

Later memos fault Einstein for allowing Paul Robeson to deliver Einstein's letter to President Harry Truman stating his opposition to lynching. Robeson was chairman of the American Crusade to End Lynching, an alleged Communist-front organization. Another memo lists "Indicators of Einstein's Sympathy with the Communist Party."

The complete file is now available on the Internet at [www.fbi.gov](http://www.fbi.gov).

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*The Famous Letter to President Franklin D. Roosevelt*

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*Peconic, Long Island,  
August 2nd, 1939*

Sir:

Some recent work by E. Fermi and L. Szilard, which has been communicated to me in manuscript, leads me to expect that the element uranium may be turned into a new and important source of energy in the immediate future. Certain aspects of the situation which has arisen seem to call for watchfulness and, if necessary, quick action on the part of the Administration. I believe therefore that it is my duty to bring to your attention the following facts and recommendations:

In the course of the last four months it has been made probable—through the work of Joliot in France as well as Fermi and Szilard in America—that it may become possible to set up a nuclear chain reaction in a large mass of uranium, by which vast amounts of power and large quantities of new radium-like elements would be generated. Now it appears almost certain that this could be achieved in the immediate future.

This new phenomenon would also lead to the construction of bombs, and it is conceivable—though much less certain—that extremely powerful bombs of a new type may thus be constructed. A single bomb of this type, carried by boat and exploded in a port, might very well destroy the whole port together with some of the surrounding territory. However, such bombs might very well prove to be too heavy for transportation by air.

The United States has only very poor ores of uranium in moderate quantities. There is some good ore in Canada and the former Czechoslovakia, while the most important source of uranium is [the] Belgian Congo. In view of this situation you may think it desirable to have some permanent contact maintained between the Administration and the group of physicists working on chain reactions in America. One possible way of achieving this might be for you to entrust with this task a person who has your confidence and who could perhaps serve in an unofficial [*sic*] capacity. His task might comprise the following:

a) to approach Government Departments, keep them informed of the further development, and put forward recommendations for Government action, giving particular attention to the problem of securing a supply of uranium ore for the United States;

b) to speed up the experimental work, which is at present being carried on within the limits of the budgets of University laboratories, by providing funds, if such funds be required, through his contacts with private persons who are willing to make contributions for this cause, and perhaps also by obtaining the cooperation of industrial laboratories which have the necessary equipment.

I understand that Germany has actually stopped the sale of uranium from the Czechoslovakian mines which she has taken over. That she should have taken such early action might perhaps be understood on the ground that the son of the German Under-Secretary of State, von Weizsäcker, is attached to the Kaiser-Wilhelm-Institut in Berlin where some of the American work on uranium is now being repeated.

*Yours very truly,  
Albert Einstein*

Roosevelt replied, in part, on October 19, 1939, as follows: "I have found this letter of such import that I have convened a board consisting of the head of the Bureau of Standards and chosen representatives of the Army and Navy to thoroughly investigate the possibilities of your suggestion regarding the element of uranium." (See Rosenkranz, *Albert through the Looking-Glass*, 66–67. Einstein Archive 33-088. Einstein's letter was bought at auction by the Forbes family.)

The new board met only two days later, on October 21, with Enrico Fermi, Leo Szilard, Edward Teller, and Eugene Wigner serving as experts on nuclear fission.

A lesser-known letter was sent to Roosevelt five and a half years later, as Einstein came to fear the possible misuse of uranium:

*March 25, 1945*

Sir:

I am writing you to introduce Dr. L. Szilard, who proposes to submit to you certain considerations and recommendations. Unusual circumstances which I shall describe further below induce me to take this action in spite of the fact that I