RESTRICTED August 31, 1950

ROUGH DRAFT FOR ARTICLE FOR THE
BULLETIN OF THE ATOMIC SCIENTISTS.
NOT FOR RELEASE.

A Letter in the Open

by Leo Szilard

This letter is addressed to a number of scientists to whom it will be communicated two weeks after its appearance in print. The addressees are as follows: Hans Bethe (Cornell University), Harrison Brown (Institute for Nuclear Studies, University of Chicago), A. H. Compton (Washington University, St. Louis), K. T. Compton (Massachusetts Institute of Technology), James B. Conant (Harvard University), Lee A. DuBridge (California Institute of Technology), Albert Einstein (Institute for Advanced Studies, Princeton), Irving Langmuir (General Electric Company, Schenectady), F. Wheeler Loomis (University of Illinois), Joseph Mayer (Institute for Nuclear Studies, University of Chicago), H. J. Muller (University of Indiana), J. R. Oppenheimer (Institute for Advanced Studies, Princeton), Linus Pauling (California Institute of Technology), Frederick Seitz (University of Illinois), Cyril Smith (Institute of Metals, University of Chicago), Edward Teller (Los Alamos), Robert Wilson (Cornell University).

This is not an open letter, but rather a real letter sent to you in the open, prior to its delivery by mail. It is sent to you in the open because if something should come of what is being proposed here, the public ought to know about it from the very outset. Moreover, you may wish to know before you answer the question I am putting to you whether the proposal can command any public support, and the only way to find out is to let the public know and let them have their say.

The question I am asking you is this: Would you be willing to meet with a group of Russian scientists (and such scientists from other countries as it may seem advisable to include), assuming that such a meeting can be arranged with the consent of the Russian and American governments?

In this first meeting we would hope to have a sincere and searching discussion (in closed rather than in open sessions) of the problem of international control of atomic energy. Our objective would be to find out what we scientists

--Russians, Americans, and others--consider to be the political prerequisites that would have to be met before an adequate method for the control of atomic bombs, and other means of mass destruction, could be expected to become acceptable to both Russia and America.

Many of you must have known now for quite a number of years that there can be no peace without control of atomic energy, that there can be no control of atomic energy without a general agreement on far-reaching disarmament, and that there can be no far-reaching disarmament without an over-all settlement of the major outstanding issues between Russia and America. Most of you will agree, I believe, that such an over-all settlement will be of value only if it will lead to lasting peace, and that it can lead to lasting peace only if it creates conditions in which America and Russia will desire to keep the agreement in operation even if they should retain the legal right to abrogate it at any time.

Is it possible to outline such an agreement? Is it possible to outline an agreement which will satisfy reasonable men in America as well as in Russia? This, to me, seems to be the crucial question, yet no one today seems to know the answer to it, for at no time during the five years that have passed since Hiroshima have there been any comprehensive negotiations at the governmental level.

The Scientists' Role

In a democracy like ours, progress is, however, not entirely dependent on actions of the government; if need be, groups of private individuals may take the initiative. There is some reason to think that in this particular case we scientists might render a public service by doing so. We are not entirely without responsibility for the trouble the world is in, and we should therefore be prepared to take the risk which goes with sticking our neck out in this time of crisis. And more important, we scientists--Russians and

Americans--have something in common which might prove to be an invaluable asset on this occasion. We have in common a deep-seated devotion to truth; to seeking the truth and to stating the truth as we see it, whenever absence from outside pressures permits us to do so.

In saying this I do not wish to convey the impression that scientists can always be expected publicly to express their views in time of war, be it hot or cold, even though their opinion should fly in the face of the official views of their government. Naturally, scientists, whether Russian or American, will be reluctant to embarrass unnecessarily their own government through their public utterances. The public discussion of international control of atomic energy in the United States has amply demonstrated this point. American scientists, after their initial enthusiastic and articulate reception of the Acheson-Lilienthal report, lapsed into silence when Baruch introduced the issue of the veto, when it became evident that the United States was not going to be specific concerning the time scale of the stages in which the plan was supposed to go into effect, and that the Department of Defense was going to rely, for the defense of Western Europe, on strategic bombing in general and atomic bombs in particular.

But, notwithstanding the restraint which American scientists exercise in their public utterances, in their private discussions devoted to the search for the truth they are completely free from any such restraint.

In the proposed discussion with our Russian colleagues, it would be necessary to be as sincere with them as we are with ourselves if the meeting is to serve any useful purpose. This is, of course, possible only if they are equally sincere with us and feel free to state their personal views rather than compelled to reiterate the official Russian position. Could we expect this from our Russian colleagues?

Russian and American scientists alike could not participate in such a discussion except with the consent of their governments. Assuming such consent, American scientists should have no difficulty in talking in the presence of their Russian colleagues just as sincerely as when they talk with each other. Some of you may think, however, that because of the complete absence of any free public discussion in Russia, Russian scientists may have altogether lost the ability to discuss controversial issues and might be too intimidated to do so even if they were encouraged by their own government. Those who hold this view are perhaps right; but again they might turn out to be wrong, for it is easy to overestimate our own freedom from intimidation and to underestimate the courage of others.

One thing is certain: The proposed meeting could serve no useful purpose unless both Russian and American scientists felt free to speak their minds in closed meetings. Whether or not this can be achieved should become manifest at the very outset. At the very outset we shall either succeed in finding the right tone or else there will be no point in going on with the meeting.

