



Biography

Stéphane Hessel

Stéphane Hessel was born in Berlin in 1917 out of cosmopolitan German parents. His family moved permanently to Paris when he was seven, where Mr. Hessel decided to become a French national. After the debacle of the French armies in 1940, he joined de Gaulle's Secret Services during the Second World War, and was captured by the Gestapo in France. Mr. Hessel was then deported to Buchenwald where he got interrogated and tortured. After the war he embarked upon a diplomatic career, and participated in the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948. In 1962 he created the AFTAM (Association for Training in Africa and Madagascar), in order to enhance social development. After a long diplomatic career, he ended as French Ambassador to the United Nations at Geneva. Since the war he has been an indefatigable defender of human rights inside and outside France, a commitment which he sees part of the same combat that had led him to join the "exhilarating adventure of the Free French". In October 2010, his essay "Indignez-vous!" was published, in which he argues that the French people need to get outraged again, as were those who participated in the French Resistance during World War II. In his essay, Mr. Hessel describes a personal outrage against the growing gap between the rich and the poor, France's treatment of its illegal immigrants, the plight of Palestinians and the importance of protecting the French welfare system.