

PERSONAL—SECRET

October 24, 1944.

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MEMORANDUM FOR DR. CONANT:

The Secretary spoke to me a few days ago about our recent memorandum, but evidently has not yet decided what he ought to do about the subject. I rather think that the best thing for him to do is for him to add his own comments and put the memorandum in the hands of the President. Of course what the President needs is a good solid group to study the implication of this affair and advise him as to possible moves, but I judge this is too much to hope for just at the present time.

I have been giving some thought to another subject recently, and possibly it offers a means of approaching this one. Everyone is now agreed, I think, that biological warfare is not likely to break out in the European Theatre. In the Far East the situation may be dangerous, especially if chemical warfare is started, but even there I believe that any large-scale biological warfare is highly unlikely for the present war. In fact, excitement on the matter in this country has died down. There is a new biological warfare committee set up by the War Department and interchange with Britain is being provided for on a proper basis for the first time, but action in the Chiefs of Staff organization seems to have terminated completely, and the whole thing in this country is being left to this committee and I doubt whether the committee will be active except to carry on a certain amount of experimentation in the Chemical Warfare Service.

In the world of the future there may be some danger that biological warfare would be developed in secret by a future aggressor and be suddenly sprung upon the world. This depends, I suppose, upon how biological matters develop, but the possibility is already there in some forms. Now it seems to me that this would be far less dangerous if there were full interchange between biological scientists all over the world, especially if this occurred through an international organization, with frequent international conferences on epidemiology held in all of the large countries in turn, and with a central organization collecting public health information, with particular emphasis on the prevention of epidemics. Under such circumstances if one country were developing the military aspects of the matter on a large scale in secret there would be a fair chance, I believe, that it would become known. Certainly

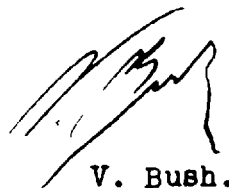
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any country that did not have ideas of aggression somewhere in the back of its mind would be inclined to join such an affair genuinely and open up the interchange, unless indeed there is more duplicity in the world than I am inclined to think. It might be well worth while to attempt to bring this about.

As a means to this end, having established interchange with Britain, I would suggest that we immediately advocate full interchange on all aspects of the subject with Russia. We might learn a great deal from the way in which this worked out.

In my opinion the Dumbarton Oaks conference went quite a distance, in fact farther than I originally thought possible at this stage of the war. They provided for international bodies on economic matters, and for some of the things that were done under the League of Nations, but they did not give the scientific interchange the position which it should occupy in such a body if the approach that I have outlined above has any validity. It is possible that a document outlining the dangers of biological warfare in the future, and the protection against such an event which might be provided by international interchange could be made to bring this thing out into the light early, although I am not quite sure where it should be inserted into the subject. A talk with Stettinius might be helpful as a starter.

You will readily see that I have in mind more than meets the eye, and am thinking of an entering wedge. However, I would very much like to explore with you this particular thing on its own merits, and also from the standpoint of what its relationship might be to other matters.



V. Bush.