The First Meeting

We might perhaps start out by reviewing the history of the past five years of negotiations on atomic energy and discussing in general just how the world got into its present sorry state. In these discussions we might do well to have the American scientists present all those facts which emphasize America's responsibility for bringing about this state and have the Russian scientists emphasize Russia's responsibility for it.

It might then become clear before the first day is over that the participants think just as little of the official American position which holds Russia responsible for all the troubles as they do of the official Russian position which holds America responsible for all of them, and that

they regard these official views as gross and sterile oversimplifications. If that happens the stage for a successful meeting will have been set.

The meeting might be scheduled to last three to ten days, and it would seem preferable to hold it in some neutral country. Because we would be dealing with difficult problems, there would undoubtedly be strong divisions of opinion. Yet, if we succeed in coming close to the truth, such divisions of opinion should not be along national lines. The less correlation there is between opinions and the nationality of those who hold them, the more certain we can be that we are facing the real problems which are involved.

We shouldn't expect this first meeting to do more than establish the fact that Americans and Russians acting as private individuals free from governmental responsibility have the respect for each other's personal opinion which sincere personal opinions deserve, and that they are therefore able jointly to think through the problems involved.

Since whatever any of us might say at such a meeting will be his tentative rather than his final opinion, the participants must have the assurance that the record of the meeting will be held in confidence. If any clarification of issues is reached which would warrant a public statement, such a statement should be released only with the approval of both the majority of the American and the majority of the Russian participants.

It is assumed that representatives of the American and Russian governments would attend this meeting as observors but that they would not actively participate in it. Moreover, every facility should be given to agents of both governments in order to protect the participants from any subsequent suspicion that "secrets" have passed at the meeting in one direction or another.

The Second Meeting

If such a meeting were held and if it proved to be successful, it would very quickly lead us to questions which go beyond the competence of scientists.

We should, therefore, be prepared to follow it up with a second meeting held under the same auspices, but with the participation of a group of perhaps ten distinguished American citizens who possess the required experience, knowledge, and wisdom, as well as an equal number of Russian citizens possessing similar qualifications. These additional participants should also be free from governmental responsibility.

This second meeting should attempt to come to grips with all the problems that are involved and the participants would therefore have to devote their full time to that task for a period of perhaps three months.

In order to have an orderly discussion it might be of advantage to form two teams--a "Russian team" and an "American team"--and let the discussion take the form of "negotiations" between these two teams. This, however, would be no more than a device for arriving at a rapid clarification of our thoughts, and both the "Russian team" and the "American team" should be composed half of Americans and half of Russians in order to avoid any danger that the thinking of the two teams will get into the grooves of the official policies of their respective governments.

In order to make sure that the effect of any contemplated provision (which the meeting may recommend for inclusion in an over-all settlement) on nations other than Russia and America will also be fully taken into account, the participation of citizens of the other nations involved would seem to be very desirable.

A "negotiation" of the type here envisaged would have one very great advantage over actual negotiations between the governments involved. In actual negotiations it is very difficult to bring into play imagination and resourcefulness because once a point is conceded it is very difficult to retract it. This makes it impossible to experiment with ideas. In the "negotiations" here proposed, however, both teams, the "American team" and

the "Russian team," can tentatively conceed a number of points and later on, when the whole picture emerges and they recognize the weak points, they can throw everything out and start again from scratch.

It is the flexibility of this kind of "negotiations" which permits us to hope that if there is any solution to our problem it will be discovered, and that one might end up with the outline of a comprehensive agreement which the participants can with good conscience recommend to the American and Russian governments.

It is not to be assumed that either of these governments would accept outright any such recommendation, for in international bargaining no one wants to start out with what he hopes to end up with. But if, subsequently, it should come to real negotiations between the two governments, these recommendations might provide the intellectual clarification which must preceed any actual negotiation if it is to lead to an agreement that will secure lasting peace.

Proposed Procedure

It is proposed to proceed in stages as follows:

1) The text of this article will be communicated to you two weeks after its appearance in print, together with such expressions of opinion--private or public--as will then be in hand. At that time you will be asked tentatively to say whether you are willing to participate in the proposed meeting.

If it turns out that we have the acceptance of a group that is broadly representative of the thinking of American scientists, and not merely of one faction or another, we shall proceed further and set up a steering committee.

2) Next the Russian government would be approached in order to obtain its consent to the proposed meeting.

There has been very little personal contact between Russian and American scientists since 1935. Prior to that time, however, many outstanding

Russian scientists had visited Western Europe and America. Many of these men, who are quite well-known to us, are still active and have the confidence of their government. We could, therefore, from our past personal experience, submit to the Russian government a list of names of those whose presence, in our opinion, could be very useful at the proposed meeting.

There would be no point in trying to anticipate what the answer of the Russian government might be; it may very well depend on whether or not they are able to understand fully what is being attempted and that in turn may depend on what insight into the workings of our democracy they have by now acquired.

3) If the consent of the Russian government is obtained, we shall ask for the consent of the American government, either the Secretary of State or the President. We cannot know for certain what the answer may be. But since no one in our government could possibly believe today that we are on the road to peace, it is difficult to believe that our government would want to take upon itself the responsibility for blocking us even though they might think that our chances of success are very small.

Financing of the meeting

The cost of the proposed first meeting of scientists is estimated at between thirty and ninety thousand dollars, depending on where the meeting would be held, and we may raise our share of the cost through publicly solicited private donations.

