

Speech delivered by the General Officer Commanding British Troops Berlin on the Occasion of the Opening of the Technical University Berlin – Charlottenburg on April 9th 1946

Some people have expressed their surprise to me that the British and German authorities in charge of this institution have not planned a more ambitious opening ceremony for it, with more and longer speeches and brighter and more luxurious entertainments. And I have always replied to them that to do so would be quite contrary to the spirit in which you are beginning your work. You are starting it in a shattered building with few facilities and no amenities, and a long and difficult road lies ahead. Your task is one of slow reconstruction and of watchful devotion to the principles on which your work must be based, and I am glad that it is at a simple ceremony, in tune with the seriousness and responsibility of your task, that I am able to give the formal permission of British Military Government for your opening. We have no need now of elaborate ceremonies and high-sounding words, but rather of earnest and humble work and a sense of simple dedication to the task of rebuilding this High School on the right lines.

What then are those right lines? Above all I think that it should be a home of true education and not of mere technology. The British authorities are well aware that the Technical High School of Berlin made a valuable contribution to your country's war potential and was one of the props of the technical development of the vast war machine which Hitler built up to oppress other peoples and to impose what he conceived to be the will of Germany without respect for the rights and wishes of the rest of the world. The four great Allies - Russia, France, the United States and Great Britain - have vowed that such a war machine shall never be allowed to rise again, and we mean to keep this promise. But we, the British authorities, do not believe that Germany and its technical education must necessarily be devoted to such aims. If we did we should not permit you to begin work today. When we first entered Germany we said that though we came as conquerors we did not come as oppressors, and for this reason we are giving you our confidence and the chance of showing that German science and technology can be turned to the civilised and constructive aims of peace. Should that confidence ever be abused we should be forced to withdraw it and to show that we had indeed come as conquerors in the name of peace.

This is a warning, but I am confident that it will never need to be implemented. Your Rektor and Senat and the Magistrat of the City of Berlin are well aware of what is required of this institution in the future interests of humanity. For this reason with the agreement of all the German authorities concerned they have given you a new name - the Technical University of Berlin. The old Technical High School is dead and in its place arises a new institution with new aims.

The implications of this change of name are simple but of vital importance. It should teach you that all education, technical, humanistic, or what you will, is universal: that is to say it must embrace the whole of man, the whole personality, and its first aim is to produce a whole human being, capable of taking his place responsibly beside his fellows in a community. Its second aim may be to produce a good philologist, a good architect, a good musician or a good engineer. But if education does not assist the development of the whole personality it fails in its aim, and this Technical University must not fail in its aim. You cannot bring into this building only the technical part of your minds and leave the other parts of your personalities outside or hang them up with your hat and coat on a peg in the hall. You must bring to your work all that you have - your love of art, your religion, your philosophy of life as well as your technical capacities - and allow them to develop together with your work through your experience here and your contact with your teachers and fellow-students.

Your Rektor's first love, for instance, is music - and I am sure that he brings what he gets from Bach into the laboratory with him and into his contact with all of you.

This universality is necessary in education because only by cultivating the whole of himself can man acquire a sense of responsibility, and only by responsibility can freedom, peace and justice - that is the happiness of all men - be assured. Those technicians - and they were not few - who were content to put their technical brains at the disposal of Hitler's war machine without considering the ends to which it led were lacking in responsibility. If they had first thought, "What will be done with this discovery of mine? To what use will this machine I can make be put? How is it related to the whole functioning of mankind?", then those of them who were whole men and felt responsibility for their actions would have seen that the aim was unjust and represented the perversion of their ingenuity. Science and technology can be and must be devoted to advancing the peace and civilisation of man and this can only be so if they are used with

responsibility. Responsibility is the corner-stone of democracy. For democracy does not mean that everyone gets everything he wants, or that every man is free to do just what he wants; but that by balancing the claims of the individual and the claims of the community in such a way that each individual has the maximum personal liberty which is compatible with the good of the community, the greatest possible welfare of all men is ensured. Every man is consulted and his wishes respected in so far as the good of the community allows. The individual is the precious and vital unit of which society is composed. But the claims of any individual are less than those of the community, and where the two conflict the individual must from his own sense of responsibility prefer the good of the whole to his own good. But the whole must never make such overwhelming demands as to crush completely the freedom of the individual. So the ideal democracy is a society of well-developed, well-educated individuals prepared to think for themselves, to be themselves and to take responsibility, but of their own free will to put the good of the community first when it conflicts with their own individuality. This can only be done by people with a sense of personal responsibility for their actions and a respect for the right of other people to think differently from them. The more you here devote yourselves to the development not of mere technicians but of whole responsible men the more you will advance the future peace and happiness of men and the more you will fulfil the intentions of the British and German authorities who have sponsored your opening.

You are forced to start in a small way. But by agreement between the four Allies all institutions of higher learning are to serve the needs of all Zones of Germany, and we do not regard you as a Technical University for Berlin alone. You have the responsibility of sending out into all your country men who ask themselves not only: "Can I do a good job?" but: "Will it be put to good use?". The needs of Germany in the future will be very different from what they were in the past, and your syllabuses will be adapted to the requirements of German life as agreed between the Four Powers. The flow of students from your institution will be regulated in accordance with this, for the worst of all things would be once more to flood Germany with trained experts for whom there was no employment. We are persuaded that the students you train here can be used by all Germany for the reconstruction of your shattered land and the advancement of a peaceful economy in all countries. In the first place in your efforts should come architecture and building for the rebuilding of your towns, and agricultural research to enable you to feed yourselves. I should like to think of this Technical University of Berlin

as dedicated to the reconstruction of a Germany in which free, democratic, peaceful men can live, respecting the rights of others and living at peace among their neighbours.

You have a big job ahead to achieve this. And you will only do it by observing the principles of Truth and true democracy. Do not let personal differences deflect you from pursuing the good of the community. Respect the right of your fellows to think differently even though they are devoted to the same aims. Be different individuals but not disunited. Do not submerge your own personalities in blind obedience to an artificial unity which takes no account of your personal responsibility, but let your community be one of free and responsible people, each acknowledging the claims of his own personality, but of his own free will putting the good of all before the good of one. And remember that Society is not one nation nor one class of men, but is the whole world and all men and nations in it.

In the spirit of these general principles I declare your Technical University open. I am happy to greet on the platform with me the Oberbürgermeister of the City of Berlin, your Rektor, Professor Kucharski, and the representatives of the Magistrat's Department of Education; and I extend a sincere welcome to our guests in the hall who have come to bring their good wishes to the beginning of your work. I am sure that they all wish you a good beginning and a fruitful continuation of your work, as I most heartily wish you every success on behalf of Great Britain.