

RG 76 vol 601 file 879545

PT 5

B 23797

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

In your reply refer to File 58

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Extract from W.C. Hopkinson to W.W. Cory
Immigration Branch

CONFIDENTIAL

Department of the Interior
Canada

WCH/DNCN.



Vancouver, B.C. July 25th, 1914.

Sir,

With reference to my letter of the 20th instant, addressed to Mr. J.A. Wallinger, I now beg to quote herewith my cablegram of the 21st instant addressed to Mr. J.A. Wallinger as follows:-

- "Komagata situation solved without any use of force. Canadian Government are provisioning ship for return journey to Hong Kong. Passengers returning include some local men.
- "Carefully watch situation on arrival Hong Kong as majority are determined return Calcutta en masse to agitate. Komagata leaves 22nd instant."

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On the 20th instant, arrangements were made to have the Cruiser H.M.C.S. "Rainbow" leave Victoria and proceed to Vancouver to assist in the enforcement of law and order in conjunction with the militia of this City. The Militia turned out at 6 a.m. numbering about 200 men, and at 9 a.m. everything was ready to take whatever action was necessary.

Immigration Agent, Mr. Reid, with the Officer commanding the Militia, proceeded to the "Rainbow" and interviewed Commander Hose, and there arranged certain plans for action. On their return at about 11 a.m. it was decided to send by me the following ultimatum to Gurdit Singh and the passengers of the "Komagata Maru":-

- "I am instructed by the authority of the Government of Canada to say that much regret would be felt by this Government should any injury be done to you and to urge you to peaceably submit to the laws of this Country.
- "Your case has been most exhaustively and ably argued in the Courts and decision been given against you, and you have been lawfully ordered deported by the authorities; but in view of the peculiar circumstances of your case the Government have offered, as an act of grace, to supply you with provisions for your return voyage. This offer still holds good and I am instructed to assure you that all necessary provisions will be placed aboard immediately you restore command of the steamship "Komagata Maru" to her rightful Captain Mr. Yamamoto.
- "I am further to say that the Government regrets to note that you have been guilty of a very serious and grave offence against the laws of Canada, first in resisting the orders of the Immigration Authorities; secondly, in taking away from the Captain the control of his ship and by preventing him from getting up steam on his vessel; and thirdly, by violently resisting and obstructing the peace officers in the performance of their duties.
- "The Government regret that unless you now submit, that it will be necessary to forthwith take steps to enforce the law.

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Before I had an opportunity of proceeding to the "Komagata Maru", certain prominent Hindus approached me on the subject of bringing about a peaceful settlement of the whole matter. As these men were not of the shore committee, I knew that no notice would be taken of them, and advised them if they were desirous of seeing the matter settled peacefully, to get in touch with the shore leaders at once.

These men at once got into communication with the shore leaders, and shortly after Mr. Reid received a telephone message from Mr. A. H. McNeill, Barrister, to the effect that he had been approached by members of the Sikh Temple to bring about a settlement of this dispute. Mr. McNeill was informed that any steps taken by him on behalf of the Hindus to effect a solution of this problem would receive consideration, and arrangements were made, at Mr. McNeill's request, to send out six or seven members of the shore committee to the "Komagata Maru". Just before arrangements were completed to send these men out, the following telegram was received from Gurdit Singh for despatch to the Minister of the Interior:-

"Reddy to submit the law if Government issue tickets
"for return voyage and duly provided with provisions
"and medicines necessary before lifting anchor."

Inasmuch as this telegram was not very clear as to what these men wanted, it was made over to the shore committee to ascertain definitely what they meant by the term "if the Government issue tickets for return voyage."

I proceeded with the shore members to the "Komagata Maru", and gave them one hour within which to try to effect a settlement. Within the hour, the members returned and informed me that they had received certain instructions from Gurdit Singh which would lead to the solution of the whole matter; but they could give me no answer

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till they had consulted Mr. McNeill. Accordingly, another hour was given these people within which to give us a written answer after consulting their solicitors. Within the hour, Mr. McNeill in company with the committee, called at the office, consulted us, and submitted the following proposals:-

That Gurdit Singh would leave this harbour with the passengers, provided the Government supplied them with provisions, a list of which was handed at the same time. This list is practically twice the amount the Government intended putting on this boat. A further proposal was, that these men should be returned to Calcuttaw. The third was, that in view of the fact that the local Hindus had subscribed a large sum of money to meet the charter obligations, the Government refund to the Hindus the amount paid by them.

