JOHN F. KENNEDY
MASSACHUSETTS

COMMITTEES:
FOREIGN RELATIONS
LABOR AND PUBLIC WELFARE
JOINT ECONOMIC COMMITTEE

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, D.C.

May 27, 1960

Dr. Leo Szilard
Memorial Hospital
68th Street and York Avenue
New York, New York

Dear Dr. Szilard:

Many thanks for sending me the interesting advance draft of your forthcoming article for Look, "Has the Time Come to Abrogate War?". The time has certainly come to abrogate war, but this will never happen without inventive ideas and a clear vision of the goal. Your article and your other writings in the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists are making important contributions in supplying new ideas and better vision.

May I also say how happy I was to hear of the Atoms for Peace Award just presented to you. This country owes many debts to you, not only for your scientific achievements but for the great responsibility and imagination you have brought to the problem of securing peace.

With every good wish, I am

Sincerely,

John F. Kennedy

JFK:gls

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
CHICAGO 37 · ILLINOIS

THE ENRICO FERMI INSTITUTE
FOR NUCLEAR STUDIES

October 16, 1960

To: Senator John F. Kennedy

Dear Senator Kennedy,

On October 5 I had an extended, and rather satisfactory, private conversation with N.S. Khrushchev. Because I believe that your first approach to him after the elections might well set the tone for all subsequent conversations throughout your term of office, I am anxious to give you orally a report on both the mood and substance of my conversation. Thus I would hope to convey to you a type of approach that might evoke a constructive response.

At present your attention must be focussed on the elections, and therefore it seems to me rather unlikely that you would want to see me now, even if you could find the time. I should be very grateful, however, for your setting aside a few hours for an interview after the elections, and letting me know the date as soon as you are able to set it. (Naturally, if I should be wrong about this point, I am at your disposal now also.)

I assume that, after the elections, you may go to some resort for a rest, and I should be glad to see you there even if this were to involve a trip by air of several hours' duration.

Should the elections be won by Mr. Nixon, I should still want to have this interview with you - believing, as I do, that the role played by the Leader of the Opposition might be almost as important in this matter as the role played by the President.

I am asking Dr. Eugene Cohen to transmit this letter to you with such comments as he may care to make.

Over the telephone, I can be reached at the Memorial Hospital in New York at Extension 133 - TRafalgar 9-3000. If my extension does not answer, a message may be taken by the hospital but such messages are not always delivered.

Very truly yours,

LEO SZILARD
Memorial Hospital, Room 812
444 East 68th Street,
New York 21, New York.

November 19, 1960.

Senator John F. Kennedy,
Washington D.C.

Dear Senator Kennedy,

I understand from Dr. Eugene J. Cohen that you might be able to see me some time in December and I would hope to give you then a report on an extended conversation that I had with Chairman Khrushchev in New York. This conversation covered a wide range of issues and perhaps it provides a clue to the type of general approach (with regard to both its tone and its substance) to which Khrushchev might be expected to be responsive.

If you are able to see me in December, I would submit to you at that time an exchange of letters which I had with Chairman Khrushchev prior to his visit to New York. In my letter to Khrushchev I raised a single issue: the possibility of clarifying controversial issues that have arisen in the so-called atomic stalemate through informal discussions between American and Russian scientists who have no governmental responsibilities.

Khrushchev gave in his reply his approval to the general approach I had outlined in my letter, including a specific proposal to hold such informal conversations immediately following an international meeting of scientists in Moscow, scheduled for November 27 of this year. Subsequently, the Academy of Sciences of the USSR has taken steps to implement this specific proposal and I am keeping the Statement Department informed of what is being currently done through the Science Adviser of the Department, Professor Walter G. Whitman.

The conversations to be held in November in Moscow are not meant as a one-shot operation, but rather as the beginning of a study extending throughout several years. Therefore, after your inauguration as President, it will be necessary to ascertain whether such conversations meet with the full approval of your Administration. I would hope to have an opportunity to raise this issue if I should see you in December, even though I would not expect an answer until some time after the new Administration has taken office.

Yours very truly,

Leo Szilard

c/o Dr. Eugene J. Cohen
260 East 66th Street,
New York City.

January 13, 1961

STRAIGHT WIRE

FROM: President-Elect and Mrs. Kennedy -- Washington, D.C.

