

An appeal by Nobel Prize Winner Academician Jaroslav Heyrovský

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AN APPEAL BY NOBEL PRIZE WINNER
ACADEMICIAN JAROSLAV HEYROVSKÝ

(From a speech delivered at a meeting of Czechoslovak artists
and scientists held in Prague on 22 September, 1961)

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to say a few words at today's meeting of artists and scientists on the question of strengthening peace and concluding a peace treaty with Germany, which is the main topic of our discussion and which has captured the attention of the world. It is such a momentous question for all mankind that everyone must take a position and be aware of his responsibilities. No one concerned with the welfare and better future of mankind can remain indifferent to it. Our conscience leads us to unity with the people and a sense of responsibility before the nation.

I happen to belong to a generation that lived through both world wars and was already of mature age at the outbreak of World War One. Memory is, therefore, precise, recollections are vivid, the pictures of horror appear in clear-cut outlines. Although we have since experienced revolutionary changes and witnessed unprecedented progress, the recollections of the horrors of war remain fresh in our minds. They remind painfully how many great ideas have been misused and evoke bitter reflection on how much human effort and energy have been directed to devastation and destruction.

As a member of a nation from whose memory there will never disappear Munich and the dark days following when it was attacked by ruthless forces which prepared World War Two, it is with fear and apprehension that I perceive that these forces have not been silenced, but are again coming to life. A way must be found to remove the remnants of war in order that these forces never again perpetrate such destruction. There is fear for the future and this fear compels us to be cautious. For modern, progressive man the future is not merely a word. It is a scientifically justified and planned road, it is his programme. He cannot remain indifferent to it.

We live in a country which has the full moral right to raise its voice of warning and demand the conclusion of a peace treaty with Germany. This would be an important step to avert war and to achieve general and

complete disarmament under strict control. We have every hope that this road will lead to world peace.

I would like to tell you now of my happy experiences. I have had many occasions in my travels, especially in recent years, to speak with scientists from all parts of the world. The majority of them do not wield in their countries power in a political sense, but all of them are the moral authority of enlightened reason. And almost all of them are by far and large well aware of the present situation in the world arising after the last war: the existence of two world systems and its consequences.

Technological progress in recent decades has resulted in scientific knowledge being spread with hitherto unimaginable and ever growing rapidity. Under its influence there is co-operation in science, unintentional competition, and exchanges of experience, which is leading in turn to a clarification of opinions. Scientific work on common problems associates members of different social systems and leads to understanding on questions which are important for the future of all mankind. We realize with deep satisfaction that not only outstanding workers in the field of nuclear research but all truly great and honourable scientists throughout the world condemn the use of nuclear weapons and emphatically warn against it. They take as a basis the logic of scientific thinking and help to implement the ideals of socialist humanism. They show us the road which will lead to the solution of great and complex world problems in harmony with the age-long desire of mankind for a life in peace.

These experiences convince me that honest and honourable scientists of different countries will not fail to raise their voices now and with full responsibility will speak their minds on the most burning question of the international situation. As a scientific worker of a country which has made many sacrifices and undergone great sufferings, I wish to appeal to them to help obtain a realistic judgement of present-day international problems and strengthen world peace.

I believe in human reason, I profoundly believe in the creative genius of mankind and its longing for a happy future. I believe, therefore, that their voices will be raised unanimously for this happy future.