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Letter to
Monsieur Larkin
Consul des Etats-Unis
Ambassade des Etats-Unis
2 Avenue Gabriel
Paris

My dear Mr. Larkin,

This letter is meant as a conclusion to the conversation which we had last Wednesday on the matter of my application for a U.S. visa. I have considered this problem very seriously in the light of the information which you gave me that, under the provisions of the Internal Security Act of 1950, I must be considered an "inadmissible alien" because I had belonged to the Communist party from 1943 to 1945. To my regret I have come to conclude that I could not follow the course, which you suggested I should take, of applying to the Attorney General for special permission to enter temporarily the U. S.

In view especially of your extremely courteous and helpful personal attitude in this matter, I feel that I should explain in some detail the reasons which have led me to this negative decision. These are twofold.

To begin with my proposed trip to the U.S. was planned, you may recall, in answer to invitations extended to me by the American Chemical Society and by the Harvey Society. However much I appreciate the honour entailed in these invitations, as well as the pleasure and fruitfulness of a scientific visit to the U.S. I cannot put these in balance with the extremely distasteful obligation of personally submitting my "case" to the Department of Justice, and of having to ask for permission to enter the U.S. as an exceptional and temporary favor of which I am legally assumed to be unworthy.

The second reason is that I am not willing to fill in and swear to any "biographical statement" of the type apparently required for this application. This refusal is not based on abstract principles only, but on a sad and terrible experience: This kind of inquisition was introduced into the French Administration under the occupation. I will not submit myself to it, if I can possibly avoid it. Furthermore I feel quite sure you realize that such questions as: "state name of all organizations of which you have been a member since 1918 or to which you have given financial or other support, giving dates of membership and dates of contributions" cannot be answered both fully and truthfully. It is unfair to demand a detailed sworn statement when the slightest omission such as the "date of a contribution" might make one technically liable to a charge of perjury. You will also realize, I believe, that such statements, should they fall into wrong hands, might conceivably be used as a source of information. The mere possibility of this would make it impossible for me to submit one, even though I knew that mine would be most uninteresting. The fact that I have been completely estranged from my former political affiliations makes this even more impossible.

This being said, I should like to add that I did not reach this decision light-heartedly, as I fully realize that it means cutting myself partially away from a country which I love, and to which I am attached by very strong links. Not only am I half American, but I have many very close friends in your country. I have learned by experience to respect and admire American Science. Indeed, I owe much to several American scientific or other institutions, such as the Rockefeller Foundation, and I may perhaps venture to say that, as a scientist, I have had more recognition in the U.S. than in my own country.

However, all this is strictly personal and I would like to mention another more general aspect of these problems. Scientists themselves are quite unimportant. But Science, its development and welfare are overwhelmingly important. Isolation is the worst enemy of scientific progress. (If proof of this statement were needed I would point to the strange and profound deterioration of Russian biology

in recent years). Measures and laws such as you are now obliged to enforce, will contribute in no small extent to erecting barriers between American and European science. I do not pretend to know whether or not such measures are justified in general, and in any case I have no right to express an opinion. But I can say, because it is a plain fact, that such measures represent a rather serious danger to the development of science, and that, to that extent at least, they must be contrary to the best interests of the United States themselves.

Thanking you again for your courteous help,

I remain,

Sincerely yours,

Jacques Monod

Institut Pasteur

28. RUE DU DR ROUX . PARIS XV^e

TÉL. SÉCUR 01-10

PARIS, le July 17, 1953

Professor Leo SZILARD
Institute of Biophysics
University of Chicago
CHICAGO 37
Illinois

Dear Dr. Szilard,

Enclosed you will find a copy of a "letter to the editor" which I am sending to the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists. I wish you would let me know your personal feeling about it.

Sincerely yours,

Jacques Monod

Jacques MONOD

Sir,

As you may know the execution of Ethel and Julius Rosenberg has aroused profound emotions in Europe, especially in France. It has also been the cause, or sometimes the occasion, of strong hostility and severe criticism being expressed in the press or by the public (I am referring here to the non-communist press and public). In taking the liberty of writing to you on this subject, I am urged, not by the desire to express criticism or reprobation, but by my love and admiration for your country where I have many close friends.

