

10 December 1958

→ MEMORANDUM FOR THE FILES OF LEWIS L. STRAUSS

Dr. Edward Teller called on me today by appointment made by Captain Morse who later joined us. Dr. Teller expressed himself as convinced that the conference now going on in Geneva on the suspension of testing of atomic weapons would conclude with an agreement that would be to the very serious disadvantage of the United States. He reminded me that he had told me last July that the delegation of scientists which we had sent to Geneva had inaccurate knowledge of the detectability of underground tests and that they had been at fault in stating that tests of 4 kiloton weapons could be almost certainly detected anywhere.

It now appears as a result of the second HARDTACK series that tests of as large as 20 kilotons can pass undetected. He said that he had sent a memorandum to Geneva to our delegation at its meeting but that it had been disregarded. He pointed out that the group of Rabi, Bethe and Bacher, who are the prime movers of test suspension, are the same individuals who bitterly opposed the H-bomb program and that their advice, whether sincere or innocent, has been invariably wrong. He reminded me that he had wanted to make a public statement in September and that I had dissuaded him from doing it. He said he felt he should not longer delay. I said I would not take the position of opposing the statement from him but thought he should consider the consequences; that he was now the Director of an AEC National Laboratory and that this might make his continuance in such capacity impossible. This, he said, he had considered and was prepared to resign if requested.

I then said I thought he had a responsibility to inform Chairman McCone of his proposed statement which he said he would do. I suggested that in lieu of making a statement, he had best address a letter to the President. He replied that he would do so but that he felt such a letter would be referred by the White House staff to Dr. Killian and that the President might either never hear of it or just receive a brief and disparaging version. (This opinion, in view of Rabi's statement to the President concerning Teller and Lawrence in my presence last year is probably a good appraisal of what would happen.) I told Dr. Teller that he might try getting the letter to the President through the good offices of General Goodpaster. He said he would do this. He also said that he was seeing the Vice President this afternoon

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and asked me whether I thought he could speak to the Vice President with complete frankness. I encouraged him to do so.

Captain Morse said that he was extremely depressed. He said that Mr. McCone had apparently given up the fight; that the other Commissioners were confused or not informed; and that while those in the second and third echelons had discussed the subject fully and agreed with him, they had apparently abdicated to the State Department and felt that the AEC was entitled to no voice in the matter of policy in connection with weapons.

Lewis L. Strauss

LLS/vhw