

Lanouette

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Dear Professor Meselson,

Since I interviewed you about Szilard's work in biology and arms control, in 1987 and 1988, I have written and edited a manuscript, which we'll call Genius in the Shadows: A Biography of Leo Szilard. Since writing the book in 1988, I have split 15 chapters into 25, in order to be more thematic, and enclose a contents sheet for your information (the numbers at right are chapter word counts, in thousands).

By way of re-introduction, since researching and writing the manuscript I have been a fellow at the Kennedy School and at the Smithsonian's Woodrow Wilson Center, and Washington Correspondent for the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists. Last spring I joined the GAO as an energy-policy analyst, specializing in nuclear issues and now reviewing the Energy Department's woes.

As I recall, when we met you said you would be willing to critique my work, and I hope to take you up on that offer. Enclosed please find manuscript copies of chapters 21 and 24, respectively "Biology", which covers Leo's work in that new field, and "Seeking a More Livable World," about his founding of the Council. I would appreciate your comments and suggestions about these particular chapters because you are a source for some of the material. As you know, I have no background in biology, and need all the advice I can get. Aaron Novick has made many useful suggestions, and I'm also sending this chapter to Fox, Marcus, and Platt: other sources for some of the anecdotes.

I have tried to do several things in the "Biology" chapter, and welcome your suggestions about how I might correct and improve the effort.

First, I have described Leo's early fascination with biology, and his entry into the field. Chapter 8 also touches on his interest in the subject in 1932, just before he left Berlin, and Chapter 16 describes his abrupt separation from nuclear physics -- thanks to Groves. But here I try to lay out what he hoped to accomplish, and how he went about it.

Second, I have described very briefly the development of molecular biology, and Leo's tentative early contacts with the field. Did Leo ever tell you that he had met Delbruck in Berlin in 1932 or 1933? Did he ever describe his work with Schroedinger at that time? I know from his own writing (MIT Vol. II) that he considered teaching physiology by the spring of 1933, but am at a loss to find conclusive evidence for an earlier attempt at study. The Wells-Haldane connection through The Bund is a likely link.

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Third, I have described how I think Leo worked as a scientist; how he thought and what he thought about.

Fourth, I have related Leo's brainstorming to the contributions made by others.

Finally, I have described his attempts to arrange a secure position, and his restlessness with both science and life. His footloose behavior is more fully described in chapters 17 and 18.

My chapter on the Council is a straightforward narrative, and there I welcome your perspective and any anecdotes that this account might prompt.

My editor at Scribner's assures me this book will be published next September: good timing for the 50th anniversary of the first chain reaction. All our changes need to be made by the end of December, so a prompt reply by you would be a great help.

I plan to be in Cambridge on November 18th to 20th, and could meet with you then if that would be convenient. Or we can talk by phone about your critique. My office number at the GAO is (202) 401-8116. I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,



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