

Albert Einstein, F.B.I. Interview

F.B.I. interview with Albert Einstein, November 1, 1940

Source: Leo Szilard's F.B.I. file, obtained by [Gene Dannen](#) under Freedom of Information Act Request 219,708 dated October 22, 1981.

This interview is transcribed exactly as it appears in FBI files. The capitalization of names (EINSTEIN, SZILARD) was standard FBI practice. Einstein's English was not fluent and the FBI agent apparently did not speak German. I have noted obvious errors by adding "[sic]".

AT PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY

Professor ALBERT EINSTEIN was contacted at his home 112 Mercer Street, and he advised that he has known LEO SZILARD since about the year 1920. He said that he believes SZILARD is a little over 30 [sic] years of age and was born in Hungary of Jewish parents. Professor EINSTEIN advised that he did not know anything about SZILARD'S relatives as he only knew him from a scientific point of view.

He further advised that LEO SZILARD was probably educated in Budapest, Hungary but that later in life he had spent most of his time in Berlin, Germany. He also stated that SZILARD had left Germany about the year 1933 and that he had spent sometime in England, although he, EINSTEIN, could not recall whether SZILARD had been in England prior to or after the year 1933. Professor EINSTEIN further related that SZILARD had made several trips to the United States in recent years.

He advised that SZILARD, while in Berlin, had been assistant to Professor LAUE at the University of Berlin. He said that Professor LAUE was a very decent man and that he is the only German he knows who behaved in an admirable way after Hitler's advent to power. Professor EINSTEIN continued that at the time SZILARD was at the University of Berlin he himself was at the Academy of Music [sic] in Berlin and he saw SZILARD every day for many years. He said that he did not believe that SZILARD had ever become a German citizen, although he was not positive of this.

In connection with the inventions SZILARD is supposed to have perfected with Professor EINSTEIN, the latter stated that he and SZILARD had been interested in the construction of a small cooling machine similar to our household refrigerators. He stated that they had worked together on this machine for sometime but had never completed it because of lack of money to finish it in its experimental stage. However, he advised that they had taken out several patents on several parts of the machine. He stated that he did not know whether SZILARD might still be receiving royalties from these patents but said that he doubted very much whether SZILARD could be receiving any money from Germany at the present time. He said that SZILARD had some sort of an agreement by which he was to receive so much money from the Allgemeine Elektrizituts Gefellichaft [sic] (A.E.G.). EINSTEIN said that this company would be known in America as the German General Electric Company.

He went on to say that LEO SZILARD had left Germany about the year 1933 and that he believes SZILARD went to England and visited America on several occasions.

He advised that at the present time SZILARD is connected in some manner with Columbia University in New York City, where he is working on uranium experiments for military purposes. He stated that this work is on a private scale but that it is financed by the University. He said that SZILARD is working with an Italian by the name of FERMI, who is a very trustworthy man. Professor EINSTEIN said that he sees SZILARD quite frequently as SZILARD visits him to inform him as to his work on the uranium experiment. He said that the last time he had seen SZILARD was a week or ten days ago, at which time SZILARD had visited him, together with Professor EUGENE WIGNER, of Princeton University.

Professor EINSTEIN advised that SZILARD is a theoretical physicist. He stated that SZILARD is a very idealistic man who is not at all politically minded. He stated that he had never been connected with any organizations, societies, or political groups abroad. He said that SZILARD is a very fine, gifted young man; that he is absolutely honest, reliable, and trustworthy, and that he would recommend him very highly to the United States Government. Professor EINSTEIN stated that he would recommend SZILARD without any hesitation and that he would assume any responsibility for his conduct. He said that SZILARD is as anti-Nazi as he himself is and that SZILARD is an outspoken Democrat. He further advised that he believed the U.S. Government could trust SZILARD in any respect without any fear whatever that SZILARD might disclose confidential information to a foreign power.

Professor EINSTEIN stated that Professor WIGNER was a very close friend of SZILARD'S and that SZILARD was also acquainted with Professor JOHN VON NEUMANN, 26 Westcott Road, Princeton, N.J. Of these two he believed that Professor WIGNER would know more concerning SZILARD.

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