DURING OUR FORTHCOMING ADMINISTRATION WE HOPE TO SEEK A PRODUCTIVE RELATIONSHIP WITH OUR WRITERS, ARTISTS, COMPOSERS, PHILOSOPHERS, SCIENTISTS AND HEADS OF CULTURAL INSTITUTES. AS A BEGINNING, IN RECOGNITION OF THEIR IMPORTANCE MAY WE EXTEND YOU OUR MOST CORDIAL INVITATION TO ATTEND THE INAUGURAL CEREMONIES IN WASHINGTON ON JANUARY 19th AND 20th. RESERVATIONS FOR INAUGURAL CONCERT, PARADE, BALL ARE HELD FOR YOU. ROOM ACCOMMODATIONS AND HOSPITALITY WILL BE ARRANGED FOR YOU BY A SPECIAL SUBCOMMITTEE. R.S.V.P. WHICH EVENTS DESIRED AND WHAT ACCOMMODATIONS NEEDED BY TELEGRAPHING K. HALLE, 3001 DENT PLACE, NORTHWEST WASHINGTON.

Sincerely,

President-Elect and Mrs. Kennedy

January 16, 1961

Mr. K. Halle
3001 Dent Place, Northwest
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. Halle:

In the absence of Professor Leo Szilard, who is abroad at the moment, this will acknowledge receipt of the telegraphed invitation dated January 13th from President-elect and Mrs. Kennedy to attend the inaugural ceremonies. Since Professor Szilard will not have returned to the States by the 19th-20th, he will want me to express his thanks for the kind invitation and his sincere regrets that he cannot accept.

Very sincerely yours,

Norene Mann (Mrs.)
Secretary to
Professor Leo Szilard

COPY

May 10, 1961

President John F. Kennedy
The White House
Washington 25, D. C.

Dear Mr. President:

I am convinced that the next phase of the so-called atomic stalemate, which is now rapidly approaching, will be inherently unstable and may explode in our face the first time we get into a conflict with Russia in which major national interests are involved. Therefore, I believe it is imperative that we reach a meeting of the minds with the Russians on either how to live with the bomb or else how to get rid of the bomb. So far we have not been doing either.

On October 5th of last year I had an extended conversation with Chairman Khrushchev in New York from which I had gained an insight into the kind of approach to which the Russians might respond with respect to either of these two issues. I thought that what I had learned was important enough to ask you to see me in November before you took office, and it was with deep regret that I learned that this was not possible.

Private conversations which I had in Moscow last December lead me to doubt that the Russians would be very receptive at the present time to any discussions on controlled arms limitations. I believe that the attitude of the Russians in this regard might change but only if we were first to examine jointly with them the issues involved in general disarmament and would then jointly reach the conclusion either that general disarmament is not desirable, or else that it is desirable but not feasible.

Most Americans do not know at all whether they would want to have general disarmament, even if it were feasible. I personally am convinced

that we shall make no progress towards general disarmament unless we first reach a meeting of the minds with the Russians on how one would secure the peace in a disarmed world.

Recently I moved to Washington in order to discover if I might be of some use in connection with the problem that the bomb poses to the world. Because I found nobody who appeared to know how the peace may be secured in a disarmed world, I decided to concentrate on this issue.

I was in the process of preparing a memorandum which analyzes what may and what may not be possible in this regard when I was stopped in my tracks by the invasion of Cuba by Cuban exiles.

I am deeply disturbed by what appears to be the present attitude of your Administration towards our obligations under the United Nations Charter. How many of my colleagues share my misgivings I do not know, but I am writing individually to other members of the National Academy of Sciences, and I shall take the liberty to transmit to you the responses which reach me by June 5th. A copy of the memorandum which I am mailing to my colleagues is attached.

Yours very truly,

Leo Szilard
Hotel Dupont Plaza
Washington 6, D. C.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Lemmings vs. Air-borne Arks

By C. L. Sulzberger

PARIS, May 7 -- It almost seems as if there is some mystical race between man's resolve to destroy this world and his efforts to find lodgment on another planet.

On one hand, we find the heroic but still tentative voyages of Gagarin and Shepard. These are the first precursors of that celestial Noah's ark which, some inevitable day, will wobble into space and seek to perpetuate humanity on distant spheres.

On the other hand, the earth-bound remnants drive on adamantly, foolish as Scandinavian lemmings, toward what they apparently would make their doom. No one is qualified to prophesy the outcome of this contest between our constructive and destructive genius. Yet at least we can measure the march to terrestrial catastrophe.

The great powers are paralyzed by suspicion in their efforts to negotiate a halt to the nuclear weapons race. With evident reason we attribute this to Soviet blind stubbornness. Nevertheless, if continued, it will insure that the means for such terrestrial catastrophe are at hand for almost everyone.

Simultaneously the opposing blocs inch ever more terrifyingly up against each other's borders. Far from disengaging, they are increasingly engaging. Let us regard two trends.

