

Szilard, Leo
{sil'-ahrd}

The Hungarian-born American physicist and biologist Leo Szilard, b. Feb. 11, 1898, d. May 30, 1964, made significant contributions to the development of the atomic bomb. Hearing of Otto Hahn's demonstration of uranium fission, Szilard was certain that the sustaining of a chain reaction would be possible. He helped draft the letter from Albert Einstein to President Franklin Roosevelt that ultimately resulted in the decision to proceed with the atomic bomb. Szilard later turned his attention toward the problems nuclear weapons posed, and he shared the 1959 Atoms for Peace Award with E. P. Wigner. His experimental work in molecular biology led to theories of mutations and the aging process.

James A. Booth

Bibliography: Esterer, Arnulf K. and Louise A., *Prophet of the Atomic Age: Leo Szilard* (1972); Feld, Bernard T., and Szilard, Gertrud Weiss, eds., *The Collected Works of Leo Szilard: Scientific Papers* (1972); Weart, Spencer R., and Szilard, Gertrud Weiss, eds., *Leo Szilard: His Version of the Facts--Selected Recollections and Correspondence* (1978).