

## Barton Bernstein to discuss Szilard and his contributions to science

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The University of California, San Diego, is continuing to build its collection of papers of eminent scientists and thinkers of the 20th century with the acquisition of the papers of renowned nuclear physicist Leo Szilard.

Dr. Barton Bernstein, professor of history at Stanford University, will discuss Szilard and his contributions to science, Friday, March 22 at 4 p.m. in conference room 111A in the Administrative Complex. An exhibit of Szilard's papers will follow in the Department of Special Collections in the Central University Library.

The Hungarian-born Szilard, who died in 1964, has been hailed as one of the most creative scientific minds of this century. At the time of his death, he was a Fellow of the Salk Institute.

Szilard was one of the first men to conceive of the idea of the nuclear chain reaction which ultimately led to the creation of the atomic bomb. He is credited with encouraging Albert Einstein to write his famous letter to President Franklin Roosevelt warning of the German capability to construct a nuclear weapon. Roosevelt responded by initiating the Manhattan Project to enable the U.S. to build the first atom bomb.

Despite his key role in creating the bomb, Szilard was opposed to its being dropped on Japan, thus legitimizing it as a weapon of war. Following World War II, Szilard became an outspoken opponent of nuclear weapons. In 1960, he was named winner of the Atoms for Peace Award.

In addition to his work on nuclear physics, Szilard was also interested in mathematics, molecular biology, thermodynamics, literature and politics.

Szilard joined the Salk Institute in 1964, but died only a few months later at the age of 66.

His correspondence, notebooks and other writings would probably fill around ten file cabinets, according to Lynda Claassen, head of the Department of Special Collections at the Central University Library.

The papers come to UCSD partially through a gift from the Szilard-Weiss family and partially through purchase, made possible in part by funds from the Friends of the Library, the Chancellor's Associates, and the University of California Shared Purchase Program.

"Leo Szilard was a giant of 20th century science," Claassen said. "These papers will give scholars the opportunity to examine the creative processes in which he was engaged. They will also give a clearer picture of what was going on during one of the most important periods in modern history."

The library's Department of Special Collections already houses the papers of Nobel Laureate Harold Urey, as well as Josef and Maria Mayer, who was also a Nobel Prize recipient.

"Here at UCSD we are in the process of building an important research facility with materials from some of those scientists and policy makers who have been most responsible for the shaping of 20th century thoughts and values," said Claassen.

(March 18, 1985) For more information contact: Paul Lowenberg, 452-3120