The first is the prospect of sending American troops to South Vietnam and perhaps to Thailand -- as a consequence of the Laos collapse. The second is Castro's announcement that Cuba is now "Socialist." Consider these together.

President Kennedy thinks of stationing U.S. soldiers in Southeast Asia because of the Laotian breakdown of SEATO defense machinery. Clearly we wish to check the possibility that Communist dry rot may spread to neighboring lands.

SEATO Article Four specifies that "aggression by means of armed attack" will be met by alliance action. Yet armed aggression from North Vietnam, logistically supported by Russia, wasn't truly met because the Laotians themselves showed they simply couldn't care less.

Laos was never in SEATO. But it is unilaterally guaranteed protection under a special protocol applied to treaty Article Four. The points to be considered now are these: Must we put in troops or else risk losing Southeast Asia? And if we must, how will we ever get them out again?

Furthermore, how will China accept the presence of such forces, evidently with nuclear equipment, close to its southern border? Peiping contends that war is inevitable and even seems to relish the ghastly thought. The implications are too obvious to warrant further comment. But how is all this related to Castro's Cuba?

Here we must turn back the pages to a year ago when Marshal Malinovsky announced an arrogant new Soviet doctrine. He said Russian missiles, presumably with atomic tips, would be launched against the home base of any aircraft intruding over Socialist territory.

The key word is Socialist, which, of course, means Communist in Moscow's lexicon. Malinovsky said he had issued orders for such missile protection not only of Russian but of Socialist territory; and he didn't mean Sweden.

Now Castro proclaims that his is a Socialist state. Clearly this infers the kind of Socialism Khrushchev admires and Malinovsky boasts he will defend by holocaust. So Cuba now qualifies for the same kind of unilateral Warsaw Pact protection that Laos qualified for from SEATO.

This ought not to be taken to mean that necessarily and immutably, should aircraft intrude over Socialist Cuban skies from Guatemala or the United States, rockets would automatically whizz. But it also doesn't necessarily and immutably mean they wouldn't.

The world is again edging closer to war. And it is edging closer to total, not brush-fire, war. The hopes that, with skill and wisdom, both sides could begin to extricate themselves and establish at least a brush-fire peace, are dimming.

Therefore, the conceited atavist, concerned with man's general destiny, should pray that everyone will invest increasingly in endeavors to conquer space.

For if there is human logic --a dubious assumption-- it is only after telemetric signals have been received from some air-borne ark, announcing its safe arrival elsewhere in the universe with a cargo containing both male and female of the species; then and only then should the two great coalitions set about grimly honoring each and all their earthly commitments.

The New York Times, Monday, May 8, 1961.

LETTERS TO THE TIMES

The Kennedy Doctrine
Policy Implications of President's Statement Are Examined

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NEW YORK TIMES:

The deeper implications of the Kennedy doctrine go far beyond Cuba. Only superficially can it be taken as a revival of the long-discarded Wilson doctrine that only democratically constituted governments can count on recognition by the United States. The present world is further than ever from the Wilsonian dream of democracy, and the withholding or withdrawal of recognition from all but democratically constituted governments would affect the majority of states, including many of this country's allies and friends.

The real meaning of the Kennedy statement is the affirmation of the supremacy of national interests and spheres of influence over the moral and legal restraints imposed by international law. This may be the result of a grim appraisal of the rapidly worsening international situation, and admission that only force, strategy and logistics can henceforth count in the struggle between the great power blocs. It may mean that America, no more than Russia or China, will tolerate in its own sphere of power a type of government that it distrusts. But the implications of such a doctrine should be realized.

The Communist powers have never been hampered in the use of force, which they can justify with the dialectics of revolution. But for at least half a century the United States has believed itself, and led the world to believe, in its image as a nation that will only fight, individually or collectively, against aggression, and in defense of international law. While often limiting freedom of action, this has given strength to the United States posture in international relations, among allies and neutrals. To sacrifice it would be a decision of grave and revolutionary importance.

Comparison With Hungary

Unilateral intervention designed to destroy by force a regime deemed hostile and dangerous to the United States would be on a par with Khrushchev's intervention in Hungary, suppressing a revolution whose success would undoubtedly have threatened the security of the Soviet regime, at least to the same degree as Castro's Cuba threatens

the security of the United States.

The Castro regime, however tyrannical, is not a puppet government. It came to power by a successful revolution, then acclaimed by most Americans. It will be far more difficult, if not impossible, for the United States henceforth to condemn Russians or Chinese for the actions in Hungary and Tibet, or the Franco-British intervention in Suez.

