohg's painting dominates the chamber completely. It is easy to agree with the journalist in *Interiors*, who described this work as "the most unique feature of the room". The painting, on canvas, is some five by nine metres. The lower part, roughly a quarter of the surface, is dark and sombre, representing a dungeon, dragons' lairs and other fantastic features, soldiers and war machines. Human beings are climbing and twisting and trying to liberate themselves from bonds and chains. Many of them stand silhouetted against the upper, lighter part of the painting. This area is divided into seven separate panels against a pale background. The effect is almost that of a polyp-tych, an open altarpiece with many panels. The panels are organised symmetrically with three on either side of an amygdaloid central section. Beneath this, right at the centre of the painting, a phoenix is rising from a world laid in ashes. In the amygdaloid central section there is a man and a woman kneeling to each other and holding flowers in their hands, surrounded by children bearing flowers and wreaths. In the other panels there are people opening windows and doors to the light and the sun. They are singing and dancing or engaged on building and creative work. In brief, the painting represents, in an extremely simple and unambiguous manner, the new, harmonious, bright world that has conquered the forces of evil.

Problems with Per Krohg's Painting

Arneberg was very keen that the chamber should be more than a mere workroom or "political workshop". So he did not accept the "workshop" terminology, with which Markelius was obviously happier and which Juhl also accepted to a certain extent.(FN46) He maintained that it was important that the chamber should be representative of the Norwegian culture and art of the time and that it therefore had to contain works by Norwegian artists.

When even in the initial phase Arneberg suggested that the Chamber should be

adorned with a large painting, it does not seem that the Headquarters Planning Office and Harrison had anything against it. Meanwhile, objections were gradually raised. As mentioned above, a special committee was set up in 1950, the Headquarters Art Panel, which was to assess the various proposals for art in the Chambers. The art had to be suited both to the function of the individual rooms and to the overall design of the building. As a background to its assessment of the decoration of the Security Council Chamber, the Art Panel was provided with a sketch from Krohg with an explanatory text explaining the planned painting.(FN47) “The essence of the idea is to give an impression of light, security and joy,” he wrote. He wanted to show that: “... The world we see in the foreground is collapsing, while the new world based on clarity and harmony can be built up”. After a lengthy section on the terrible and unhappy world of the past and the harmonious, better, just world that is to come, the section ends with the words: “Thus must the work of the UN and the Security Council provide the seeds for a new and more valuable life.”

Nevertheless, the Art Panel did not without further ado accept the idea of the wall painting in the Security Council Chamber. They believed that the Council Chambers should have the feel of a workroom, and so artistic decoration was not suitable. It would merely disturb the delegates’ concentration. But it was suggested that the wall painting from Norway could perhaps be fitted in elsewhere in the building. Arneberg expressed strong opposition to this idea. He maintained that the painting was very important to the effect the room would have as a window on Norwegian culture and art. He also maintained that the grant made to pay the artist’s fee would be withdrawn if the decoration were not placed in the Security Council Chamber.(FN48) It is likely that this view was shared by Trygve Lie.(FN49) In order to influence and persuade the main architect and the Art Panel, a visit to Scandinavia was arranged for Harrison and two representatives of the Art Panel in August 1950.(FN50) Lie was present in Oslo, and the representatives were shown Norwegian monumental painting, especially the work of Per Krohg. They were — apparently at least — convinced that the painting could be placed in the chamber as planned. A shortage of time was probably also a

contributory factor to the decision. The chamber had to be finished by the autumn of 1952 at the latest. If the decision dragged out, the artist would have too little time to complete the work. And as we have seen above, it was very important that the Headquarters should be finished on time.

After the Art Panel had given the go-ahead, the Oslo local authorities placed a large studio in Oslo Town Hall at the disposal of Krohg for his work on the UN decoration.(FN51)

The Security Council held its first meeting in the new Chamber on 4 April 1952.

Krohg's painting was not yet in place. It was set up during the summer and finished in time for the official inauguration of the Chamber on 22 August 1952.(FN52)

The Economic and Social Council (Eco-Soc) Chamber

As a member of the original Design Committee, Sven Markelius was already well acquainted with the Headquarters' Building project when he was brought in to design the chamber for the Economic and Social Council, often referred to as "Eco-Soc". It is not entirely clear how Markelius came to be given this task. However, it is not unreasonable to assume that the chairman of the Design Committee and the later head of the Headquarters Planning Office, Wallace K. Harrison, wanted precisely Markelius to have the task. Harrison already knew him, most recently through the collaboration in the Design Committee referred to above and before that in connection with the planning of the 1939 World Fair. Formally, however, it was the Swedish government that suggested Markelius for the task. And this choice was scarcely particularly controversial. Sven Markelhus (1889-1972), along with Erik Gunnar Asplund and Sigurd Lewerentz, was one of the most famous Swedish architects at the time. He had been one of the main architects of the Stockholm exhibition in 1930 and he had designed the Swedish pavilion in the great World Fair in New York in 1939. With this, he achieved international recognition. When he was brought in to the work on the UN Headquarters for the first time, Markelhus had a large number of buildings, especially public buildings, to his name in Sweden. From 1944 to 1954 he was Director of Town

Planning in Stockholm. His assistants in his work with the Eco-Soc Chamber were Bengt Lindroos and Hans Borgström.

The first official letter from Harrison to Markelius concerning the interior furnishing of the Eco-Soc Chamber is dated 5 July 1950.(FN53) Harrison writes that he is "... pleased to learn that you are working on the design of the Eco-Soc Council Chamber ... in connection with a possible donation from your government".(FN54) At this time, then, it was not yet clear whether the Swedish government would give its final approval,(FN55), but the probability must surely have been quite considerable, as Markelius was already engaged on the work. It can be clearly seen from the letter that time was of the essence. Harrison emphasises that the work must progress rapidly and asks for a sketch to be ready "not later than 15 August". that is to say scarcely a month and a half later. Harrison also mentions the size of the budget that the UN was operating with (about \$100,000). "It is expected that part of this budget may be covered by the gift being considered by your government". So it was still fairly unclear how far a possible gift was to cover fees and possible travel expenses for the architect and his assistants or how big the architect's fee was to be. This uncertainty was in time to lead to both problems and irritation.

Markelius's design was the most radically modernist of the three Council Chambers. It can also be said that, in contrast to the other two Chambers, "Eco-Soc" has a certain dramatic or brutalist character. In contrast to Arneberg, Markelius has created a striking visual distinction between the delegates' section, nearest the window, and that of the press and public in the inner part of the Chamber. The walls in the delegates' area are clad with wooden panels or almost vertical wooden battens mounted with narrow gaps so as to allow a glimpse of the bricked wall behind. Nor do the battens reach right down to the floor, but are mounted on legs standing on the floor at intervals of about half a metre. It gives the impression of a kind of screen. This impression is reinforced by the screen's being extended a little from the wall and rounded off at the transition to the section for the press and public, allowing the back

of the screen to be seen. A few comments suggested that this gives the impression of a stage curtain that has been pulled aside, something that further reinforced the impression of being in a theatre, where the delegates' section is the stage. The battened wall or stage was also compared with organ pipes.(FN56) As at the transition to the gallery for the press and public, the screen is also rounded at the corners near the curtain wall and drawn a little in across the window on both sides so that the light is filtered, thereby reducing the dazzle. The walls in the public area are painted straight on the plaster surface.

