

Until recently the world believed that the atom was the ultimate indivisible particle of matter; a particle of matter so minute as to admit of no division. When the war began in 1939, scientists of many nations had come to recognize that the release of energy by the "splitting" of the atom, or what is scientifically referred to as "atomic fission" was a possibility. The war gave impetus to research into the means of releasing atomic energy and later to the production of atomic bombs.

At the outset, research was carried on mainly in the universities of the United Kingdom. During 1940, there was an interchange of information on war research between Britain, the United States and Canada. By the summer of 1941 such progress had been made in research in the application of atomic energy that it was felt that full use should be made of university and industrial laboratories in seeking to find, just as rapidly as possible, the means of producing atomic bombs. In October of 1941, upon the suggestion of President Roosevelt, there began a co-ordination and joint conduct of British and American efforts. In 1942, the United Kingdom authorities proposed that an important section of research into atomic energy should be carried on in Canada as a joint enterprise. The special Montreal Laboratory of the National Research Council was thereafter organized, and staffed by over