

Leo Szilard

July 10, 1958

DESCRIPTION OF A STUDY RELATING TO THE WORLD  
SECURITY PROBLEMS RAISED BY THE BOMB

During the past three months, I have been engaged in a study relating to the world security problems raised by the bomb. This study has proceeded through informal conversations among American scientists and serves primarily the purpose of clarifying the minds of the participants on the issues involved.

Since we had no funds available for the purpose of this study, it was not possible to arrange for special meetings and consultations among the participants and some of the informal discussions were, therefore, conducted incidentally at meetings which were held for purposes other than the conduct of this study,

This study is devoted to a dispassionate analysis of the problems of world security that are raised by the bomb and it could be carried out to a certain point through informal discussions among American scientists and experts without the participation of Russian scientists.

It is not sufficient, however, to determine merely what policies would be desirable from a point of view of world security; it is also necessary to consider whether



particular policies that would appear desirable would also be politically acceptable to Russia as well as to America. Therefore, after a certain degree of clarification of the issues has been accomplished in our own minds, it becomes necessary to widen the circle of the informal discussions to include also Russian scientists, who are in a better position to appraise what may be politically acceptable to Russia than we are.

In April of this year while I attended an international conference of scientists at Lac Beauport, Quebec, Canada, I was led to conclude that the participation of Russian scientists in these informal discussions could be best arranged through the sponsorship of such informal discussions by the Academy of Sciences of the Soviet Union. For the time being such informal conversations between American and Russian scientists could be best carried out in Russia, where American scientists would have access to a fairly wide circle of Russian scientists.

The attached letter written by Academician A. V. Topchiev, General Secretary of the Academy of Sciences of the Soviet Union, to Colonel Richard S. Leghorn--with copies to Professor Jerome Wiesner and myself--affords a unique opportunity to extend the circle of informal discussions to Russian scientists. The events leading up to the



receipt of this letter from Academician Topchiev are described in the attached memorandum of July 2, 1958, addressed by me to Warren C. Johnson.

Since April, when I discussed this topic with Academician Topchiev, my own thinking has moved even further in the direction of stressing the need to keep the discussions between American and Russian scientists as informal as possible. For this reason, we are now exploring whether the meeting that the Academy of Sciences of the Soviet Union is willing to sponsor might not be further loosened up and rendered more diffuse by having first a preparatory discussion of a very few American scientists with Russian scientists, held under the sponsorship of the Academy of Sciences of the Soviet Union. Such a preparatory discussion might examine the possibility of holding informal discussions between Russian and American scientists on a more or less continuous basis. The attached copy of a cable sent on July 9 by Col. Richard S. Leghorn to Academician Topchiev reflects these thoughts.

Formal meetings aimed at proclaiming a consensus of the participants or any other meetings which are not strictly private in character would fall outside the scope of this study.



It is estimated that we shall need for secretarial services, travel expenses of the American participants in this study, long-distance calls, and other similar expenses, a total of perhaps \$35,000 in the next twelve months. Of this, about \$20,000 might be spent on expenses connected with the informal discussions held between American and Russian scientists under the sponsorship of the Academy of Sciences of the Soviet Union, and this sum might have to be spent in the course of the next three months.

Most closely associated with me in this study were so far Col. Richard S. Leghorn and Prof. Jerome Wiesner. Prof. Walter Whitman is about to become associated with it.

As the circle of American scientists participating in this study is getting wider, some of those who initiated this study might have to loosen their connection with it if they get directly involved in negotiations which the Government of the United States may be conducting with the Government of the Soviet Union.

L.Sz.



Leo Szilard

July 16, 1958

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circle of the informal discussions to include also Russian scientists, who are in a better position to appraise what may be politically acceptable to Russia than we are.

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Formal meetings aimed at proclaiming a consensus of the participants or any other meetings which are not strictly private in character would fall outside the scope of this study.

It is estimated that we shall need for secretarial services, travel expenses of the American participants in this study, long-distance calls, and other similar expenses, a total of perhaps \$50,000 in the next twelve months. Of this, about \$20,000 might be spent on expenses connected with the informal discussions held between American and Russian scientists under the sponsorship of the Academy of Sciences of the Soviet Union, and this sum might have to be spent in the course of the next three months.



Most closely associated with me in this study were so far Col. Richard S. Leghorn and Prof. Jerome Wiesner.

Prof. Walter Whitman is about to become associated with it.

It is possible that Prof. Wiesner, who is a member of the President's Science Advisory Committee and who might get closely involved with official negotiations between the United States Government and the Government of the Soviet Union, might not be free to participate in the projected informal discussions with Russian scientists.

L.S.