The ceiling, especially above the public and press area, is however the most striking feature of Markelius' design. Here he has left it quite open so that technical installations, cables, pipes, channels for air conditioning etc. are visible. The customary approach of course is to hide this kind of thing. By doing this, Markelius achieves a greater height to the rear of the Chamber. Pipes and leads are painted black, white and grey. Pendant cylindrical light fittings, however, provide a certain shadow effect which makes the technical installations less intrusive. The open ceiling led to a great deal of discussion and criticism when the Chamber was new. Many people, for instance the later President Eisenhower, found it almost shocking.(FN57) Some merely expressed amazement, as emerges from a heading in *Popular Science Monthly*: "Ceiling in New United Nations Building Left Unfinished on Purpose."(FN58) But progressive architects were more positive. Markelius' open ceiling has at all events been allowed to remain as an early example of architectural brutalism.

The ceiling above the delegates' section has not been treated "brutally". Technical equipment here is partly hidden beneath a suspended ceiling cover. However, this does not go right up to the walls, and the installations inside can just be glimpsed. The flat, white expanse gives the impression of a kind of suspended ceiling. Large, circular light fittings have been set in it. Markelius himself was very keen that the flat ceiling above the delegates' area should form a direct contrast to the girders, air ducts and other constructional details in the open ceiling above the public area.(FN59)

Alongside the battening on the walls and the treatment of the ceilings, the textiles, primarily curtains, were a main concern for Markelius. Here, he operated with a double set, night curtains and day curtains, the latter mainly to dim the light. The night curtain was the result of a competition among Swedish textile designers. It was won by Marianne Richter and Barbro Nilsson from the Märta Mås^o-fjetterström weaving workshop. The curtains, in wool and jute, were hand woven using the gobelin technique, that is to say that the textile was identical on both sides. The stylised shell pattern was dominated by shades of red and orange. The day curtain in loosely woven naturally coloured material was designed by Astrid Sampe.(FN60) Along the walls the floor was covered with polished Swedish marble, a gift from the Federation of Swedish Stone Enterprises (*Sveriges Stenindustris Förbund*). The floor in the delegates' area was otherwise covered with a greyish brown carpet with narrow white stripes. The public and press area had the same kind of carpet, but without the stripes. These carpets were made in Stockholm by Nordiska Kompaniet.

From summer 1950 to autumn 1953 there was a regular exchange of letters between the Planning Office and Markelius. By August 1950, Markelius received samples of fireproofed American oak. This means that his plan had been to use wooden panels right from the start. But for both financial reasons and because of fire safety it was for a long time uncertain whether this could be carried out. An evaluation was made as to whether the panels should be made in Sweden or the USA. The latter alternative was more than three times as expensive as it would be to have the job done in Sweden. The problem was that the Swedes did not have any special experience of fireproofing. Despite countless attempts and experiments on their part, the result was not satisfactory. At one time it was even proposed by the Planning Office that the idea of wall panels should be abandoned.(FN61) However, the final outcome was that the wooden panelling was made of Swedish pine and fireproofed in Sweden by Holmsund AB.

Textiles for the curtains were also a constant problem for the same reason.

Countless attempts and assessments regarding fire resistance were carried out here, too, before a satisfactory result was achieved.

The large round conference table was made of American sycamore. The delegates' chairs, of Swedish ash covered with pale brown gällon (a kind of plastic coated fabric) were designed by Andreas Svedberg.

A major and constantly recurring problem was that of finances. What would the various alternatives cost? Where would it be most advantageous to place production, in Sweden or the USA? And it became increasingly burdensome that there was no clear indication of what the gift from the Swedish government would actually consist of. The UN, for its part, was operating on a fixed budget. This took care of chairs for the press and public area and tables for the delegates. Sweden was to contribute chairs for the delegates and their colleagues, floor, ceiling and wall coverings, carpets and curtains.(FN62) But it was not clear who was to pay the architect's fee or even what this should be. Markelius long maintained a low profile in this connection. But in a letter of 31.5.1951 he is quite obviously irritated. He emphasises that he feels it a great honour to have been given the task, and "... the privilege of assisting in this prominent work", (FN63) but he believes that the suggested fee of \$5,000 is far too small, especially as it was also to cover any possible journeys to New York for him and/or an assistant. He considers it unreasonable that he should receive so much less than he would for a similar undertaking at home in Sweden.(FN64) He also points out that he has used a great deal of time and energy in reducing the total cost. Many of the Swedish suppliers had made gifts or worked at their own expense, to a large extent thanks to his own arguments and persuasion. The correspondence between the Planning Office and the architect is very much about tight budgets and limited expenses. And although he expresses himself extremely cautiously, Markelius is probably rather bitter or angry that the finances do not permit him to go to New York and see the work in progress. Nor did he have an opportunity to see the final result.

In a letter to the Planning Office on the completion of the work, he complains that: “I have not had the opportunity to examine and form an opinion on the result of my work. The honorary being far exceeded by my expenses. I can’t afford to pay for the expenses myself for such a trip.”(FN65)

The Trusteeship Council Chamber

The architect and furniture designer Finn Juhl (1912-1989) was only 38 years old and relatively unknown as an architect when he was given the large task of designing the third of the major Council Chambers in the UN headquarters. In his book on him, Esbjørn Hiort writes that Juhl was appointed by the Danish government on the recommendation of the Academic Council of the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts.(FN66) The appointment was all the bolder both in view of the fact that Juhl had not previously had any major commissions for interior design and also when seen in comparison with the Swedish and Norwegian choices of architects for the other two chambers. Arneberg and Markelius were 68 and 61 years old respectively and were among their countries’ most highly regarded architects when they were given the prestigious commission. Hiort believes that the proposal probably came from the Danish-American Abel Sorensen, one of Wallace Harrison’s colleagues in the Planning Office and/or Edgar Kaufmann Jr., one of America’s best known architectural historians and head of the Department of Design in the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Kaufmann was very interested in Scandinavian — originally especially Swedish, later Danish — design. According to Hiort, he gradually became something of an unofficial ambassador for Danish design in the USA. He was a great admirer and in time a close friend of Finn Juhl.

The first official letter to Finn Juhl from the UN Planning Office, signed by Wallace Harrison, is dated 5 July 1950. Its wording and the date are the same as in the letter sent to Markelius. But even before this official approach, there had obviously been contact between the Planning Office and Juhl. Juhl had received plans and sections of the building together with drawings of those parts of the interior design and

furnishings that the Planning Office had determined beforehand. It emerges from the letter that Juhl had already started on the work in connection with what Harrison calls a possible donation from your government.

As in the other Chambers, the task of designing the interior decoration consisted of deciding the treatment of ceiling and walls, determining the lighting, designing doors and railings between the levels, deciding on carpets and curtains and himself designing or selecting tables and chairs for the delegates and their secretaries. Other chairs were of the same type in all the chambers and were designed by Abel Sorensen in the UN Planning Office, but the covering for them could be varied. The UN budget for this Chamber was \$83,482, i.e. rather less than for the other two Chambers. Part of this sum was expected to be covered by the Danish government, or as Harrison diplomatically put it: the gift being considered by your government.

