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To the Nobel-laureates  
in Science

Dear Colleagues,

The problems with which humanity is faced today are of such a gravity, and governmental decisions on the national or international scale are often so bizarre that -as was stated by a journalist at a press conference on Human Rights held by Nobel-laureates in Stockholm, 12 December 1975- Nobel-laureates have the responsibility to use their public prestige to help make things go in the right direction and to prevent the misuse of science for purposes leading in the short or in the long run to degeneracy and to destruction of mankind.

Therefore I would strongly recommend to all Nobel-laureates who receive every year the Nobel-yearbook of the preceding year, to read and to meditate upon the Nobel lecture delivered in 1974 (see page 263) by Gunnar Myrdal who was awarded the prize in Economics in 1974. Myrdal has devoted his long life to the problems of the desherited people of the earth. He is an expert in the fields of economics and sociology. His lecture highlights the gravity of the present world situation. He shows that only a radical change of attitude of the citizens of the industrialized countries towards the people of the developing areas can protect humanity from the coming catastrophe initiated by the population explosion and food shortages, leading to hunger for billions of people and inevitably to violence.

In the present situation, the aid given to underdeveloped areas being very limited, the crucial but rational doctrine of "triage" has to be considered, condemning millions of people to death by starvation.

If, however, as Myrdal proposes, this aid could be substantially increased, if in our countries the citizens could be educated to consciousness on these problems and to a more frugal mode of alimentation, and if agriculture could be developed in retarded countries, all people on the globe could be saved from undernutrition and starvation.

Such an increase in aid is difficult to achieve at the present time when even the industrial countries are severely touched by the economic crisis and by the unemployment problem.

But it could be easily done, as emphasised by Prime Minister Olof Palme of Sweden in his speech at the Nobel banquet 1975, if "the enormous potential of human creativity and material resources at present invested in the arms race, could instead be channeled into the fight against poverty and underdevelopment in the poor countries of the world. Thus, the tremendous resources would be used in the service of peace and reason".

At this point, may I draw your attention to another Nobel lecture published in the same yearbook 1974, page 208, that of Sean Mac Bride, laureate of peace, entitled : "The imperatives of survival". Mac Bride strongly supports the view of Gunnar Myrdal on the gravity of the present world situation : "Never before has humanity been presented with so many or such grave problems".

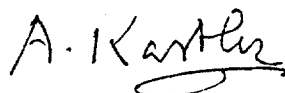
At present the competition of the nuclear arms race between USA and USSR goes on at a rate which -as our colleague George Wald has said- may be characterized as MAD. It is not only an offence to ethical principles, as emphasized by Albert Schweitzer; it becomes a defiance to human intelligence. When some years ago the governments of both nations proposed to other nations the non-proliferation treaty of nuclear arms, they promised to engage themselves in the task of nuclear disarmament. This promise has not been fulfilled. If the present trend goes on, before the end of this century, a dozen more nations will possess nuclear arms.

I strongly request all Nobel laureates to join our Japanese colleagues Yukawa and Tomonaga in their Pugwash appeal published in the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists, December 1975.

I may also inform you that the "Stockholm declaration of twelve Nobel laureates on disarmament, help to poor countries and the aim of the Paris conference" remains open for signatures. Your signature would be welcome.

With kind regards.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "A. Kastler". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Alfred Kastler