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Memorandum presented to Shri Jawahar Lal Nehru, Prime Minister of India on 13th May 1960 on his visit to U.K. by the Central Executive Committee of the Indian Workers' Association of Great Britain.

Indian Workers Association, Great Britain  
(Hindustani Mazdoor sabha)

13, Artillery Passage,  
London, E.1.

to: Shri Jawahar Lal Nehru,  
Prime Minister,  
Republic of India.

Dear Sir,

1. On behalf of the Indian Workers Association of Great Britain and Indian Nationals in U.K. we welcome you on your visit to London. It is almost three years since our delegation met you here in London last time in June 1957. Since then many important events and major changes have taken place, not only in India but also in the international arena. Undoubtedly, under your able guidance and forceful leadership India has made great progress in solving its many critical problems and is still fighting to eradicate some of the very bad diseases that we inherited along with the independence of India, such as corruption, black market, nepotism, favouritism and communalism etc. The foreign policy of India that is a policy of peace, has been greatly appreciated by all countries. The policy of peace has been a dominating factor which has increased our prestige to a large extent abroad. Our Prime Minister's stand on recent incidents in South Africa and Apartheid policy has also been greatly appreciated. The racial question concerns the Indians in the U.K. very much. Had we received the full co-operation of the High Commissioner our voice would have carried weight in solving problems confronting Indians. The relationship and the contact between the High Commission in London and our organisation has been very inadequate. In succeeding paragraphs we have quoted some instances which will show how workers were treated indiscriminately during her term as High Commissioner in this country. We are sure that our frank opinion expressed here will lead to our closer relations rather than create any misunderstandings. The lack of contact has been the major factor as a result of which the Passport Racket developed on a large scale.

2. Passport Racket and Indians sent back with alleged forged passports:

Not very long ago, fifty-two Indians were sent back from England to India in a special chartered plane paid for by the British Government. These simple people, deliberately exploited by the crooked agents were kept in British and Indian jails for more than a month. Many Indians are still stranded in Italy. They live in camps without any means or proper arrangement for their lodging and accommodation.

Whereas for two weeks, these events were given headlines in the British National Press, Radio and Television, the Indian National Press, Radio and the Indian Parliament failed to give them adequate and due consideration. This publicity in the U.K. has caused serious difficulties, embarrassment and humiliation to Indians resident here. It has lowered the prestige of the Indian Government in the eyes of the common man and accentuated the atmosphere of colour prejudice. Every Indian is suspected of possessing a forged passport and it is becoming a compulsion for Indians to produce their passports while applying for or taking any jobs. And yet the Government of India does not seem to have taken any effective measures against this racket.

3. Indians resident in Great Britain and passport problem

Passports held by a number of Indians residing in Great Britain are not fully endorsed, although these have been issued by the proper (Passport) authorities of the Indian Government. Some of them are



forged also. We have not come across a single forged passport, in which the forgery was committed by the holder. In all cases, the illiterate people were duped by the agents, who charged exorbitantly high prices as fees for these irregular documents. The Indian Government is fully aware of this fact. Some time ago your Excellency, (Mr. Nehru, the Indian Prime Minister) told the Indian Parliament that during the period in which the Government issued only 5000 passports, 17,000 Indians arrived in Great Britain. This raises a twofold problem, that of stopping the passport racket and of issuing proper documents to those who have already come to Great Britain and are settled there for the present. Under the British law, a Commonwealth citizen has a right to a passport after one year's stay in the country. Why the Indian Government should force their own nationals to give up Indian Nationality is hard to understand, for to refuse to issue passports to Indians residing abroad, is to force them to change their nationality very much against their will. This is discreditable. The Government of India may well take precautions to avoid recurrence of such cases in the future, but it is essential that Indian Nationals abroad possess a proper passport issued to them by the Government of India.

Last year as an extradition case under warrants issued from Bombay two innocent Indians were taken back to India from England because they had come through an agent who gave them forged passports. It is the normal practice of the British and International Police to get the smuggler and the person in whose possession the goods are found does not matter so much. But, surprisingly enough, the Indian Police finds it more convenient and easier to work quite the other way round. They find it more convenient to arrest and prosecute the man who possesses a forged passport and they have not taken trouble to get the real culprits responsible for the forgery. Many agents are still at large and they travel all over the world and they are holding genuine Indian passports, which the Indian Government have not bothered to take away from them so far.