From summer 1950 to autumn 1952 there was a stream of letters and telegrams between Juhl and the Planning office. Infinitely many decisions had to be taken, on technical details, the materials to be used, dimensions and mounting. Estimates, mainly of a financial nature, had to be made concerning where things were to be made, in the USA or Denmark. And "flame-proofing" the materials was, as in connection with the other Chambers, a constantly recurring difficulty. It is also clear that it led to problems when discussions and assessments could not be carried out in discussions on the spot, but had to be done by letter and cable. It is not always easy to estimate effects merely on the basis of drawings and loosely sketched proposals. Juhl was keen that the Chamber should be elegant, functional and carefully planned in every detail. For instance, he suggests that the proposed measurements for the delegates' chairs and tables are too small to be comfortable, but receives the reply that these are the standard measurements. And he indicates difficulties with regard to the shape of the ceiling: "In a short time I will send you the first drawings of the ceiling, which really has been and still is my greatest problem".(FN67) Juhl furthermore writes that he accepts that the room is to be considered more as a workshop than a reception

room.(FN68) So here he is not in agreement with Arneberg, who reacted against the concept of a workshop and believed that the chamber precisely should be a shop window for Norwegian culture and art.

Although it had still not officially been decided whether Denmark would support the interior decorating project or by how much, the matter was being discussed in government circles, wrote Juhl to Harrison in September 1950. He emphasises that “everyone” seemed to believe that a piece of sculpture should be included in the gift. In that connection it would be fine, he continues tactically, “... if you would send me a note, telling me that a sculpture placed in that building and in that room ought to be abstract or at least not too much a page of literature”.(FN69) He also writes that he would like to ask a young sculptor to make a model. He clearly has a specific artist in mind, but he does not mention any name. In a later letter he was also very firm in saying of the sculpture that: “I don’t want a naturalistic one”.

The biggest problem of all in this Chamber also was the finances. There are repeated demands that everything should be as cheap as possible. And there is still uncertainty as to who is going to pay what. Juhl also gradually becomes impatient with regard to his fee. He asks for an agreement on one. Who is going to pay? The UN or the Danish government? He has of course already put a great deal of work into the project. In September 1950, he was in New York “on private business” as he says(FN70) and took with him drawings and models of the ceiling. Throughout the autumn there was also a great deal of correspondence back and forth on various technical problems — and the financial ones. But in a letter of 7 November 1950, addressed directly to Harrison, Juhl is obviously very irritated. “At the moment we donot [sic] work on the Trusteeship Council Chamber”, he writes, with heavy underlining, and he lists a number of reasons for that. The most important is that the Danish Government has still not decided anything with regard to the gift and that the Planning Office in the UN does not answer letters. He has, for instance, not been informed as to how the wood is to be treated in order to satisfy the fire regulations or

whether American workers can assemble objects produced in Denmark. He is also indignant that “old” chairs are to be used(FN71) and that for these chairs he had been provided with samples of the chair covers “... of the most odious colours I can imagine”. And then he is very angry because he has received no answer to direct questions about including a piece of sculpture. The following passage shows that he is furious:

I have — fortunately — other jobs to do, from which I can get a living, still wondering if everybody else working for the UN building will be working half a year under the same conditions as I have, furnishing drawings and model and free travelling and staying, sending expensive cables and letters without knowing by whom I am engaged on this job.(FN72)

Juhl concludes this temperamental letter by saying that his most important concerns are: 1) that the room must be finished in August 1951. 2) that he want it to be useful and beautiful, and that very few seem to take much interest in that.

Abel Sorensen from the Planning Office replies in a brief and matter-of-fact manner on behalf of Harrison (13/11). He asks Juhl to advise on colours for seating in the fixed chairs for observers and advisers. As for tables and chairs for delegates and their secretaries, Juhl is at liberty to design these as he wishes, he assures him.

At the beginning of February 1951, Glenn Bennett, the Director of Finance at the Planning Office, writes that the UN Secretary General has now officially been informed that the Danish government has agreed the gift, “which amounts roughly to \$20,000 for the Trusteeship Council Chamber”. And he goes on: “I had expected that the government of Denmark would appoint you as its architect insofar as the gift was concerned”. As this is not the case, he says, juhl will be officially appointed by the UN. Since Denmark has made no mention of the architect’s fee, this must be taken from budget for the Trusteeship Council Chamber stipulated by the UN. “In view of our very critical budget position”. Bennett therefore proposes that Juhl should be paid a fee of

\$3,000.

Juhl replies immediately (13 February) to say that the reason why the Danish government has not appointed him is that there has been a misunderstanding. The government thought that the formal appointment was to be made by the UN. He also encloses a review of expenditure showing that the proposed fee is based on too low a percentage. Even \$5,000 would not constitute more than 7.5% of the total expenditure. In Denmark he would have received between 12 and 15%. He is not content with \$3000 for this large task and refers to Arneberg, who has received \$5,000 for his share in addition to free travel and accommodation in New York. "Not that it is any business of mine, except for the fact that our position ought to be the same". The story ends with Juhl's being given a fee of \$5,000, though this was to cover "all expenses" such as the cost of travel.

As said above, Juhl was in New York in September 1950 and had the opportunity to see the building before he started on the work in earnest. According to Esbjørn Hiort, he was far from pleased with what he saw and noted that "there is no sense of a room or definition of a room"(FN73) He found the Chamber's proportions very unfortunate, and the height of the ceiling was insufficient in relation to the other dimensions. He attempts to improve these aspects by taking several quite radical steps in his proposals for the interior design. While Markelius had created a clear distinction between the delegates' area in the chamber and that occupied by the press and the public, Juhl makes the boundaries between the delegates' area and the press area considerably less distinct. So the treatment of the ceiling and walls is identical in these two thirds of the room while the section for the public is set off by a much simpler treatment of both ceiling and walls. "Fences" and railings between the levels are as open and light as possible, railings and balusters of ash, with teak panels in the spaces in between, and there are no barriers between the delegates' area and the press area. Like Markelius, Juhl saw the design of the ceiling would provide the possibility of creating a sense of greater height in the room. So, like his Swedish

colleague, he made the ceiling into a central feature in his design. But in contrast to the Eco-Soc Chamber, where the radical, open part of the ceiling is above the public and press area in the furthest interior of the room, Juhl chose to place the most dramatic and specially designed ceiling in the part of the room closest to the window, that is to say where the height of the ceiling is greatest. Here, across the room from wall to wall, hang serried ranks of grilles. Between them are placed rectangular, open wooden boxes at varying heights. They are covered with sound-absorbing material and painted in strong colours. The boxes contain technical installations, electrical cables, ducts for air conditioning and so on. Light fittings are also mounted in the boxes. The concrete ceiling above the boxes and the grilles is painted sky blue. Juhl himself says that he had the idea from an exhibition he had seen in Switzerland, where thousands of colourful flags hung vertically in long rows, something that gave the impression of a ceiling, even if the sky could just be sensed between the flags. By using the flag effect here, he thought he could hide the fact that the ceiling was as low as it was in reality. "I naturally do not think of real flags painted on the side of these boxes, but a balanced colour scheme might give a pleasant festivity, which such a room ought to inspire, in contrast, I am afraid, to the sinister gatherings in it."(FN74) In the innermost part of the chamber, above the public area, the ceiling is covered in a more traditional manner, with inset lighting.

Also like Markelius, Juhl had covered the walls with wooden panels, but without the slightly interimistic, screen-like quality that the wooden walls have in the Swedish Chamber. Oregon pine was at first thought to be suitable for this use, but finally the choice fell on Danish ash. Despite many problems and disappointments in connection with the treatment for fireproofing, the result was very satisfactory elegant and coherent in its overall impression, as is customary in Juhl's designs. Wall panels were made by the Danish cabinetmaker Jacob Petersen and according to the periodical *Interiors*, "these elements were handled more like furniture than architectural carpentry".(FN75) The panelling is rounded in the comers by the window and towards the public area in the opposite end of the room. In contrast to Markelius, who limited the panelling to the

delegates' area, Juhl also encompasses the press area in the panelling. The treatment of the ceiling and walls thus contributes to a less clear division between the delegates and the press than is the case in Markelius' chamber. In the area for the public, the walls are merely washed and painted.

