Book Reviews

Anders Johnson


The title of this book, as translated into English, is *The Noble Art of Arbitration. Gunnar Lagergren. International Judge for Trade, Peace and Human Rights*. The book tells the story of the career of the Swedish jurist Gunnar Lagergren (1912–2008), who became a world-famous international arbitrator in commercial and inter-state disputes. The author is the former journalist Anders Johnson, who has written a number of well-received biographies on renowned personalities in politics and business life.

Gunnar Lagergren's achievements were given prominent attention when the Arbitration Institute of the Stockholm Chamber of Commerce celebrated its centennial in January 2017. Lagergren was off and on featured in the film *The Quiet Triumph*, which was produced for and shown on the occasion. The film made the point that arbitration has largely succeeded in peacefully resolving international disputes. Lagergren was also a recurrent figure in the book *Arbitrating for Peace*, which made the same point, and had been published to coincide with the centennial of the Stockholm institute.¹

Anders Johnson's aim is to give an almost full account of Lagergren's life and deeds. He has been very successful in this endeavour, to a large extent due to his excellent contacts with the family, which implied easy access to official documents, personal papers, and family memories. He enjoyed many conversations with the widow, Nina Lagergren, half-sister to Raoul Wallenberg,

¹ Ulf Franke, Annette Magnusson and Joel Dahlquist (eds.), *Arbitrating for Peace. How Arbitration Made a Difference* (Wolters Kluwer, Alphen an den Rijn, 2016). Each of the book’s 14 chapters is devoted to one landmark arbitration case, with Lagergren playing a key role in three of them, the Rann of Kutch case, the Iran – U.S. Claims Tribunal and the Taba award.
famous for his rescue operations in Nazi-occupied Budapest, before being lost in Soviet captivity.

One early event, depicted in the book, concerns Wallenberg’s departure via Berlin, to his assignment in Budapest in the summer of 1944. At the time, Gunnar Lagergren was posted at the Swedish embassy in Berlin, implementing the duties of Sweden as a Protecting Power vis-à-vis countries that could not uphold diplomatic or consular relations with Germany as an enemy state or occupying power during the war. Nina and Gunnar Lagergren took care of Raoul during his short stay in Berlin. That was the last time they saw him.

Lagergren’s professional duties at this time included visits to prisoner of war camps in different parts of Germany. He experienced the effects of war first-hand, among them the repeated bombing raids over Berlin. He was young and idealistic and made it clear in a letter that he wanted to contribute to the struggle for peace in his future career. He was not formally a diplomat, but on loan from the Svea Court of Appeal in Stockholm. He was tempted to stay on in the diplomatic service. As things turned out, however, he transferred back to the legal profession in January 1945.

In 1947 Institute för rättsvetenskaplig forskning (The Institute for Legal Scientific Research) was established in Sweden. Through it Lagergren received a grant to study international trade law at the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) in Paris and the International Institute for the Unification of Private Law (UNIDROIT) in Rome. He conducted this research in Paris, Rome and Tübingen during 1949–1951. As a result, he published different trade law-related reports the following years.2

Lagergren became involved with the activities of the ICC and was put on its list of arbitrators available for commercial disputes. In 1948, while attached to the Svea Court of Appeal, he was appointed arbitrator in a Swedish commercial dispute. He was highly regarded by the Swedish foreign minister, Östen Undén, and in December 1952 Undén offered him a position as a judge in the Tangiers international tribunal.

Tangiers had been “internationalised” according to the terms of a bilateral treaty between Spain and France in 1912, as these countries delineated their own protectorates in the rest of Morocco. In Tangiers a multilateral diplomatic presence was linked to claims for foreign extraterritorial jurisdiction. Through

---