This delightful biography by Bill Lanouette brings Leo Szilard out of the shadows today: the time of the finale of the Cold War, a time foreseen by Szilard in his novelette, The Voice of the Dolphins. It is high time for a comprehensive look at Szilard, who was involved simultaneously in the first steps in building the original nuclear weapons and in the creation of international regimes to control the nuclear genie he had let out of the bottle. Lanouette's book does justice to the man who propelled the world across the nuclear Rubicon with the Einstein–Szilard letter to Roosevelt (p. 205): "Some recent work by E. Fermi and L. Szilard, which has been communicated to me in manuscript, leads me to expect that the element uranium may be turned into a new and important source of energy in the immediate future···. This new phenomenon would also lead to the construction of bombs···[which] might very well destroy the whole port together with some of the surrounding territory."

By obtaining a first access to Szilard's correspondence with his wife Trude, his brother Bela, and many others, Lanouette has been able to fully expose the two competing sides of Szilard's actions. The inherent conflict building bombs and controlling bombs made Szilard's unique, somewhat frantic personality all the more chaotic. Lanouette shows that Szilard, the unemployed dreamer, was the creative force in the nuclear shadows of Einstein and Fermi, and also the instigator of today's arms control process. This is a humane book about Szilard the person, related through countless anecdotal stories; it is not a formal history of the Manhattan Project.

Szilard was an intuitive applied physicist whose thumb prints are on applied technologies (thermal reactors, breeder reactors, atom bombs, electromagnetic pumps, electron microscopes, and information theory) rather than on fundamental science. Lanouette shows that Szilard was politically very astute. He realized early on that Hitler could get the bomb and that a nuclear arms race would follow the first nuclear weapons. Szilard, driven by these political concerns, acted boldly: he secretly patented the nuclear chain reaction in 1934; he tried to get other physicists not to publish nuclear data, but after they published, he arranged for a necessary first step would be to 'guarantee immunity to scientists and engineers everywhere in the world in case they should report violations of the [arms-control] agreements?' Later Szilard recommended supplementing his immunity for whistleblowers with $1 million rewards. These ideas sound good today; wouldn't whistleblowers in Iraq, North Korea, India, Pakistan, Israel, South Africa, and several other states have been useful? The special and challenge inspections of today's arms control treaties are further extensions of Szilard's suggestions of September 1945.

Because Szilard had the courage to work against the misuses of science, the American Physical Society and its Forum on Physics and Society have given the Szilard...
Award for "outstanding accomplishments by physicists in promoting the use of physics for the benefit of society in such areas as the environment, arms control, and science policy." Since 1974 the award has been given to many prominent physicists, including Richard Garwin, Hans Bethe, Wolfgang Panofsky, Andrei Sakharov, and Jack Gibbons. Upon receiving the Szilard Award, Gibbons, the former director of the Congressional Office of Technology Assessment and the present Science Advisor to President Clinton, stated that "Szilard should be the patron saint of OTA!" Many of us fondly remember Trude Szilard, who joined in the early years in presenting the Szilard Award at the Washington APS meetings. More recently, the Szilard award has been enhanced by adding a sculpture of a dolphin which travels from winner to winner.

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