

AWARD OF HONORARY DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF LAWS

DR SAMUEL PISAR, AO

Samuel Pisar was 10 years old when Hitler and Stalin carved up his native Poland and ignited World War II. He endured two years of Soviet oppression and four years of Nazi slavery in Auschwitz and other infernos. After escaping from Dachau in the Spring of 1945, he was liberated by an advancing American tank column. At 16, he was one of the youngest survivors of the Holocaust, the only one of his family and his school. Retrieved from the ruins of post-war Europe by a French aunt and two Australian uncles, he was brought to Melbourne, where he began his physical, moral and intellectual rehabilitation.

Under the watchful eye of his great mentor, the Rt Hon Sir Zelman Cowen AK GCMG GCVO QC, he earned, in 1953, an LLB (Hons) from the University of Melbourne, followed by doctorates from Harvard and the Sorbonne. In 1955, he became Australia's intern at the United Nations in New York, and in 1956, legal counsel at UNESCO in Paris. In 1961, he was voted US citizenship by a special Act of Congress, after having served as a member of President John F Kennedy's brains trust on foreign economic policy, advisor to the State Department and consultant to committees of the Senate and House of Representatives.

As an international lawyer admitted to United States, British and French Bars, Dr Pisar has acted as counsel to governments, banks, corporations, foundations and the International Olympic Committee, where he played a major role in Sydney's selection as the venue of the 2000 Games.

He has been an occasional advisor and interlocutor of political leaders as diverse as Jean Monnet, the 'Father of Europe', Chancellor Helmut Kohl, Prime Minister Edward Heath and President Mikhail Gorbachev, and business leaders like Giovanni Agnelli, David Rockefeller and Steven Jobs. He presided at the 1983 World Colloquium of Nobel Laureates and addressed such global gatherings as the Davos Economic Forum, the Council on Foreign Relations in New York, the Young Presidents Organization in Kyoto and London and the Commission on Human Rights in Paris. He has also served as Chairman of Yad Vashem France, Trustee of Washington's Brookings Institution, Administrator of the Foundation for the Memory of the Shoah and Honorary Member of Australia's Global Foundation.

His books, published in 20 languages include, *Coexistence and Commerce* (1970), acclaimed as "the bible of East-West trade" (President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing) and "a work that charts an enlightened course for the future of American and Western policy" (Senator Edward Kennedy). His autobiographical memoir *Of Blood and Hope* (1980) was greeted as "a soaring triumph of the human spirit" (Business Week) and "powerful testimony to faith, courage and man's capacity for redemption" (Il Tempo).

Dr Pisar was one of the first to urge broader economic, cultural and human contacts as "weapons of peace" to reconcile the so-called hereditary enemies of history. At the height of the Cold War, with its growing nuclear risks for mankind, he helped forge strategies that facilitated the integration of Eastern Europe, Russia and China into the global economy.

A defender of freedom and human rights, he has undertaken humanitarian missions on behalf of minorities and other oppressed groups. He took up the causes of Greek composer Mikis

Theodorakis, Andrei Sakharov, Alexander Solzhenitsin and other political dissidents, and succeeded in freeing “refuseniks” from Soviet jails.

Dr Pisar is a Knight-Commander of the French Legion of Honour, an Officer of the Order of Arts and Letters, a Commander of Poland’s Order of Merit, an Honorary Officer of Australia, and a recipient of other international distinctions and awards. In 1973, he was nominated and short-listed for the Nobel Peace Prize.

In 1995, at the 50th Commemoration of the Allied victory in Europe, President Bill Clinton publicly narrated the saga of Dr Pisar’s traumatic adolescence and miraculous rescue by American GIs on a German battlefield, while President Jacques Chirac cited his life and work in a historic speech acknowledging France’s responsibility for the Vichy regime’s complicity in the persecution of Jews.

On 2 August 2007, Dr Pisar returned to the Melbourne Law School to deliver a Distinguished Alumnus Public Lecture on “The State of the European Union”. The lecture, which attracted an audience of more than 300, drew heavily on Dr Pisar’s own participation in the constitutional evolution of a new Europe over a period of five decades. The lecture was also a warm and eloquent tribute by Dr Pisar to Sir Zelman Cowen, who as Dean of the Law School from 1951, played such a decisive role in his emergence as an outstanding scholar at the Melbourne and Harvard law schools.