

May 24, 1950

Professor Leo Szilard
University of Chicago
Chicago, Illinois

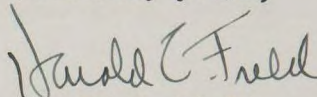
Dear Professor Szilard

I am writing on behalf of Claude Bourdet whose name is probably familiar to you through his former connection with *Combat*, the Parisian daily, which he edited until very recently. Mr. Bourdet is now editing a weekly political and literary magazine, *l'Observateur*.

During a recent visit to the United States Mr. Bourdet made a speech at The Nation Associates conference on The Atomic Era -- Can it Bring Peace and Abundance in which he advocated the idea of a neutral Europe. He is now in the process of preparing a special issue of his magazine dealing with this subject, one feature of which will be an international symposium. He has asked us to say that he would be extremely grateful to receive an expression of opinion from you on this subject in about 300-500 words. If, however, you would like to write at somewhat greater length, I am sure that Mr. Bourdet could find room.

Would you at your earliest convenience let me know whether or not you would be able to write such a contribution?

Sincerely yours,



Harold C. Field
Executive Editor

HCF/bn

May 27, 1950

Mr. Harold C. Field
Executive Editor
The Nation
Twenty Vesey Street
New York 7, New York

Dear Mr. Field:

Your letter arrived while Dr. Szilard was out of town. He is sorry, but he will not be able to contribute anything to Mr. Bourdet for l'Observateur because of the pressure of other business.

Sincerely yours,

Secretary for Leo Szilard

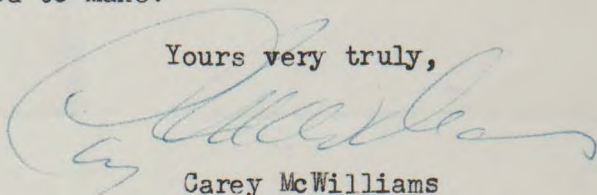
January 25, 1955

Dear Dr. Szilard:

A friend in Los Angeles sent me a copy of a local paper containing a copy of your talk, "The Sensitive Minority among our Men of Science." I found it extremely interesting.

How would you feel about our reprinting it, either in its present form or with whatever changes you cared to make?

Yours very truly,



Carey McWilliams
Editorial Director

Dr. Leo Szilard
C/o Brandeis University
Waltham, Massachusetts

Kings Crown Hotel
420 W. 116th St
New York, N. Y.
February 4, 1955

Mr. Carey McWilliams
Editorial Director
The Nation
333 Sixth Avenue
New York, N. Y.

Dear Mr. McWilliams:

It was very kind of you to suggest that you might be interested in reprinting the speech I gave in Los Angeles. I am not sure whether it is suitable for that purpose but I will give it some more thought and I will contact you again.

Very sincerely,

Leo Szilard

LS/nr

THE *Nation* ASSOCIATES

February 25, 1955

Dr. Leo Szilard
University of Chicago
Chicago, Illinois

Dear Dr. Szilard:

I was very interested to read your recent letter in the New York Times which was a real contribution to the clarification of the issues which confront the modern world and the particular responsibility of the intellectual.

Because you and we do have in common so many views respecting the world in the era of the atom, I venture to make this request of you.

Would you serve as co-chairman of a small committee sponsoring the celebration of the 90th anniversary of The Nation?

This is to be devoted entirely to a projection of a future world of peace and prosperity conceivable if the potential of the atom were fully applied to its peacetime development.

What we are planning is a threefold operation:

- 1) A dinner forum on June 19 devoted to a projection of the creative and constructive possibilities of atomic development.
- 2) An anniversary issue timed for the same date on the same subject.
- 3) The establishment of an endowment fund to insure The Nation's future, initiated by a sum we hope may reach \$100,000, to be solicited before the dinner forum. There is to be no fund raising at the forum.

May I say that we have as co-chairmen now: Dr. Frank P. Graham, former President of the University of North Carolina, now head of the United Nations mediating staff; Van Wyck Brooks, the distinguished author and Ernest Gruening, former Governor of Alaska, who in an earlier time served as one of the editors of The Nation. It is in their behalf as well as my own that I extend this invitation to you.

What would be your function as a co-chairman? As limited or as large as you would want to make it in terms of advice. The work, of course, would be carried on by our office.

Page 2...

The committee would decide on speakers for the dinner forum, extend the invitations to them and permit their names to be used in soliciting the anniversary fund. The fund is a way of getting working capital, desperately needed to increase circulation and to meet rising production costs.

From you we would in particular desire guidance on the special issue of The Nation.

I am enclosing a confidential memorandum which represents in principle what we would strive to achieve.

We believe that these undertakings could be a major contribution to the efforts to establish a peaceful modus vivendi.