In addition to the ceiling lighting described, Juhl has set up a series of large, specially designed reflector lamps in brushed brass. These very effectively project the light partly up towards the ceiling and partly downwards, although some critics have thought them too overpowering.(FN76)

The problem of back lighting from the window was unrelenting, as in the other chambers, and great emphasis was placed on curtains. Here, too, it was necessary to have two sets, one curtain to reduce the dazzle effect and one for a more decorative purpose. Juhl chose a pale, light fibreglass textile, produced in America, to hang closest to the window, while the curtain facing the chamber was of a denser textile woven by Paula Trock of the Spindegaarden weaving workshop. "As I am using quite a lot of colour in the ceiling baffles and in covers for chairs, I would like something neutral for this inner curtain.... Perhaps I will prefer it natural white".(FN77) In reply to this, the Planning Office pointed out that the soot in the air over New York would be liable to turn white curtains grey. It seems, however, that the choice still was for white. When it came to loose furnishings, Juhl designed tables and chairs for delegates and their secretaries in addition to reflector lamps and wall clocks. The chairs were in walnut and sycamore. The seats and backs were covered in dark blue, bluish green and yellowish green to match the strong colours in the ceiling.

The floor in the delegates' and press section was covered wall to wall in grey with thin yellow stripes echoing the colours in the ceiling. Juhl had also chosen covering for the fixed, single-legged standard chairs with built-in earphones. There were also chairs like these in the delegates' area and that for the press and the public. It is also interesting that these chairs, which were used in all the meeting rooms in the

Headquarters, were, in addition to earphones, also fitted with spaces for ashtrays. When the delegates, press representatives and public were all smoking, the meetings must have been very full of smoke at times.

As said above, Juhl agreed with the idea that the Chamber should be a workroom, and he was in full agreement with representatives of the Planning Office, who believed that the aesthetic impression of the Chamber should come from carefully thought out and elegant details in the practical furnishings such as chairs, textiles, panelling, light fittings etc. And as we have seen, when it came to the question of a sculpture, Juhl believed it should be abstract. But he was not empowered to select the artist. Instead, a competition was arranged by the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts. It was won by Henrik Starcke with a representation of a woman holding a bird. Juhl, who had all the time maintained that he wanted an abstract sculpture, was only moderately satisfied with the decision. Four artists had been invited to submit proposals in the closed competition. Erik Thommesen, Juhl's own candidate, was the only one to produce a non-figurative proposal. Juhl himself describes the result of the competition in a letter to Michael Harris at the Planning Office:

Most votes went to Mr. Henrik Starcke, who has made a sketch for a wooden sculpture, showing a very slim and slender woman, raising her hands towards a very strange bird over her head. The bird is not a pigeon but of fantasy and seems to symbolize mankind and hope — which naturally can hurt nobody. All entries (except one quite abstract by Erik Thommesen) had birds to the dozen, Noah and the ark, etc.(FN78)

Although he continues to maintain that an abstract sculpture would be best, he does not deny that Starcke's figure has many qualities. He is, however, worried that the sketch might lose its freshness when it is increased to full size. In addition, he is afraid that the "willed crudeness" of the sculpture will harmonise badly with "the smooth finish of the finely profiled battens". With his customary direct and slightly ironical manner of expressing himself, Juhl goes on:

As a result, the Council and Ministry decides that the sculpture must be a result of a close co-operation between Mr. Starcke and me. What that really includes, is difficult to know. I have a very small and personal knowledge of Mr. Starcke. He may be as stubborn as I am, but at least I will try my very best to make him understand my intentions.(FN79)

Juhl also asks whether the work must be approved by the UN Art Panel. And he says he is aware that, for financial reasons, the sculpture must be relatively small and made of some cheap material: "... it is clear that the importance cannot compare in "room-creating" qualities to the Krohg-mural", but he nevertheless hopes that the sculpture "will be a nice and interesting feature in the room".(FN80) In a letter dated 15 November 1951, Harris informs Juhl that the Art Panel has approved the sculpture.

The correspondence between the Planning Office and Juhl during autumn 1951 shows that there are continually problems relating to fireproofing the materials. Samples of both wood and textiles show that the materials shrink, twist and change colour on being treated. It is difficult to decide on what can be used, and this constantly leads to delays. In a letter from the Planning Office to Juhl there are repeated warnings that the work is going too slowly. The Chamber is planned to be taken into use in February 1952 and at the end of October 1951 it is still not clear what kind of wood is to be used for the panelling.(FN81) It cannot possibly go well, writes a worried Harris to Juhl on 26 October.(FN82) There were similar problems in getting the complicated ceiling constructed and fitted. By 16 January, the materials for the ceiling have not yet reached New York, and it will take at least a month to install it, writes a desperate Harris to Juhl. He is aware that Juhl is planning a visit to New York at the beginning of February and writes hopefully: "We assume you will be spending at least three weeks in New York to see the room complete and possibly attend the opening meeting". However, it looks as though Juhl was not in New York for as much as three weeks.(FN83)

However, the visit was presumably effective. The Chamber was finished by the

appointed day, 27 February 1952, even though it was touch and go. Admittedly not everything was yet in place. Curtains and Starcke's sculpture were still missing. From correspondence in the autumn it emerges that there are still problems with finishing the sculpture. Juhl complains that the sculptor is slow to answer letters and that he "... still does not want to tell, when the damned thing will be ready" and adds sarcastically: "Are we artists? So much for him".(FN84)

Many approving words were uttered about the chamber on its inauguration, and comments in the professional journals and newspapers were generally positive. But the architect himself was clearly not entirely satisfied. In a letter to Wallace Harrison, dated 19 March 1952, he thanks him for the collaboration both with him personally and with his competent staff. "I appreciate and feel grateful for all the collaboration and good will I have received". Juhl admits that he personally has not been all that easy to work with, that there have been numerous delays etc.

I am fully aware that I have been a "pain in the neck" a pest and a bore, and I would have been only half as sorry for that if the final result had been half as insufficient and unsatisfying as it is. Let me hasten to add, that whatever defect in aesthetical value is apparent, is my responsibility.(FN85)

And he goes on in his open and direct manner: "In time I hope, that you will remember me, as the chap, who was indeed grateful to you and forget the above mentioned qualities". Despite the dissatisfaction with his own result, he says directly: "To tell another truth: it has been a great pleasure and a great chance to do my little share in the very fine and interesting building".

