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Immigration Branch

Department of the Interior
Canada

Kindly do not write of more than
one subject in any one letter.

In your reply
refer to No. _____



Vancouver, B. C., July 20, 1914.

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Sir:

I beg to acknowledge receipt of your wire as follows:

"Unmailed letters delivered to yourself or letters addressed to Hindus in your care are not protected by Post Office law or regulations while in your possession".

and to confirm my wire as follows:

"Following telegram sent addressed Minister Interior Ottawa signed Passengers Komagata Maru reply paid ten words begins many telegrams to Governor General. He answers transferred to you for consideration. No consideration as yet. Police attacks daily duly armed. No provisions. Immigration returning forcibly without your decision. If not decided within two days all passengers will be killed by police and volunteers and you are responsible for so many lives. Will not return forcibly prefer death to cruelties what would be use of consideration after death. Ends."

Inspector Hopkinson took out a wire addressed to the passengers of the Komagata Maru, this morning. I herewith embody his report:

"I have to report for your information that I took on board the "Komagata Maru" this morning at about 10:05 a telegram addressed to the passengers of this boat. On going up the gangway I was met by quite a few of the passengers and on inquiring for the Secretary or one of the Committee, the Secretary Daljit Singh put in an appearance and to him I handed the telegram. He opened the same, read the contents, but did not communicate what was conveyed.

After reading the wire he wished to know if the Government intended sending any provisions on board, and I replied that it was not the intention of the Government to send any provisions on board till such time as the Hindus decided to obey the law. I further went into detail as to the intention of the mission of Saturday night, and pointed out that the boat had \$6,000.00 worth of provisions ready to put on board. After a great deal of discussion, and on making a particular demand for some reasonable proposition, Daljit Singh informed me as follows: That the passengers would permit the getting up of steam and leaving of this harbor on the following conditions:

1. That the provisions be put on board.
2. That the two charterers, Bhag Singh and Rahim be brought alongside the ship so that they could

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talk to them and receive their permission to leave.

3. If the two above conditions were satisfactorily arranged steam would be permitted to be got up.

I replied that under no circumstances could we possibly acquiesce to all three demands, but in the alternative proposed the following:

(a) That Captain Yamamoto be permitted to issue orders to his crew to get up steam.

(b) That within four or five hours after they had started getting up steam we would come alongside with a scow loaded with provisions for the voyage and also Rahim and the Secretary of the Sikh Temple; that they could hold a conference with these two men and if they decided to move out and gave us an assurance in writing that they would do so, we would then load the provisions; that when the provisions were loaded the ship would immediately start on her voyage to Hong Kong, as the Captain was already in possession of his clearance papers.

This proposition was absolutely rejected and Daljit Singh, together with quite a few of his countrymen around him stated that unless and until such time as the provisions were first put on board, they would not permit the anchor to be raised or steam to be got up or the ship to leave the harbor, under any circumstances, and they would perish by hunger.

I asked for some assurance or guarantee that if we complied with their request they would carry out their proposition, but received no assurance and no guarantee that they would do so. I further went into the matter of explaining the guarantee question - that the Government had no assurance that if the provisions were put on board they would move out, inasmuch as by putting the provisions on board they would then have themselves fully equipped with water and supplies for a period of one month and they could lie in that harbor for that length of time without making a move.

Daljit Singh further stated to me that five of the Hindus had been injured in the melee on Saturday night, and that one of them was seriously hurt. He requested that the man be taken ashore for treatment, but before giving him any satisfactory answer I requested that the four or five alleged injured men should be produced before me or that I be permitted to see them wherever they were, so that I could make such arrangements - if I was satisfied that they needed medical attention - as would be necessary in order to have the same attended to by our medical officer. Daljit Singh refused to produce the men or permit me to go and see them, and said that unless provisions were put on board there would be no benefit from seeing these men whatsoever.

Making no headway in our deliberations, I finally informed them that no provisions would be put on board until they were of a more reasonable turn of mind and had decided to obey the laws of this country, and with this parting injunction I came down the gangway and boarded our launch for shore."

Counsel Ladner and Assistant Paul Howard

reported from Victoria as follows:

Wire No. 1: "Saw commander this morning. Cruiser sails ten tonight with usual crew plus fifty regulars from garrison. He to assist you with these and Vancouver militia uniformed force of two hundred. Plans excellent in detail bringing leg irons and handcuffs but Provincial police Vancouver to supply further equipment. Have chief police ready be on cruiser but few of any local police. Commander will wire hour of conference and hour when militia be ready. Probably between six and nine arrange receive messages tonight perhaps wireless."