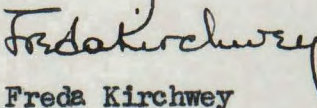
We should so much like your help in the way suggested or in any other way that seems more pleasing to you.

Do you still come to New York? Could we not meet very soon?

I shall await your word.

With best regards,

Cordially,


Freda Kirchwey

P.S. You may remember how in 1945 our conference on the bomb, with your help assisted in placing control of atomic energy in civilian hands. And also that our 1950 conference was the first full scale projection of the peacetime potential of the atom.

Proposals for 90th Anniversary Issue of The Nation from Lillie Shultz

At a recent meeting, it was agreed in principle that an anniversary issue of The Nation should be published and that it should deal with the peacetime potential of the atom.

Here is an outline of my views on time and contents.

Date:

The issue should appear coincident with (or as nearly as possible) the date of the function to mark the anniversary. I suggest June 11 or June 18, assuming a function either on June 12 or June 19. It would also come two months before the August U.N. Conference on Atomic Energy and conceivably influence it.

Contents:

The issue should be devoted to a discussion of the atomic era in relation to peace and prosperity, for America and for the world.

Since the atomic field in its peacetime potential is terra incognita to most people, an issue devoted solely to the presentation of the theoretical premise of the atom could be interesting.

But in my opinion, it would be senseless for a publication like ours to assume a neuter gender.

For the atomic era has a direct ^{relation} ~~interest~~ to our major interest -- existence and growth of civilization in a world at peace.

It has a special interest at a moment when the theme of "peaceful coexistence" has reached the top position on the international agenda.

The absence of war makes "peaceful coexistence" possible in a limited sense for a limited time, as long as fear persists over the awful alternative of an atomic war.

But absence of war, while both sides mount their military might and seek military allies, preferable though it is to war, is still a sterile thing, even if there are certain accompanying political settlements.

Peaceful coexistence in the creative sense and in depth becomes possible only if the underlying problems of the world receive fundamental solution.

Two-thirds of the world is just emerging from a feudal society, is underdeveloped, often over-populated, with its people living in abysmal poverty.

Many of these countries are strategically located along the lines of world communications. Others have the raw materials indispensable to the mounting of the military machine in war production.

Precisely these territories are the prize sought by both East and West and are responsible for the cold war.

In many of these territories Russia has gained an important root-hold by its ability to win people with the promise of bread and land. This promise has all allure in every underdeveloped territory on earth -- including our neighbors in Latin America.

Despite our H-Bomb stockpile, the U. S. holds little basic advantage over Russia in the event of an atomic war. For Russia has enough to destroy or profoundly damage us.

Nor do our military alliances, important though they may be, alter this fundamental fact. All our allies, dependent on our strength, are fearful of being the first targets in an atomic war. And among the peoples of allied countries, there is a growing restiveness and demand for coming to terms with Russia.

The peaceful development of the atom represents the basic vantage point of America over the Russians.

Our genuine power rests in our scientific know how, where we have outdistanced the Russians, atomic advances already made by us, in our capacity to expand these uses; our ability to share our atomic knowledge with the world and to underwrite if need be peacetime atomic development for developed and under-developed countries.

By sharing with the world for its advantage, we remove the appeal of Russia to under-developed territories, we make it possible to force alliances with the peoples of the world and to render them impervious to Russian blandishments.

Up until now, U.S. sharing has been a kind of reward for virtue, i.e., military alliances. President Eisenhower's plan for an international atomic body for peacetime development was forced by Belgium, under the threat of refusing to supply uranium, of which the Belgian Congo is the chief source.

There is no basic American concept rooted in social and economic factors to develop atomic energy for the benefit of mankind. Our atomic energy issue should supply the incentive for such a projection. It should be both factual and interpretive.

Specifically:

A. The theme should be introduced in a twofold fashion -- (a) the problems of the world and their relation to war; (b) the promise of the atom and its relation to peace.

In other words:

1. The general story should be told of the needs of the peoples of the world; how poverty, ignorance, ill health produce friction while strategic geographic position makes them impoverished areas coveted by East and West both -- creating the cold war -- and containing the seeds of a hot war.

2. The general story should be presented of the revolutionary potential of the atom in relation to power for industry, universal irrigation, desalting water, medicine, chemistry, food processing, communications, etc.

* * *

How revolutionary is the atom's peacetime potential is indicated by the following:

(1) The U. S. has perfected a portable power plant where 1 lb. of atomic fuel equals 1500 tons of coal. This power plant can be used where there is no water, coal, or oil for fuel, in deserts, wastelands, or areas like the Arctic where ship supplies are possible only on a seasonal basis. Within three to five years portable power plants are expected to achieve maturity. The atomic fuel envisaged is in the form of suitcase-sized bricks which can be re-supplied every few months, cheaply and in fact reactivated.

