

University of Toronto

TORONTO 5, CANADA

DEPARTMENT OF CHEMISTRY

Sept 10th 1960

Dear Les (please excuse this familiarity - I succumbed to it when we used to meet at Tom Zeisel's - Also at the Rockefeller Centre office of your Rubber Baron friend, about whom I meant to enquire when I saw you..)

It was a pleasure to see you, and I am most grateful to you for letting me question you at length about the prospects for the next decade or two. My devotion to the notion of disarmament (which, of course, can mean a hundred things) has been rather in the spirit of Camus: it may be an absurd undertaking at the present time, but if it offers the only hope then human dignity requires that we pursue it energetically.

The weakness of this position is that it undoubtedly requires the establishment of an international authority both to enforce disarmament and to arbitrate disputes. It is very hard to believe that such an international authority could come into existence in the next decade or two. Perhaps after a major nuclear war, but not before one. As you pointed out, on the record of their actions, there is no indication that any of the major (or minor) powers is prepared to accept such an authority.

I think that what you have shown, and it is quite startling, is that a limited war could be fought more safely and effectively using strategic nuclear weapons than tactical ones. The essential element in the type of war that you describe seems to me to be (not the carefully measured quid pro quo, however important that may be but) the clear and truthful warning that each side gives the other weeks in advance of its action. The dangers

inherent in successively decreased warning intervals would be at least as great as the danger of successively increasing retaliatory blows. During each four week period sanity has a fresh chance to assert itself.

I forwarded the Dolphin manuscript to Misi as soon as I arrived back here 10 days ago (my movements have been complicated; I was in New Hampshire for a week, then here, then in Montreal - and have just returned from there). I now discover that he and Magda have gone to Italy and will not be back in England until the end of September. I rather doubt that mail is being forwarded so it may be a little while before you hear from him. Sept 10th - 17th he will be at the Hotel Times, Taormina, Sicily, Italy, and I shall write there to tell him that the M.S. is in Oxford. He is 90% recovered from his prostate operation. I am happy to say.

You asked me to ascertain the dates that your "The World of Leo Szilard" interviews were seen in Canada. The dates were ~~September 14th~~ June 14th and June 21st 1960. I wish that these had been interviews with you - designed to lay bare the essential steps in the line of argument that you take in your Bulletin article. This is the only alternative to disarmament that I have ever heard of that makes sense. To be useful such an interview should be published too (in the Listener for example). Should I try to arrange something like this through the CBC (who work closely with BBC) or have you had enough of this sort of thing? Affectionate greetings to you and your wife, John

it would not be in the least - hard for me to talk to them about it.

22 UPLAND PARK ROAD
OXFORD
TEL. 58288

28th July 1960

My dear Leo

Yesterday I watched you the second time on the Small World program. I thought your point about the failure of a President striving for peace during the past 8 years was most effective. So was your discussion with Wiener throughout. The conclusion, that the US can no longer rely on their armed might for achieving a reasonable measure of security is crucial and came through clearly. I believe that the immediate consequence of this situation, once fully realised, must be to cultivate means that are collateral to the force of arms. I think all of these are comprised by the principle that every international action must take henceforth account of the dual purpose of ~~maximising~~ the sum of strength + mutual confidence.

achieving
This means of course, less strength than if 'mutual confidence' were disregarded, but minimizing the risk at the same time by taking some of it in terms of actions increasing mutual confidence. (My estimate would be that any policy based on absolute distrust of the Soviets involves almost certain destruction, i.e. practically unlimited risks, while a policy of total unilateral disarmament would involve us in very high risks, but not quite as high as the other extreme and of a more acceptable nature. Anyhow, the minimum of risks - whether ^{of a} more or less acceptable nature - would lie in some combination of military strength and mutual confidence.)

I think that mutual confidence can be improved by three or four closely interconnected policies. I might mention the following. Reduction of prestige-elements of national imagery. "Humiliation", "being pushed about", etc. such sentiments may be a help in securing national cohesion, but are grossly misplaced if allowed to play an important role in the evaluation of the present menace to the world. They should be

shrugged aside with a stern and sober reference to the urgency of the task facing humanity. This leads on ^{to} the next point. A sense of alarm for humanity as a whole should be cultivated by reversing the present policy of anti-neutralism. That little effective mutual confidence has been established in the last 10 years, was always based on the use of neutrals. This was the way out at Panmunjom and again in the Congo. A great neutralist pressure group should be our most desirable ally, not only because it would be indispensable for the manning of any ^{future} supervision scheme, but even more perhaps for its influence on Soviet opinion. The great change inaugurated by the XXth Party congress was to a large extent due to Tito's influence. It is the dissenters most closely associated with the Soviets and not those who attacked them head on, who have had the most liberating effect on them. And ^{it is} this reduction of ideological fanaticism on which we have to rely for generating a measure of confidence of the Soviets in ourselves, which alone can offer a basis for some confidence of ours in them ~~in~~ in ^{some} a measure of fraternity of their counsels.

There are a number of concessions which (contrary to the policy of Dulles and Acheson) we should make gratuitously, simply because we can hold on to that which we would concede only by an unreasoning vacillance. I would cite Quezouoy and Matsui, the ^{non-}recognition of China, the ^{non-}acceptance of the Oder-Neisse line. The belief of the US in the power of Communist propoganda shows a deplorable lack of faith in the power of truth and justice, for which we stand. It is in reliance on this power that we should make the ^{gratuitous} concessions I am advocating. It is simply not true that such acts would be solely regarded as signs of weakness by those in power against us. We should realize that there is a medium of opinion flowing through thousand channels all round the planet over which the crude falsification of Sino-Stalinist reporting have no control.