Reception

The Conference Building was not the subject of as much attention as the other two buildings of the Headquarters either during planning and building or when it was finished. While the dominant skyscraper building for the UN Secretariat and the very striking building for the UN General Assembly hit the headlines in both newspapers

and professional journals, it is necessary to seek for a considerably longer time to find comments on the Conference Building. And that is perhaps not all that strange. This building is after all considerably less striking than the other two both in position and in design. Perhaps many will agree with Lewis Mumford, who wrote that the best thing about the Conference Building was that it was as good as invisible, except from the river, where it looked like “a solid wall of glass windows”.(FN86) Mumford believed that the Conference Building on the outside was “a nullity”.(FN87) But the interiors make a better impression, he wrote, largely because the interior design is so tasteful, “thanks mainly to Danish and Swedish designers”(FN88) (making no mention of the Norwegian!). The only Chamber he comments on in greater detail is that by Markelius. Like most other critics, Mumford especially draws attention to the striking ceiling, which he thinks is too dramatic and unsuited to these surroundings. When the lights are switched on in the delegates’ area you have a sense of being present during the shooting of a film, he writes. In conclusion, Mumford maintains that even if the interiors are the only aspect of the Conference Building justifying its being called architecture, the Chambers lack a unified impression. “The lack of conviction, the element of exaggeration, the recurrent touch of uncertainty that pervades the whole design makes even these elegant 89rooms less workmanlike than they should be.”(FN89)

The American architectural periodical *Architectural Forum* carried articles, exchanges of views and interviews relating to the UN headquarters both during the planning and building stage and when the complex was finished. Most attention is given also here to the buildings for the Secretariat and for the General Assembly. But a richly illustrated article in the April issue of 1952 was dedicated completely to the Conference Building, primarily the three Committee Chambers. A large coloured photograph of Markelius’ Chamber takes up the front cover of this issue. Like so many others, the author of this article points to the anonymous quality about the Conference Building. Seen from the land side, it is “but a hyphen between Secretariat and General Assembly”.(FN90) The Conference Building represented primarily an interior problem, says the author of this article, and so three Scandinavian architects were called in to

design the three Committee Chambers. “The result is three interesting variations on the ‘humanist’ design idiom now popular in the Scandinavian countries”S.(FN91) This is followed by a description of Markelius’ and Juhl’s Chambers, with many illustrations. Arneberg’s work on the other hand is seen as less interesting and is dismissed with the following lines: “Architect Arneberg’s Security Council Chamber does not measure up to the other two, is therefore not illustrated.”(FN92)

Architectural Record had a lengthy article in its July number 1952, “United Nations Headquarters. A Description and Appraisal” written by Henry Stern Churchill. The buildings for the United Nations are presumably, he wrote in his introduction, “the most important architectural work of the century. They constitute a World Capitol, as such draw the eyes of the world as a symbol of hope for world peace and the visible expression of world government”. In his article, which extends over almost twenty pages, the entire complex, its position, the planning solutions, functions, aesthetics and symbolism are analysed. Churchill places great emphasis on the fact that it has been both difficult and challenging to design a complex with so many different requirements. The greatest attention, naturally enough, goes to the Secretariat Building and the General Assembly Building, but the author of this article also spends a good deal of space on the three Committee Chambers. He is positive, though with reservation, regarding Arneberg’s solution to the interior:

While rich and consistent, the Security Council Room seems curiously antique; not “old-fashioned”, but reminiscent rather of the best late medieval decors — the older part of the Chateau of Blois, or the sacristies of late Gothic cathedrals, almost as though the room had been restored by Viollet le Duc.(FN93)

It is obvious that the article was written before Per Krohg’s painting was put in place. Churchill says only that Arneberg has built a free-standing screen in front of the window as the background to the President of the Council, but he admits that the screen has to be decorated and “a great deal of the final effect of the room will

depend upon the decoration”

Finn Juhl’s chamber is described as “strikingly light and vibrant ... a gay and pleasant room”. The only “false note” is struck by the large aluminium light fittings. In the reviewer’s opinion, they are “grossly out of scale with the sharp fineness of the rest of the design”. Markelius’ Eco-Soc Chamber is described as the boldest and most dramatic of the three Council Chambers. Otherwise the reference to it is quite brief and neutral. There is a reference to the experimental, open ceiling, but without either critical or approving comments. In his summing up on the three Scandinavian interiors, however, he expresses a relatively high degree of scepticism:

It would be hard to find a better example of the uncertainty and irresolution that besets modern architecture outside the field of structural design. Striking as all three principal Council rooms are, they do not speak the same language; they lack a common accord of dignity. They are vibrant, thin; their attraction comes from and is on the surface, there is no depth. All three lack conviction; they are the expression of personal ideas of decoration, not the expression of an underlying and common culture.(FN94)

Churchill is much in agreement with Mumford’s comment on the Committee Chambers’ “uncertainty and lack of conviction.”

The discussion of the rooms in the periodical *Interiors*(FN95) has been touched on several times above. Of the discussions and presentations relating to the Committee Chambers that I have gone through, this is the most thorough and detailed. The article on the three Chambers takes up altogether 25 pages, richly illustrated. Arneberg’s Chamber is described as consistent, beautiful and harmonious in materials and details. One senses a certain reservation regarding Arneberg’s somewhat conservative attitude, although, in contrast to the case in many other references, this is formulated very cautiously: “And yet, though there is not a single traditional *item* in this chamber, its *total effect* is indeed conservative like the romantically Scandinavian Oslo town hall which is Arneberg’s best known work”.

Sweden is described as the Scandinavian country that stands strongest for its modern architecture. And the country: “... did not risk her standing by placing the responsibility in the hands of Sven Markelius,”(FN96) continues the author of the article in *Interiors*. Markelius’ Chamber is described as “austere” but at the same time “theatrical”.

The greatest enthusiasm is reserved for Finn Juhl’s Chamber. It is described as “valiant, exhilarating, exquisite and ingenious”. Several other professional journals had more extensive articles on the entire UN complex, in which the Conference Building and the Committee Chambers were also discussed. Most are sober descriptions without either severe criticism or enthusiasm. On the whole, Arneberg’s Chamber was seen as “old-fashioned” or conservative, while the other two are seen as more in keeping with the age. This impression is also found in ordinary periodicals and newspapers. In general, greater emphasis is placed on discussing what for that time were advanced installations such as earphones with simultaneous translation, a studio for television recordings and so on than on formal and aesthetic solutions.

Conclusion

None of those writing later on Arneberg, Markelius and Juhl appear to consider the works at the UN as major landmarks in the architects’ oeuvres. At all events, they have devoted very little space to them.(FN97) And even if the three architects themselves naturally enough felt the commission to be an honour, it seems that none of them was really satisfied either with the result or with the conditions relating to the task. In an article in the periodical *Byggekunst* entitled “On the UN Building in New York”,(FN98) Arneberg himself writes on the work on the Security Council Chamber. He seems almost to be apologetic because his Chamber is so different from the others. When he started work, the building was really only just in its very early stages, he writes, and, in contrast to his two colleagues, he had thus not had the opportunity of seeing the chamber beforehand, but had to relate to drawings. At the time he was

planning the interior decoration, the windows were arranged differently from what later became the case (see note 45), and he had been told that wood could not be used in the scheme, something that limited his effects considerably, he says. In an interview with *Interiors*,(FN99) he also makes a point of this and maintains that it was a handicap to be the first to submit proposals for the interior design. He had no information as to what was being planned for the other Chambers. “Therefore, quite possibly, many consider the room of the Security Council to be too conservative in comparison with the other rooms,” he goes on to say, with a small stab at his two colleagues’ more radical solutions: “My understanding of the problem was to execute a room of good, durable materials with a character, in all simplicity, which represented not only a casual taste of today, but a character so neutral that it could withstand the test of time”.(FN100)

