

## Mediator between Past and Future

### Nobel Peace Prize for Pugwash and Joseph Rotblat

To give the 1995 Nobel Peace Prize to the Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs and its President Joseph Rotblat was the right decision at the right time. The year 1995 is marked by many events related to the past, present and future of nuclear weapons, including the NPT Review and Extension Conference, the 50th anniversary of the first nuclear explosions that destroyed Hiroshima and Nagasaki, as well as the continuation of nuclear testing by China and France. Therefore, it was logical that the Nobel Prize Committee honoured an organization and an individual that have been devoted to nuclear arms control since the early phase of the nuclear age.

In the past 40 years, since the Russell-Einstein Manifesto marked the beginning of the Pugwash movement, the Pugwash Conferences have had a tremendous impact on breaking the ice of the Cold War. At the height of the East-West conflict, the informal meetings of Pugwash - the first took place in the Canadian village Pugwash in July 1957 with 22 scientists - provided one of the rare occasions on which individuals from opposing blocks could discuss critical issues of war and peace.

Among them was Joseph Rotblat, now at the age of 87 the last signatory to the Russell-Einstein Manifesto who is still alive. Born in Warsaw, Poland, where he worked at the Radiological Laboratory, he left for England in April 1939 to take up a fellowship with Professor James Chadwick at the University of Liverpool, and then later became part of the British team of the Manhattan Project at Los Alamos. Since it came in conflict with his moral attitudes, working on the atomic bomb was a traumatic experience for him. When it was certain that Germany would not develop a bomb, he resigned from the Manhattan Project at the end of 1944. Taking this risk changed his life, and he devoted much of his efforts to putting the nuclear genie back into the bottle. Aiming for positive applications of science, he focused on biomedical research at the University of London. Beyond that he became politically active by organizing the Atom Train Exhibition in England to inform the public about the dangers of nuclear weapons and by founding the Pugwash movement together with other concerned colleagues.

Working behind the scenes, Pugwash has played a pivotal role in influencing the political leaders of the superpowers. Pugwash had an indirect but significant impact on several disarmament agreements, in particular the Partial Test Ban Treaty, the NPT, and the Biological and Chemical

Weapons Conventions.

In the four decades since the Russell-Einstein Manifesto was signed the world has drastically changed, and Pugwash is gradually adapting to these changes. The annual Pugwash conferences now deal with a wide range of topics, which combine disarmament with broader issues of security, energy, environment and development. Still Pugwash exclusively recruits by invitation, rarely cooperates with other organizations, abstains from public action and prefers to work behind-the-scenes (which can be adequate as in the Middle East). With the Nobel Prize and the new public reputation of Pugwash, some of these traditions may change as well.

Many times Rotblat has been ahead of his time. Years before the bomb was built, he anticipated the concept of nuclear deterrence. He soon recognized the social implications of his nuclear research and despite criticism refused to continue, when the consequences became contradictory to his moral obligations. In the 1950s, he strongly promoted the idea that scientists should be responsible, not only for the quality of their research but also for its impact on society.

Today, Joseph Rotblat represents the transformation to a new generation of scientists and engineers, networking together for global responsibility. He is ready to cooperate with any group or individual sharing his aims, regardless of which organization they belong to.

Inside and outside of Pugwash, Rotblat has done a lot to convince the scientific community that a Nuclear-Weapon-Free



World (NFWF) is both desirable and feasible and should be on the political agenda. The Pugwash monograph on this topic provides an important basis for further studies. At the 1995 Pugwash Conference in Hiroshima, Pugwash has adopted the goal of a NFWF.

Joseph Rotblat also has taken an active role in INESAP, by joining the Study Group "Beyond the NPT: A Nuclear Weapon-Free World". At the NPT Review and Extension Conference in New York, together with more than hundred non-governmental organizations, he publicly objected against the argument that indefinite extension of the NPT should be the only rationale to be discussed there. He used the opportunity to push the idea of a NFWF.

Despite his age, Rotblat shows an admirable degree of activity and flexibility. His list of publications is endless, his flow of ideas seems irresistible. His example was and still is inspiring to young people. When he was asked why he had not yet written his memoirs, he said that he still does not feel old enough to do it and that he still has so many things to do.

Jürgen Scheffran (IANUS)

### The Award of the Nobel Prize to Pugwash

#### A personal anecdote by Tom Milne

We (that is, Joseph Rotblat and I) learned that the Nobel Prize has been awarded jointly to Rotblat and to Pugwash 45 minutes before it was announced officially in Oslo. It was a total surprise to us. We had not heard a single rumour. I did not know that secrets could be kept so well nowadays!

Rotblat was quite overwhelmed. Anticipating the media onslaught that was to come, Rotblat left the office immediately; he wanted some time alone to gather his thoughts, to briefly reflect on this wonderful award, and to give some preliminary thought to what it would mean for the future. When he returned to the office an hour and a half later we were besieged, and it would be like this for the rest of the day. Rotblat gave eleven hours of consecutive interviews on that Friday the 13th. After lunch he managed to escape out of the back door into a wine bar - he hoped to grab a minute's rest - but he was discovered by a determined BBC reporter who dragged

him into the street (leaving an unpaid for glass of wine!) where a football crowd of journalists and camera crews had gathered. Rotblat's home in the London suburb of West Hampstead was also surrounded by reporters. He lives with his sister-in-law, an elderly, reserved lady, who one would have expected to have been even more surprised by the events of the day than we were. But if she was, she didn't show it - when asked what Professor Rotblat had said to her on the phone, she replied: "What do you think he said? He said I won the Nobel prize!"

We have had not much chance to think about the opportunities to further the work of Pugwash that the award of the prize will bring. This, of course, will be the enduring value of the prize. In general, Rotblat plans to continue much as before and we hope that this will mean a continuing fruitful cooperation with INESAP above all in our organizations' joint efforts for nuclear disarmament. *Tom Milne works at London Pugwash office.*