The cost of the second meeting would be considerably higher. Since it would be a mistake to forego the services of outstanding American citizens because of insufficient financial consideration offered to them, we should plan on offering $10,000 for three months to ten men who put in full time. In addition, the services of a considerable staff may be required. Thus it might be necessary to raise perhaps $500,000 from private individuals in the United States for the purposes of the second meeting.

The record of the past

The present proposal to bring about a meeting between Russian and American scientists would be the third serious attempt made.

In the fall of 1945 the vast majority of the atomic scientists in America held very strongly to the belief that the elimination of atomic bombs from national armaments and the inclusion of stringent inspection measures in any agreement which might be concluded were essential for the preservation of peace. At that time it was felt that if a meeting between American and Russian scientists could be arranged, we might succeed in convincing our Russian colleagues of the thruth of this thesis, and, moreover, we might be able to convince them of the sincerity of our desire for an equitable arrangement. We thought that our Russian colleagues were in a much better position to persuade the Russian government of the validity of our views than were the representatives of our government. In the fall of 1945 the Russian government looked to the Russian scientists to match our wartime achievements in the field of atomic energy, and therefore we believed that the Russian scientists had the ear of their government. x

In October, 1945 the proposal to hold such a meeting was submitted th the Assistant Secretary of State, William Benton, and he was quick enough to see the advantages that might result from holding such a meeting at that time. He was not able, however, to convince Byrnes, who was then the Secretary of State.

The proposal was then carried to the White House in 1946 by Robert M. Hutchins, Chancellor of the University of Chicago, and R.G. Gustavson, at that time Vice-President of the University of Chicago (now Chancellor of the University of Nebraska). In a personal interview with President Truman and Secretary Byrnes they offered the cooperation of the University of Chicago for arranging for such a meeting. Mr. Byrnes held, however, that the time was not yet ripe for it.

The second attempt to bring about a meeting of American and Russian scientists was made by the Emergency Committee of Atomic Scientists in 1947, a short time before the communists took over Czechoslovakia. The Emergency Committee proposed to invite American, English, and French scientists on the one hand, Russian, Czech, and Polish scientists on the other, to a meeting to be held in Jamaica, British West Indies. The meeting was to be devoted to discussing what political conditions would have to be met before international control of Atomic Energy, with adequate safeguards, could be expected to be acceptable to the governments involved.

This time it was decided not to ask for the State Department's consent ~~in advance~~ at the outset, but rather to keep the State Department merely informed of all the steps taken and to seek its consent only after the consent of the Russian government had been obtained. Accordingly, Dr. Harrison Brown, acting as executive vice-chairman of the Emergency Committee, had two personal interviews with Andrei Gromyko (who was at that time Russia's representative in the Security Council). Dr. Skobelzyn was with Gromyko on both of these occasions. ~~Since it was felt that Dr. Brown should not go alone, he was accompanied at the first meeting~~ In order to safeguard Dr. Brown against any subsequent suggestion that he might have given away "secrets" he was accompanied on the first occasion by Mr. Beardsley Rumel (at that time chairman of the board of R. H. Macy and Co, New York) and on the second occasion by Fowler Hamilton, ~~the~~ corporation lawyer (Cleary, Gottlieb, Friendly, and Cox, New York.)

In the first interview, Gromyko informed Dr. Brown that he would have to transmit the proposal to Moscow and in the second interview, which took place at Gromyko's suggestion, he informed Dr. Brown that the proposal had been turned down. It might very well be that at the second interview, even while he transmitted the rejection of the proposal, Gromyko knew in his heart that a mistake had been made.

* * *

You may be inclined to think that Russia and America are moving toward a third world

war in a predestined course and that nothing that anyone of us can do is likely to deflect them from this course, ~~You may be right about this, but that is no reason why any one of us should not do whatever lies in his power to try to avert the impending clash.~~ It would be wrong to give up hope until such time as bombs begin to fall, and perhaps we should not give up hope even then. And if it comes to the worst, let each one of use have at least such satisfaction as we may get from the knowledge that we have done our utmost to prevent it.

Clearly, private initiative in inter-national relations is long overdue. Unfortunately private initiative will often come late, because to take action is not the responsibility of anyone in particular.

In this instance, the responsibility would seem to rest in the first place with the public; for unless some friendly voices are raised in response to the publication of this letter, it will be very difficult for us to proceed with the plan here presented.

Printers copy

RESTRICTED August 31, 1950

ROUGH DRAFT FOR ARTICLE FOR THE
BULLETIN OF THE ATOMIC SCIENTISTS.
NOT FOR RELEASE.

A Letter in the Open.

by Leo Szilard

This letter is addressed to a number of scientists to whom it will be communicated two weeks after its appearance in print. The addressees are as follows: Hans Bethe (Cornell University), Harrison Brown (Institute for Nuclear Studies, University of Chicago), A. H. Compton (Washington University, St. Louis), K. T. Compton (Massachusetts Institute of Technology), James B. Conant (Harvard University), Lee A. DuBridge (California Institute of Technology), Albert Einstein (Institute for Advanced Studies, Princeton), Irving Langmuir (General Electric Company, Schenectady), F. Wheeler Loomis (University of Illinois), Joseph Mayer (Institute for Nuclear Studies, University of Chicago), H. J. Muller (University of Indiana), J. R. Oppenheimer (Institute for Advanced Studies, Princeton), Linus Pauling (California Institute of Technology), Frederick Seitz (University of Illinois), Cyril Smith (Institute of Metals, University of Chicago), Edward Teller (Los Alamos), Robert Wilson (Cornell University).