Markelius also seems to have certain reservations with regard to the Eco-Soc commission. At all events, he was obviously fairly disappointed because, for financial reasons, he was “not given the opportunity” to supervise the work as it progressed, let alone to see it when complete. His own discussion of the work in the periodical *Byggmästaren* in 1953 was written without his having seen the finished chamber. And Juhl at least was not entirely satisfied if we are to judge from the letter to Harrison quoted above. Perhaps the three architects felt that the task facing them was too constricting, that they had too little freedom to do their own thing. Most architectural decisions had been made even before they were brought into the task. What they could contribute was a kind of “icing on the cake”. We also have to remember that all three architects had other major and important commissions at the same time as they were working on the UN project. It is almost as though it could be maintained that the work in New York was a secondary matter to them all. Arneberg was in the midst of the completion phase of Oslo Town Hall, which must surely be called his most important work. Markelius was Director of Town Planning in Stockholm, an undertaking that must have been particularly demanding at that time. In addition, he had commissions as a private architect, including the extension to the Technical

University annexe in Stockholm, *Folkets hus* in Linköping and *Folkets hus* in Stockholm. Of the three architects, it was Juhl who had the most international commitments. Alongside commissions at home in Denmark, including furniture for Bovirke København, he was at this time busy planning the Good Design exhibition in Chicago, designing furniture for Baker Furniture Inc. Michigan, arranging the exhibition “Angewandte Kunst aus Dänemark” in Zürich in 1952, the redesign of Georg Jensen’s shop on Fifth Avenue, New York and the designing of a gallery for his own works in the Nordenfjeldske Kunstindustrimuseum at Trondheim. His involvement with so many projects also emerges from a letter to the Planning Office, in which he apologises for not having been in touch for such a long time. “My life really with this job and other American enterprises has been a series of events, happening so fast, that I wonder that I am still there.”(FN101)

The UN commission probably led to frustration in other ways. There was confusion as to who was the actual commissioning authority, the UN or the governments in the individual countries. The idea that the three Scandinavian countries “gave” the interior decorations is also a qualified truth. In the case of Norway, most of the sum granted went on fees and travel expenses for Per Krohg and the mounting of the large painting. Sweden’s gift went largely on the large, woven curtains. Starcke’s sculpture constituted an important part of Denmark’s contribution. An important part of the motivation behind the idea of giving the interior decoration to individual countries had been the thought that this would reduce the UN’s own outlay. This turned out not to be the case. There is much to suggest that it all became considerably more expensive than had been budgeted for. Glenn E. Bennett, the financial director in the Planning Office, writes a rather pessimistic letter to Markelius as an answer to the architect’s suggestion that the fee was too small: “All three of the gifts have caused us to spend more money on the rooms than we had budgeted. The result is an increased cost for the three rooms totalling something like \$100 000 at a time when we are struggling to complete the building within our original overall budget!”(FN102)

It was dearly also associated with many extra problems and led to delays that the architects/designers were so far away from the people that were working on the spot. All discussions, assessments and decisions had to be done by means of letters and cables. The correspondence between the Planning Office's various representatives and the three architects between 1950 and 1952 was vast.

But all those involved were obviously willing to undertake extra burdens of this kind against the background of the important symbolical effect that architecture and interior design had in the establishment of the United Nations' image. In her dissertation *Constructing The United Nations Headquarters: Modern Architecture as Public Diplomacy*, Linda Phipps shows how press, radio, film, television and other media quite consciously were used in the newly-started organisation's presentation and legitimisation of itself. There was a clear awareness that the United Nations' legitimacy and strength was based on: "... the universal moral values embodied in its symbolism"... "Architecture would play a role central to that symbolism and, thus, 10in 3the public perception of the United Nations itself".(FN103)

Both Trygve Lie and his colleagues were very much aware of this symbolical effect. It was probably not by accident that Lie manoeuvred in such a way that the Scandinavian countries were given the large task it was of putting their stamp on the interiors that after the General Assembly Hall are the most important in the entire organisation.

Notes

I would like to thank the following institutions and individuals for the great help they have given me during my work on this article: the Norwegian Ambassador to the United Nations, Ole Peter Kolby; Tony Newton and his colleagues at the UN archives in New York (UN Archives and Records Centre, ARMS); colleagues in the libraries at Yale University; Eva Rudberg and others in the Museum of Architecture, Stockholm; Mirjam Gelfer-Jørgensen and others in the Danish Museum of Decorative Art,

Copenhagen; Birgitte Sauge and Ulf Grønvold in the Museum of Architecture (now the National Museum, Oslo). The interior architect Finn Nilsson, who was Arnstein Arneberg's assistant in the 1950s has provided me with useful information. So has the architect Bengt Lindroos, formerly a member of Markelius' drawing office. Bengt Lindroos has also generously sent copies from his scrapbook. Guri Hjeltnes have provided me with useful information on practical details in relation to the UN and other archives and libraries. She has also on several occasions been an inspiring informant, especially concerning Trygve Lie and his activities as UN Secretary General.

1. The UN Building, New York. From Finn Juhl's archive, Danish Museum of Decorative Art.
2. The Site Plan of the UN Buildings. 1. Visitors' Entrance, 2. Gardens, 3. General Assembly, 4. Conference Building, 5. Secretariat, 6. Library, 7. Rotunda, 8. Main Gate.
3. General Assembly. North Lobby.
4. General Assembly. North Lobby.
5. Third floor plan of the Conference Building. 1. Delegate Lounge, 2. Writing Room, 3. Public Corridor, 4. ECO-SOC Chamber, 5. Trusteeship Council Chamber, 6. Security Council Chamber, 7. Projection Room, 8. Public Seating, 9. Press Seating, 10. TV and Sound, 11. Translators, 12. Lounge, 13. Fan Room, 14. Press Offices.
6. Arnstein Arneberg, Perspective drawing of the Security Council Chamber, 1951. The National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design, Oslo.
7. Arnstein Arneberg, Chair for the Security Council Chamber, 1951. National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design, Oslo.
8. Arnstein Arneberg, The Security Council Chamber, UN Building, New York. 1950-52,
9. Per Krohg, oil on canvas, 5 x 9 m, Security Council Chamber, UN Building, New York. 1952.
10. Sven Markelius, The ECO-SOC chamber, UN Conference Building, New York, 1950-52.
11. Sven Markelius, Economic and Social Chamber, UN Building, New York Side entrance, notice back of wooden wall-battening mounted legs.
12. Finn Juhl, The Trusteeship Council Chamber The UN Building, New York, 1950-52.
13. Finn Juhl, Isometric drawing of the ceiling grilles, The Trusteeship Council

Chamber. Pen and watercolour, 1950-51. Danish Museum of Decorative Art.

14. Finn Juhl, Design for the chairs for the delegates. Pen and water-colour, 1950-51.

Danish Museum of Decorative Art.

15. Finn Juhl, Window-wall. The Trusteeship Council Chamber. Pen and watercolour, 1950-51. Danish Museum of Decorative Art.

16. Finn Juhl, Seating plan for the Trusteeship Council Chamber Pen and watercolour, 1950-51, Danish Museum of Decorative Art.

17. Finn Juhl, The Trusteeship Council Chamber. The UN Building, New York, 1952.

18. Finn Juhl in front of Henrik Starcke's sculpture. The Trustee-ship Council Chamber. The UN Building, New York.

19. Finn Juhl, The Trusteeship Council Chamber. The UN Building, New York 1950-52.

Footnotes

1. In her comprehensive book on Sven Markelius, Eva Rudberg devotes only a few pages to Markelius' work with the UN Building. Esbjørn Hiort's biography of Finn Juhl also treats Juhl's work at the UN only briefly. In the literature on Arnstein Arneberg, his work in the UN is only just mentioned. This suggests that the authors do not believe that the work in the UN is among the best by these architects.

