

The University of Chicago

Metallurgical Laboratory

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REGISTERED

June 22, 1942

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Dr. Vannevar Bush  
1530 P Street, N. W.  
Washington, D. C.

Dear Van:

We have recently become aware that the threat of German fission bombs is even more imminent than we supposed when I made my budget report to Mr. Conant and Mr. Briggs a month ago. This is because we have just recognized how a chain reaction started with a small heavy water plant, can quickly supply material for a high power plant for producing "copper". If the Germans know what we know - and we dare not discount their knowledge - they should be dropping fission bombs on us in 1943, a year before our bombs are planned to be ready. The attached memo explains their schedule.

The exceedingly serious picture thus presented is, I fear, all too probably true. If it is correct, what can we do to escape defeat? There are, I believe, only three chances:

1. Complete domination of Germany before about June, 1943.
2. Destruction of their fission plants by sabotage, air, or commando raids.
3. Speed our schedule to beat theirs.

Clearly none of these proposals is an easy one. My view is that destructive raids combined with all possible speed in our own development is the most hopeful plan.

In both the "copper" and the "magnesium" studies the developments of the past month will perhaps help us to advance somewhat our time tables. But at best I do not see how we can catch up with the Germans unless they have overlooked some possibilities that we recognize, or unless our military action should delay them.

Secret service activity in Germany is urgently needed, to locate and disrupt their activities. Perhaps our physicists can give helpful advice to this end. Our careful consideration of possible counter-measures has led to nothing except such destruction at the source and blocking of planes, etc., bringing the bombs to us.

As they value the safety of the nation, please ask the military authorities,

1. To give the fullest possible support in making the American fission

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By CED NARS, Date 7/31/54

June 22, 1942

work go,

2. to make all effort to find and destroy the enemy plants engaged in this work.

I should add that I have discussed this matter with the best informed members of our group, who agree completely with my view of the seriousness of our situation.

Yours sincerely,

*Arthur C.*

Arthur H. Compton

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