This is not an open letter, but rather a real letter sent to you in the open, prior to its delivery by mail. It is sent to you in the open because if something should come of what is being proposed here, the public ought to know about it from the very outset. Moreover, you may wish to know before you answer the question I am putting to you whether the proposal can command any public support, and the only way to find out is to let the ~~public~~ People know and let them have their say.

The question I am asking you is this: Would you be willing to meet with a group of Russian scientists (and such scientists from other countries as it may seem advisable to include), assuming that such a meeting can be arranged with the consent of the Russian and American governments?

In this first meeting we would hope to have a sincere and searching discussion (in closed rather than in open sessions) of the problem of international control of atomic energy. Our objective would be to find out what we scientists

—Russians, Americans, and others—consider to be the political prerequisites that would have to be ~~met~~ fulfilled before an adequate method for the control of atomic bombs, and other means of mass destruction, could be expected to become acceptable to both Russia and America.

Many of you must have known now for quite a number of years that there can be no peace without control of atomic energy, that there can be no control of atomic energy without a general agreement on far-reaching disarmament, and that there can be no far-reaching disarmament without an over-all settlement of the major outstanding issues between Russia and America. Most of you will agree, I believe, that such an over-all settlement will be of value only if it will lead to lasting peace, and that it can lead to lasting peace only if it creates conditions in which America and Russia will desire to keep the agreement in operation even if they should retain the legal right to abrogate it at any time.

Is it possible to outline such an agreement? Is it possible to outline an agreement which will satisfy reasonable men in America as well as in Russia? This, to me, seems to be the crucial question, yet no one today seems to know the answer to it, for at no time during the five years that have passed since Hiroshima have there been any comprehensive negotiations at the governmental level.

The Scientists' Role

In a democracy like ours, progress is, however, not entirely dependent on actions of the government; if need be, groups of private individuals may take the initiative. There is some reason to think that in this particular case we scientists might render a public service by doing so. We are not entirely without responsibility for the trouble the world is in, and we should therefore be prepared to take the risk which goes with sticking our neck out in this time of crisis. And more important, we scientists—Russians and

Americans—have something in common which might prove to be an invaluable asset on this occasion. We have in common a deep-seated devotion to truth; to seeking the truth and to stating the truth as we see it, whenever absence from outside pressures permits us to do so.

In saying this I do not wish to convey the impression that scientists can always be expected publicly to express their views in time of war, be it hot or cold, even though their opinion should fly in the face of the official views of their government. Naturally, scientists, whether Russian or American, will be reluctant to embarrass unnecessarily their own government through their public utterances. The public discussion of international control of atomic energy in the United States has amply demonstrated this point. American scientists, after their initial enthusiastic and articulate reception of the Acheson-Lilienthal report, lapsed into silence when Baruch introduced the issue of the veto, when it became evident that the United States was not going to be specific concerning the time scale of the stages in which the plan was supposed to go into effect, and that the ~~Department of Defense~~ War Dept. was going to rely, for the defense of Western Europe, on strategic bombing in general and atomic bombs in particular.

But, notwithstanding the restraint which American scientists exercise in their public utterances, in their private discussions devoted to the search for the truth they are completely free from any such restraint.

In the proposed discussion with our Russian colleagues, it would be necessary to be as sincere with them as we are with ourselves if the meeting is to serve any useful purpose. This is, of course, possible only if they are equally sincere with us and feel free to state their personal views rather than compelled to reiterate the official Russian position. Could we expect this from our Russian colleagues?

Russian and American scientists alike could not participate in such a discussion except with the consent of their governments. Assuming such consent, American scientists should have no difficulty in talking in the presence of their Russian colleagues just as sincerely as when they talk with each other. Some of you may think, however, that because of the complete absence of any free public discussion in Russia, Russian scientists may have altogether lost the ability to discuss controversial issues and might be too intimidated to do so even if they were encouraged by their own government. Those who hold this view are perhaps right; but again they might turn out to be wrong, for it is easy to overestimate our own freedom from intimidation and to underestimate the courage of others.

One thing is certain: The proposed meeting could serve no useful purpose unless both Russian and American scientists felt free to speak their minds in closed meetings. Whether or not this can be achieved should become manifest at the very outset. At the very outset we shall either succeed in finding the right tone or else there will be no point in going on with the meeting.

The First Meeting

We might perhaps start out by reviewing the history of the past five years of negotiations on atomic energy and discussing in general just how the world got into its present sorry state. In these discussions we might do well to have the American scientists present all those facts which emphasize America's responsibility for bringing about this state and have the Russian scientists emphasize Russia's responsibility for it.

It might then become clear before the first day is over that the participants (think just as little) of the official American position which holds Russia responsible for all the troubles as they do of the official Russian position which holds America responsible for all of them, and that

they regard these official views as gross and sterile oversimplifications. If that happens the stage for a successful meeting will have been set.

The meeting might be scheduled to last three to ten days, and it would seem preferable to hold it in some neutral country. Because we would be dealing with difficult problems, there would undoubtedly be strong divisions of opinion. Yet, if we succeed in coming close to the truth, such divisions of opinion should not be along national lines. The less correlation there ~~will be~~ is between opinions and the nationality of those who hold them, the more certain we can be that we are facing the real problems which are involved.

