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2 U.S. MEN FACE SPY TRIAL IN INDIA

Americans Have Been Held
for 19 Months—Conviction
Carries 14-Year Term

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CALCUTTA, India, Nov. 24—The Indian Government has decided to prosecute two young Americans on espionage charges. Lawyers for the two insist that the defendants were involved in attempted narcotics smuggling, and were not engaged in spying.

The two Americans, Richard Harcos and Anthony Fletcher, will face a closed trial beginning on Dec. 16 in Calcutta City Sessions court. Persons involved in the bizarre case expect the trial to last several months, possibly a year.

The two have been held by the Calcutta police since April 26, 1973. Last month, the prisoners were removed from prison and placed under house arrest, after United States diplomatic efforts had newspaper stories about their plight. If found guilty of violating India's Official Secrets Act, the two men face 14-year prison sentences.

Mr. Harcos was arrested after the police found him in a prohibited area of the King George Dock on Calcutta's Hooghly River. He was carrying scuba diving equipment.

Calcutta sources said that the police seized the 27-year-old army veteran and accompanied him to his room in the Waverly Hotel, his residence here, where Mr. Fletcher was sleeping. Sources said that the police searched the room and found half-burned maps and papers. The police concluded that the two Americans were involved in spying.

The two men, who were from San Francisco and listed their occupations as taxi drivers, said later that they were seeking to smuggle narcotics, apparently hashish, out of India by fixing a bag to the hull of a ship.

Two Others Arrested

Two other persons were later arrested in the case. One was David Ming Hu-san Chang, the owner of a hotel and restaurant in Calcutta. He was reported to be a friend of the two Americans; he kept a key to their hotel room. The other defendant has been identified as Yusuf David, described as a stateless person and long-time resident of Calcutta who is accused of showing the dock area to Mr. Harcos.

Calcutta authorities have also accused two Americans living in San Francisco of being involved in the case. They were identified as Bela Harcos, a brother of the prisoner, and Dr. Kuo Hu-san Chang, a brother of the hotel owner. Sources said that India has not asked for their extradition.

United States Embassy officials have denied that Mr. Harcos and Mr. Fletcher were working with the Government.

The two Americans are living under house arrest in a two-room apartment in the home of Bejoy Bhowe, Mr. Fletcher's lawyer. The prisoners are barred from receiving visitors, except for their lawyers and a United States consular official, who is also allowed to attend the trial, which is barred to the public.

The prisoners had been on a hunger strike for more than three months in protest against their detention. They hoped to get their trial opened to the public. The decision by the West Bengal Government to allow an American official to witness the closed trial—an unusual move in view of the espionage charges—ended the hunger strike.