The Kennedy statement may signify a new and grimmer phase in United States policy, and the abandonment of its leadership in the fight for the rule of law in international affairs. It may be that the world situation justifies such a drastic reorientation, which may lead to the formation of tightly controlled superstates holding each other at bay. At least the implications of such a change should be clearly understood.

W. Friedmann,
Professor of Law and Director, International Legal Research, Columbia University.
New York, April 25, 1961.

The New York Times, Monday, May 1, 1961.

TODAY AND TOMORROW

To Ourselves Be True

By Walter Lippmann

We have been forced to ask ourselves recently how a free and open society can compete with a totalitarian state. This is a crucial question. Can our Western society survive and flourish if it remains true to its own faith and principles? Or must it abandon them in order to fight fire with fire?

* * *

There are those who believe that in Cuba the attempt to fight fire with fire would have succeeded if only the President had been more ruthless and had had no scruples about using American forces. I think they are wrong. I think that success for the Cuban adventure was impossible. In a free society like ours a policy is bound to fail which deliberately violates our pledges and our principles, our treaties and our laws. It is not possible for a free and open society to organize successfully a spectacular conspiracy.

The United States, like every other government, must employ secret agents. But the United States cannot successfully conduct large secret conspiracies. It is impossible to keep them secret. It is impossible for everybody concerned, beginning with the President himself, to be sufficiently ruthless and unscrupulous. The American conscience is a reality. It will make hesitant and ineffectual, even if it does not prevent, an un-American policy. The ultimate reason why the Cuban affair was incompetent is that it was out of character, like a cow that tried to fly or a fish that tried to walk.

It follows that in the great struggle with Communism, we must find our strength by developing and applying our own principles, not in abandoning them. Before anyone tells me that this is sissy, I should like to say why I believe it, especially after listening carefully and at some lengths to Mr. Khrushchev I am very certain that we shall have the answer to Mr. Khrushchev if, but only if, we stop being fascinated by the cloak and dagger business and, being true to ourselves, take our own principles seriously.

* * *

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TODAY AND TOMORROW

Post-Mortem on Cuba

By Walter Lippmann

* * *

Though it is late, it is, let us hope, not too late to find our way back to the highway from which we have strayed.

To do this there will have to be a certain inquiry, which only the President can conduct, followed by a frank and convincing explanation of how so colossal a mistake was made.

The question is how the President decided to approve this venture which was, as the event has shown, so greatly misconceived. As I understand it, and contrary to the general impression, there was no serious expectation that the landing of the exiles would be followed immediately by a political uprising against Castro. The object of the landing was to establish a beachhead for a civil war against Castro, and no plans seem to have been made, no thought seems to have been given, to what we would do then, what the rest of Latin America would do then, what the Soviet Union would do, while the civil war was being fought.

Bad as has been the consequences of the failure, they are probably less bad than would have been the indecisive partial success which was the best that could conceivably have been achieved. For in order to support the rebellion in Cuba we would have had to continue to violate not only our treaties with the other American states but also our own laws which prohibit the preparation of foreign military expeditions in the United States.

* * *

My own inquiries as to how the misjudgment was made lead me to believe that the President was not protected by the New Hands --Bundy, Rostow, Schlesinger and Rusk -- against the bad advice of the Old Hands, Bissell and Dulles of the C. I. A., Lemnitzer and Burke of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Berle of the State Department. There is no doubt that the plans had been drawn up and the preparations made during the preceding administration. There is no doubt that the President insisted upon modifying these plans to avoid, as he thought and hoped, any appearance of direct involvement of the United States Armed Forces. Though much has been said that this proviso ruined the plan, there is no doubt also that the Chiefs of Staff and the C. I. A. advised the President to proceed nevertheless.

I believe an inquiry will show that the Secretary of State, although he had his misgivings, approved the plan. Contrary to much that has been said, I believe it to be true that Stevenson and Bowles were excluded from the deliberations which preceded the fatal decision.

Furthermore, the record will show, I believe, that the one man who participated in the deliberations and pleaded with the President not to approve the plan was Sen. Fulbright. He foresaw what would happen, he warned the President that the right policy was not to attempt to oust Castro but to contain him while we worked constructively in Latin America. Sen. Fulbright was the only wise man in the lot.

* * *

When there is a disaster of this kind --as for example the British disaster at Suez -- the mistake can be purged and confidence can be restored only by the resignation of the key figures who had the primary responsibility and by candid talk which offers the promise that the mistake will not be repeated.

