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JAPANESE CONFIRM NETAJI'S DEATH

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Fourteen months ago the Japanese News Agency announced to the world that the plane in which Netaji was flying from Singapore to Tokio had crashed in Formosa. Afflicted India was rudely shaken by this sad news. But she was tantalised all the more by the spate of conflicting reports appearing in the press about his supposed secret flight to Germany to seek haven in Hitler's Reich. Pandit Nehru's recent statement about the death of this Apostle of Indian Freedom provoked a reply from a Forward Blocist. (All the way from Singapore, now comes news, from our own Correspondent, that the Allied Military Authorities in Tokio, after careful interrogation of Japanese High-ups have been able to confirm his death.

SINGAPORE, Oct. 29 (By Air Mail). Details of the investigation, conducted by the Allied Military Authorities in Tokyo, of the plane-crash in which Subhas Bose was reported to be killed are now available.

The following Press Note has been issued:—

A very thorough investigation has been conducted in Tokyo, at the request of SACSEA, to establish the precise details of the circumstances surrounding the reported death of Subhas Chandra Bose. The United Kingdom Liaison Mission in Japan conducted these investigations and it is confirmed as certain that Subhas Chandra Bose died in a Taihoku Military Hospital (Nammon Ward) some time between 19.00 hours and 20.00 hours, local time, on August 18, 1945. The cause of death was heart failure resulting from multiple burns and shock.

All the persons named below were interrogated at different times but the several accounts of the event agree both in substance and detail at all points where the knowledge of the subjects could have been deemed to be based on common experience. The possibility of a pre-arranged fabrication must be excluded since most of the individuals concerned had no opportunity of contact with one another prior to interrogation.

FELLOW PASSENGER TELLS TALE

LT.-COL. NONOGAKI: This person was a passenger on the same plane with Bose from Saigon onwards. He related the story of the crash in great detail and drew a sketch showing the position of the crew and passengers. The aircraft was a K.21 Heavy Bomber (Sally). Just after taking off from the Taihoku air strip en route to Tokyo at about 1430 hours on August 18, 1945, there was a sudden explosion in the port engine, which broke off from the main plane causing the aircraft to go into a spin and crash to the ground, just off the runway. The fuselage burst open and the petrol tanks exploded on impact with the ground. According to Nonogaki, the following persons were killed instantly:—

Three engineers (names unknown),

Wireless Operator (name unknown), Major Takizawa, and Lt. General Shidel.

The following were very seriously injured:

W. O. Aoyagi, the pilot

Major Kono

and Subhas Chandra Bose.

The following were less seriously injured:

Habibur Rahman (presently alive to Bose)

and Lt.-Col. Sakai.

NETAJI SUSTAINS BURNS

Nonogaki gave as the reason for Bose's sustaining such severe injuries that he was sitting next to the petrol tank and owing to the cold had just previously donned a rather tight-fitting type of jacket, which could not easily be removed after the crash when Bose was lying on the ground in flames. Habibur Rahman and Nonogaki between them succeeded in beating out the flames and Bose was removed immediately to a nearby emergency dressing station where the burnt clothing was cut away from his body. He was then taken in a Japanese Army truck in a prostrate condition, but still conscious, to the nearest Army Hospital, known as the Taihoku Military Hospital (Nammon Ward) where he arrived shortly after 3 p.m.

Lt.-Col. Nonogaki supervised the admittance of Bose to the hospital and heard the report of his subsequent death, but did not himself see any more as he returned to Tokyo by the next departing aircraft.

HE CARRIED BOSE'S ASHES

LT.-COL. SAKAI: Sakai was a passenger sitting immediately behind Nonogaki in the aircraft. He was somewhat shaken by the crash and slightly burned, and so has no clear recollection of what happened immediately after the crash, but for the rest he confirms the story told by Nonogaki. Sakai was removed to a military hospital but was put in a different ward from Bose and was subsequently recovered from his injuries to travel to Fukuoka in the same aircraft with Rahman on the 4th 5th September. He carried with him a box alleged to contain the ashes of Bose but as he was in the

hospital he did not himself see Bose again either before or after death.