Wire No. 2: "Arrange immediate with Brodie to delay Seattle boat departure until Rainbow draft arriving ten twenty can go aboard. If this done will be Vancouver fully equipped at daybreak."

to which I replied:

"Impossible hold Seattle boat your wire too late. Sailors left Princess Alice noon making practically same time as ten thirty boat. Keep me posted. Ask Commander Rainbow if he has any special word to communicate."

I further received the following wire from Commander Hose of the cruiser Rainbow:

"Propose leaving Esquimalt tonight arrive Vancouver about 7 A. M. with Messrs. Howard and Ladner on board."

I also received this evening an additional message from Commander Hose giving more definite time for arrival:

"Rainbow due Vancouver about 7 a. m. shall be ready to see you and any other officials any time after arrival, the earlier the better."

I further wired Inspector Howard as follows:

"Does Commander wish fire engines on Sea Lion or tug or has he ample pressure both steam and cold water. Rush answer."

receiving in reply:

"Commander Rainbow desires fire engines Sea Lion held in readiness in case required."

The question of handcuffs was also taken up. We have borrowed about 18 pairs locally, through the courtesy of the Chief of Police and the Warden of the Penitentiary at New Westminster, and I wired Colin

Campbell, the Superintendent of Provincial Police at Victoria as follows:

"Cruiser Rainbow leaving Victoria tonight. Commander anxious secure all handcuffs and leg irons available, as endeavor will be made to handcuff the three hundred and fifty two mutinous Hindus aboard Komagata. Kindly oblige by loaning. Wire me what action if any you take."

receiving in reply the following:

"All available handcuffs and leg irons sent aboard Rainbow today have instructed Chief Constable Smith to do same at Vancouver."

I further received a wire from Mr.

Howard as follows:

"Commander thinks it advisable have only about dozen police on hand in morning will arrange details further on landing."

In reply to the communication from J. Edward Bird the following was forwarded by our solicitors:

"A copy of yours of the 20th inst. to M.R.J.Reid, re S. S. "Komagata Maru", has been handed to me for attention.

As I understand the matter, the Hindus on board the Ship come to this country deliberately intending to force their presence upon a people who do not wish them, through some hoped for defect in, or technical objection to, laws made with the approval of the country at large. After having come to British Columbia and after delay occasioned solely by them, the matter is heard by the Court of Appeal and decision given under which Boards of Enquiry are held and Orders of Deportation made. They do not see fit to obey the Orders of the Government but mutiny and take control of the ship. On an attempt being made by the Police to enforce the ordinary rights of the Captain over his Ship, they resist and deliberately assault and grievously injure them. They then make the proposals set out in your letter in which you concur.

The Government, although under no obligation to do so, has fed them during the last three weeks and out of charity has been willing to provision them for the return journey to Hong Kong. If they are on the verge of starvation it is their own fault. As soon as they signify that they are willing to obey the law the Government will, no doubt, adhere to its offer to supply provisions as mentioned above.

I shall, however, submit your letter to headquarters and will return you such answer as may be directed."

Counsel advised sending the following wire:

"Have received letter from MacNeill and Bird on behalf of local Hindus submitting, subject to approval by Hindus on board Komagata Maru following alternative proposition for consideration: First, Government to send back all deported Hindus by other steamship line permitting assignees of charter to unload and load cargo. Government to pay all sums which assignees have been compelled to pay for charter money while vessel detained in Port, or Second Government to pay assignees of Charter passage money from Vancouver to Calcutta for deported Hindus at the rate of one hundred dollars each, or Third, Government to pay assignees of Charter Twenty-five thousand dollars for passage money for deported Hindus from Vancouver to Hong Kong. Assignees in each of the two last propositions to pay for provisions and waive all other claims. Counsel has replied pointing out unlawful course pursued by Hindus on board ship and treatment received by them from Government with no response to proposition except statement that they would be submitted to you and such answer would be returned as you direct."

Sir Charles Hibbert Tupper and C. Gardner Johnson, Solicitor and Agent for the Owners, respectively, interviewed me at some length this morning, principally in reference to J. Edward Bird's proposal. Sir Hibbert Tupper emphatically stated they virtually asked for everything, and viewed the whole proposal as a practical impossibility.