2. The concept of "Scandinavian Design" was not really established before the beginning of the 1950s, but many people had become aware of architecture and design from the Nordic countries, not least as a result of the large international exhibitions in the 1920s and 1930s.

3. It was not without its problems that American high finance played such a major role. Especially countries in the Communist bloc reacted negatively. On this, see Phipps' *Constructing the United Nations Headquarters: Modern Architecture as Public Diplomacy*.

4. On the task of deciding on an area, finding a site etc., see Dudley. *Workshop for Peace and Trygve Lie. In the Cause of Peace*. New York, 1954.

5. Nikolai Bassov (Soviet Union), Gaston Brunfaut (Belgium), Ernest Cormier (Canada), Charles le Corbusier (France), Liang Seu-cheng (China), Sven Markelius (Sweden), Oscar Niemeyer (Brazil), Howard Robertson (Britain), G.A. Soilleus (Australia) and Julio Vilamaja (Uruguay).

6. Phipps suggests that Harrison was appointed thanks to Trygve Lie and calls this "a clear instance of behind-the-scenes maneuvering" Phipps, *op.cit.*, 1998, 143, note 62.

7. It was still used as an objection and a criticism of Harrison that he had such a close connection with Rockefeller and American capitalism. Many also believed that Harrison had also imposed himself too much on the final shape of the UN Headquarters. They maintained that it reminded too much of the Rockefeller and other commercial buildings.

8. Trygve Lie writes in his memoirs that the idea of a collective of design consultants was Harrison's, *op.cit.*, 115.

9. Headquarters Planning Office, established in January 1947 at the instance of the Headquarters Advisory Committee.

10. For instance by Newhouse and Dudley.

11. See Dudley *op.cit.*,

12. For instance in a major article in *Life* vol. 13, no. 10, 17 November 1952, 57. Here, Harrison is quoted as having said, "We were not trying to make a monument ... we were building a workshop ... the best damn workshop we could". The *RIBA Journal* also reproduces a lecture Harrison gave in the Royal Institute of British Architects in London in spring 1951, when he concluded by saying: "... we have tried with all we had to build for man his workshop for peace". *RIBA Journal*, March 1951, 173.

13. The dome, in both its position and its shape, is one of the features that have been most severely criticised in architectural circles.

14. The *UN Yearbook*, 1950, 177 says that in his report to the fourth session of the General Assembly concerning the building project the Secretary General stated that letters had been sent to all the governments of member countries asking them to contribute to the interior fittings and decoration of the Headquarters, and that the governments of Norway, Denmark and Sweden, "had indicated their intention of supplying some of the interior furnishings, as well as the interior design, for the three Council Chambers". Norway and the architect Arnstein Arneberg, meanwhile, had already been in the picture before this.

15. Secretary General's private meetings, 1 and 27 February 1950. Summary Records.

16. The Headquarters Art Panel appointed February 1950.

17. 18.10. 1951. The UN Secretary General's private meetings. Summary records.
RAG 1 Box 2.

18. Lie, *op.cit.*, 121.

19. Nor have I found more precise information on this in the UN archives or in

Department of Foreign Affairs papers in the National Archives in Norway.

20. Written in 1952 in *The New Yorker*. Quoted here from *From the Ground Up*, New York, 1957, 65.

21. It was a guiding principle that the organisation's meetings and negotiations should be open to the public. This is the reason why the General Assembly Chamber, the Council Chambers and the Conference Chambers provide ample space for the press and the public.

22. Only in the Security Council Chamber have the original furnishings been kept. The other two Chambers have been altered in order to accommodate larger gatherings.

23. The chairs were designed by Abel Sorensen of the Planning Office and were used in the UN's temporary accommodation at Flushing Meadows.

24. Great importance was attached to communication, information, interpreting etc.

25. August 1952.

26. Lie, *op.cit.*, 121.

27. An undated and unsigned copy of a letter in the Department of Foreign Affairs in Oslo refers to a letter from Arneberg to the Ministry dated 17 November 1949, in which he says that the United Nations had asked him to make sketches for the interior of the Security Council Chamber. He recommends that the Norwegian government should bear the cost of the wall decorations and the reliefs. There is no mention of the costs of the other interior decorations.

28. Norwegian National Archives, Department of Foreign Affairs. 1950 Jnol 122iv.

29. National Association of Norwegian Architects, Arneberg File VII, 1948-1953.

30. UN Security Council Chamber. RAG 11Box 31. File no. 120-10-6-1.

31. *Ibid.*,

32. National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design, Arneberg File VII, 1948-1953.

33. *Ibid.* Letter from Headquarters Planning Office via M. Harris to Arneberg 17.3.1950.

34. *Ibid.* Letter from Headquarters Planning Office via M. Harris to Arneberg 17.3.1950.

35. Letter from Arneberg to G. Bennett, Headquarters Planning Office, 22 December 1950. UN RAG 1. Box 31 File No. 120-10-6-1.

36. The question was, then, not discussed in the parliament, the Storting, something that led to irritation in the Storting Committee on Foreign and Constitutional Affairs, and to a demand that the matter should be examined by the Control Committee. Norwegian State Archives. Department of Foreign Affairs 1950-59. Box 1080. Budget

recommendation S.no. 13.1950.

37. Norwegian State Archives. Department of Foreign Affairs 1950-1959, Box 1080.

Press statement 20.3.1950.

38. Of this, more than half constituted fee and journeys to New York for Per Krohg 60,000 and 15,000 kroner respectively. Emil Lie's reliefs were estimated at 15,000 kroner for sketches, 15,000 kroner for sculpting. 10,000 kroner were put aside for the design of textile wallpapering.

39. Made by the firm of Johannes Petersen, Oslo.

40. I have not found anything to suggest that the choice was made on the basis of a competition or any other more democratic method.

41. See i.a. Ameberg to Trygve Lie 4.6.1952. National Association of Nonvegian Architects archives.

42. Made by A/S Granit, Norway. The idea was that marble reliefs by Emil Lie should be let in here, but they were never made.

43. Produced in the UK by Firth & Sons, York.

44. Produced by Rasmusson & Hansen, Norway.

45. In the first drawings with which Arneberg worked during the planning there were not the large windows that were subsequently designed. Instead, there were two tall, narrow windows with a section of wall between, something inviting artistic decoration. This emerges from a letter from Ameberg to Harrison 30.3.1949 (National Association of Norwegian Architects Arneberg file). Arneberg comments on this himself in Byggekinst 10, 1952.

46. "Workshop" was something of a fashionable word in connection with the UN. The UN was constantly being referred to as a "workshop". Cf. the title of Dudley's book on the planning: Workshop for Peace

47. In Nonvegian with English translation, dated 22 February 1950. Nonvegian National Archives. Department of Foreign Affairs 1950-1959. Box 1080.

48. Letter to the Planning Office from Arneberg 3.8.1950. UN. Archives. Security Council RAG 1-31 File 120-10-6-1.

49. Linda Phipps writes about this painting. "Per Krohg, the Norwegian artist [...] became the first to have a painting accepted by the Art Board. Its conservative style can be seen as a concession to the Secretary-General. Lie actively disliked Picasso and had little interest in abstract painting". Op.cit. 290). In a footnote, Phipps adds that

in 1948 Picasso had offered to make a wall painting for the UN, but this had been refused: "Lie's opposition to the artist's (Picasso's) work combined with his leftist political orientation undoubtedly prevented the artist from working in the New York headquarters" Ibid., 290, note 180. She also writes that the presence of a large tapestry after Guernica and another painting by Picasso in the headquarters was due to the administration of later Secretaries General.