We shouldn't expect this first meeting to do more than establish the fact that Americans and Russians acting as private individuals free from governmental responsibility have the respect for each other's personal opinions which sincere personal opinions deserve, and that they are therefore able jointly to think through the problems involved.

Since whatever any (of us) might say at such a meeting will be his tentative rather than his final opinion, the participants must have the assurance that the record of the meeting will be held in confidence. If any clarification of issues is reached which would warrant a public statement, such a statement should be released only with the approval of both the majority of the American and the majority of the Russian participants.

It is assumed that representatives of the American and Russian governments would attend this meeting as observors but that they would not actively participate in it. Moreover, every facility should be given to agents of both governments in order to ~~dispell any~~ Protect The participants from any subsequent suspicion that "secrets" ~~are being~~ have passed at the meeting in one direction or another.

The Second Meeting

If such a meeting were held and if it proved to be successful, it would very quickly lead us to questions which go beyond the competence of scientists.

We should, therefore, be prepared to follow it up with a second meeting held under the same auspices, but with the participation of a group of perhaps ten distinguished American citizens who possess the required experience, knowledge, and wisdom, as well as an equal number of Russian citizens possessing similar qualifications. These additional participants should also be free from governmental responsibility.

This second meeting should attempt to come to grips with all the problems that are involved, and the participants would therefore have to devote their full time to that task for a period of perhaps three months.

In order to have an orderly discussion it might be of advantage to form two teams--a "Russian team" and an "American team"--and let the discussion take the form of "negotiations" between these two teams. This, however, would be no more than a device for arriving at a rapid clarification of our thoughts, and both the "Russian team" and the "American team" should be composed half of Americans and half of Russians in order to avoid any danger that the thinking of the two teams will get into the grooves of the official policies of their respective governments.

In order to make sure that the effect of any contemplated provision (which the meeting may recommend for inclusion in an over-all settlement) on nations other than Russia and America will also be fully taken into account, the participation of citizens of the other nations involved would seem to be very desirable.

A "negotiation" of the type here envisaged would have one very great advantage over actual negotiations between the governments involved. In actual negotiations it is very difficult to bring into play imagination and resourcefulness because, once a point is conceded, it is very difficult to retract it. This makes it impossible to experiment with ideas. In the "negotiations" here proposed, however, both teams, the "American team" and

the "Russian team," can tentatively ~~conceed~~ concede a number of points and later on, when the whole picture emerges and they recognize the weak points, they can throw everything out and start again from scratch.

It is the flexibility of this kind of "negotiations" which permits us to hope that if there is any solution to our problem it will be discovered, and that one might end up with the outline of a comprehensive agreement which the participants can, with good conscience, recommend to the American and Russian governments.

It is not to be assumed that either of these governments would accept outright any such recommendation, for in international bargaining no one wants to start out with what he hopes to end up with. But if, subsequently, it should come to real negotiations between the two governments, these recommendations might provide the intellectual clarification which must preceed any actual negotiation if it is to lead to an agreement that will secure lasting peace.

Proposed Procedure

It is proposed to proceed in stages as follows:

1). ~~The text of this article will be~~ communicated to you (two weeks) after its appearance in print, together with such expressions of opinion--private or public--as will ~~then be~~ in hand. At that time you will be asked tentatively to say whether you are willing to participate in the proposed meeting.

If it turns out that we have the acceptance of a group that is broadly representative of the thinking of American scientists, and not merely of one faction or another, we shall proceed further and set up a steering committee.

2). Next, the Russian government would be approached in order to obtain its consent to the proposed meeting.

There has been very little personal contact between Russian and American scientists since 1935. Prior to that time, however, many outstanding

Russian scientists had visited Western Europe and America. Many of these men, who are quite well-known to us, are still active and have the confidence of their government. We could, therefore, from our past personal experience, submit to the Russian government a list of names of those whose presence, in our opinion, could be very useful at the proposed meeting.

There would be no point in trying to anticipate what the answer of the Russian officials might be; it may very well depend on whether or not they are able to understand fully what is being attempted and that, in turn, may depend on what insight into the workings of our democracy they have by now acquired.

3. If the consent of the Russian government is obtained, we shall ask for the consent of the American government, either the Secretary of State or the President. We cannot know for certain what the answer may be. But since no one in our government could possibly believe today that we are on the road to peace, it is difficult to believe that our government would want to take upon itself the responsibility for blocking us even though it might think that our chances of success are very small.

Financing of the meeting

The cost of the proposed first meeting of scientists is estimated at between thirty and ninety thousand dollars, depending on where the meeting would be held, and we may raise our share of the cost through publicly solicited private donations.

The cost of the second meeting would be considerably higher. Since it would be a mistake to forego the services of outstanding American citizens because of insufficient financial consideration offered to them, we should plan on offering $10,000 for three months to ten men who put in full time. In addition, the services of a considerable staff may be required. Thus it might be necessary to raise perhaps $500,000 from private individuals in the United States for the purposes of the second meeting.

The record of the past

The present proposal to bring about a meeting between Russian and American scientists would be the third serious attempt made.

In the fall of 1945 the vast majority of the atomic scientists in America held very strongly to the belief that the elimination of atomic bombs from national armaments and the inclusion of stringent inspection measures in any ~~xxxx~~ agreement which might be concluded were essential for the preservation of peace. At that time it was felt that if a meeting between American and Russian scientists could be arranged, we might succeed in convincing our Russian colleagues of the thruth of this thesis, and, moreover, we might be able to convince them of the sincerity of our desire for an equitable arrangement. We thought that our Russian colleagues were in a much better position to persuade the Russian government of the validity of our views than were the representatives of our government. In the fall of 1945 the Russian government looked to the Russian scientists to match our wartime achievements in the field of atomic energy, and therefore we believed that the Russian scientists had the ear of their government.

