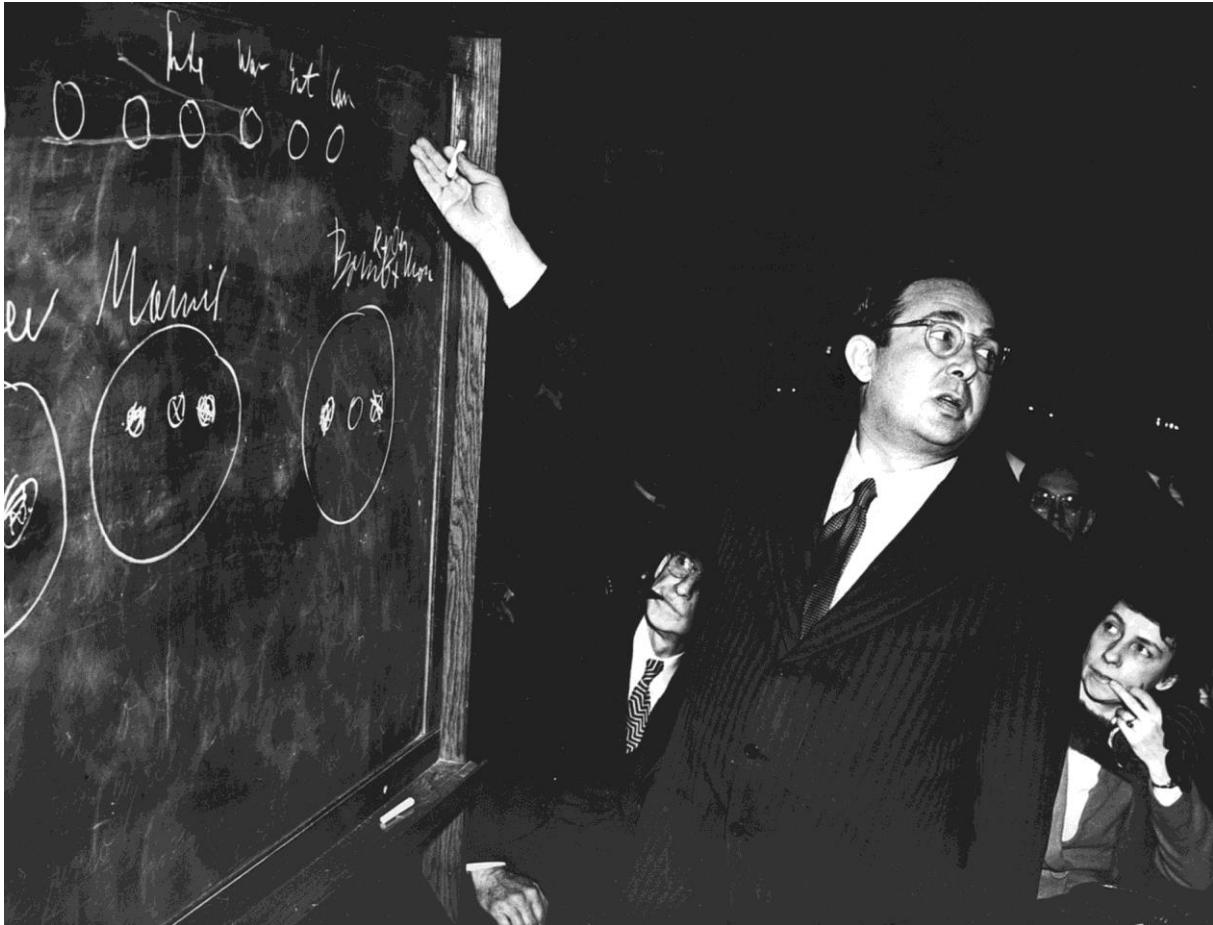


Source: <https://ahf.nuclearmuseum.org/ahf/key-documents/szilard-petition/>

Szilard Petition

[Leo Szilard](#) drafted the petition below to the President in the summer of 1945 attempting to avert the U.S.'s use of the atomic bomb against Japan. Although the petition was signed by seventy other scientists of the [Met Lab in Chicago](#), it was never seen by the President or the Secretary of War before the first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima.



A PETITION TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

July 17, 1945

Discoveries of which the people of the United States are not aware may affect the welfare of this nation in the near future. The liberation of the atomic power which has been achieved places atomic bombs in the hands of the Army. It places in your hands, as Commander-in-Chief, the fateful decision whether or not to sanction the use of such bombs in the present phase of the war against Japan.

We, the undersigned scientists, have been working in the field of atomic power. Until recently we have had to fear that the United States might be attacked by atomic bombs during this war and that her only defense might lie in a counterattack by the same means. Today, with the defeat of Germany, this danger is averted and we feel impelled to say what follows:

The war has to be brought speedily to a successful conclusion and attacks by atomic bombs may very well be an effective method of warfare. We feel, however, that such attacks on Japan could not be justified, at least not until the terms which will be imposed after the war on Japan were made public in detail and Japan were given an opportunity to surrender.

If such public announcement gave assurance to the Japanese that they could look forward to a life devoted to peaceful pursuit in their homeland and if Japan still refused to surrender, our nation might then, in certain circumstances, find itself forced to resort to the use of atomic bombs. Such a step, however, ought not to be made at any time without seriously considering the moral responsibilities which are involved.

The development of atomic power will provide the nations with new means of destruction. The atomic bombs at our disposal represent only the first step in this direction, and there is almost no limit to the destructive power which will become available in the course of their future development. Thus a nation which sets the precedent of using these newly liberated forces of nature for purposes of destruction may have to bear the responsibility of opening the door to an era of devastation on an unimaginable scale.

