



May 15, 1978

**Letter from C.P. Burdess (British Embassy,
Islamabad) to M.J. Wilmshurst (Joint Nuclear Unit),
'Pakistan: Reprocessing Plant'**

Citation:

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Summary:

This document is a letter from Christopher Burdess, a diplomat at the British Embassy in Islamabad, to Michael Wilmshurst at the Joint Nuclear Unit of the Foreign Office. In the letter, Burdess discusses a worrying interview given by President Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq to Washington Post Correspondent Bernard Nossiter.

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Mr Falconer
- (on any copying please.)

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BRITISH EMBASSY *Please arrange*
ISLAMABAD *Bo to me with*

M J Wilmshurst Esq
JNU
FCO

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RECEIVED IN COUNTRY No. 70	
27 MAY 1978	
FROM OFFICER	PECUARY
FROM UNIT	AS TAKEN

22/5 Mr on 2/5

15 May 1978

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Dear Michael,

Bo to Mr Falconer 9/6 to

PAKISTAN : REPROCESSING PLANT

Check whether you have been any reaction from them on 8/5

1. The Pakistan press of 12 May gave headline coverage to an interview given by General Zia to a Washington Post correspondent on the reprocessing plant. We know that Bernard Nossiter's interview took place about 24/25 April; the relevant part was briefly reported in the Washington Post of 1 May. The delay before publishing here, the selection of only the reprocessing point from what was a wide-ranging discussion and the full treatment it was given can be taken as indications that the Washington Post interview has been used mainly as a peg for a policy statement.

2. Much of the interview was along familiar lines - "There was no justification why Pakistan should not acquire nuclear re-processing technology which was badly needed to boost energy production". There were the usual oblique references to the Bomb: while giving the ritual assurances that Pakistan would not build one with its (safeguarded) reprocessing plant, Zia emphasised that Brazil was going to get a reprocessing plant, the Indians would soon have a third one, and "The Jews have got it. Then why should Pakistan, which is considered part of the Muslim world, be deprived of this technology ...".

3. But the main significance lay in General Zia's treatment of the co-processing issue. We understand (though this has not been announced here) that the French have now made firm proposals to the Pakistan Government for modifying the plant's specifications for co-processing technology. In the Nossiter interview, General Zia fairly firmly rejects this. "Co-processing is not an established technology so far. Why should I accept a technology or say my last word on a thing the results of which even the West has not yet seen ... I am only trying to acquire a technology which has been tested in the West, and that is reprocessing".

4. In the Pakistan Times of 14 May, the editorial follows this up with descriptions of the reprocessing plant as "a dire necessity", justifying it as an essential part of a nuclear power programme, and "the CMLA's rejection of the co-processing plant proposal makes technological sense. Our friends would be doing us less than justice if they misinterpret it". Overall, there is

22/6 No reaction from Paris yet. on 14/6. CR/6
Mr. Ashton. Still no reaction from Paris. You may care to take this over back with the French on 27/6. SC/7/6

c to Miss Parikh Jordan. Dr. Basim Mr. Selim D52a MOD Mr. Ottava ADD (E) 22/5 Enter & BU to Mr. Selim

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a clear plea to the US to stop trying to block the reprocessing plant; and to the French to get on with supplying the plant as under the original project.

5. It would be interesting to know the French Government's reactions to this and on how firmly they are now committed to making supply of the plant conditional on modification to the co-processing technology.

Yours ever

K&K

C P Burdess

- cc: J M Candlish Esq, SAD, FCO
- D J Wright Esq, Paris
- D G Manning Esq, New Delhi
- The Hon M A Pakenham, Washington

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