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Einstein activist for world peace

Our physicist popstar

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Your article missed a vital aspect of the life of Albert Einstein — his activities for peace. As the photo caption notes, he wrote to President Franklin Roosevelt in 1939 to urge the United States to develop atomic weapons before Germany did so, and this initiated the atomic bomb development program. Einstein (officially at least) did not know about preparations to test and use the nuclear weapon so he could not have taken part in the attempt to prevent its use. However, we know that he supported renowned physicist and leading Manhattan Project scientist Leo Szilard, who vigorously advocated against using the atomic bomb. In March, 1945, Einstein sent a letter to Roosevelt, urging him to listen carefully to Szilard.

Until his death in 1955, he was a leading figure in promoting nuclear disarmament, and joined Bertrand Russell in the Russell-Einstein Manifesto, decrying every aspect of nuclear weapons and demanding their abolition. The year 2005 is not only the 100-year celebration of Einstein's theory of relativity, but also the 50th anniversary of the Russell-Einstein Manifesto. Within its famous text, we find: "Shall we put an end to the human race: or shall mankind renounce war?"

The Manifesto was the impetus for a meeting of 22 scientists from 10 countries at Pugwash, Nova Scotia, which was the beginning of the Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs, and thus Einstein's activism touched Canada. The Pugwash conferences quickly became an international movement and was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1995 together with its founder Sir Joseph Rotblat in recognition of its work to seek the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

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