(2) Universal irrigation is another hope held out by atomic energy, through a new process of separating sea water from its salt. Once perfected it

could in effect produce what scientists call man-made countries by pumping freshened water uphill through pipe channels.

(3) On the threshold of the immediate future is food atomically treated which can be kept almost in perpetuity. There is talk of two-year potatoes, four-month bread, three-week hamburgers.

(4) Plastics are being developed due to atomic energy, able to withstand temperature as high as 3500 Fahrenheit and promising a revolution in building materials and costs.

(5) In the medicinal field, a new atomic portable X-ray machine is being developed weighing less than 10 lbs., and if mass produced would cost only \$200. This portable X-ray machine performs the same job as equipment now costing tens of thousands of dollars.

* * *

B. From the general we should move to the particular and examine in detail how atomic energy applied to a particular country can affect the area and the relation of the area to its neighbors and to peace. In other words, we should do a kind of blueprint operation for given areas.

1. India is a case in point.

An enormous country strategically situated, its tremendous population, limited resources, and abysmal poverty make it one of the most vulnerable areas on earth in terms of susceptibility to Communist propaganda.

Lacking coal, water, and fuel, industrialization is a slow and meagre process. But cheap power supplied by atomic energy could make possible the industrialization of large sections of India. And India thus helped to develop could be the counter-balance to China now lost to communism.

My suggestion is that an atomic expert, Indian or otherwise, should be invited to do the story of atomic energy and its meaning to India. Some of this has possibly been blueprinted already. Some has not. Knowledge and imagination both would have to be applied to drawing the picture of what could happen to India.

2. Another case in point is Egypt.

Here the basic problem is the desert. Occupying almost 400,000 square miles of territory, Egypt's population lives on 14,000 square miles, because the rest is desert. In Egypt, the most advanced state in the Middle East, and strategically located, the population density is perhaps the highest in the world, and poverty and disease proportionate. The population density is due to lack of water. With portable atomic plants possible in the immediate future, artificial seas could presumably be created in the desert, Egypt could fructify the desert; create power for industry, allow for population distribution, raise the standard of living of impoverished millions.

Again a detailed blueprint of atomic energy's application to Egypt should be drawn as the symbol of what is possible in other areas, having the same natural limitations as Egypt.

3. Another case in point is Israel.

With ample sea water, but a dearth of fresh water, Israel's economic problems could be solved through the de-salting process promised by atomic energy, as well as by the creation of cheap power.

Here again the blueprint should be drawn on the effect on agriculture and industry both, of atomic energy in relation to Israel and similar areas lacking fresh water.

4. Highly advanced European countries too need atomic energy.

Britain, France, Norway, Holland, and Belgium lack fuel. Lack of fuel affects industry, the cost of living, etc.

Here the story should be the effect of atomic energy on already industrialized areas.

5. South America.

I do not know the specific needs of South America. But the area certainly represents a large, under-developed section of the world. One country should be chosen as the symbol of what atomic energy can do for the area as a whole.

6. United States.

The story of the U.S. and atomic energy should provide an important section of the issue, dealing with:

(a) The pioneering we have done -- and detailing the direction it has taken.

(b) The meaning to America of cheap power not only in terms of reduced costs, but bringing electrical power where none exists; of new chemicals, medical derivatives, etc.

C. A special story should be done on the cost of these symbolic pilot operations -- and compared with military expenditures of the U.S. and what it would cost us to militarize these putative allies.

D. A factual story should be done where uranium and other atomic fuels are to be found throughout the world. The facts would show many countries possess these prized fuels; now unused or bought by U.S. So that it is clear that each country given the technical know-how, could be helped to provide its own salvation.

E. The effect of an atomic world on labor and leisure.

F. The effect of atomic energy on the concept and application on the Marxist theory -- i.e., Marxism's absolescence.

G. The contrast between atoms for peace and atoms for war. In other words, the story of the destructive capacity of the atom.

H. A review of the progress of the world in the ninety years before the atom -- and The Nation's role in producing that progress.

I. A program for bringing about the miracle world of the atom -- and The Nation's

What I am proposing is a projection into the future of a kind which has never before been attempted.

To succeed in doing a good job we will have to invite and secure the thinking and cooperation of the scientists, -atomic, social, and political.

If we succeed, ours will be a great accomplishment and one which could give profound direction.

December 6, 1961

Mr. Carey McWilliams
The Nation (a publication)
333 Sixth Avenue
New York City, N.Y.

Dear Mr. McWilliams:

Many thanks for your telephone call.

Enclosed you will find a rather early version of the speech which I gave at four Universities. Please note that I am not starting a movement, but rather performing an experiment which will show whether a movement of the kind I am describing in my speech could get off the ground if it were started under suitable auspices.

With best wishes.

Very sincerely yours,

Leo Szilard
Hotel Dupont Plaza
Washington 6, D.C.

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