

SELECTED WORKS OF JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

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Consultation of Historical Records¹

From the papers on this file I see that you wrote to the Home Secretary on August 2nd. Presumably no reply has come from him yet.²

2. I am not at all satisfied with the noting on this file by Intelligence or by the Director of Archives. The papers required are very old, probably over thirty years old. No question of secrecy should apply to such papers, unless there is some very extraordinary reason in regard to a particular document. In fact, they should be considered, more or less, public papers. To say that they can only be seen by research scholars is not very helpful. Any person can become a research student for a time. The mere fact that he is investigating some matter may make it necessary for him to look at some old papers. Also the fact that a Communist wants to see them is irrelevant.

¹ Note to Principal Private Secretary, New Delhi, 27 August 1957, JN Collection.

² This was regarding withdrawal of permission to Sohan Singh Bhakna, Gurmukh Singh and Karam Singh Cheema of Desh Bhagat Yadgar Committee to consult papers in the National Archives for writing a history of the Ghadar movement. They met Nehru on 4 May to seek his help in the matter but got a reply later from his PPS conveying that these were secret papers. They argued that material pertaining to Independence movement was sacred national heritage and belonged to all patriots. At Nehru's instance, K. Ram enquired on 2 August if the Home Secretary, A.V. Pai would allow at least some of the records to be made available to the Committee, and whether the publication of a revised history of the Ghadar movement would in any way adversely affect the happy relations between India and the UK.

3. I do not particularly fancy this hush hush policy about old public documents. Nor do I understand how our relations with the British Government might be affected by these as PPS has somewhere stated.

4. As I said previously I could understand some particular paper being kept secret.

5. If the Director of Archives has any doubt about the desirability of any papers being shown or not, he should send me a list of them and I shall examine them.

6. Normally speaking, the only understanding that is necessary is that nothing will be published without Government's permission.³

³ However, the Home Minister, G.'B. Pant noted on 1 September 1957: "I am not as a rule in favour of giving undue prominence to surreptitious or violent activities. I have a feeling that their effect on the whole cannot be wholesome. Such material when placed at the disposal of persons who believe in subversive and violent methods can be used by them in an insidious, if not open, manner for encouraging violence. It would be difficult to prevent anyone from making use of the material that is made over to a private individual in any manner he likes." In view of Pant's opinion, Nehru directed on 6 September that the matter should be allowed to rest