

May 15, 1978

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

Citation:

"Letter from C.P. Burdess (British Embassy, Islamabad) to M.J. Wilmshurst (Joint Nuclear Unit), 'Pakistan: Reprocessing Plant'", May 15, 1978, Wilson Center Digital Archive, The National Archive of the UK, FCO 96/822. Contributed by Malcolm Craig. https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/280713

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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Contents:

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1. The Pakistan press of 12 May gave healline 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 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. Much of the interview was along familiar lines - "There 2. Much of the interview was along familiar lines - "There was no justification why Pakistan should not acquire nuclear reprocessing 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 ...". 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 a 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 Mr. Motor Stin no reacher & Chapte.

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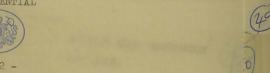
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a clear plea to the US to stop trying to block the reprocessing plant; and to the French to get on with supplying the plant as under the original project.

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.

Yen ever

Kit

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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