If after the war a situation is allowed to develop in the world which permits rival powers to be in uncontrolled possession of these new means of destruction, the cities of the United States as well as the cities of other nations will be in continuous danger of sudden annihilation. All the resources of the United States, moral and material, may have to be mobilized to prevent the advent of such a world situation. Its prevention is at present the solemn responsibility of the United States—singled out by virtue of her lead in the field of atomic power.

The added material strength which this lead gives to the United States brings with it the obligation of restraint and if we were to violate this obligation our moral position would be weakened in the eyes of the world and in our own eyes. It would then be more difficult for us to live up to our responsibility of bringing the unloosened forces of destruction under control.

In view of the foregoing, we, the undersigned, respectfully petition: first, that you exercise your power as Commander-in-Chief, to rule that the United States shall not resort to the use of atomic bombs in this war unless the terms which will be imposed upon Japan have been made public in detail and Japan knowing these terms has refused to surrender; second, that in such an event the question whether or not to use atomic bombs be decided by you in the light of the consideration presented in this petition as well as all the other moral responsibilities which are involved.

[Names and titles by Szilard biographer [Gene Dannen](#)]

1. [David S. Anthony, Associate Chemist](#)
2. [Larned B. Asprey, Junior Chemist, S.E.D.](#)
3. [Walter Bartky, Assistant Director](#)
4. [Austin M. Brues, Director, Biology Division](#)
5. [Mary Burke, Research Assistant](#)
6. [Albert Cahn, Jr., Junior Physicist](#)
7. [George R. Carlson, Research Assistant-Physics](#)
8. [Kenneth Stewart Cole, Principal Bio-Physicist](#)
9. [Ethaline Hartge Cortelyou, Junior Chemist](#)
10. [John Crawford, Physicist](#)
11. [Mary M. Dailey, Research Assistant](#)
12. [Miriam Posner Finkel, Associate Biologist](#)
13. [Frank G. Foote, Metallurgist](#)

14. [Horace Owen France, Associate Biologist](#)
15. [Mark S. Fred, Research Associate-Chemistry](#)
16. [Sherman Fried, Chemist](#)
17. [Francis Lee Friedman, Physicist](#)
18. [Melvin S. Friedman, Associate Chemist](#)
19. [Mildred C. Ginsberg, Computer](#)
20. [Norman Goldstein, Junior Physicist](#)
21. [Sheffield Gordon, Associate Chemist](#)
22. [Walter J. Grundhauser, Research Assistant](#)
23. [Charles W. Hagen, Research Assistant](#)
24. [David B. Hall, Position Not Identified](#)
25. [David L. Hill, Associate Physicist, Argonne](#)
26. [John Perry Howe, Jr., Associate Division Director, Chemistry](#)
27. [Earl K. Hyde, Associate Chemist](#)
28. [Jasper B. Jeffries, Junior Physicist, Junior Chemist](#)
29. [William Karush, Associate Physicist](#)
30. [Truman P. Kohman, Chemist-Research](#)
31. [Herbert E. Kubitschek, Junior Physicist](#)
32. [Alexander Langsdorf, Jr., Research Associate](#)
33. [Ralph E. Lapp, Assistant To Division Director](#)
34. [Lawrence B. Magnusson, Junior Chemist](#)
35. [Robert Joseph Maurer, Physicist](#)
36. [Norman Frederick Modine, Research Assistant](#)
37. [George S. Monk, Physicist](#)
38. [Robert James Moon, Physicist](#)
39. [Marietta Catherine Moore, Technician](#)
40. [Robert Sanderson Mulliken, Coordinator Of Information](#)
41. [J. J. Nickson, \[Medical Doctor, Biology Division\]](#)
42. [William Penrod Norris, Associate Biochemist](#)
43. [Paul Radell O'Connor, Junior Chemist](#)
44. [Leo Arthur Ohlinger, Senior Engineer](#)
45. [Alfred Pfanstiehl, Junior Physicist](#)
46. [Robert Leroy Platzman, Chemist](#)
47. [C. Ladd Prosser, Biologist](#)
48. [Robert Lamburn Purbrick, Junior Physicist](#)
49. [Wilfred Rall, Research Assistant-Physics](#)
50. [Margaret H. Rand, Research Assistant, Health Section](#)
51. [William Rubinson, Chemist](#)
52. [B. Roswell Russell, Position Not Identified](#)
53. [George Alan Sacher, Associate Biologist](#)
54. [Francis R. Shonka, Physicist](#)
55. [Eric L. Simmons, Associate Biologist, Health Group](#)
56. [John A. Simpson, Jr., Physicist](#)
57. [Ellis P. Steinberg, Junior Chemist](#)
58. [D. C. Stewart, S/Sgt S.E.D.](#)
59. [George Svihla, Position Not Identified \[Health Group\]](#)
60. [Marguerite N. Swift, Associate Physiologist, Health Group](#)
61. [Leo Szilard, Chief Physicist](#)
62. [Ralph E. Telford, Position Not Identified](#)
63. [Joseph D. Teresi, Associate Chemist](#)
64. [Albert Wattenberg, Physicist](#)

65. [Katharine Way, Research Assistant](#)
66. [Edgar Francis Westrum, Jr., Chemist](#)
67. [Eugene Paul Wigner, Physicist](#)
68. [Ernest J. Wilkins, Jr., Associate Physicist](#)
69. [Hoylande Young, Senior Chemist](#)
70. [William Houlder Zachariasen, Consultant](#)