In the immediate wake of the disaster the President took the position that he would accept all the blame and that nobody else was to be held responsible. This was generous. It was brave, and in the sense that the Chief Executive must stand by those under him, it was right. But it is not the whole story. Under our system of government, unlike the

British system, the Chief Executive who makes a great mistake does not and cannot resign. Therefore, if there is to be accountability in our government, the President must hold responsible those whose constitutional or statutory duty it is to advise him.

All this is a painful business, even for a hardened newspaper writer. But the stakes are very high and the national interest is that the truth be found and that justice be done. For there is at stake the confidence of our own people and of our friends throughout the world.

New York Herald Tribune, Tuesday, May 2, 1961.

June 6, 1961

President John F. Kennedy
The White House
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. President:

I take the liberty of transmitting to you in the enclosed memorandum the names of 56 members of the National Academy of Sciences who have signed the petition attached to this letter.

In connection with the Cuban incident I became deeply disturbed by what appeared to be the present attitude of your administration toward our obligations under the United Nations Charter. Because what we think about ourselves is even more important than what others think about us, I communicated on May 10, 1961, with the members of eight sections of the National Academy of Sciences, representing slightly more than half of the membership of the Academy. About one in six of those to whom I wrote responded by signing the petition which I drafted.

In evaluating this response, it must be born in mind that there is probably no group in the population whose membership would be as reluctant to sign a petition, than the group of men to whom I addressed myself. It would be my guess that most of them have never signed a petition in their life.

A copy of the communication which I sent to my colleagues, and which elicited this response is enclosed.

Yours respectfully,

Leo Szilard

LS:acb

Enclosures

June 6, 1961

Memorandum

From: Leo Szilard

To: The President of the United States

The attached petititon was signed between the 10th of May and June 5th, and sent to me for transmittal to you by 56 members of the National Academy of Sciences. I am holding the signed originals until I am instructed by you to what agency to send them. The names of those who signed are as follows:

Edgar Anderson
Missouri Botanical Garden
2315 Tower Grove Avenue
St. Louis 10, Missouri

Edwin Bennett Astwood
New England Center Hospital
Harrison Avenue and Bennet Street
Boston 11, Massachusetts

Horace Welcome Babcock
Mount Wilson and Palomar Observatories
813 Santa Barbara Street
Pasadena 4, California

Kenneth Tompkins Bainbridge
Department of Physics
Harvard University
Cambridge 38, Massachusetts

Eric Glendinning Ball
Department of Biological Chemistry
Harvard Medical School
25 Shattuck Street
Boston 15, Massachusetts

George William Bartelmez
224 Agnes Avenue
Missoula, Montana

Raymond Thayer Birge
University of California
Berkeley 4, California

Felix Bloch
Department of Physics
Stanford University
Stanford, California

David Mahlon Bonner
Department of Microbiology
Yale University
310 Cedar Street
New Haven 11, Connecticut

Royal Alexander Brink
Department of Genetics
University of Wisconsin
Madison 6, Wisconsin

Robert Bigham Brode
Department of Physics
University of California
Berkeley 4, California

Robert Kyle Burns
Department of Embryology
Carnegie Institution of Washington
Wolfe and Madison Streets
Baltimore 5, Maryland

Herbert Edmund Carter
Department of Chemistry
University of Illinois
Urbana, Illinois

Edward Uhler Condon
Department of Physics
Washington University
St. Louis 30, Missouri

Gilbert Dalldorf
Sloan-Kettering Institute for
Cancer Research
145 Boston Post Road
Rye, New York

Max Delbruck
Kerckhoff Laboratories of Biology
California Institute of Technology
Pasadena 4, California

Leslie Clarence Dunn
Department of Zoology
Columbia University
New York 27, N. Y.

Michael Heidelberger
Institute of Microbiology
Rutgers, The State University
New Brunswick, New Jersey

Karl Ferdinand Herzfeld
Department of Physics
Catholic University of America
Washington 17, D. C.

Ernest Ropiequet Hilgard
Department of Psychology
Stanford University
Stanford, California

Johannes Holtfreter
Biological Laboratories
University of Rochester
Rochester 3, N. Y.

Edwin Crawford Kemble
Physics Laboratories
Harvard University
Cambridge 38, Massachusetts

Charles Kittel
Department of Physics
University of California
Berkeley 4, California

Gerard Peter Kuiper
University of Arizona
Tucson, Arizona

Michael I. Lerner
Department of Genetics
University of California
Berkeley 4, California

Salvador Edward Luria
Department of Biology
Massachusetts Institute of
Technology
Cambridge 39, Massachusetts

Maria Goeppert Mayer
School of Science and Engineering
University of California
La Jolla, California

William Frederick Meggers
2904 Brandywine Street N. W.
Washington 8, D. C.

