

longish version

September 21, 1962

A MESSAGE FROM LEO SZILARD

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

If you stay in Washington long enough, you may begin to understand how governmental decisions come about, and what kind of pressures are at work.

Partly because of such pressures and partly for other reasons, the Administration has been so far steadily following the line of least resistance on the ~~very~~ crucial issue of the atomic arms race. It is much easier to keep on building long range solid fuel rockets, as fast as they can be produced, than to reach a consensus within the Administration in Washington on a reasonable proposal for arms limitations that Russia could conceivably accept. The trouble is that if we keep on following this line, we shall before long reach a point of no return in an all-out arms race.

For a number of years now, you have had the opportunity to observe how we as a nation respond to the actions of the Russians, and how the Russians respond to our responses. By now many of you may have been led to conclude that we are headed for an all-out war. I too believe that our chances of getting through the next ten years without war are rather slim.

I personally find myself in rebellion against the fate that history seems to have in store for us, and I address myself to those of you who may be equally rebellious. The question is, what can we do?

War seems to be inevitable unless it is possible somehow to alter the pattern of behavior which America and Russia are exhibiting at present. We as Americans are not in a position to influence the attitudes of the Russian Government; it follows that somehow we would have to bring about a change in the attitudes of our own government, which in turn might bring about a similar change in the attitude of the Russian government.

Last November it occurred to me that in cooperation with others, I could try to set up an organization in Washington, a sort of Lobby - if you wish. This Lobby could bring to Washington from time to time scholars and scientists who know what it would take to stop the world from drifting into war. These men would speak with the sweet voice of reason, and the Lobby could see to it that they would be heard by the Administration and also by the key members of Congress. The trouble is that these distinguished scholars and scientists would be heard but that they might not be listened to, if they are not able to deliver either votes, or else substantial campaign contributions.

But if 20,000 people, who are concerned about the course of events, were able to unite on a set of ^{attainable} ~~reasonable~~ political objectives, and if they were willing to make campaign contributions to congressional candidates in the amount of 4 million dollars per year, then they might set up the most powerful lobby that ever hit Washington. The sweet voice of reason alone could not do the job, campaign contributions alone could not do the job, but the combination of the sweet voice of reason and substantial campaign contributions could very well do the job.

I should add at this point that in order to contribute 4 million dollars per year, 20,000 people would have to set aside 2% of their income for this purpose. Would they be willing to do this much?

Starting in November of last year at the Harvard Law School Forum and ending up in January at the University of Oregon, I spoke at eight universities and colleges. On these occasions I described in detail how such a lobby would operate. In every case, I spoke before large student audiences, and afterwards, the students distributed mimeographed copies of my speech, in their home communities. Because of these activities, I have received ^{by June} ~~updates~~ 2,500 letters from persons pledging 1 to 2% of their income. The majority of

the pledges were for 2%. A minority of the pledges were for 1%, mostly from people who were putting several kids through college.

Because of this encouraging response, two political committees, the Council and the Lobby for Abolishing War, were set up in June in Washington.

The Lobby is supporting those now in Congress who are deeply concerned about our drifting into war. More importantly, in 1964 the Lobby will try to find able men and women who are similarly concerned and who could get elected to Congress if they were to receive the nomination of their party. The Lobby will try to persuade them to seek the nomination and it will help them to get the nomination, by assuring them in advance of adequate campaign contributions.

The Council will bring to Washington, from time to time, scientists, scholars and other public spirited citizens who could help members of the Administration and of Congress to clarify their minds on the issues which have to be resolved if peace is to be based on reliable foundations.

~~We have found that it is possible to draft a set of political objectives on which reasonable people can unite. These objectives are listed in the platform of the Council which is in the process of being drafted.~~

If you should decide to take part in this movement, then the Lobby would advise you to whom your campaign contribution should go in order to do some good. You would be expected to weigh the recommendations of the Lobby before you make up your mind which candidate you want to support. And, finally, you would be ~~asked~~ ^{expected} to make out your check directly to the candidate of your choice but to send it for transmittal to the Lobby in Washington.