I could go on like this; and I am very sorry indeed that I cannot do so personally, by talking to you. But I may yet see you in the next few months. Meanwhile let me send you these lines as a token of my life-long affection and admiration.

W.P.

September 14, 1960.

John Polanyi,
Department of Chemistry,
University of Toronto,
Toronto 5,
Canada.

Dear John,

Many thanks for your kind letter of September 10. Enclosed you will find two copies of an "Excerpt" which contains a pretty straight narration of the history of the next twenty-five years.

I would be interested in a television or radio program where an interviewer would read my version of the history of the next twenty-five years (suitably abbreviated to cut down the time of the performance to one hour). The interviewer could stop at certain points of the narration and ask me questions which would give me an opportunity to explain what I mean.

If the Canadian Broadcasting Company or the BBC are interested, please let me know.

With kind regards,

Sincerely,

Leo Szilard
Room 82
The Memorial Hospital,
444 East 68th Street,
New York 21, N.Y.

Enclosures

polanyi

University of Toronto

TORONTO 5, CANADA

DEPARTMENT OF CHEMISTRY

file M
22 December 1961

Dr. Leo Szilard,
Dupont Plaza Hotel,
Washington, D.C.,
U.S.A.

Dear Leo,

You will be receiving by the same mail a letter from a Dr. Norman Z. Alcock. He is a nuclear physicist who became a businessman (Vice President of Isotope Products Limited) and then, two years ago, left his job to devote himself full-time to the founding of a 'Peach Research Institute'. During these two years he has been living on his (dwindling) savings. Now he is ready to try to launch a drive for funds for his Institute.

I have met him once, and we had a longish talk. He is much more sensible than his pamphlet, 'The Bridge of Reason', would lead one to suppose. He is writing to ask whether you could talk to him for an hour about what he is trying to accomplish. I think it would be very useful indeed if you could find time to machine-gun him, even briefly, with questions as to precisely what he is hoping to do and by what means. He started, I would suspect, by visualising a group of peace-loving scientists making a 'breakthrough'. He is now more realistic. But is he realistic enough and in the right way? - I don't know. By helping him onto the right track you would perform a real service. He is a serious and intelligent fellow, and will put everything he has into this endeavour.

I am honoured to see that the article I peddled without much success in Stowe, now nestles beside your intriguing contribution to the December "Bulletin". Perhaps your article will read mine.

With affectionate greetings to you and Trude at Christmas,

Sincerely,

John

JCP:EB

John Polanyi

1612 Stadium Rd, Apt. #1, Charlottesville, Va.

17. 10. 61.

Dear Leo,

Have just booked a room for Nov. 12th and 13th
(and perhaps 14th) at the Presidential Hotel. Hope it
won't be too grand for us.

Shall we be able to meet both you and your
wife? We do seem to follow you around: first
Chicago and now Washington.

It will be great to see you again. We have

watched you on TV and I nearly - but only nearly -
wrote to you on that occasion.

Yours

Magda Tolanyi

University of Toronto

TORONTO 5, CANADA

DEPARTMENT OF CHEMISTRY

April 23rd -

Polanyi?

Dear Trude and Leo,

Thank you, first of all, for your thoughtfulness in sending me a card from Schloss Felbrinelli. How fitting that you should take a holiday from your exertions in 20th century Moscow, in such a Romantic and decadent setting. I envy you. I came directly back to Toronto, which represents only a modest improvement.

My next thanks are for your kindness in sending me an advance copy of 'The Voice of the Dolphins'. I have just read (in the case of the title essay, re-read) the entire volume with the keenest interest. 'The Dolphins' bears many re-readings. The other stories, apart from being thought-provoking, are a delight.

Last summer Leo suggested that I might pass on the M.S. of 'The Dolphins' to Mr Pearson. In a mood of sacrifice I have now sent him my advance copy. I had a half-hour interview with him a few weeks ago. Among politicians he struck me as a man of rare intellect (I am not the first to make this discovery!). Urbane and well-read. Now he will be even better read.

Incidentally he seemed very sympathetic toward Pugwash³ and scathing of its detractors.

While I was in Ottawa I had lunch with Gen. Burns who is the P.M.'s chief adviser on Disarmament. It must be quite relaxing to be chief adviser on Disarmament to a country that has no arms. Certainly he seemed relaxed. He is a man whose heart is very much in the right place but whose mind is nowhere in particular - I don't think that he has yet thought very deeply on this subject.

I have written a number of articles (5) for the Globe & Mail, a nationally-read Canadian newspaper, since my return. Nothing, however, that would surprise you. At the moment I am battling the influence of Herman Kahn's pernicious book. I mean, I am battling it in this back-water. What effect it is having in the U.S. I do not know.

The Pugwash Committee have honoured me for my cleverness in being Canadian, by inviting me to the Boston and Aspen meetings. I do look forward to seeing you there, though better still I would wish to see you earlier.

^{& I} She had a daughter, Margret Alexandra Polunji, two weeks ago, so I am feeling especially Canadian. Warmest regards to you both,

John