I received further, through C. Gardner Johnson, Esq., the following communication embodying a communication from Y. A. Hori, the Consul for Japan:

"On my informing Mr. Hori, Japanese Consul, of the arrangement arrived at with Sir Chas. Hibbert Tupper and yourself re the Japanese crew of the S. S. "Komagata Maru" being taken on board the Canadian Navy "Rainbow" under certain conditions, the Japanese Consul sent me the letter of which enclosed is a copy.

Any reply you may wish to give I shall be glad to convey to Mr. Hori.

(Signed) C. Gardner Johnson."

The following is Mr. Hori's letter to C. Gardner Johnson:

"In reference to your favour of even date re the arrangement made between you and the Immigration

Department about boarding the crew of the Komagata Maru on the Rainbow I regret to have to say that it is not very satisfactory and would be very much obliged if you could have Mr. Reid furnish a neutral boat at the crew's disposal or have him consent to their stay ashore during the engagement."

I replied as follows:

"I beg to acknowledge receipt of your letter of 20th instant enclosing communication from Mr. Y.A. Hori, Japanese Consul, and note remarks.

After duly considering the matter I will arrange to place a neutral boat at the disposal of the Japanese crew of the "Komagata Maru" until control of the ship is obtained."

I will endeavor to meet their wishes in this respect, but the matter will have to be duly considered by Commander Hose, as this act alone might precipitate trouble. Mr. Hori raised several technical objections verbally, and I requested him to place his views in writing, when I would have much pleasure in submitting them by wire to the Department. Up to the time of writing I have had no communication other than the one above referred to.

To absolutely avoid any possibility of criticism by the public, however, in taking advantage of any concessions which might be obtained, the following communication was drafted to Hoosain Rahim, one of the alleged charterers of the Komagata Maru:

"Dear Sirs:

You are authorized to leave port on the S. S. Komagata Maru, and have my full authority to do so, according to my connection with the charter and my rights thereunder.

Yours truly,

Charterer of the S. S. Komagata Maru.

To the Committee,
for Passengers on s. s. Komagata Maru,
Vancouver Harbor."

This is important in view of the fact that the Committee aboard that vessel have absolutely refused to leave without

the consent of the charterers, Hoosain Rahim and Bhag Singh (Bhag Singh is now held by the United States Immigration authorities in the detention shed at Seattle, Washington). To make sure there should be no misunderstanding, Officer Nelson and Assistant Interpreter Gwyther were told to read the following instructions to Rahim, but to have no argument with him:

"We wish you to sign this letter and then we are in a position to know exactly where you stand. The Committee of the Komagata Maru claim you are the last drawback to their departure and as they will not leave without your consent we now present this letter for your signature."

My wishes in the matter were duly carried out. Their report I now embody:

"I beg to state that accompanied by Mr. Gwyther I handed the attached letter to Mr. H. Rahim at 516, Main Street, this city, with a request to sign it, at the same time reading to him the letter headed, "Instructions for Mr. Nelson" which explains why his signature was asked for.

He refused to sign it and referred us to his Solicitors, Messrs. McNeill & Bird.

D. Nelson, Immig. Insp.

H.W.Gwyther, Asst. Hindoo Inter."

The Honourable C. J. Doherty, Acting Minister of the Interior wired as follows:

"Have instructed militia department to place permanent force and officers at your disposal commanding officer will report to you."

to which I replied:

"Your wire Captain Ogilvie Work Point Barracks has phoned on long distance he will arrive with 75 regulars on Rainbow seven A. M. Requisitions for calling out militia being prepared locally. Will be signed immediately."

I have further discussed the proposed operations with Brigade Major Tobin, Colonel McSpadden commanding the Irish Fusiliers, Adjutant Dowding of the same Regiment, Captain Godson of the Highlanders, and others. The authorization for the calling out of the local militia

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was prepared by our legal advisers, and Magistrate Proctor is now obtaining the signature of the Mayor of the City and another Magistrate to same. I have also arranged with Chief Carlisle for his fire engines and he is to meet me at 7 in the morning together with the Chief of Police, militia officers and others. Immediately on arrival of the cruiser we will go aboard on the chartered tug Sea Lion.

Your obedient servant.

Malcolm R J Reid

DOMINION IMMIGRATION AGENT & INSPECTOR

W. D. Scott, Esq.,
Superintendent of Immigration,
Ottawa.

MRJR/W.