

HARVARD UNIVERSITY
THE BIOLOGICAL LABORATORIES
16 DIVINITY AVENUE
CAMBRIDGE 38, MASSACHUSETTS

April 15, 1960

Dr. Leo Szilard
Memorial Hospital
New York City, New York

Dear Szilard:

Naturally I was delighted at the news of the Atoms for Peace award to you. No better choice could possibly have been made.

I have been reading, and pondering over, your long article in the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists. Of course I had heard you develop these ideas before, and the general argument was quite familiar to me. In its present form, however, I think it is better and more persuasively worked out than in any of the earlier versions that I have seen or heard. I am very glad that you have got around to stating it publicly, although I personally am still very dubious whether any such scheme as you outline for the balance of nuclear destructive power could actually be made workable. My doubts are primarily on psychological grounds. I doubt whether human beings, subjected to the enormous emotional stresses involved in the threat of nuclear destruction could act with the degree of rationality that the scheme requires. However, in this situation that is unprecedented in the history of the world, ~~it may be that~~ we must somehow learn to act in unprecedented ways.

Your scheme supposes, as I understand it, that whereas the present situation is certainly unstable, a situation permitting a stabilization will arise when both the Russians and ourselves acquire solid fuel rockets with essentially impregnable bases. So many technological developments are proceeding with such terrific speed, however, that I wonder if this potential stability is not likely to be illusory, because of other technological developments not now foreseeable, but perhaps decisive in new ways. Roughly speaking, I judge that you would favor rapid technological development until we get to the stage you foresee, at which point it might be possible to freeze weapons development to some extent. Others, including myself, would be inclined to favor a more immediate attempt at freezing some of the most threatening developments at least.

All these remarks on my part are tentative and fragmentary, and probably fail to convey adequately what I am trying to say. It is also quite possible that I have misunderstood some aspects of your argument. At any rate you have given a great many of us a great deal to think about.

I have started to study, with great interest, your two papers in the March issue of the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

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but I have not yet got to the point where I feel ready to offer comment or criticisms.

If I get to New York later this spring I hope very much that I shall have the opportunity to stop in and see you.

Best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

John Edsall
John T. Edsall

JTE/llw



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May 26, 1961

President John F. Kennedy
The White House, Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. President:

As one who has long urged the desirability of a treaty to stop the testing of nuclear weapons, I should like to express my admiration for the coherent and sensible proposals which our Government has been putting forward in the Geneva negotiations since you took office. Correspondingly I am dismayed and disturbed by the new and reactionary proposals of the Russians, with their apparent insistence on a three-fold directorship of the inspection authority -- a proposal, with its built-in veto power, which must obviously be unacceptable to the United States. I still have some hope that this may be just one of the well-known Russian techniques for slowing up negotiations, and that they may agree to a reasonable treaty in the end; but these hopes are fading.

A treaty to ban nuclear testing is certainly not disarmament; it is only one quite limited measure of arms control. Nevertheless it has certainly appeared to both sides as an important first step toward a disarmament agreement that might be really substantial. If the Russian attitude on this issue is to be typical of their attitude toward further disarmament proposals, the outlook is certainly dark.

I was one of the American scientists who attended the Sixth Pugwash Conference in Moscow last December; and the discussions of that Conference raised some hopes, among some of the participants, that have been sadly disappointed since.

I hope you can persuade Mr. Khrushchev that many people like myself in the United States, who recognize the urgent importance of disarmament, are watching the current attitude of his government with anxiety and dismay. We, who have urged the seeking of agreements with the Soviet Union, may have to reconsider our position rather drastically if the Soviet Government maintains its present attitude. I hope that, in any case, we shall make clear our continuing readiness to negotiate, and our urgent desire to work out solutions that will minimize the danger of a nuclear war that both sides have the most urgent interest in avoiding. In the present ominous climate, I heartily support your recommendations for the strengthening of conventional forces; I have dreaded our undue reliance on nuclear weapons, which has been both a military weakness for us and a source of danger for the world.

Recently I was one of a number of signers of a protest against the Government's Cuban policy, and I believe in the importance of independent criticism and dissent, even -- and perhaps especially -- in these times of great peril. All the more on this account I want to express my high regard for your attempts to reach an effective agreement to stop nuclear testing, and my anxiety at the present obstructive attitude of the Russian Government.

Yours respectfully,

John T. Edsall

JTE/llw

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CAMBRIDGE 38, MASSACHUSETTS

May 30, 1961

Dr. Leo Szilard
Hotel DuPont Plaze
1500 New Hampshire Ave., N.W.
Washington 6, D. C.

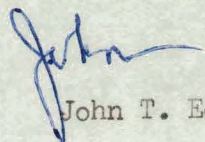
Dear Leo:

I am entirely in sympathy with your letter to the President about the Cuban situation. However, having already been one of the signers of a public statement protesting the Government's Cuban policy, I do not think it is appropriate for me to sign another letter on the subject now. At the moment, indeed, I should like to do whatever I can to strengthen the President's hand in his discussions with Mr. Khrushchev on the nuclear testing and disarmament questions. I enclose a copy of a letter that I have ~~just~~ ^{recently} sent to him on this subject.

I want to thank you for sending me "The Voice of the Dolphins", which I have re-read with admiration. I also want to express my pleasure that the National Academy of Sciences at last got around to electing you a member. The Academy was, of course, very late in getting around to this; the honor of your election is to the Academy rather than to you. Now that you are a member, have you got any dolphin friends that you would like to nominate for membership?

Best wishes,

Yours sincerely,



John T. Edsall

JTE/llw

February 24, 1962

Professor John Edsell^a
Harvard University
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Dear Doctor Edsell:

Would you be good enough to read the attached "speech" and let me know whether you are sufficiently interested to be willing to be part of this operation.

I am enclosing some indication of the responses, and if you are interested I shall mail you a set of press clippings and photocopies of a sample of my mail.

Please let me know as soon as you can what you think about all this by writing to me at my Washington address given below.

Sincerely,

Leo Szilard

Hotel Dupont Plaza
Washington 6, D. C.
Telephone: HUDson 3-6000

Enclosures

Washington 6, D. C.
March 3, 1962

Professor John Edsall
Department of Biology
Harvard University
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Dear Dr. Edsall:

The attached letter is meant for you and those others whose names are listed in the memo "The Next Step". I should be very grateful to you for reading the attached letter and the enclosures, and for advising me as soon as possible whether you are willing to serve as an Associate.

I hope very much that you will not disqualify yourself from serving on the Board of Directors of the Council.

Sincerely,

Leo Szilard

Hotel Dupont Plaza
Washington 6, D. C.
Telephone: HUDson 3-6000

Enclosures

P.S. I am enclosing the revised and final version of my speech, which will be printed in the April issue of the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists.

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