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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON
POST OFFICES AND POST ROADS

September 27, 1945



The President,
The White House,
Washington, D. C.

My dear Mr. President:

Enclosed you will find my views on the atomic bomb,
as requested by you.

With much respect,

Sincerely your friend,

Franklin D. Roosevelt



The question immediately submitted was whether we should give to Russia our formula for making the atomic bomb, it being seemingly understood that we were going to give this formula to Great Britain and to Canada because Great Britain had furnished twenty-five or thirty workers or scientists who aided us in the program, and because we wanted to retain Great Britain's good will, and because Canada had furnished the uranium but of course at an enormous price.

It seems to me unwise, impolitic and dangerous to our nation's defense, provocative of war, and dangerous to peace, to give this formula to Russia, England, Canada or to any other nation.

In passing, I want to say that I have not a single unkind feeling towards Russia or the Russian people. I think both Russia and the people made a wonderful record in the late war. She fulfilled every obligation not

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only in the war against Germany but it will be remembered when many people thought she was not obligated at all to go into the war with us against Japan, and that it was not to her interest to do so, yet she came proudly across and stood with us in that war. I repeat I have not anything but the highest respect and admiration for the Russians.

It is on their account indeed that I take the stand that if we give this formula to England or Canada we are in duty bound and in honor bound to give it to Russia and to China and our other Allies also.

I am going to try succinctly to give my reasons why this bomb, or the formula for making it, should not be given away to other nations:

- (1). Russia as a government nor as a people did not give us material aid in discovering this formula and, therefore, is not entitled to the use of it or property rights in it on this account.

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- (2). Great Britain or Canada did not give us any material aid in discovering this bomb, though I have been reliably informed that twenty-five or thirty British citizens, the most of them scientists, were over here and helped in one way or another with it, and surely the work of twenty-five or thirty scientists or helpers would not entitle her to a property right in this bomb.
- (3). This help from Great Britain was so inconsequential, and her own self defense was so much at stake, a thousand fold more than ours, that surely she could not claim a property interest in the formula of the bomb by the casual assistance of twenty-five or thirty people in a two billion six hundred million dollar (\$2,600,000,000) enterprise.
- (4). America, as I am informed, spent two billion six hundred million dollars (\$2,600,000,000) on this bomb. At best, Great Britain spent not more than a few hundred thousand dollars on it and her interest in her own defense was so much greater at the time than our interest in our defense that surely she could not claim a property right in this bomb.
- (5). I think anyone could see that Canada having for the first time made real money out of uranium which she sold us for the purpose of making the bomb would not be entitled to any consideration in the property.
- (6). Neither Russia nor China nor any other Ally furnished anything towards creating the formula.
- (7). Even if there were any equity why it should be given to any other nation this is not the time to give it away. We do not ourselves know the value or worth of this formula at this time. It is too early yet for us to ascertain its value or worth and surely we ought not to give this formula away at this time.
- (8). This formula may or may not be important industrially as well as in a military way. It may wholly revolutionize the use of force and power in this nation and, therefore, it should not be given away to any one for any purpose until we know its value and worth.

- (9). We have not the constitutional nor the moral nor the legal right to give this away without return and as we do not know its value it surely should not be given away now.
- (10). From a military standpoint, from actual experience with it, it is the greatest military power or force in the world today and, therefore, it may be and probably is the greatest foe of peace and the greatest promoter of war ever known in the world.
- (11). Every nation great or small and ambitious for other nations' territory, whether a defeated or a victorious nation in this war, upon becoming the owner of this formula will at once become imbued with the ambition that with the use of this formula they can acquire other nations' property and thereby increase the likelihood of war.
- (12). But it is said that all except our late enemy nations have united in an agreement to keep the peace and that is true, but I call attention to the fact that in the first world war we signed peace agreements with practically all the nations to keep the peace in the future and the ink had hardly gotten dry on those peace treaties before many nations were already plotting for another war. This was especially true of Germany and Japan.
- (13). The United States wants no other nation's property and wants no other nation's territory. We simply want to live in peace with all of our neighbors and trade and traffic and have good relations with all. This is not true of other nations as shown by their history. The only safe trustee of this formula is the United States.
- (14). We feel kindly towards our Allies, those that we helped and those that we did not help, though for the moment I cannot think of any that we did not help. They owe us. We do not owe them.
- (15). But it is claimed that our Allies or the most of them do not feel kindly towards us and that it is especially necessary that we create in Great Britain, France, Russia and other Allies a most kindly feeling towards us and for that reason we should be generous and give them property of this kind. If the United States having entered this war just before Hitler was about to capture
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London, and of course he would have then captured the entire nation, and was only kept from doing so by the timely entrance of the United States in the war; if we could not by giving her some twenty odd billions of dollars in lend lease purchase her good opinion of us; if we could not after saving her government and people from German rule at the expense of two hundred and seventy-five billions of dollars to us purchase England's good will, I cannot believe that we could purchase it by giving in addition the use of this formula which may be the most important formula ever written in both a civil and military way.

- 16). Likewise Hitler had overrun Russia. He had the Russian Army beaten back to Stalingrad practically to the Asiatic line then we came in by lend lease, by sending her guns, ammunition, tractors, aeroplanes, food and clothing way around by the Persian Gulf and the North Sea, all free and for nothing, and if that did not purchase Russia's good will there is no amount we could give her or no property we could give her that would purchase her or her country's good will. This applies in lesser degree to all countries.
- 17). Given such a dangerous weapon or the formula for it, each and every nation will at once get their scientists busy with it and the most of them will think they have improved it in a better and more effective way than any other nation and it won't be long before they will want to go to war to prove that they have got the best bomb in the world and, unless they change their past thousand years history, a war of bombs will soon be fought. To give the formula for this weapon to other nations or to any other nation without money and without price would be to invite them to get busy and prepare for another world war.
- 18). It is argued that Great Britain has all the information now necessary to proceed with the formula and build bombs. If that is true there is no necessity whatsoever in our giving her the formula. If we give it to Great Britain I do not see how we can keep from giving it to Russia and all the other Allies.

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(19). My sincere and honest and genuine judgment is that the distribution of this formula to our Allies will again disturb the peace of the world; undo all the good work we have done at San Francisco, and war will be eagerly looked forward to again by all the war-like nations of the world.

(20). I believe for peace-loving America to keep the formula and the process in her own hands will guarantee the peace of the world as outlined at San Francisco.

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