The situation is not going to get any better if we sit on our hands. Time is not working for us, It is working against us. Right now there

are only two major atomic powers, America and Russia. Before many years have passed, there may be 5 or 6 of them; and what will happen then is anyone's guess.

The movement is off to a good start, but it is not over the hump, because it faces this dilemma:

Many people, who wholeheartedly approve of the general objectives of the Council, would be prepared to expend 2% of their income on campaign contributions to Congressional candidates year after year, but only if they can be assured that the Council is going to attain its objectives. To attain its objectives, the Council would need to have, however, the sustained support of 20,000 people whose campaign contributions would amount to about \$4 million a year.

In order to resolve this dilemma, the Council will have to secure the support of 20,000 people within a short period of time. This is my reason for appealing to you.

If you think that you might be willing to join with others in effective political action, even at ^{ya} substantial ^{financial} personal sacrifice, please write me at the Hotel Dupont Plaza in Washington, D. C. The Action Program of the Council for 1963, ~~which is in the process of being drafted,~~ will then be promptly mailed to you and you will be able to decide whether you would want to support the Council in its endeavors.

Thank you very much.

A MESSAGE FROM LEO SZILARD

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

Under the last two Presidents, and so far also under the Kennedy Administration, the United States has steadily followed the line of least resistance. The United States followed this line when she dropped the Bomb on Hiroshima and she is following this line at the present time. In 1945 Japan was suing for peace, but it was easier to stick to the demand of "unconditional surrender" and to drop the Bomb, than to arrive at a decision--jointly with our allies--on the peace terms to be offered to Japan. At the present time it is easier to keep on building long-range solid fuel rockets, as fast as they can be produced, than to propose an agreement on arms limitation that Russia could accept. And if we keep following this line of least resistance we may reach, within a few years, a point of no return in an all-out arms race.

With President Kennedy, a number of able men moved into the Administration who are deeply concerned, but so far they have not been able to integrate their collective wisdom and to deflect the seemingly inexorable course of events.

I personally find myself in rebellion against the fate that history seems to have in store for us and it appears that there are many others who are equally rebellious. Even though they are in the minority, still this minority could take effective political action, provided they are able to agree on the specific political objectives that must be pursued in order to halt our drifting towards war, and provided they are willing to compensate for their numerical inferiority by making substantial campaign contributions to Congressional candidates--about 2 per cent of their income, annually. The contributions of 20,000 such people, having an average income of \$10,000, would amount to \$4 million per year.

Two interrelated political committees would have to operate in Washington: the Lobby for Abolishing War and the Council for Abolishing War.

It would be the function of the Lobby to advise the people where their contributions ought to go in order to bring about a change in Congressional attitudes that would encourage the Administration to pursue truly constructive policies. The Lobby would support those now in Congress who are deeply concerned about our drifting towards war. More importantly, the Lobby would strive to find men and women, similarly concerned, who could get elected to Congress if they received the nomination of their party. It would be the task of the Lobby to persuade them to seek the nomination, and to help them get the nomination, by assuring them of adequate campaign funds in advance.

It would be the task of the Council to bring to Washington from time to time scientists, scholars and other public-spirited citizens who could help members of the Administration and Congress clarify their minds on the complex issues which have to be resolved if peace is to be based on reliable foundations.

Starting at the Harvard Law School Forum last November, and ending at the University of Oregon in January, I spoke at eight universities and colleges across the country. In each place I spoke before large student audiences and I asked the students to help me determine whether a political movement of this sort could get off the ground. The students distributed mimeographed copies of my speech among their elders in their home communities, and by June I have received about 2,500 letters, from persons pledging 2 per cent of their income.

In view of this response the

If you think that you might be willing to join with others in ^{an} effective political action, even at a substantial financial sacrifice, please write me at the Hotel Dupont Plaza in Washington, D. C. The Action Program of the Council for 1963, ~~which is in the process of being drafted,~~ will then be promptly mailed to you and you will be able to decide whether you would want to support the Council in its endeavors.

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