

The Memory of Humanity

The memory of humanity
for sufferings borne is astonishingly short.
Its gift of imagination for coming
sufferings is almost even smaller.

The descriptions
the New Yorker received
about the horrors of the nuclear bomb,
apparently didn't frighten him all that much.
The inhabitant of Hamburg still surrounded by ruins,
yet he hesitates,
to raise his hand against a new war.
The worldwide atrocities of the forties seem forgotten.
Yesterday's rain doesn't wet us, many say.

It is this callousness
that we must combat
its uttermost point being death.
Today all too many even resemble the dead,
like people who already have behind them,
what lays ahead of them, that's how little they are doing against it.

But albeit nothing will convince me,
that it is hopeless,
to stand by reason against its enemies.

Let us repeat what has been said thousands of times,
so it is not told but one time too few!
Let us renew the warnings
when they are already like ashes in our mouths!

For humanity is threatened by wars
compared to which those past are like poor attempts
and they will come, without any doubt,
if the hands of those who prepare them in all openness
are not shattered.

By Bertold Brecht
at the Congress of the Peoples for Peace,
December 1952, Vienna

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