



January 25, 1946

Notes on the discussion between I.V. Kurchatov, lead scientist for the Soviet nuclear effort, and Stalin

Citation:

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<http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/111533>

Summary:

Kurchatov's notes on his meeting with Stalin, Molotov and Beria. Stalin promises the all necessary help to the soviet effort to build an atomic bomb. He suggests that the project should be build on "a Russian scale," without concerns for cost saving.

Original Language:

Russian

Contents:

- English Translation

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The conversation continued for approximately one hour, from 7:30 to 8:30 in the evening. Comrade Stalin, Comrade Molotov, and Comrade Beria attended.

Basic impressions of the conversation. The great love of Comrade Stalin for Russia and for V.I. Lenin, about whom he spoke in terms of his great hope for the development of science in our country. [...]

Viewing the future development of the work Comrade Stalin said that it is not worth spending time and effort on small-scale work, rather, it is necessary to conduct the work broadly, on a Russian scale, and that in this regard the broadest, utmost assistance will be provided.

Cde. Stalin said that one should not look for cheap ways, that one should not polish, that one should carry out the work quickly in the crude basic manner. He expressed the thought that all great inventions were initially crude, as it was with the steam locomotive.

Regarding the scholars, Comrade Stalin was preoccupied by thoughts of how to, as if, make it easier, help them in their material-living situation. And in prizes for great deeds, for example, on the solution to our problem. He said that our scholars are very modest, and they never notice that they live badly--that is bad in itself, and he said that although our state also had suffered much, we can always make it possible for several thousand persons to live well, and several thousand people better than very well, with their own dachas, so that they can relax, and with their own cars. In work, Comrade Stalin said, it is necessary to move decisively, with the investment of a decisive quantity of resources, but in the basic directions.

It is also necessary to use Germany to the utmost; there, there are people, and equipment, and experience, and factories. Comrade Stalin asked about the work of German scholars and the benefits which they brought to us.

[. . .]

A question was asked about [physicists A.F.] Ioffe, [A.I.] Alikhanov, [P.L.] Kapitsa, and [S.I.] Vavilov, and the utility of Kapitsa's work.

Misgivings were expressed regarding who they work for and what their activity is directed toward--for the benefit of the Motherland or not.

It was suggested that measures which would be necessary in order to speed up work, everything that is necessary, should be written down. What other scholars would it make sense to bring into the effort?

[. . .]