Karl Friederich Meyer
George Williams Hooper Foundation
University of California Medical
Center
San Francisco 22, California

Alfred Ezra Mirsky
Rockefeller Institute
New York 21, N. Y.

Hermann Joseph Muller
Zoology Department
Indiana University
Bloomington, Indiana

Alfred Newton Richards
Rugby Road
Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania

Oscar Riddle
Route 4
Plant City, Florida

Alfred Sherwood Romer
Museum of Comparative Zoology
Harvard College
Oxford Street
Cambridge 38, Massachusetts

Bruno Benedetto Rossi
Room 26-569
Department of Physics
Massachusettes Institute of Technology
Cambridge 39, Massachusetts

Karl Sax
Department of Botany
Josiah Willard Gibbs Research Laboratory
Yale University
New Haven, Connecticut

Leonard Isaac Schiff
Department of Physics
Stanford University
Stanford, California

Martin Schwarzschild
Princeton University Observatory
14 Prospect Avenue
Princeton, New Jersey

Harlow Shapley
Sharon Cross Road
Peterboro, New Hampshire

Burrhus Frederic Skinner
Memorial Hall
Harvard University
Cambridge 38, Massachusetts

Tracy Morton Sonneborn
220 Jordan Hall
Indiana University
Bloomington, Indiana

Lyman Spitzer, Jr.
Princeton University Observatory
14 Prospect Avenue
Princeton, New Jersey

William Howard Stein
Rockefeller Institute
New York 21, N. Y.

Lyman Spitzer, Jr.
Princeton University Observatory
14 Prospect Avenue
Princeton, New Jersey

William Howard Stein
Rockefeller Institute
New York 21, N. Y.

Wilson Stuart Stone
Genetics Foundation
University of Texas
Austin 12, Texas

Edward Lawrie Tatum
Rockefeller Institute
New York 21, N. Y.

Cornelis Bernardus Van Niel
Hopkins Marine Station of Stanford University
Pacific Grove, California

Maurice Bolks Visscher
Department of Physiology
University of Minnesota
Minneapolis 14, Minnesota

George Wald
The Biological Laboratories
Harvard University
16 Divinity Avenue
Cambridge 38, Massachusetts

Victor Frederick Weisskopf
Department of Physics
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Cambridge 39, Massachusetts

Frits Warmolt Went
Missouri Botanical Garden
2315 Tower Grove Avenue
St. Louis 10, Missouri

Robley Cook Williams
Virus Laboratory
University of California
Berkeley 4, California

Benjamin Harrison Willier
Department of Biology
Johns Hopkins University
Baltimore 18, Maryland

Olin Chaddock Wilson
Mount Wilson and Palomar Observatories
813 Santa Barbara Street
Pasadena, California

Oskar Wintersteiner
Squibb Institute for Medical Research
New Brunswick, New Jersey

Sewall Green Wright
Department of Genetics
University of Wisconsin
Madison 6, Wisconsin

Frederik William Houlder Zachariasen
Division of the Physical Sciences
University of Chicago
Chicago 37, Illinois

***

These petitions were sent to me in response to a communication I sent on May 10th to the members 8 out of 14 section of the National Academy of Sciences. As of July 1960 the membership of these 8 sections was 366, slightly more than half of the total membership of 615.

A letter by Theodore Thomas Puck, Department of Biophysics, University of Colorado Medical Center, Denver 20, Colorado, addressed to you and sent to me for transmittal is attached to this memorandum.

THE END

4/2/75

THIS XEROX COPY
SUBSTITUTED FOR
ORIGINAL, NOW IN
GWS LA JOLLA
SAFE DEPOSIT BOX

from V-61
See V-112 Sept 1, 61
LS - JFK

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

October 18, 1961

Dear Dr. Szilard:

Thank you very much for your letter.

We are, of course, glad that the situation in Brazil has stabilized without civil war and that we can now proceed with the Alliance for Progress in that most important area.

Every best wish,

Sincerely,

John F. Kennedy

Dr. Leo Szilard
The University of Chicago
Chicago 37, Illinois

file: Drafts

November 14, 1963

Draft

President John F. Kennedy
The White House
Washington 25, D.C.

Dear Mr. President:

It occurred to me that, if they both wanted to do so, the American Government and the Soviet Government could avoid further incidents connected with the right of access of American troops to West Berlin, by issuing to the officials who operate on the local leval instructions of a certain type.

Thus, the American officials would be instructed to offer to have the troops dismount from the trucks in order to be counted, and the Russian officials would be instructed to respond by saying that this would not be necessary.