As a scientist, I naturally address myself to scientists. Moreover, I know that American scientists respect their profession, and are aware that it involves a permanent pact with objectivity and truth - that indeed wherever objectivity, truth, and justice are at stake, a scientist has the duty to form an opinion, and defend it. This, I hope, will be accepted as a valid explanation and excuse for my writing this letter. In any case, whether one agrees or not with what I think must be said, I beg that this letter be taken for what it is : a manifestation of deep sympathy and concern for America.

First of all, Americans should be fully aware of the extraordinary amplitude and unanimity of the movement which developed in France. Everybody here, in every walk of life, and independent of all political affiliations, followed the last stages of the Rosenberg case with anxiety, and the tragic outcome evoked anguish and consternation everywhere. Have Americans realized, were they informed, that pleas for mercy were sent to President Eisenhower not only by thousands of private individuals and groups, including many of the most respected writers and scientists, not only by all the highest religious leaders, not only by entire official bodies such as the (conservative) Municipal Council of Paris, but by the President of the Republic himself, who was thus obeying and expressing the unanimous wish of the French people. As your New York Times remarked with some irony and complete truth, France achieved a unanimity in the Rosenberg case that she could never hope to achieve on a domestic issue.

To a certain extent these widespread reactions were due to the simple human appeal of the case : this young couple, united in death by a frightful sentence which made orphans of their innocent children, the extraordinary courage shown by Ethel and Julius Rosenberg, their letters to each other, simple and moving. All this naturally evoked compassion, but it would be wrong to think

that the French succumbed to a purely sentimental appeal to pity. Public opinion, and first of all the intellectual circles, were primarily sensitive to the legal and ethical aspects of the case, which were widely publicized, analyzed and discussed.

If I may be allowed, I should like to review briefly the points which appeared most significant to us in forming an opinion on the whole affair.

The first was that the entire accusation, hence the whole case of the American government, rested upon the testimony of avowed spies, the Greenglass couple, of whom David received a light sentence after turning state's evidence (fifteen years reducible to five on good behaviour), while his wife Ruth was not even indicted. The dubious value of testimony from such sources was apparent to everyone.

Moreover leaving the ethical and legal doubts aside, is it probable or even possible that a simple mechanic such as David Greenglass, with no scientific training, could have chosen, assimilated, and memorized secrets of decisive atomic importance, under the directions of the similarly untrained Julius Rosenberg? Scientists here always found this difficult to believe, and their doubts were confirmed when Urey himself clearly stated in a letter to President Eisenhower that he considered it impossible: "The case against the Rosenbergs outrages logic and justice. It depends upon testimony of Greenglass and his wife, both confessed spies and alleged accomplices of the Rosenbergs. Greenglass is supposed to have revealed to the Russians the secrets of the atomic bomb. Though the information supposed to have been transmitted could have been important, a man of Greenglass' capacity is wholly incapable of transmitting the physics, chemistry and mathematics of the atomic bomb to anyone". After that it was difficult for us to accept, as justification of an unprecedented sentence, the following statement of Judge Kaufman: "I believe your conduct in putting into the hands of the Russians the A bomb years before our best scientists predicted Russia would perfect the bomb, has already caused the Communist aggression in Korea with the resulting casualties". The mere fact that such statements should have found their place in the text of the sentence, raised the gravest doubts in our minds as to its soundness and motivation.

Indeed the gravest, the most decisive point was the nature of the sentence itself. Even if the Rosenbergs actually performed the act with which they were charged, we were shocked at a death sentence pronounced in time of peace, for actions committed, it is true, in time of war, but a war in which Russia was an ally, not an enemy, of the United States. As outsiders to both countries, we French could not help comparing this sentence with the six years given Alan Nunn May, and the thirteen years given Klaus Fuchs in English courts, for acknowledged and capable atomic espionage that the Rosenbergs could not have undertaken.

We could not understand that Ethel Rosenberg should have been sentenced to death when the specific acts of which she was accused were only two conversations ; and we were unable to accept the death sentence as being justified by the "moral support" she was supposed to have given her husband. In fact the severity of the sentence, even if one provisionally accepted the validity of the Greenglass testimony, appeared out of all measure and reason to such an extent as to cast doubt on the whole affair, and to suggest that nationalistic passions and pressure from an inflamed public opinion, had been strong enough to distort the proper administration of justice.

In spite of these doubts and fears, all those of us who know and love your country, followed each step in the case with anxiety, but also with hope. There were still further appeals to be made, new evidence to be presented, and in the last resort, the President would surely grant mercy where mercy was humanly and ethically called for. We thought a point would finally be reached above the level of irresponsible passions, where reason and justice would prevail.

