

November 28, 1945

Beria's Cover Memo to Stalin on Niels Bohr

Citation:

"Beria's Cover Memo to Stalin on Niels Bohr", November 28, 1945, Wilson Center Digital Archive, State Archive of the Russian Federation (GARF). Translated for CWIHP by Mark H. Doctoroff and published in CWIHP Bulletin No. 4, Fall 1994, "Soviet Espionage and the Bomb." <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/111837>

Summary:

Memo to Stalin discussing Beria's efforts to obtain information from physicist Niels Bohr about development of the atomic bomb.

Original Language:

Russian

Contents:

Translation - English

SPECIAL FOLDER

No. 1-1

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Top secret

[Handwritten across top of page: "Make known to Com[rade]. [V.N.] Merkulov [Chairman of the People's Commissariat of State Security (NKGB) and Beria's long-time deputy]. L. Beria 8/XII" (8 December)]

[28] November [1945]

To Comrade STALIN I.V.

The famous physicist Professor Niels BOHR, who participated in efforts to create the atomic bomb, has returned to Denmark from the USA and started working at his Institute of Theoretical Physics in Copenhagen.

Niels BOHR is famous as a progressive-minded scientist and as a staunch supporter of the international exchange of scientific achievements. This gave us grounds to send to Denmark a group of employees, under the pretense of searching for equipment which the Germans had taken from Soviet scientific establishments, who were to establish contact with Niels BOHR and obtain from him information about the problem of the atomic bomb.

The comrades who were sent: Colonel Vasilevsky, the Candidate of physico-mathematical sciences [Yakov] Terletsky, and interpreter-engineer Arutunov, having identified appropriate pretexts, contacted Bohr and organized two meetings with him.

The meetings took place on 14 and 16 November, under the pretense of Soviet scientist Terletsky's visit to the Institute of Theoretical Physics.

Com[rade]. TERLETSKY told BOHR that while passing through Copenhagen, he considered it obligatory to visit the famous scientist and that BOHR's lectures at Moscow University are still warmly recollected there.

In the course of the conversations BOHR was asked several questions which were prepared in advance in Moscow by Academician KURCHATOV and other scientists who deal with the atomic problem.

Attached are the questions, BOHR's answers to them, and also an evaluation of these answers by Academician KURCHATOV.

/L. B E R I A /

[handwritten: "Correct: Chernikov"]

3 copies typed.

Copy #1 -- to the addressee

" #2 -- to the Secretary of USSR NKVD

" #3 -- Department "6"

Executor Sudoplatov

Typist Krylova.