One could prepare a detailed list of similar instructions on the basis of all previous incidents. In each case the instruction to the American official would be to offer to do what the Russians have previously asked that they do and the instruction to the Russian officials would be to respond by saying that this would not be necessary.

I am writing a similar letter to Chairman Khrushchev and if I should receive favorable responses to both letters then I would transmit to you the text of Chairman Khrushchev's reply and I would transmit to him the text of your reply. Otherwise, I would hold the responses in confidence.

If your response should be favorable, you might deem it, however, preferable to contact Chairman Khrushchev directly in this matter.

Yours very truly,

Leo Szilard
Hotel Dupont Plaza
Washington, D.C.

cc: John McNaughton
Llwellyn E. Thompson

W-16

File: Dr. Szilard

November 14, 1963

President John F. Kennedy
The White House
Washington 25, D.C.

Dear Mr. President:

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Yours very truly,

Leo Szilard
Hotel Dupont Plaza
Washington, D.C.

cc: John McNaughton
Llwellyn E. Thompson

President John F. Kennedy
The White House
Washington 25, D. C.

Sir:

I am taking the liberty of writing to you because I have come to believe that if your Administration were to adopt the right approach towards the Soviet Union on the issue of general disarmament it would meet with a favorable response and that progress could then be made towards political settlements as well as towards far-reaching disarmament.

It is my contention that the Soviet Union is very much aware of the great benefit which she would derive from general disarmament and that she would be willing to pay a commensurate price for obtaining it.

It stands to reason that this should be so. The Soviet Union spends on defense a much larger fraction of her industrial output than America does. Eliminating the cost of armaments would enable the Soviet Union not only to put an end to the housing shortage in her cities and to solve many other domestic economic problems, but also to extend her influence by giving economic aid to other nations on an unprecedented scale.

Ever since America has ringed Russia with bomber bases in the post-war period, the average Russian has been keenly aware of the dangers of the arms race, much more keenly, I should say, than is

the average American. There is less fear in Russia of economic dislocations that might be caused by moving too fast towards disarmament than there is in America. And above all, the whole concept of general disarmament fits in very well with the set of values generally prevailing in the Soviet Union.

At the same time, the leadership of the Soviet Union is, of course, aware of the virtually total lack of interest in disarmament on the part of America; this to my mind explains why the Soviet Government's attitude towards disarmament negotiations is guided more by the public relations aspect rather than the substantive aspect of this problem and is no different in this regard from the American Government's attitude.

I am convinced, however, that their attitude in this regard would change overnight if it became apparent that America was becoming interested in general disarmament.

America is at present committed to protect against Russia certain territories which are located in the geographical proximity of Russia. Since, in the case of general disarmament America would not be able to live up to any such commitment, general disarmament would be politically acceptable to America only if it is made possible to her to liquidate her present commitments -- <u>without loss of prestige and without seriously endangering the interests of the other nations involved</u>.

Chairman Khrushchev, I know, is very much aware of this. Therefore, I am convinced that if it came to serious negotiations on the issue of general disarmament and if it became manifestly necessary to reach a political settlement in order to permit America to liquidate her military commitments, then, under its present leadership the Soviet Union would go a long way towards seeking an accommodation. Accordingly, we might be missing an opportunity which may not recur if we do not speedily examine what our attitude towards the issue of general disarmament ought to be.

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Let me say, at this point, that I, personally, am not a disarmament enthusiast. Four years ago I dissented from the proclamation issued by the First Pugwash Conference, because it said that the conclusion of a treaty providing for the cessation of bomb tests would be a good first step towards disarmament. I did not think at that time that it would be a good first step, nor did I ever believe that real progress could be made towards disarmament as long as people thought of this problem in terms of what would be a good first step.

In the past eight months I made it my business to examine the main issues involved in general disarmament.

The difficulties of the problem of inspection appear to be almost insurmountable to most people in America because this problem is approached in the wrong way. Further, people in America

find it difficult to see how it may be possible to secure the peace in a generally disarmed world, because a generally disarmed world is wholly unprecedented and the securing of peace in such a world would require the adoption of unprecedented methods.

In the enclosed memorandum "On Disarmament", I am trying to indicate what I believe to be a constructive approach to both of these problems. While I cannot give a blueprint spelling out in detail adequate solutions for all problems involved, I believe that I am now in a position to appraise the difficulties presented by these problems. I believe that all these problems could be solved, that it would be possible to abolish war through general disarmament and that general disarmament ought to be acceptable to America, provided that the Russians, as well as the other nations involved, would accept what may be reasonably demanded from them on this score.