Above all, we counted on American intellectuals and men of science. Knowing the generosity and courage of so many of them, we felt sure they would speak, and hoped they would be heard. We constantly had in mind our own Dreyfus case, when a handful of intellectuals had risen against a technically correct decision of justice, against the Army hierarchy, against public opinion and government which were a prey to nationalist fury, and we remembered that this handful of intellectuals had succeeded, after five years of stubborn efforts, in confounding the liars, and freeing their innocent victim. We felt that you American intellectuals could similarly turn what appeared at first a denial of justice into a triumph for justice. That is why the case assumed so much importance in Europe, particularly in France. And above all, it was important to liberal intellectuals who, in contrast to Communists, had hoped to find that the most powerful nation of the free world could afford to be at once objective, just and merciful.

So we continued to hope through the last days of the young couple's life. The Supreme Court's decisions were not unanimous, and even after the final over-riding of Justice Douglas's stay of execution, Justice Jackson's comment was : "Vacating this stay is not to be construed as indorsing the wisdom or appropriateness to this case of a death sentence".

How clearly this seemed to us to recommend presidential clemency ! But the news of the execution followed hard on the heels of this very statement by the court, and coupled with it was the news of the government's last cruel offer to barter lives

for "confessions" - bargain that held to that extreme limit when, with Julius Rosenberg already dead, a telephone operator was actually present while Ethel Rosenberg was being electrocuted.

American scientists and intellectuals, the execution of the Rosenbergs is a grave defeat for you, for us, and for the free world. We do not for a moment believe that this tragic outcome of what appeared to us a crucial test-case, means that you were indifferent to it - but it does testify to your present weakness, in your own country. Not one of us would dare reproach you for this, as we do not feel we have any right to give lessons in civic courage when we ourselves have been unable to prevent so many miscarriages of justice in France, or under French sovereignty. What we want to tell you is that, in spite of this defeat, you must not be discouraged, you must not abandon hope, you must continue publicly to serve truth, objectivity and justice. If you speak firmly and unanimously you will be heard by your countrymen, who are aware of the importance of science, and of your great contributions to American wealth, power and prestige.

You, American scientists and intellectuals bear great responsibilities which you can not escape, and which we can only partly share with you. America has power and leadership among the nations. You must for civilisation's sake, obtain moral leadership and power in your own country. Now as never before, the world needs a free, strong, just America, turned towards social and moral as well as technical progress. Now as never before, intellectuals the world over must turn to you American scientists to lead your country in this direction, and to help her conquer her fears and control her passions.

Geneva, 24 July 1963

Dr Jacques Monod
Institut Pasteur
25 rue du Docteur Roux
Paris XVe

Dear Monod,

For sometime now I have been unable to contact you by telephone because you were on your sailboat. As I believe I wrote you from New York, Dr André Cournant offered to explore in Paris how we are to go about getting the French Government interested in our tentative plans to set up a biological institute in Geneva. Dr Cournant phoned me from Paris to say that he talked to Marechal and also to the Chef du Cabinet of the Minister (Palewski) and that he obtained the promise that the French Government will appoint a scientist to look into this matter and to report back to the Government. Your name was one of those mentioned as a possibility. On the suggestion of Cournant, John Kendrew will officially write to Marechal and ask that an official representative be appointed. At the same time he will invite this official representative to take part in the Ravello meeting in the middle of September. Cournant tells me that it would be improper for Kendrew to express a preference as to who the French representative might be.

My main purpose is to raise the question with you whether you yourself could perhaps engage in some course of action which would increase the chances that you yourself would be picked as a representative, which, of course, would please Kendrew very much. I will send a copy of this letter to Kendrew with the suggestion that he delay a little while writing to Marechal, at least until he hears from you what you would propose to do. At the same time Kendrew cannot delay writing to Marechal too long if we want the French representative to attend the Ravello meeting. In these circumstances, all I can suggest is that as soon as you receive this letter and are clear in your mind what needs to be done, contact Kendrew in Cambridge. The telephone numbers through which you can reach him are as follows:

57580

48011

(and at home: 47258)

His address is: MRC Laboratory for Molecular Biology, Hills Road,
Cambridge.

As long as I roam around in Europe you can reach me c/o Dr Martin Kaplan, World Health Organization, Palais des Nations, Geneva, Switzerland.

With kind regards,

Sincerely,

cc John Kendrew