

A Greeting to the Peace Event on Hiroshima Day, August 6, 2024.

Now more than ever: "Forge swords into plowshares"!

In the middle of a war, the Jewish prophet Isaiah launched a message of peace, a promise from God, a flaming appeal to beat plowshares out of swords!

His words are written as an appeal on a plaque in front of the United Nations Headquarters in New York. His desire for peace and his hope must be cultivated at any time but particularly today when every day brings new reports of military escalation. Russia's attack on Ukraine and that of the terrorist Hamas on Israel have set off dynamics that can hardly be stopped. Peace economies are being transformed into war economies. Trade flows are interrupted. The geopolitical situation is explosive. Hatred and fear in states formerly oppressed by the Soviet Union or colonial powers are driving processes of polarization. Arms producers and lobbyists know how to use them for their own benefit. Armament spending has never risen as sharply as in recent years. It is 1000 billion US dollars (!) higher today than it was in 2005 (SIPRI from 1443 to 2443 million US dollars, April 2024). In the territories of Ukraine subjugated by Russia, appalling human rights violations are being committed (according to a UN report) and there are daily attacks on Ukrainian cities and infrastructure. The consequence of the Israeli government's illusory assumption that Hamas can be eradicated root and branch after the terror attack costs tens of thousands of civilians lives, it leads to violations of international humanitarian law and a destabilization of the entire Middle East. An international order that, despite all its weaknesses, has provided good diplomatic services for decades has fallen into coma. But now more than ever, it is important to build up resistance and fight for peace against a bellicosity that poisons international relations, cynical recklessness and lazy resignation!

Every individual, every civil society and every religious organization, especially churches and states, have a duty to engage in peace furthering activities. This also applies to art, as this year's opening speaker at the Salzburg Festival, Nina Khrushcheva, urgently demanded.

Peace has seemed to us a matter of course for too long! We have settled into it and only now we see what an undeserved gift it was that needs to be preserved.

What is needed is a new peace movement that argues in a differentiated way and courageously opposes those who reject any kind of mediation as defeatist and who discredit diplomatic and personal contacts. A few days ago, the American physicist Thomas Neff died.

After 1990, he had succeeded in reducing the number of nuclear warheads of the Soviet Union by a third through negotiations. The basis of this deal was the ingenious idea of converting the uranium to civilian use and selling it to the United States. Such ideas are urgently needed today, just as the will and the perseverance to fight for peace.

Peaceful demonstrations, the cultivation of those contacts that have been forged through worldwide networks in times of peace could and should be used for further initiatives! It is also necessary to strengthen diplomacy and exert pressure on politicians, which in democracies – thank God! – is possible.

Pope Francis has long spoken of a "world war in pieces". There is a real danger that this will become a full-fledged world war the consequences of which are unimaginable and which can no longer be limited. It is the duty of everyone to act against it with all the means at their disposal. The impact of every single deed and every single word is often much greater than it seems at first glance!

In this sense, I thank the organizers for their persistent work for peace and their commitment to the service of peace.

1.8.2024. O. Univ. Prof. Dr. Ingeborg Gabriel, University of Vienna.