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WAR DEPARTMENT

P. O. Box 2610

WASHINGTON, D. C.



REFER TO FILE NO. \_\_\_\_\_

22 March 1945

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. BUNDY:

Subject: Visit of Seven Indian Scientists to the United States.

1. Reference is made to letter from Mr. Dunn, Assistant Secretary of State, with accompanying memorandum relating to the visit of the Indian Scientists to the United States, which you recently brought to my attention.
2. On approximately 11 December 1944, we learned that a group of Indian Scientists was planning to visit various university and industrial research centers in the United States and also many of the personnel engaged on DSM work. Scientific personnel of the Project were alerted not to discuss classified information with the Indians, and every effort was made to prevent the Indian Scientists' having access to areas where DSM work was in progress.
3. On 6 January 1945, while the Indians were visiting the University of California, we learned that as a result of persistent questioning by various members of the delegation, particularly Dr. Meghnad Saha, during their stay in Knoxville, Tennessee, an unknown source apparently not connected with our work gave the Indians the following information: (1) there is a large installation near Knoxville, which used 10,000 KW of TVA power, (2) the installation was engaged in the manufacture of "nuclear bombs", (3) separation of the material was accomplished by mass-spectrograph or thermal diffusion, and (4) there were "several pounds" of separated product in existence. We also learned that at Berkeley, Dr. Saha was evidencing unusual curiosity in the whereabouts and activities of many of the key personnel engaged on the Project and was attempting to gain further information concerning our progress.
4. We have made every effort to ascertain the cause of this unusual interest but no motive other than usual scientific curiosity has been uncovered.
5. Dr. Saha is not believed to be either pro-Communist, pro-Japanese, or pro-German, either in attitude or activity, but an ardent Indian nationalist who has never been known to be active in politics. He has a reputation for being unusually inquisitive scientifically. Upon the return of the party to Washington, arrangements were completed with the Department of State for a representative of my office to interview the Indians. This interview was most unsatisfactory and certainly indicated no feeling of respect for the wishes of their host, the United States Government. A copy of a report of the officer who conducted the interview is attached. I propose no further action in the matter.

L. R. GROVES,  
Major General, C.E.

DECLASSIFIED

1 Inclosure  
Memo 2-26-45

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BY ERC NARS, Date 5-14-78

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TO: A-D Mr. Dunn

February 10, 1945

FROM: NEA

SUBJECT: Visit of Seven Indian Scientists to the United States.

The delegation of Indian scientists was composed of the following persons:

Dr. Nazir Ahmad, O.B.E., M.Sc., Ph.D. (Cantab.), F. Inst. P., J.P., Director, Indian Central Cotton Committee;  
Col. S. L. Bhatia, M.C., M.A., M.D., B.Ch. (Camb.), M.R.C.S., F.R.C.P. (Lond.), I.M.S.; Deputy Director General, Indian Medical Service;  
Sir Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar, Kt., O.B.E., D.S.C., F.R.S., F. Inst. P., F.I.C., Director, Scientific and Industrial Research Directorate, Government of India;  
Sir Jnan Chandra Ghosh, Kt., M.Sc., D.Sc., Director, Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore;  
Professor S. K. Mitra, D.Sc. (Cal and Paris), M.B.E., F.N.I., Ghose Professor of Physics, Calcutta University;  
Professor Meghand Saha, D.Sc., F.R.S.F.R.A.S.B., F.N.I., Palit Professor of Physics, Calcutta University;  
Professor J. N. Mukherji, C.B.E., D.Sc., F.R.A.S.B., F.N.I., F.I.A.C.S., F.C.S., Professor of Chemistry, University College of Science, Calcutta.

Prior to their arrival in the United States on December 8, 1944, they had visited Great Britain for a period of six weeks as the guests of the British Government and had toured the country under the auspices of the Royal Society.

They were invited to this country as guests of the United States Government under our cultural cooperation program designed to develop contacts between India and the United States. During the first part of their stay in Washington, they lived at the Blair Lee House and Mr. Frank Coan of the Division of Cultural Cooperation was attached to the delegation and remained with it throughout its tour in this country.

During their stay here they visited important scientific laboratories in various parts of the country, including Pittsburgh, Knoxville, Los Angeles, Chicago, San Francisco, Boston, and New York. The delegates were cordially welcomed and entertained in every place which they visited and Mr. Coan is convinced that they leave this country with a very enthusiastic opinion about the United States and American scientific progress.