In October, 1945 the proposal to hold such a meeting was submitted ~~to~~ the Assistant Secretary of State, William Benton, and he was quick enough to see the advantages that might result from holding such a meeting at that time. He was not able, however, to convince Byrnes, who was then the Secretary of State.

The proposal was then carried to the White House in 1946 by Robert M. Hutchins, Chancellor of the University of Chicago, and R.G. Gustavson, at that time Vice-President of the University of Chicago (now Chancellor of the University of Nebraska). In a personal interview with President Truman and Secretary Byrnes they offered the cooperation of the University of Chicago for arranging for such a meeting. Mr. Byrnes held, however, that the time was not yet ripe for it.

The second attempt to bring about a meeting of American and Russian scientists was made by the Emergency Committee of Atomic Scientists in 1947, a short time before the communists took over Czechoslovakia. The Emergency Committee proposed to invite American, English, and French scientists on the one hand, Russian, Czech, and Polish scientists on the other, to a meeting to be held in Jamaica, British West Indies. The meeting was to be devoted to discussing what political conditions would have to be met before international control of Atomic Energy, with adequate safeguards, could be expected to be acceptable to the governments involved.

This time it was decided not to ask for the State Department's consent at the outset, ~~in advance,~~ but rather to keep the State Department merely informed of all the steps taken and to seek its consent only after the consent of the Russian government had been obtained. Accordingly, Dr. Harrison Brown, acting as executive vice-chairman of the Emergency Committee, had two personal interviews with Andrei Gromyko (who was at that time Russia's representative in the Security Council). Dr. Skobelzyn was with Gromyko on both of these occasions. In order to safeguard Dr. Brown against any subsequent suspicion that he might have given away "secrets, he was accompanied on the first occasion ~~Since it was felt that Dr. Brown should not go alone, he was accompanied at the first meeting~~ by Mr. Beardsley Rumel (at that time chairman of the board of R. H. Macy and Co, New York) and on the second occasion by Mr. Fowler Hamilton, corporation lawyer (Cleary, Gottlieb, Friendly, and Cox, ~~of the law firm~~ New York.)

In the first interview, Gromyko informed Dr. Brown that he would have to transmit the proposal to Moscow, and in the second interview, which took place at Gromyko's suggestion, he informed Dr. Brown that the proposal had been turned down. It might very well be that at the second interview, even while he transmitted the rejection of the proposal, Gromyko knew in his heart that a mistake had been made.

* * *

You may think that Russia and America are moving toward a third world

war in a predestined course and that nothing that anyone of us can do is likely to deflect them from this course; ~~You may be right about this, but that is no reason why any one of us should not do whatever lies in his power to try to avert the impending clash.~~ It would be wrong to give up hope until such time as bombs begin to fall, and perhaps we should not give up hope even then. And if it comes to the worst, let each one of use have at least such satisfaction as we may get from the knowledge that we have done our utmost to prevent it.

Clearly, private initiative in inter-national relations is long overdue. Unfortunately private initiative will often come late, because to take action is not the responsibility of anyone in particular.

In this instance, the responsibility would seem to rest in the first place with the public; for unless some friendly voices are raised in response to the publication of this letter, it will be very difficult for us to proceed with the plan here presented.

RESTRICTED

August 31, 1950

ROUGH DRAFT FOR ARTICLE FOR THE
BULLETIN OF THE ATOMIC SCIENTISTS.
NOT FOR RELEASE.

A Letter in the Open .

by Leo Szilard

This letter is addressed to a number of scientists to whom it will be communicated two weeks after its appearance in print. The addressees are as follows: Hans Bethe (Cornell University), Harrison Brown (Institute for Nuclear Studies, University of Chicago), A. H. Compton (Washington University, St. Louis), K. T. Compton (Massachusetts Institute of Technology), James B. Conant (Harvard University), Lee A. DuBridge (California Institute of Technology), Albert Einstein (Institute for Advanced Studies, Princeton), Irving Langmuir (General Electric Company, Schenectady), F. Wheeler Loomis (University of Illinois), Joseph Mayer (Institute for Nuclear Studies, University of Chicago), H. J. Muller (University of Indiana), J. R. Oppenheimer (Institute for Advanced Studies, Princeton), Linus Pauling (California Institute of Technology), Frederick Seitz (University of Illinois), Cyril Smith (Institute of Metals, University of Chicago), Edward Teller (Los Alamos), Robert Wilson (Cornell University).

This is not an open letter, but rather a real letter sent to you in the open, prior to its delivery by mail. It is sent to you in the open because if something should come of what is being proposed here, the public ought to know about it from the very outset. Moreover, you may wish to know before you answer the question I am putting to you whether the proposal can command any public support, and the only way to find out is to let the public know and let them have their say.

The question I am asking you is this: Would you be willing to meet with a group of Russian scientists (and such scientists from other countries as it may seem advisable to include), assuming that such a meeting can be arranged with the consent of the Russian and American governments?

