

September 25, 1961

PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL

Mr. Charles Bartlett
c/o Chattanooga Times
National Press Building
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Bartlett:

I have been convinced for some time that no satisfactory solution of the Berlin issue is possible unless East Germany shifts its capital from East Berlin and East Berlin is permitted to become a free city, at about the same time that West Berlin may become a free city. If there is no satisfactory solution to the Berlin issue, West Berlin will wither away rapidly and its half empty shell will be a conspicuous monument - visible to all - to the failure of the West.

It is a foregone conclusion that the proposal that East Germany shift its capital would meet with sales resistance. I believe, however, I am in an exceptionally good position to argue this point with Khrushchev both because I am deeply convinced that such a shift of the capital is essential for a genuine accommodation and also because I had a rather good conversation with him about this point in October of last year.

While I might have a fair chance of selling him on the idea of setting up both East Berlin and West Berlin, each as a free city, I would not undertake to try to sell him on setting up the whole of Berlin as one free city.

I could hop a plane and fly to Moscow, but there would not perhaps be much sense in my doing so unless I were given to understand that the general approach to the problem which is described in the attached article meets with the approval of the White House. This need not mean, of course, that the particular "package" described in the article is acceptable, as it stands. But it would need to mean that the general philosophy from which this package is derived would be acceptable and that the relinquishing of East Berlin by East Germany would be part of some package, derived from this philosophy.

I wonder whether, if I were to go to Moscow, it might not be useful for some other private person who has the confidence of the White House to accompany me, as an observer. He could sit in on my conversations with Khrushchev, without actually participating in the conversation, and subsequently he could report to the White House.

Yours very sincerely,

Leo Szilard

July 10, 1961

Charles Bartlett
The Chattanooga Times
National Press Building
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. Bartlett:

I am getting more and more concerned about the lack of real direction in our foreign policy. Attached is a Letter to the Editor about the Berlin crisis which I wrote over a year ago and which Senator Cooper put into the Congressional Record. If you like this particular approach, perhaps you might be able to feed it in somewhere where it might do some good.

As a rule I am able to understand the moves the Russians are making by putting myself in their place and asking myself what I would do if I were in their shoes. I am, however, rather puzzled by their apparent desire to establish East Germany as an independent state. While on the face of it the situation in Europe may appear to be more stable if East Germany is recognised as an independent state, I personally have serious doubts about this.

There is considerable discontent in East Germany. As long as East Germany is not recognized as a sovereign state, putting down a revolt would be a police measure which the Russians could undertake without seriously risking international complications. But once East Germany is recognised as a sovereign country, then if there is a revolt and Russia sends in troops to put it down, West Germany may also be impelled to intervene and we may have a serious international crisis.

With all respect for Khrushchev's intelligence and judgement, which in general I hold in high regard, I wonder whether he has given sufficient thought to this.

Sincerely yours,

Leo Szilard

Hotel DuPont Plaza
Washington, D.C.

S:D

October 6, 1961

Mr. Charles Bartlett
c/o Chattanooga Times
National Press Building
Washington 5, D. C.

Dear Mr. Bartlett:

Enclosed is one of my masterpieces which I sent to Gardner Cowles. You might find it amusing, if not instructive, if you read it.

Also enclosed is a little book, Red Alert, which I very much would like you to read. Even though things have changed in the three years that elapsed since the book was written and even though great efforts have been made by the present Administration, the problem is still not solved. There are certain things which I would like to discuss with you in this context.

I am leaving tomorrow morning for Boston to attend some ceremonies at Brandeis University, but I should be back by the middle of next week and if I may, I shall then telephone you at your office.

Very sincerely yours,

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

Enclosures 2

P.S. Enclosed also my article on the Berlin issue in The New Republic.

L.S.