

18 September 1946

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Subject: Operation Crossroad

To: Major General S. J. Chamberlain, Director of Intelligence,
War Department, Room 2E 800, The Pentagon, Washington, D. C.

The following information has been received in this office from a reliable informant and is transmitted for your information.

FRANCE

1. Observer: Capt. Henri Balande, Representative of the General Staff of the French Ministry of National Defense, spoke only rudimentary English and was rather shy of contact with most of the observers. He expressed one day, however, his satisfaction with the first test and said that it went about as he had anticipated.

Bertrand Goldschmidt, Member of the French Atomic Commission, is a former associate of Irene Curie and during the war was Director of the Chemistry Division of the Montreal Laboratory of the Canadian atomic energy effort. In discussing his departure from the Canadian Project for France recently Goldschmidt said he had an interview with General Groves which was blunt but fair. He said he believed General Groves was a singularly good choice as a military head of the Manhattan Project because he is a "genius of organization". Goldschmidt was a little bored with the tests and after the first one wired for permission to return to New York, but he received two denials from Joliot and an explanation from Kowarski later that while it was a waste of time it would be impossible to prove that to the French people and so for the sake of appearances he must stay.

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Summary

Alain Labarthe arrived at Bikini just after the first test to replace Yves Fauge, a Communist underground worker and writer, who was recalled to France as Vice Minister under Bidault. Labarthe was formerly Professor of mechanics at the Sorbonne and had an excellent technical appreciation of the project. I read one of a series of twenty-eight articles he had written for his primary newspaper, France Soir, and it was quite good. Labarthe was Minister of Information under Giroud during the war when he admired intensely. He explained that he had become associated with journalists because of his friendships with temporary journalists, and he continually criticized the sensational approach to news used by most of the journalists at Bikini. I showed him a quotation from the French paper "L'Humanite" which claimed to be "unimpressed" by the first test. He snorted, "These Communists are all fools."

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2. Frederic Joliot-Curie: Goldschmidt said that Joliot is deeply hurt by the statements against him which appeared in the Smyth Report. In this connection he says both Einstein and Szilard have personally stated to Joliot that they had no part of these statements. Goldschmidt said Joliot is also almost obsessed with the idea that people believe that everything he knows he tells to Moscow. He said that when he and Chazem and Komarski first arrived in France they were puzzled by the fact that Joliot almost completely ignored them and certainly failed to show the lively curiosity in their work that they had anticipated. After a short time Joliot called a meeting at which he stated to them categorically that none of the information on nuclear research known to him would go to Russia except as specifically included in public treaties between France and Russia. He stated that he recognized the difficult position in which they were placed and he promised to ask nothing of them which would not be immediately needed for the French program. Because of the nature of the program, Goldschmidt thought this might work with a minimum of difficulty.

In his attitude towards Operation Crossroads Goldschmidt said Joliot had gotten caught by his "disease" of talking too much. He said that Joliot was in Brussels when the first rumors of an atomic bomb test were received and he vigorously denounced such a plan before he learned that they would be open to international observers. Shortly afterwards both he and Auger received official invitations to attend the tests but both felt that three months was too long to spend and to explain their absence they continued their statements condemning the tests. According to Goldschmidt, Joliot and Auger are extremely jealous of each other.

Andre Labarthe reported that Joliot was astounded that Labarthe had been permitted to see even the exterior of the plants at Oak Ridge.

3. French Plans: The general plan of France for atomic energy is not to develop a full-scale program but to use its time well until it is clear what may develop from the United Nations Atomic Energy Commission. Because they expect that enriched uranium may eventually be made available through an International Control Agency they are undertaking no isotope separation work at all. Two small piles will be built near Paris, a heavy water pile and a graphite pile of ten to fifty thousand kilowatt capacity. Joliot hopes to be able to interest the Netherlands and Belgium in collaborating on the financing of a 60 to 100 Kw cyclotron which they hope to order from Switzerland. Otherwise they do not expect to be able to afford so large an instrument. In general France hopes to collaborate with Great Britain in this work "if she feels she can free herself from America," and if this fails the emphasis will be placed on a west European bloc. I asked why collaboration with Great Britain depended upon their independence from America and Goldschmidt replied that it seemed quite clear that America would not want to collaborate with France.

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2. United Nations Atomic Energy Commission: A letter arrived dated July 8 which Goldschmidt read in its entirety. Komaraki felt things in the UN were going very slowly and many of the scientists feel nothing at all was coming of it, although the diplomats tell them they are naive children and that things are going exceptionally well. Komaraki and Pierre Auger attended the American Physical Society meeting in Chicago on 20-22 June where they saw a number of the University of Chicago people. Komaraki expects to return to Paris with Joliot at the end of August.

- Unquote -

For Major General L. R. Groves

W. R. SHULER,
Colonel, Corps of Engineers

✓ Copy No. 2 to Chief, Scientific Branch,
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