

February 13, 1963

Professor Wolfgang Panofsky  
Physics Department  
Stanford University  
Palo Alto, California

Dear Professor Panofsky:

I am writing to find out whether you might be willing to join a project which would involve your full-time participation in a three weeks session. In addition, you would probably have to spend a week in Washington some time before the session takes place.

The enclosed confidential memorandum should be sufficient to explain what all this is about.

I am keeping in close contact in this matter with Carl Kaysen, deputy to McGeorge Bundy, and I have the green light from the White House for the recruiting of the participants.

The session might take place in the United States, conceivably even in Washington, D. C., or somewhere in Europe, but more likely in Austria or Switzerland than in the Soviet Union. The number of American participants would be between three and five.

At this time, I wish to ask you whether in principle, you would be willing to participate. I would also need to know at this time whether you have any fixed dates between now and June 30 which you would not be able to break in case there is a conflict of schedules.

If you are willing to participate - in principle - then I would also like to know whether you ought to clear, later on, your participation with someone in the Government and if so, with whom in particular you would want to clear it.

Others with whom I have raised the issue of their possible participation are: Herbert York, Henry Kissinger, Roger Fisher  
xxx Louis Henkin, and Harvey Brooks.

Professor Wolfgang Panofsky  
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It is proposed to set up a program comprising 3 three week sessions under a committee of the Academy of which I am the chairman. The first of these three week sessions would be set up to implement the project described in my letter to Khrushchev and the remaining two sessions would serve to implement another project.

You might want to call Carl Kaysen or Jerome Wiesner before answering this letter.

You can reach me at the Hotel Dupont Plaza, Washington 6, D. C. If you should come to Washington, perhaps you will call me over the telephone and we could then discuss matters which go beyond the scope of this note.

Sincerely yours,

Leo Szilard

*Copy*

STANFORD UNIVERSITY  
STANFORD, CALIFORNIA

STANFORD LINEAR ACCELERATOR CENTER

*Serialized 2/25/63  
JH*

20 February 1963  
airmail

Dr. Leo Szilard  
Hotel DuPont Plaza  
Washington 6, D. C.

Dear Dr. Szilard:

I received your letter of February 13 inviting me to join you in a project which would involve initially a three-week session on disarmament matters jointly with the Russians. As you request, I am returning the exchanges of memoranda between yourself and Mr. Krushchev which would set the basis for these discussions.

Due to pressure of current work I am not in a position to accept your invitation to participate and therefore would like to decline. I recognize that if I really believed that the proposed discussions would serve a real opportunity to achieve better understanding on this all-important subject with the Russians, current commitments should not stand in the way. However, I believe that the framework you have set for these discussions in your letter of October 9 to Mr. Krushchev is such that it makes my participation in this venture impossible on any account.

Your letter identifies the individuals whom you are asking to join you in these discussions in effect as a minority of men of good intent working in an otherwise hostile environment of the U.S. Government. This I feel is grossly unfair--both to the people you are asking to participate as it is also to the current U.S. efforts in making progress on disarmament; such efforts are being pursued at the very highest level with a most genuine desire to make progress. By identifying the members of your proposed associates as dissidents within the Government you would simultaneously destroy their usefulness in meaningful discussion with the Soviet Union, however informal they may be, and would also destroy their usefulness as responsible counselors to the U.S. Government.

I hope you will forgive me for expressing myself freely on this subject. I do believe that an informal platform for persons of scientific background interested in disarmament on the one hand but whose voice can be heard within the governments of both countries on the other hand can serve the very useful purpose in achieving more rapid mutual understanding of the disarmament problem. The stage you have set for such discussions with your letter of October 9 in practice would destroy this very objective.

Sincerely yours,

*W. K. H. Panofsky*

encls: as noted

W. K. H. Panofsky

C O P Y

February 22, 1963

Professor W.K.H. Panofsky  
Stanford Linear Accelerator Center  
Stanford University  
Stanford, California

Dear Panofsky:

Thanks for your prompt reply of February 20th.

What you regard as the weakness of the project is precisely what I consider to be its strength. It might very well be that virtually everybody in the Government, who has a voice in determining what proposals the U.S. may put forth on the issue of arms control and disarmament, wants an agreement that would stop the arms race. Nevertheless, it is true that one may distinguish among them those who are on the side of the angels and believe that we ought to be willing to give up certain temporary advantages, that we might possess, for the sake of stopping the arms race at an early date, and those who believe that the political advantages which we derive from having a real, or apparent, superiority in strategic delivery systems are so important that we ought to maintain our "superiority" for a number of years, even though this may make it impossible for us to put forward at this time a proposal on arms control which the Russians may be expected to accept as a basis of negotiations.

It is the very essence of the proposed project that the American and Russian participants would not be representative samples, composed of both angels and non-angels, but rather that the American participants and, hopefully, also the Russian participants, would be samples that are biased in favor of the angels. If the American and Russian participants were representative samples, they would not be likely to reach a consensus that would be far-reaching enough to be interesting. But if they are samples biased in favor of the angels, the group might come up with the image of a disarmament agreement that America and Russia might conceivably be prepared to accept at some future date. Such an agreement would presumably not be currently acceptable to either of the two governments, nevertheless the image could be very useful because it could focus attention on the goal towards which we might want to move.

To my mind, it is essential, not only that the American participants should, in fact, be a biased sample, but also that it should be clear to the Russians that the sample is biased in favor of the angels. If it were otherwise, I could not undertake to make the Russians understand that the project is not meant to be a disguised form of negotiation, but rather that it is meant to shed light on the following question: How far-reaching would an arms control agreement have to be, and what form would it have to take, to have a fair chance to be negotiable in the predictable future.

All the Americans who participate in this project would do so with the blessing of the Government, obtained on the basis of a full understanding by the Government of what the project is meant to accomplish. In these circumstances, I don't believe that "their usefulness as responsible counsellors to the U.S. Government would be destroyed" except if, as a result of an indiscretion, they should come under public attack. Even though everything would be done to minimize this risk, it cannot be excluded with certainty and it is up to the individual, who is asked to participate, to decide for himself whether he is willing to take this risk.

I have discussed all this with a number of thoughtful people before I wrote Khrushchev and again, after I received Khrushchev's reply. Of all those with whom I have consulted, you were the only one so far who objected to the basic concept of the project. This does not necessarily mean, of course, that the others are right and that you are wrong; you might well be very much brighter than some of those others with whom I have consulted, but I am certain that you would not expect me to concede that you are brighter than I am. I have spoken.

Sincerely,

/s/  
Leo Szilard