4. Meeting of a Delegation of the Indian Workers' Association, Great Britain, with Mr. Nehru.

When Your Excellency, Mr. Nehru, the Indian Prime Minister, visited London in June, 1957, a delegation of the Indian Workers' Association of Great Britain met you at India House. Besides presenting a memorandum to you, we also told you about the Passport racket and about the shortcomings of the Passport office of the Indian High Commission in London. Your Excellency said that he was aware of the fact that the passport racket was being operated also by certain agents in London, who made frequent use of chartered planes and ships for this illegal traffic. You advised the delegation to meet Madam Pandit, the Indian High Commissioner in U.K. to go into details. You also assured us that prompt action would be taken against the agents. The High Commissioner was present at the meeting. Subsequently the Indian Workers' Association requested to meet her, but despite our repeated requests, she did not receive our delegation until August 1959, but no useful purpose was served as the High Commissioner did not give adequate time and consideration to solve the problem brought to her notice.

5. Meetings of the Indian Workers' Association, Great Britain with Officials of the Indian High Commission in U.K.

Under these circumstances a meeting was arranged between the representatives of the Indian Workers' Association and the Counsellor to the High Commissioner for India and some other officials of the Indian High Commission. This meeting took place in India House on 16th December, 1957. The representatives of the Indian Workers' Association gave a full account of the Passport racket and explained that many people were frightened to come forward with evidence, because for them, to speak against an agent was to court trouble. The Secretary of the Consular Department and the Counsellor told that five agents operating in London had been blacklisted and that in future they will not be permitted to carry on any business with the Passport Office of the Indian High Commission in the U.K. To bring this racket to an end,



certain proposals were made by the representatives of the Indian Workers' Association and these were accepted by the officials of the Indian High Commission. However, most of these assurances and promises were not given effect, and the agents carried on their usual business with the Passport Office. Impression gained ground that some officials of the Passport Department were even associated with these so-called agents. Several protests were made without any result. A Travel Agency with its head office in London, and branches in Liverpool, Jullundur and Delhi seems to have been in the forefront in the black market of forged passports. Fifty-two Indians who were sent back to India were brought to this country by this agency on forged passports. This agency was supposed to be one of those that were blacklisted. To crown all this, the agency conducted its publicity through the official organ of the Indian High Commission in the U.K., the "India News".

6. Irregularities and forgeries committed by certain agents in London in conjunction with certain Agents in India.

(a) A large number of passports had been collected by certain agents under false pretences from a number of Indians residing in Great Britain. It seems that these were taken to India and sold at prices ranging up to Rs.6000 each. Many such cases in which these travel documents have been thus irregularly used have come to light. Some of these were reported to the office of the Indian High Commission. But no effective action seems to have been taken against the agents.

(b) In an effort to eradicate this racket, a number of public meetings were held under the auspices of the Indian Workers' Association and joint requests were made by the Indian Workers Association and the officials of the Indian High Commission for concrete evidence against the agents.

Amongst other cases, an Indian came forward in August 1958 and gave evidence against an agent operating in London to the Secretary of the Consular Department in the presence of some representatives of the Indian Workers' Association. He had been provided with a new passport in lieu of a forged one at a cost of £50 paid to the agent who had attested all documents. The particulars attested by the agent for £50, were actually of a person who was not in the U.K. The actual age of the person was 28 years and his height 5'6". In the documents these particulars were 58 years and 6'1" respectively. The identifying scars mentioned on this new passport bore no relationship to the person to whom the passport was supposed to belong.

A lot of falsifying of the person's and his father's name was involved. All these attested documents were in the files of the Indian High Commission. When the evidence had been completed, the Secretary of the Consular Department, rather than making any remarks against the agent, accused the person who had volunteered all this information in response to our appeals. A further meeting had to be arranged with the Counsellor, who assured that prompt action would be taken against the agent and the volunteer redressed by providing him with a proper passport. No action has yet been taken.

Under these circumstances it is apparent that no more volunteers were forthcoming. It is, however, certain that if full investigation is held, a large number of similar cases of forgery and falsification by the agents will come to light.

(c) The agent and the agency involved in the above case are now operating on a much bigger scale.

One of the articles concerning this racket which appeared in the Press is reproduced below:-

News Chronicle (London) 28th October, 1959.

"Indian names agents in forged passport racket by Norman Lucas

A 26 year old Sikh who is a Master of Science was responsible for the detention of 36 Indians who attempted to enter Britain on forged passports.