

September 29, 1944

Letter, Igor V. Kurchatov, Director of the Soviet Nuclear Program, to Lavrenti Beria

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<https://digitalarchive.umd.edu/document/115921>

Summary:

In this letter, physicist Igor V. Kurchatov, the scientific director of the Soviet nuclear project, writes to secret police chief Lavrenti Beria, whom Stalin had given principal responsibility for the atomic effort. Prodded by his own scientists and by intelligence reports of the secret Anglo-American atomic enterprise, Stalin had initiated a small-scale Soviet nuclear weapons program in late 1942-early 1943. But the level of support political leaders had given the project failed to satisfy Kurchatov, who pleaded with Beria for additional backing.

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Russian

Contents:

Translation - English

[...]

In our letters to you, Comrade M.G. Pervukhin [Deputy Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars and a key atomic administrator] and I reported on the status of work on the uranium problem and of the colossal development of this work abroad. ... around this issue there has been created abroad a concentration of scientific and engineering-technical power on a scale never been seen in the history of world science, and which has already achieved the most priceless results.

In our country, despite major improvement in work on uranium in 1943-44, the situation remains completely unsatisfactory...

Though I know that you are extremely busy, in view of the historic meaning of the uranium problem I all the same decided to disturb You and to ask You to order an effort which would correspond to the potential and significance of our Great State in world culture.

[...]