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The scientists are due to depart by air from Montreal today on their return journey to India, where they will resume their normal occupations referred to above.

Several of the laboratories which the scientists visited in this country are engaged in experimentation with and production of highly classified material for the military branches of this Government. The delegates were shown some of the confidential material but for security reasons could not, of course, be shown some of the more highly classified projects. During the course of the tour, one or two of the delegates were overheard to make remarks indicating that they had knowledge of some matters classified as "Top Secret" and this caused considerable concern in the Intelligence Division of the War Department. As a result, the War Department inquired of this Division whether it would object to the attachment of an Intelligence Officer to the delegation, with a view to ascertaining whether any of the scientists might have ulterior motives. The Division replied that it perceived no objection, provided the officer attached in this capacity was in civilian clothes and possessed of sufficient scientific background to enable him to talk on equal terms with the scientists themselves. This was done and Dr. Paul Fine of the Office of Scientific Research and Development joined the delegation at Boston during the latter part of the tour. In consequence of Dr. Fine's report, the Intelligence Division of the War Department became convinced that none of the scientists had any nefarious motives. It is not known whether the delegates ever became aware that Dr. Fine was actually a representative of the War Department.

Upon the return of the scientists to Washington, on February 3, 1945, the Intelligence Officers of the War Department inquired whether it would be possible for one or two of them to have a friendly interview with the scientists prior to their departure from this country in order to impress upon them the confidential character of some of the material which they had been shown and to request their cooperation in treating it with the utmost discretion. These officers also wished, in the most friendly fashion, to request the scientists to tell them the source of their information concerning the "Top Secret" material referred to above, with a view to aiding the War Department in increasing its security measures. An interview was arranged by Mr. Coan, but before the meeting could take place, Sir S. S. Bhatnagar apparently telephoned the Indian Agency General and asked for its views concerning the matter. Mr. Trevelyan, First Secretary of the Agency General, thereupon telephoned the Department and expressed the opinion that should the War Department insist on this interview, it would be strongly resented by the Indian scientists. This Division informed Mr. Trevelyan that it seemed most

extraordinary

extraordinary that the scientists should come to this country on a goodwill mission as the guests of the United States Government and at the termination of their visit take offense at a friendly request that the security officers of the War Department be permitted to talk to them in a friendly manner for a period of ten or fifteen minutes for the purposes indicated above. Sir Girja then came to the Department and profusely apologized with the explanation that both Mr. Trevelyan and the Indian scientists apparently were under the misapprehension that the War Department representatives planned something in the nature of an inquisition. After the purpose of the desired interview was fully explained to him, he quite agreed that the Indian scientists should receive the Intelligence Officers and promised to make the necessary arrangements himself. Later in the day, Mr. Trevelyan telephoned to say that the Indian delegates would be available for the interview in the Shoreham Hotel at 10:00 o'clock on the morning of February 6, 1945.

After the War Department representatives had talked with the delegation, the War Department telephoned this Division and stated that the Indian scientists were most rude and belligerent at the interview and refused to cooperate in any manner whatsoever. Mr. Alling conveyed the foregoing information to the Indian Agent General with an expression of the concern of this Division lest, as a result of this experience, the War Department would feel it necessary to review its whole attitude with regard to permitting Indians to visit plants engaged in the handling of classified material and thus jeopardize the success of any future missions to this country. Sir Girja agreed completely with the attitude of this Division and stated that the ungracious behavior of the Indian scientists was inexcusable. He expressed his deep regret and offered to write a letter of apology to the War Department but was informed by this Division that this would not be necessary but that we hoped that steps might be taken in the case of future delegations to elicit better cooperation and a more complete understanding of the military security problems involved in such tours. Sir Girja assured Mr. Alling that such steps would be taken and that he would inform his Government of the full facts of the case with a recommendation that the Government of India acquaint future delegations with the security problems involved in tours in the United States with a view to obtaining their complete cooperation.

This Division is convinced that all parties, including the War Department, consider the incident closed and that it will not detract from the otherwise complete success of the scientists' visit to this country.

Brief

Brief biographies of the members of the delegation are on file in this Division should they be desired.

Wallace Murray