

July 17, 1945

A PETITION TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

Discoveries of which the people of the United States are not aware may affect the welfare of this nation in the near future. The liberation of atomic power which has been achieved places atomic bombs in the hands of the Army. It places in your hands, as Commander-in-Chief, the fateful decision whether or not to sanction the use of such bombs in the present phase of the war against Japan.

We, the undersigned scientists, have been working in the field of atomic power. Until recently we have had to fear that the United States might be attacked by atomic bombs during this war and that her only defense might lie in a counterattack by the same means. Today, with the defeat of Germany, this danger is averted and we feel impelled to say what follows:

The war has to be brought speedily to a successful conclusion and attacks by atomic bombs may very well be an effective method of warfare. We feel, however, that such attacks on Japan could not be justified, at least not unless the terms which will be imposed after the war on Japan were made public in detail and Japan were given an opportunity to surrender.

If such public announcement gave assurance to the Japanese that they could look forward to a life devoted to peaceful pursuits in their homeland and if Japan still refused to surrender our nation might then, in certain circumstances, find itself forced to resort to the use of atomic bombs. Such a step, however, ought not to be made at any time without seriously considering the moral responsibilities which are involved.

The development of atomic power will provide the nations with new means of destruction. The atomic bombs at our disposal represent only the first step in this direction, and there is almost no limit to the destructive power which will become available in the course of their future development. Thus a nation which sets the precedent of using these newly liberated forces of nature for purposes of destruction may have to bear the responsibility of opening the door to an era of devastation on an unimaginable scale.

If after this war a situation is allowed to develop in the world which permits rival powers to be in uncontrolled possession of these new means of destruction, the cities of the United States as well as the cities of other nations will be in continuous danger of sudden annihilation. All the resources of the United States, moral and material, may have to be mobilized to prevent the advent of such a world situation. Its prevention is at present the solemn responsibility of the United States--singled out by virtue of her lead in the field of atomic power.

The added material strength which this lead gives to the United States brings with it the obligation of restraint and if we were to violate this obligation our moral position would be weakened in the eyes of the world and in our own eyes. It would then be more difficult for us to live up to our responsibility of bringing the unloosed forces of destruction under control.

In view of the foregoing, we, the undersigned, respectfully petition: first, that you exercise your power as Commander-in-Chief, to rule that the United States shall not resort to the use of atomic bombs in this war unless the terms which will be imposed upon Japan have been made public in detail and Japan knowing these terms has refused to surrender; second, that in such an event the question whether or not to use atomic bombs be decided by you in the light of the consideration presented in this petition as well as all the other moral responsibilities which are involved.

R Shapp

R M Mulliken

E P Wigner

Georges S. Monck

Lee Hilgard

G. J. Nieren

H. H. Zachariasen

Francis R. Thorpe

John A. Simpson, Jr.

Walter Bartley

John P. Howe

Frankly Foot

CLASSIFICATION CANCELLED JUL 23 1957 Date _____ For The Atomic Energy Commission C. L. Marshall / H. C. Rafter Director, Division of Classification
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Lawrence B. Magnusson
Paul R. O'Connor

CLASSIFICATION CANCELLED

OR CHANGED TO

BY AUTHORITY OF

BY DATE

7/29/57

E 398 8

SECRET

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Kenneth S. Cole

Joseph B. Jeffries

Austin W. Brues

Eric L. Simmons

Marquet H. Rand

Robert J. Moon

Marquette N. Swift

CLASSIFICATION CANCELLED
Date JUL 23 1957
For The Atomic Energy Commission
C. L. Marshall <i>McClintock</i>
Director, Division of Classification

E 3939

July 17, 1945

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Stellan J. Gundersen
A. Ladd Prosser
Miriam P. Finkel
Joseph D. Teresi
David S. Anthony

Owen France
Mary M. Sailer

CLASSIFICATION CANCELLED
Date JUL 23 1957
For The Atomic Energy Commission
C. L. Marshall/mc Lighter
Director, Division of Classification

E3989

SECRET

July 17, 1945

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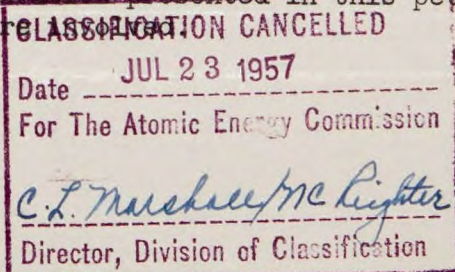
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Iruman P. Kohnman

Stewart

Larned B. Asprey



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William Kurch
Ethaline Hertel

Alfred Hanshild
Katharine Way
Norman Modine

Mary Burke
Mildred Ginsburg

Robert L. Platzman

Sherman Fried

Haylaude D. Young

L. A. Ohlinger

J. Ernest Wilkin
Witfrid Rall

George R. Carlson

CLASSIFICATION CANCELLED
Date JUL 23 1957
For The Atomic Energy Commission
C. L. Marshall/DeLoach
Director, Division of Classification

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William Rubinson
Went Fred
John A. Crawford
Eliot S. Sturtevant
Sheffield D. Rowland
Melvin Friedman

Edgar L. Westrum, Jr.
Earl K. Hyde
Ralph E. Telford

CLASSIFICATION CANCELLED
Date JUL 23 1957
For The Atomic Energy Commission
C. L. Marshall/DeRigter
Director, Division of Classification

E-3939

July 17, 1945

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David L. Hill
Robert J. Maier
Francis Lu Freeman
Albert Wattenberg
David B. Hall
Albert Cahm, Jr.

Herbert E. Kubitschek
Alexander Langsdorf Jr
Robert L. Furber
Norman Goldstein
B. Roswell Russell

CLASSIFICATION CANCELLED
OR CHANGED BY
BY AUTHORITY OF
BY *McKeyter*
C. P. Marshall
DATE 7/23/57

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CLASSIFICATION CANCELLED

Date

7/23/57

For The Atomic Energy Commission

C. L. Marshall / *McKnight*

Director, Division of Classification

George A. Wright
William P. Norris

Chas. W. Hagen, Jr.
George A. Sachs
Marjette C. Moore

13930

President of the United States

To: _____

(Postal registry number or classified mail number)

RECEIPT OF CLASSIFIED MATERIALS

- ORIGINAL** —To be signed personally by the recipient or his authorized delegate and returned to sender.
- DUPLICATE** —To be retained by recipient.
- TRIPLICATE** —To be retained by sender for suspense file and destroyed when signed original is returned.

Leo Szilard

I have personally received from (*sender*) _____
Box 5207, Chicago, Illinois, the material as identified below. I assume full responsibility for the safe handling, storage, and transmittal elsewhere of this material in accordance with existing regulations.

The material, including enclosures and attachments, is identified as follows: (In identifying material, avoid any reference which might cause the receipt form to become CLASSIFIED)

Description	Date of Document	From	Reference or File No.	Addressed to	Date Mailed
Petition	7/17/45	67 scientists	---	The President of the United States	7/19/45

SO: signed original; CC: carbon copy; PC: photostatic copy; TC: typed copy; DM: ditto master; DC: ditto copy

(Signature of Recipient)

(Date)

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