In this meeting we would hope to have a sincere and searching discussion (in closed rather than in open sessions) of the problem of international control of atomic energy. Our objective would be to find out what we scientists

—Russians, Americans, and others—consider to be the political prerequisites that would have to be met before an adequate method for the control of atomic bombs, and other means of mass destruction, could be expected to become acceptable to both Russia and America.

Many of you must have known now for quite a number of years that there can be no peace without control of atomic energy, that there can be no control of atomic energy without a general agreement on far-reaching disarmament, and that there can be no far-reaching disarmament without an over-all settlement of the major outstanding issues between Russia and America. Most of you will agree, I believe, that such an over-all settlement will be of value only if it will lead to lasting peace, and that it can lead to lasting peace only if it creates conditions in which America and Russia will desire to keep the agreement in operation even if they should retain the legal right to abrogate it at any time.

Is it possible to outline such an agreement? Is it possible to outline an agreement which will satisfy reasonable men in America as well as in Russia? This, to me, seems to be the crucial question, yet no one today seems to know the answer to it, for at no time during the five years that have passed since Hiroshima have there been any comprehensive negotiations at the governmental level.

The Scientists' Role

In a democracy like ours, progress is, however, not entirely dependent on actions of the government; if need be, groups of private individuals may take the initiative. There is some reason to think that in this particular case we scientists might render a public service by doing so. We are not entirely without responsibility for the trouble the world is in, and we should therefore be prepared to take the risk which goes with sticking our neck out in this time of crisis. And more important, we scientists—Russians and

Americans--have something in common which might prove to be an invaluable asset on this occasion. We have in common a deep-seated devotion to truth; to seeking the truth and to stating the truth as we see it, whenever absence from outside pressures permits us to do so.

In saying this I do not wish to convey the impression that scientists can always be expected publicly to express their views in time of war, be it hot or cold, even though their opinion should fly in the face of the official views of their government. Naturally, scientists, whether Russian or American, will be reluctant to embarrass unnecessarily their own government through their public utterances. The public discussion of international control of atomic energy in the United States has amply demonstrated this point. American scientists, after their initial enthusiastic and articulate reception of the Acheson-Lilienthal report, lapsed into silence when Baruch introduced the issue of the veto, when it became evident that the United States was not going to be specific concerning the time scale of the stages in which the plan was supposed to go into effect, and that the Department of Defense was going to rely, for the defense of Western Europe, on strategic bombing in general and atomic bombs in particular.

But, notwithstanding the restraint which American scientists exercise in their public utterances, in their private discussions devoted to the search for the truth they are completely free from any such restraint.

In the proposed discussion with our Russian colleagues, it would be necessary to be as sincere with them as we are with ourselves if the meeting is to serve any useful purpose. This is, of course, possible only if they are equally sincere with us and feel free to state their personal views rather than compelled to reiterate the official Russian position. Could we expect this from our Russian colleagues?

Russian and American scientists alike could not participate in such a discussion except with the consent of their governments. Assuming such consent, American scientists should have no difficulty in talking in the presence of their Russian colleagues just as sincerely as when they talk with each other. Some of you may think, however, that because of the complete absence of any free public discussion in Russia, Russian scientists may have altogether lost the ability to discuss controversial issues and might be too intimidated to do so even if they were encouraged by their own government. Those who hold this view are perhaps right; but again they might turn out to be wrong, for it is easy to overestimate our own freedom from intimidation and to underestimate the courage of others.

One thing is certain: The proposed meeting could serve no useful purpose unless both Russian and American scientists felt free to speak their minds in closed meetings. Whether or not this can be achieved should become manifest at the very outset. At the very outset we shall either succeed in finding the right tone or else there will be no point in going on with the meeting.

The First Meeting

We might perhaps start out by reviewing the history of the past five years of negotiations on atomic energy and discussing in general just how the world got into its present sorry state. In these discussions we might do well to have the American scientists present all those facts which emphasize America's responsibility for bringing about this state and have the Russian scientists emphasize Russia's responsibility for it.

It might then become clear before the first day is over that the participants think just as little of the official American position which holds Russia responsible for all the troubles as they do of the official Russian position which holds America responsible for all of them, and that

they regard these official views as gross and sterile oversimplifications. If that happens the stage for a successful meeting will have been set.

The meeting might be scheduled to last three to ten days, and it would seem preferable to hold it in some neutral country. Because we would be dealing with difficult problems, there would undoubtedly be strong divisions of opinion. Yet, if we succeed in coming close to the truth, such divisions of opinion should not be along national lines. The less correlation there will be between opinions and the nationality of those who hold them, the more certain we can be that we are facing the real problems which are involved.

We shouldn't expect this first meeting to do more than establish the fact that Americans and Russians acting as private individuals free from governmental responsibility have the respect for each other's personal opinion which sincere personal opinions deserve, and that they are therefore able jointly to think through the problems involved.

Since whatever any of us might say at such a meeting will be his tentative rather than his final opinion, the participants must have the assurance that the record of the meeting will be held in confidence. If any clarification of issues is reached which would warrant a public statement, such a statement should be released only with the approval of both the majority of the American and the majority of the Russian participants.

It is assumed that representatives of the American and Russian governments would attend this meeting as observors but that they would not actively participate in it. Moreover, every facility should be given to agents of both governments in order to dispell any suspicion that "secrets" are being passed at the meeting in one direction or another.

The Second Meeting

If such a meeting were held and if it proved to be successful, it would very quickly lead us to questions which go beyond the competence of scientists.

