

Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

TO : MR. A. H. BELMONT

DATE: May 5, 1953

FROM : MR. L. L. LAUGHLIN

SUBJECT: NIKOLA TESLA (Deceased)
INFORMATION CONCERNINGALL INFORMATION CONTAINED
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED
DATE 2-2-80 BY SP4/DM/pteTolson
Ladd
Nichols
Belmont
Clegg
Glavin
Harbo
Rosen
Tracy
Gearty
Mohr
Winterrowd
Tele. Room
Holloman
Gandy

[REDACTED] called on the afternoon
of May 4, 1953.

[REDACTED] stated that he had been reading a book entitled, "The Prodigal Genius - The Life of Nikola Tesla" by John J. O'Neill, whom [REDACTED] described as a science writer for a New York newspaper (publisher - Ives Washburn). [REDACTED] noted in this book that Bureau Agents went to Tesla's room following his death on January 7, 1943, opened his safe, examined his papers, and took over his personal files. [REDACTED] said this appeared on page 277. [REDACTED] stated that Tesla is the father of modern power engineering, being responsible for the invention of the A. C. generator, motor transmission, and other electrical engineering feats. He inquired (1) if the papers and works of Tesla were in the possession of the Bureau, and (2) if so, were they available for review in view of their scientific importance.

I told [REDACTED] that the statement concerning the Bureau's taking Tesla's files did not seem very logical but that I would check on the matter. (b) (7)

The Bureau's files reflect that shortly after the death of Tesla in his hotel room in New York City on January 7, 1943, Sava Kosanovich, a distant relative, and other individuals entered his room and opened the safe, examining certain materials which he possessed. On January 8, 1943, Mr. L. M. C. Smith of the Department advised Mr. Tamm that he was concerned about the possibility of enemy agents confiscating some of the trunks of Tesla and apparently the Office of Alien Property Custodian was taking some action regarding these effects. Since the matter was being handled by the Office of Alien Property Custodian, the Bureau did not make any inquiries into this situation. (65-47953-6) (c)

It is noted also that the Bureau received a letter dated April 16, 1948, from [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] explaining that he was studying electrical engineering at the Milwaukee School of Engineering and

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1 - Mr. Nichols

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was interested in the life and works of Tesla. [redacted] stated that he understood at the time of Tesla's death the Bureau took his manuscripts and experiment data for national security. The Bureau on April 22, 1948, advised [redacted] that the effects of Tesla were handled by the Office of Alien Property and not by the FBI. (65-47953-18)

I called [redacted] this morning and told him that it was the office of Alien Property and not the FBI which took over the effects of Tesla following his death. Accordingly, I suggested that [redacted] might wish to communicate with the office of Alien Property for further information concerning this matter.

The book "Prodigal Genius - The Life of Nikola Tesla" is not in the Bureau Library. A copy is being obtained from the Library of Congress. It will be examined to determine specifically the reference made to the Bureau's taking these papers. At that time a determination can be made as to what further action should be taken.

(b)
(7)
(c)

ADDENDUM: LLL:mer 5-14-53

Page 277 of the "Prodigal Genius - The Life of Nikola Tesla," describing Tesla's death, contains the following statement:
"Operatives from the Federal Bureau of Investigation came and opened the safe in his room and took the papers it contained, to examine them for a reported important secret invention of possible use in the war."

Since this work was published in 1944, it is not felt that any particular purpose would be served by raising an objection with the publishers at this time. [redacted], the individual who raised the question, has been set straight and, therefore, no further action is being taken.

ALG