50. Besides Harrison, the two other members were Jacques Carlu from France and Howard Robertson from the UK.

51. Henrik Sørensen had previously had this studio at his disposal. Krohg also took over Sørensen's assistant, Wilhelm Meling.

52. Per Krohg himself writes on the inauguration in his memoirs. He was probably a little disappointed that the artist was not brought into the limelight in speeches and other ceremonies on this occasion.

53. An identical letter to the Danish architect Finn Juhl, bearing the same date. UN. Eco-Soc Chamber RAG 1. Box 31 File 120-10-13.

54. UN. Eco-Social Council Chamber RAG 1. Box 31. File 120-10-3.

55. In a note from the headquarters Planning Office 15.5.1952 it is said that the Secretary General received a letter in June 1950 from Sweden's permanent UN ambassador to say that the Swedish government had: "... the intention to offer a donation for the purpose of furnishing and decorating the Economic and Social Council Chamber" UN. Eco-Soc Chamber RAG 1. Box 31, File no. 120-10-6-3.

56. Interiors, August 1952.

57. Eva Rudberg, Sven Markelius Arkitekt, Stockholm, 1989, 131. Several Swedish newspapers, for instance Dagens Nyheter and Aftontidningen, quote Eisenhower as saying, when he saw the chamber, "You surely do not need to be so foolish just to be modern".

58. Popular Science Monthly, April 1952, 160.

59. Letter from Markelius to Michael Harris in the Planning Office 31..1951 UN. Eco-Soc Chamber RAG 1 Box 31. File 120-10-6-3.

60. New curtains were installed at the end of the 1980s. They were to a design made by Markelius himself about 1950 and newly made by the Nordiska Kompaniet's department for textile printing. Markelius was very interested in textiles and designed a large number of patterns for printed textiles especially intended for large, decorative

contexts, hangings, stage curtains etc. His patterns are always based on geometrical shapes, triangles, rectangles, circles etc. They are never naturalistic. Several of his textile patterns became very popular and were produced in various colour variations. The curtain for the Eco-Soc Chamber is in a pattern called Pythagoras. It was also, in other colour combinations, used in the extension to the Technical University annexe and Folkets hus at Linköping, which Markelius designed at roughly the same time as the Eco-Soc Chamber.

61. Letter from the Planning Office (Michael Harris) to Markelius, 28.2.1951. UN.

Eco-Soc Chamber .RAG 1, Box 31

62. In a letter to Markelius from the Planning Office (Harrison) dated 5.7.1950, it is stated that the budget for the Eco-Soc Chamber is just over \$100,000 in all. The Swedish gift appears to have been SKK 160,000 = c. \$31,000. Markelius in letters to the Planning Office 31.6.1951 and 15.7.1952.

63. UN. Eco-Soc Chamber, RAG 1 Box 31, file 120-10-6-3.

64. Markelius also wrote to Ameberg and Juhl in this connection. Letter 28.2.1951.

Museum of Architecture, Archives, Stockholm.

65. Letter addressed to Abel Sorensen, Headquarters Planning Office, 25.6.1952. UN.

Eco-Soc Chamber. RAG 1. Box 31. 120-10-63

66. Esbjørn Hiort, Finn Juhl, Copenhagen, 1990, 17.

67. Juhl to Glenn Bennett, Headquarters Planning Office, 15.8.1950. UN. Trusteeship

Chamber RAG.1 Box 31. File 120-10-6-2

68. Juhl to Glenn Bennett 15.8.1950. UN. Trusteeship Council Chamber. RAG1/31 File 120-10-6-2.

69. Juhl to Harrison, 7.9.1950. UN. Trusteeship Council Chamber. RAG1/31 File

120-10-6-2.

70. This was presumably in connection with the Good Design exhibition in Chicago, which was arranged each year between 1950 and 1955 with Edvard Kaufmann Jr. as the person responsible. In 1951, Juhl was invited to arrange this exhibition. It was so successful that it was also mounted in the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Juhl had other commissions in the USA. Among other things, he designed furniture for well-known American furniture manufacturers.

71. Some of the chairs for the press and the public in all three chambers had previously been used in the accommodation in Flushing Meadows, where the UN

Organisation had been placed until the headquarters in Manhattan were finished.

72. UN. Trusteeship Council Chamber RAGI Box 31 File 120-10-6-2.

73. Hiort, op.cit, 70.

74. Interiors, August 1952, 52.

75. Ibid. 58.

76. For instance, Henry Stem Churchill in the Architectural Record. July 1952, 118.

77. Juhl to Abel Sorensen 5.5.1951.UN. Trusteeship Chamber Rag, 1. Box 31.

78. Letter to M. Harris, 13.9.1951.UN. Trusteeship Council Chamber. RAG1 Box 31.
File 120-10-6-2.

79. Ibid.

80. Ibid.

81. Undated letter from Jacob Petersen concerning serious problems with fire-proofing
and letter from Harris to Juhl 26.10.1951. UN. Trusteeship Chamber. Rag.I. Box 31.

82. And concern that things are moving too slowly with the Danish Chamber appears
higher up in the system. In a letter to Ameberg dated 24.8.1951 (translated into
English, so that it should also be read by others?), Trygve Lie writes of progress in
the three Council Chambers. Norway is keeping well to the deadline, and Sweden is
doing even better, but the Danes are far behind schedule: "... it is a question whether
we will have to take the whole thing from them". UN. Security Council Chamber RAGI
Box 31 File 120-10-6-1.

83. A letter from Bennett to Juhl dated 21 February 1952 refers to arrangements Juhl
made "during your visit to New York". UN. Trusteeship Council Chamber. Rag. 1 Box
31. File 120-10-6-2.

84. Juhl to Harris 20.9.1952.UN Trusteeship Council Chamber. Rag 1. Box 31. File
120-10-6-2.

85. Juhl to Wallace K. Harrison, 19.3.1952. UN. Trusteeship Council Chamber. Rag 1.
Box 31. File 120-10-6-2.

86. Lewis Mumford, "Workshop invisible", New Yorker 1953. Quoted here from From
the Ground Up, New York, 1956, 66.

87. Lewis Mumford. Ibid., 67.

88. Lewis Mumford Ibid.

89. Lewis Mumford. Ibid., 69.

90. Architectural Forum, 1952, April. Vol. 96, 105.

91. Ibid., 109.
92. Ibid., 105. In a letter to Ameberg dated 12.5.1952 Lie mentions this article. "If this article comes to your attention, you need not be upset by it. To begin with, the Security Council Chamber, as it is now, is among the most popular, and I have urged all visitors not to come to any final conclusion before Per Krohg's painting and Emil Lie's reliefs are in place. Norwegian National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design Amstein Ameberg archives. File VII, 1948-53.
93. Henry Stern Churchill, "United Nations Headquarters. A description and appraisal". Architectural Record, 1952, July, 118.
94. Ibid. 118f.
95. Interiors, August 1952, 62.
96. Ibid.
97. See above, p. 1 and note 1.
98. Byggekunst 1952, 10, 196-201.
99. Interiors, op.cit., 49.
100. Interiors, ibid.
101. Juhl to Bennett, 31.3.1951. UN. Trusteeship Council Chamber. Rag 1. Box 31 File 120 -10-6-2.
102. Bennett to Markelius, 20.6.1951. UN Eco-Soc. Council Chamber. RAG.1.Box 31. File 120 -10-6-3.
103. Phipps, op. cit., vi.