

October 13, 1960.

President Dwight D. Eisenhower,  
The White House,  
Washington D.C.

Dear Mr. President,

On October 5, I had an extended private conversation with N.S. Khrushchev, Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the U.S.S.R., which concerned a wide range of problems that would need to be solved if, in the long run, a war is to be avoided that neither America nor the Soviet Union wants. I shall hold myself available to give orally a detailed account of this conversation to you or to anyone whom you may wish to designate for this purpose - if you wish to receive such an account. While I would be pleased to be of service to you in this manner, I should also make it clear that such an account might be of limited interest to you because most of the problems discussed were long term problems that are not going to be settled in short order and will demand negotiations extending over a long period of time.

There is one notable exception, however, which is as follows:

We discussed the possibility of having telephone connections installed between Washington and Moscow that would be readily available in an emergency, if the President and the Chairman would urgently need to talk to each other. In the course of the conversation, it became apparent that Mr. Khrushchev would be agreeable to have such telephone connections, if this were agreeable to you also. I am convinced that, should you wish to take the initiative in this matter and take it up through the regular diplomatic channels, your initiative would meet with a favorable response.

If desired, I should be glad to send you a more detailed written report concerning the relevant portion of the conversation.

By way of illustrating why he thought that such telephone connections might in fact be important, Mr. Khrushchev said that, before he embarked on board the Baltika to sail for New York, some American manoeuvring was reported to him and, because he was uncertain as to its aim and import, he was forced to order "rocket readiness". He added that that order has, as yet, not been rescinded. I did not ask Mr. Khrushchev what American manoeuvring provoked this reaction, instead, I reported to Mr. Charles Bohlen what Mr. Khrushchev had said so that he might enquire further into this matter if he deemed it necessary. I understand from Bohlen that the same statement had been made by Mr. Khrushchev previously in public.

Yours very truly,

Leo Szilard

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