

The Russell-Einstein Manifesto

This title is sometimes given to a document that was the outcome of a long standing collaboration between Einstein and Russell. It was published in 1955 after Einstein's death, and laid the foundations for the modern Peace Movement, particularly the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and Pugwash. In 1955, Russell communicated by mail with Einstein at Princeton and they discussed publishing this document to be signed by leading scientists of the time. A few days later Einstein died, but had already sent to Russell his last letter, confirming his support for their joint statement:

Einstein's last letter:

Dear Bertrand Russell,

Thank you for your letter of April 5. I am gladly willing to sign your excellent statement. I also agree with your choice of the prospective signers.

With kind regards, A. Einstein

Russell presented this document to the public with signatures in July 9, 1955. It was the basis of his BBC broadcasts and lectures, and inspired citizen action in various ways. The impact of this statement also made possible Russell's mediation on behalf of Nikita Khrushchev during the Cuban Missile Crisis, his "victory without violence."

In the tragic situation which confronts humanity, we feel that scientists should assemble in conference to appraise the perils that have arisen as a result of the development of weapons of mass destruction, and to discuss a resolution in the spirit of the appended draft.

We are speaking on this occasion, not as members of this or that nation, continent or creed, but as human beings, members of the species man, whose continued existence is in doubt. The world is full of conflicts; and overshadowing all minor conflicts, the titanic struggle between Communism and anti-Communism.

Almost everybody who is not politically conscious has strong feelings about one or more of these issue; but we want you, if you can, to set aside such feelings and consider yourselves only as members of a biological species which has had a remarkable history, and whosedisappearance none of us can desire.

We shall try to say no single word which should appeal to one group rather than to another. All, equally, are in peril, and, if the peril is understood, there is hope that we may collectively avert it.

We have to learn to think in a new way. We have to learn to ask ourselves, not what steps can be taken to give military victory to whatever military group we prefer, for there no longer are such steps; the question we have to ask ourselves is: What steps can be taken to prevent a military contest of which the issue must be disastrous to all parties?

The general public, and even many men in positions of authority, have not realized what would be involved in a war with nuclear bombs. The general public still thinks in terms of the obliteration of cities. It is understood that new bombs are more powerful than the old, and that, while one A-bomb could obliterate Hiroshima, one H-bomb could obliterate the largest cities, such as London, New York and Moscow.

No doubt in an H-bomb war great cities would be obliterated. But this is one of the minor disasters that would have to be faced. If everybody in London, New York and Moscow were exterminated, the world might, in the course of a few centuries, recover from the blow. But we now know, especially from the Bikini test, that nuclear bombs can gradually spread destruction over a very much wider area than had been supposed.

It is stated on very good authority that a bomb can now be manufactured which will be 2,500 times as powerful as that which destroyed Hiroshima.

Such a bomb, if exploded near the ground or underwater, sends radioactive particles into the upper air. They sink gradually and reach the surface of the earth in a form of a deadly dust or rain. It was this dust which infected the Japanese fishermen and their catch of fish.

No one knows how widely such lethal radioactive particles might be diffused, but the best authorities are unanimous in saying that a war with H-bombs might quite possibly put an end to the human race. It is feared that if many H-bombs are used there will be universal death--sudden only for a minority, but for the majority a slow torture of disease and disintegration.

Many warnings have been uttered by eminent men of science and by authorities in military strategy. None of them will say that the worst results are certain. What they do say is that these results are possible, and that no one can be sure that they will not be realized.

We have not yet found that the views of experts depend in any way upon their politics or prejudices. They depend only, so far as our researches have revealed, upon the extent of the particular expert's knowledge. We have found that the men who know most are the most gloomy.

Here, then is the problem which we present to you, stark and dreadful, and inescapable: Shall we put an end to the human race, or shall mankind renounce war? People will not face this alternative because it is so difficult to abolish war.

The abolition of war will demand distasteful limitations of national sovereignty. But what perhaps impedes understanding of the situation more than anything else, is that the term mankind feels vague and abstract. People scarcely realize in

imagination that the danger is to themselves and their children and grand children, and not only to their dimly apprehended humanity. They can scarcely bring themselves to grasp that they, individually, and those whom they love are in imminent danger of perishing agonizingly. And so they hope that perhaps war may be allowed to continue provided modern weapons are prohibited.

This hope is illusory. Whatever agreements not to use the H-bombs had been reached in time of peace, they would no longer be considered binding in time of war, and both side would set to work to manufacture H-bombs as soon as war broke out, for, if one side manufactured H-bombs and the other did not, the side that manufactured them would inevitably be victorious.

Although an agreement to renounce nuclear weapons as part of a general reduction of armaments would not afford an ultimate solution, it would serve certain important purposes.

First: Any agreement between East and West is to the good because it serves to diminish tension. Second: The abolition of thermonuclear weapons, if each side believed that the other had carried it out sincerely, would lessen fear of a sudden attack in the style of Pearl Harbour, which at present keeps both sides in a state of nervous apprehension. We should therefore, welcome such an agreement, though only as a first step.

Most of us are not neutral in feelings, but, as human beings, we have to remember that, if the issues between East and West are to be decided in any manner that can give any possible satisfaction to anybody, whether Communist or anti-Communist, whether Asian or European or American, whether white or black, then these issues must not be decided by war. We should wish this to be understood both in the East and in the West.

There lies before us, if we choose, continual progress in happiness, knowledge and wisdom. Shall we, instead, choose death, because we cannot forget our quarrels? We appeal, as human beings, to human beings: Remember your humanity and forget the rest. If you can do so, the way lies open to a new paradise; if you cannot, there lies before you the risk of universal death.

RESOLUTION

We invite the congress [to be convened], and through it, the scientists of the world and the general public, to subscribe to the following resolution:

"In view of the fact that in any future world war, nuclear weapons will certainly be employed, and that such weapons threaten the continued existence of mankind, we urge governments of the world to realize, and to acknowledge publicly that their purposes cannot be furthered by a world war, and we urge them consequently, to find peaceful means for the settlement of all matters of dispute between them."

Besides Einstein and Russell, eight scientists had signed the declaration at the time of its release. They were: Percy B. Bridgeman and Herman Muller of the USA; Cecil F. Powel and Joseph Rotblat of England; Frederick Joliot-Curie of

France, Leopold Infeld of Poland; Hideki Yukawa of Japan and Max Born of Germany. Linus Pauling's name was soon added. Of the eleven 9 were Nobel Prize winners, and Rotblat would later receive the 1995 Nobel Peace Prize for his contributions including founding the Pugwash movement.