

# ON THE ABOLITION OF THE THREAT OF WAR

by Albert Einstein, from the magazine *Ideas and Opinions*

## A READING FOCUS

What does Einstein say was his **purpose** for writing the letter to President Roosevelt?

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## B VOCABULARY

### Word Study

The word *means* describes the tools or ability to accomplish something. Given what Einstein has said about the armament race, what might *means* be talking about here?

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My part in producing the atomic bomb consisted in a single act: I signed a letter to President Roosevelt, pressing the need for experiments on a large scale in order to explore the possibilities for the production of an atomic bomb.

I was fully aware of the terrible danger to mankind in case this attempt succeeded. But the likelihood that the Germans were working on the same problem with a chance of succeeding forced me to this step. I could do nothing else although I have always been a convinced pacifist. To my mind, to kill in war is not a whit  
10 better than to commit ordinary murder. **A**

As long, however, as the nations are not resolved to abolish<sup>1</sup> war through common actions and to solve their conflicts and protect their interests by peaceful decisions on a legal basis, they feel compelled to prepare for war. They feel obliged to prepare all possible means, even the most detestable ones, so as not to be left behind in the general armament race.<sup>2</sup> This road necessarily leads to war, a war which under the present conditions means universal destruction.

Under these circumstances the fight against *means* has no  
20 chance of success. **B** Only the radical abolition of wars and of the threat of war can help. This is what one has to work for. One has to be resolved not to let himself be forced to actions that run counter to this goal. This is a severe demand on an individual who is conscious<sup>3</sup> of his dependence on society. But it is not an impossible demand.

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1. **abolish** (UH BAHL IHSH): put an end to. *Abolition* is the noun form of this word, meaning "the ending."
2. **armament race**: rivalry between hostile nations to build up larger and larger stores of weapons.
3. **conscious** (KAHN SHUHS): aware.