I should add at this point, however, that this conclusion is largely based on my own appraisal of the motivations of the Russians.

In order to find out whether general disarmament could be brought about in the near future, it is necessary to determine the answer to three questions:

(1) In what sense and to what extent could peace be secured in a generally disarmed world, assuming that Russia, as well as other nations, would accept what may be reasonably demanded from them?

I believe that those who act as consultants or advisors to your Administration on the issue of disarmament could reach a consensus on this issue, provided that there would be adopted some suitable procedures that would enable them fully to utilize their capabilities. I might take the liberty to indicate, on some other occasion, how this might be accomplished.

(2) In the light of the answer to the above question and assuming that the Russians would accept what may be reasonably demanded from them, ought the United States then accept general disarmament?

It is a foregone conclusion that those of your advisors who differ in their appraisal of the motivations of the Russians, will disagree on the answer to this question.

To take an extreme case, those who see a close resemblance between the Soviet Union, under its present leadership, and Germany under Hitler will inevitably be forced to conclude that America ought not to accept general disarmament, even if the Soviet Union were to accept everything that may be reasonably demanded from her.

I believe that in order to gain real insight into Russian motivations, a man would have to view Russia's international behavior since Stalin's death in much the same way as a future historian would view it in retrospect (and comparatively few men are able to do this). Also he would have to have close personal

contact with Russians, on a variety of levels and in circumstances where he can freely engage in private conversations.

Many of those who were born and raised in America are temperamentally incapable of understanding the Russians. Among the Americans who stayed in Moscow over an extended period of time, those who were there as officials of the U. S. Government were barred from the kind of intimate personal contacts which one needs in order to be able to absorb the prevailing set of values. Government officials who represent America in negotiations with the Soviet Union may gain some impressions on how the Russians think and feel, but the environment of negotiations is not suitable for gaining a sufficiently deep insight into Russian motivations.

Clearly, in the end, the decision whether America ought to accept general disarmament (if Russia were to accept what may be reasonably demanded from her) will have to be made by <u>yourself</u> and will have to be based on your own appraisal of Russian motivations. It will not be easy for you to attain the insight which you would need to possess in order to reach the right decision, and it would be tragic if you were to reach the wrong decision.

(3) If you should decide that general disarmament ought to be acceptable to America, provided that Russia (as well as the

other nations involved) would accept what may be reasonably demanded from them, then there would arise the question whether these nations would, in fact, accept what may be reasonably demanded from them. This, of course, would have to be determined through governmental negotiations.

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I take the liberty to propose to arrange for a study, conducted on a non-governmental level by a small group of Americans and Russians. Among the American participants, of perhaps twelve men, there ought to be at least five who are at the present serving as consultants to your Administration, on a part-time basis.

This mixed American-Russian group would explore both the means through which peace could be secured in a generally disarmed world and the means through which the nations could convince each other that there may be no secret violations of the disarmament agreement occurring on their territory.

It would be the objective of this group to prepare a working paper in which these issues are clarified. It would <u>not be the task of this group to come up with recommendations of how the various problems ought to be solved</u>, but rather the group would

list a variety of different measures, analyze each measure, and clarify its possible advantages and pitfalls.

In order to do their job well, they would have to spend some time in Washington and some time in Moscow and to have contact with the American Government and the Soviet Government at all levels. They would have to listen to objections that may be raised in governmental circles both in Washington and in Moscow, with respect to any of the measures that the group may have under consideration.

Such a study would have to be conducted on a full-time, crash, basis and would have to extend over a period of several months. If time and circumstances permit the group conducting the study would also listen to the views expressed by other governments, including the government of the Peoples' Republic of China.

The resulting working paper could provide the American Government, as well as the Soviet Government, with insight into the problems involved which they do not now possess. Moreover, the various measures discussed in such a working paper would be free from the stigma of being labeled either as a Russian proposal or as an American proposal.

In addition, this study could fulfill another very important function. The American participants in this study would have an opportunity to gain insight into Russian motivations. The opportunities provided in this respect could far exceed those that any

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I believe that the Soviet Government would welcome the setting up of such a study and that the Russian participants in the study would be selected to match the American participants in knowledge, ability and the confidence which they enjoy on the part of their government.

Should the setting up of such a study meet with your approval, then I should greatly appreciate an opportunity to discuss with someone designated by you who the American participants might be, as well as other details.

Respectfully,

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

Dear Sir:

President John F. Kennedy
The White House
Washington 25, D. C.

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It would be therefore desirable to devise an adequate procedure through which those who may be advising you on this issue could gain a deeper insight into the motivations of the Russians. They in turn could then assist you in gaining a deeper insight also.

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