

Dear Mr. President:

Following the receipt of your letter Mr. Baruch telephoned and I saw him in New York yesterday afternoon. The gist of his idea is as follows:

He feels that the rapidity of invention which has characterized development of atomic weapons warrants the assumption that the methods for producing weapons will become increasingly less complicated and cheaper. The corollary will be the eventual possession of weapons facilities and stockpiles by countries other than the United States, United Kingdom, and the USSR. This fact, he thinks, should by now be equally apparent to the Soviets and that, while they know they have nothing to fear by way of unprovoked attack by us, they might take an entirely different view of the prospects of a war begun with atom bombs dropped on Russian cities by, say, Franco or a rearmed Germany.

Proceeding from this thesis he argues that a third party, for instance Churchill or Nehru -- not in any case ourselves -- might carefully sound out the Russians with this idea on the assumption that world wide atomic disarmament is very much in their interest and more difficult of achievement after atomic weapons are widely held than under present circumstances. I asked him how an agreement for atomic disarmament could be policed and he returned again to his thesis of 1946 for international inspection and control and international ownership of all uranium and thorium ore "as soon as it comes up out of the mine shaft."

I think the premise of his argument is sound although I believe the time scale to be much longer than he thinks. For while it is true that weapons have been made "cheaper" the difference is relative and the costs of plants and processes are still astronomical in terms of the resources of small nations. The real difficulty with the proposal, assuming one could find a suitable intermediary, would be the ever-present hurdle of how to deal with the inspection and international control aspects so long as the Russians maintain the Iron Curtain policy, which I assume is essential to that kind of government.

The matter was left that I would report his conclusions to you. I suggest a letter from you to him to the effect that I have done so and that you will be revolving in your mind the interesting points he has made, and which, as he must know, bristle with difficulties and complexities.



Respectfully,

LEWIS STRAUSS

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