BODY CREMATED

LT.-COL. SHIBUYA MASANORI: This officer was on the staff of Taiwan Army Headquarters, Taihoku. He did not see Bose at any time but was called in to discuss the possibility of transporting Bose's body to Tokyo by plane. After some discussion this project was dismissed as impracticable and it was decided to cremate the body. Lt.-Col. Shibuya issued orders for the cremation. He returned to Japan in December after completion of evacuation of the Japanese surrendered personnel in Formosa.

LT.-COL. TAGAMIVA HIROJI (KEMPEI): This officer, who was also attached to Taiwan Army Headquarters called at the Hospital shortly after the crash on the orders of his superior, to enquire about the condition of Bose. He saw Bose, who was conscious but obviously in great pain and in a weak condition, and on enquiry he was informed by the doctor present that there was little hope for Bose and that he was sinking fast. He did not see Bose's body after death.

INQUIRY INTO THE ACCIDENT

LT.-COL. MIURA TATSUO: Miura was a staff officer of the 3rd Hikishidan attached to the Taiwan Army Air Staff. He did not see Bose at any time either dead or alive but received the first report of the accident from the local airfield company commander (Hikojo Chutai Cho) and was responsible for subsequent investigation into the cause of the accident. This investigation, by the way, appears to have been very cursory, the explanation offered being that all the staffs in Taihoku were in a turmoil as a result of the sudden ending of the war.

SAT WITH NETAJI ALL NIGHT

SUB.-LT. (MEDICAL) TSURUTA TOYOSHI. At the time of the air accident, Tsuruta held the rank of Probationary Officer and was on duty in the Nammon Ward of the Taihoku Military Hospital. At about 3 o'clock in the afternoon of August 18, he was informed that a V. I. P. suffering from severe injuries had been brought in to the hospital in a truck. Tsuruta supervised the movement of Bose, who was lying on a stretcher without any clothes on and had him taken into the Nammon Ward. Bose was conscious but suffering from terrible third degree burns on his face and all over his body. The doctor administered a camphor injection and dressed the burns. He says that at the time he recognised that Bose had small chance of surviving. After attending to Bose, Tsuruta dressed the wounds of Habibur Rahman who was burned on the hands and had a superficial head wound. During this time Bose made no conversation except to ask for water, but after he had rested for a little while he asked to talk to Rahman and they carried on a conversation together in an Indian language for some fifteen or twenty minutes. Tsuruta went for his evening meal at about 5-30 p.m. and when he returned to the ward shortly after six o'clock, Bose asked him in English if he would sit with him throughout the night. However, shortly after 7 o'clock p.m. he suffered a relapse and although the doctor once again administered a camphor injection he sank into a coma and died shortly afterwards.

DEATH CERTIFICATE

Later, that evening there was a discussion between Tsuruta, Habibur Rahman and another officer, who Tsuruta thinks was probably Lt.-Col. Shibuya, as to the possibility of embalming the body and taking it on to Tokyo, but the doctor expressed doubts as to his ability to ensure preservation in the extreme heat. Towards midnight a hastily made coffin arrived from the headquarters of the Taiwan Army and the body was placed in the coffin and covered with a sheet. The following morning the coffin was taken away and Tsuruta understands that it was cremated although he was not an eye-witness of the process. The death certificate which was issued by Tsuruta showed death to be due to heart failure resulting from multiple burns and shock.

When faced with the question of positive identification of the victim of the accident, Tsuruta stated that there was of course no documentary evidence since all the clothes and personal papers were a matter of common knowledge that Bose was in the aircraft and that there could not possibly be any error in identity.

Tsuruta produced papers to show that he qualified as a medical practitioner from Kyoto Imperial University in September 1943, specialising in surgery.