We should, therefore, be prepared to follow it up with a second meeting held under the same auspices, but with the participation of a group of perhaps ten distinguished American citizens who possess the required experience, knowledge, and wisdom, as well as an equal number of Russian citizens possessing similar qualifications. These additional participants should also be free from governmental responsibility.

This second meeting should attempt to come to grips with all the problems that are involved and the participants would therefore have to devote their full time to that task for a period of perhaps three months.

In order to have an orderly discussion it might be of advantage to form two teams--a "Russian team" and an "American team"--and let the discussion take the form of "negotiations" between these two teams. This, however, would be no more than a device for arriving at a rapid clarification of our thoughts, and both the "Russian team" and the "American team" should be composed half of Americans and half of Russians in order to avoid any danger that the thinking of the two teams will get into the grooves of the official policies of their respective governments.

In order to make sure that the effect of any contemplated provision (which the meeting may recommend for inclusion in an over-all settlement) on nations other than Russia and America will also be fully taken into account, the participation of citizens of the other nations involved would seem to be very desirable.

A "negotiation" of the type here envisaged would have one very great advantage over actual negotiations between the governments involved. In actual negotiations it is very difficult to bring into play imagination and resourcefulness because once a point is conceded it is very difficult to retract it. This makes it impossible to experiment with ideas. In the "negotiations" here proposed, however, both teams, the "American team" and

the "Russian team," can tentatively conceed a number of points and later on, when the whole picture emerges and they recognize ~~the weak points~~ inconsistencies, they can throw everything out and start again from scratch.

It is the flexibility of this kind of "negotiations" which permits us to hope that if there is any solution to our problem it will be discovered, and that one might end up with the outline of a comprehensive agreement which the participants can with good conscience recommend to the American and Russian governments.

It is not to be assumed that either of these governments would accept outright any such recommendation, for in international bargaining no one wants to start out with what he hopes to end up with. But if, subsequently, it should come to real negotiations between the two governments, these recommendations might provide the intellectual clarification which must precede any actual negotiation if it is to lead to an agreement that will secure lasting peace.

Proposed Procedure

It is proposed to proceed in stages as follows:

1) The text of this article will be communicated to you two weeks after its appearance in print, together with such expressions of opinion--private or public--as will then lie in hand. At that time you will be asked tentatively to say whether you are willing to participate in the proposed meeting.

If it turns out that we have the acceptance of a group that is broadly representative of the thinking of American scientists, and not merely of one faction or another, we shall proceed further and set up a steering committee.

2) Next the Russian government would be approached in order to obtain its consent to the proposed meeting.

There has been very little personal contact between Russian and American scientists since 1935. Prior to that time, however, many outstanding

Russian scientists had visited Western Europe and America. Many of these men, who are quite well-known to us, are still active and have the confidence of their government. We could, therefore, from our past personal experience, submit to the Russian government a list of names of those whose presence, in our opinion, could be very useful at the proposed meeting.

There would be no point in trying to anticipate what the answer of the Russian government might be; it may very well depend on whether or not they are able to understand fully what is being attempted and that in turn may depend on what insight into the workings of our democracy they have by now acquired.

3) If the consent of the Russian government is obtained, we shall ask for the consent of the American government, either the Secretary of State or the President. We cannot know for certain what the answer may be. But since no one in our government could possibly believe today that we are on the road to peace, it is difficult to believe that our government would want to take upon itself the responsibility for blocking us even though they might think that our chances of success are very small.

Financing of the meeting

The cost of the proposed first meeting of scientists is estimated at between thirty and ninety thousand dollars, depending on where the meeting would be held, and we may raise our share of the cost through publicly solicited private donations.

The cost of the second meeting would be considerably higher. Since it would be a mistake to forego the services of outstanding American citizens because of insufficient financial consideration offered to them, we should plan on offering $10,000 for three months to ten men who put in full time. In addition, the services of a considerable staff may be required. Thus it might be necessary to raise perhaps $500,000 from private individuals in the United States for the purposes of the second meeting.

The record of the past

The present proposal to bring about a meeting between Russian and American scientists would be the third serious attempt made.

In the fall of 1945 the vast majority of the atomic scientists in America held very strongly to the belief that the elimination of atomic bombs from national armaments and the inclusion of stringent inspection measures in any ~~aggr~~ agreement which might be concluded were essential for the preservation of peace. At that time it was felt that if a meeting between American and Russian scientists could be arranged, we might succeed in convincing our Russian colleagues of the thruth of this thesis, and, moreover, we might be able to convince them of the sincerity of our desire for an equitable arrangement. We thought that our Russian colleagues were in a much better position to persuade the Russian government of the validity of our views than were the representatives of our government. In the fall of 1945 the Russian government looked to the Russian scientists to match our wartime achievements in the field of atomic energy, and therefore we believed that the Russian scientists had the ear of their government.

In October, 1945 the proposal to hold such a meeting was submitted th the Assistant Secretary of State, Willian Benton, and he was quick enough to see the advantages that might result from holding such a meeting at that time. He was not able, however, to convince Byrnes, who was then the Secretary of State.

The proposal was then carried to the White House in 1946 by Robert M. Hutchins, Chancellor of the University of Chicago, and R.G. Gustavson, at that time Vice-President of the University of Chicago (now Chancellor of the University of Nebraska). In a personal interview with President Truman and Secretary Byrnes they offered the cooperation of the University of Chicago for arranging for such a meeting. Mr. Byrnes held, however, that the time was not yet ripe for it.