



## VERRIER ELWIN DEAD

By A Staff Reporter

Dr Verrier Elwin, the 61-year-old anthropologist and authority on India's tribal affairs, died in a New Delhi nursing home on Saturday night, two hours after he had been admitted.

Dr Elwin, who arrived in Delhi from Shillong on Wednesday, was staying with Mr K. L. Rathee, Delhi's Housing Commissioner. He had a hectic round of consultations with officials of the Government on Thursday and Friday and also met the Prime Minister. On Saturday morning, he again left for his official round, but on returning to his host's house for lunch complained of restlessness.

He stayed indoors for the rest of the day, spending the whole of the afternoon in discussion with an official of the External Affairs Ministry and Dr D. Erring, Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister. Towards the evening the pain increased and he was taken to Willingdon Nursing Home at 9-30 p.m. Oxygen was immediately administered, but he died about two hours later.

At Mrs Elwin's request (she belongs to the Gond tribe) arrangements have been made to fly the body to Shillong tomorrow. Accompanying the body will be Mr R. Yusuf Ali, of the Ministry of External Affairs, and a little statue of the Buddha, which Mr Elwin always carried in his pocket.

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## Obituary

# DR. VERRIER ELWIN

A leading authority on India's tribal people, Verrier Elwin was born in 1902 and educated at Merton College, Oxford, where he was Charles Oldham University Scholar and Mathew Arnold prizeman.

Obtaining first classes in both English literature and theology, he became Vice-Principal of Wycliffe Hall, Oxford, at 24, and at 25 lecturer at Merton. His published works in India later earned him a D.Sc. from his own university.

In 1927 he gave up a promising career at Merton and came to India as a member of the newly formed Christa Seva Sangh (Poona), a small brotherhood of Christian intellectuals, both Englishmen and Indians, living together according to Indian customs.

Dr Elwin's interest in the national movement brought him into conflict with authority, both political and ecclesiastical, so four years later he returned to lay life and, in collaboration with a friend, founded a small society in the Mandla district of Madhya Pradesh, devoted to the service of the tribals on a scientific and humanitarian basis. Here, in a mud hut in a remote tribal village, he had his headquarters for over 20 years.

In January 1932 Mahatma Gandhi, on his arrest, sent a message through Dr Elwin to the British people. Shortly afterwards much excitement was caused when, because he investigated reports of atrocities on the Red Shirts, he was arrested and deported from the North-West Frontier Province. Later, on visiting England, he had great difficulty in getting his passport renewed for return to India, and was obliged to give an undertaking to abstain from politics.

### SERVICE TO TRIBALS

On Mahatma Gandhi's advice, Dr Elwin devoted almost all his time to the study of and service to the tribals. In 1940 he was appointed Honorary Ethnographer, Bastar State. Five years later he became Anthropologist to the Government of Orissa, and in 1946 was made Deputy-Director of the Anthropological Survey of India.



quished to return to field work.

Dr Elwin regarded himself as an Indian from the time he first met the Mahatma. He obtained official recognition as an Indian citizen after Independence.

The Wellcome Medal was presented to him in 1942, the first time that it was awarded to any person in India. The Asiatic Society of Bengal presented him with the Roy Gold Medal in 1945 and the Annandale Medal in 1951 for "conspicuously important contributions to the Anthropology of Asia", and elected him a Fellow. In 1948 the Royal Anthropological Institute awarded him the Rivers Medal, and in 1960 the Asiatic Society of Bombay gave him the Campbell Gold Medal.

Dr Elwin's first publications were on Christian and Hindu mysticism; he then turned to politics, with books on Mahatma Gandhi and others containing an eloquent plea for India's freedom. Later he turned to anthropology, working first in the field of folklore—he produced six large volumes on oral literature—and then studying tribal sociology, religion, sex, crime, technology and art in a series of monographs. His most important work, *The Muria and Their Ghotul*, has been translated into French and Italian. He has also published poems, novels, essays and *The Story of Tata Steel*.

#### ADVISER IN NEFA

At Mr Nehru's instance, he was appointed Adviser for Tribal Affairs to NEFA, in which capacity he found scope for practical application of sociology and in problems of tribal administration. As chairman of a committee to evaluate the working of the multi-purpose tribal blocks, he produced a report which had wide influence, while his books, *A Philosophy for NEFA* and *Nagaland*, did much to popularize India's tribal policy. He was appointed a member of the Scheduled Tribes Commission in 1960 and awarded the Padma Bhushan in 1961.

At the time of his death he had just completed his autobiography shortly to be published by the Oxford University Press.

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#### PRESIDENT TOURE TO VISIT INDIA

ABIDJAN, Feb 23.—President Sekou Toure of Guinea has accepted an official invitation to visit India, says AFP quoting Radio Conakry.