The Hon: Mr. Martin Burrill, Minister of Agriculture, who had arrived early in the morning, got into touch with the situation at once. He was informed of the demands of these people, and after a consultation with our solicitors, Mr. Stevens, Mr. Reid and myself, it was decided to meet the wishes of the Hindus only as far as the provisions were concerned. With regard to the tickets to India, we would not for a moment consider this proposal, inasmuch as they did not come from there. With regard to the refund of the monies paid out to meet the charter obligations, The Hon: Mr. Martin Burrill, promised to consider the matter, and if necessary, a Commission could be appointed to inquire into the claim of the Hindus in this regard. The reply of the Government with regard to these proposals was communicated to the Hindu committee, who at once proceeded on board the "Komagata Maru", and within half an hour intimated that Gurdit Singh and his committee had accepted the answer of the Government, and that they would leave as soon as the provisions were put on board.

The conduct of these negotiations took up a considerable amount

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of time, and it was about 6-30 in the evening before we received their final answer. The final answer was embodied in a letter given to Captain Yamamoto and which is quoted below:-

"Negotiations between the Hindu representatives on shore and the committee of my ship, have resulted to my satisfaction, and I am now in a position to authorise you to get up steam, preparatory to leaving this harbour, and I hereby give you instructions to do so on receipt of this letter.

Signed. H. Raheim for Self and Bhag Singh
Charterer of S.S. Komagata Maru".

On receipt of this letter, we arranged to send as much provisions as possible on board that night, sufficient to carry them over to the following morning, when arrangements to furnish them with the full quantity as outlined in their list, copy of which is quoted below, would be made:-

- " 800 sacks Flour, W.W. "V" Brand,
- 600 lbs curry powder.
- 5400 lbs Pulse.
- 6000 lbs Sugar.
- 6000 lbs Cabbage.
- 5000 lbs Potatoes.
- 20 Sacks of Onions.
- 10 Sacks of Carrots.
- 360 lbs Cayenne Pepper.
- 6000 lbs Butter.
- 2000 lbs Rice.
- 500 lbs Salt.
- 700 lbs Ceylon Tea.
- 10 Boxes Sunlight Soap.
- 240 Cases Canned Milk "Canada First".
- 600 lbs Ginger.
- 500 lbs. Pickles.
- 1,000 small bottles Hair Oil.
- 200 Bottles Vinegar.
- 20 Tons Kindling Wood.
- 1 Box Matches.
- 200 lbs. Tobacco.
- 200 Quarts Molasses.
- Toilet Paper.
- Kerosene Oil.
- Toilet Soap.

This now takes us to the 22nd instant. The whole of this day was spent in loading the provisions, and while this was being done, permission was granted the shore committee to proceed on board and see their friends. As soon as it became known that the

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ship would leave. a large number of Hindus applied to this office for permission to visit their friends on board; but this was refused. We, however, made arrangements to take out ten or twelve men at a time on board the Immigration Launch, and from the deck of this boat to permit them to hold conversations with their friends on the deck of the "Komagata Maru". The Secretary of the Sikh Temple, a man named Mitt Singh, made application for permission to take two Hindu women on board to see the one Hindu woman passenger on the "Komagata Maru". This permission was first granted by Mr. Reid; but when the women were brought in the evening, he refused to permit them on board, with the result that Mitt Singh was so enraged, that when he went out on the Immigration Launch, he jumped on board the "Komagata Maru" from our launch without leave from the Officer-in-Charge. This action of his at once stopped any further Hindus being taken out to see their friends. I spoke to Mr. Reid on this matter, and advised him to permit of a continuation of the arrangements, and took out with me twelve men on the Immigration Launch to see their friends.

On my way to the "Komagata Maru" with these men, I saw Mr. Gwyther returning from the ship on our other launch. He had a letter in his hand for Mr. Reid, and on enquiry, said it was in regard to some provisions. I told him to make over the letter to Mr. Reid, while I went out to the boat. While I was engaged in looking after the Hindus talking to their friends, Mr. Reid drew up in a launch and requested my presence at once. I left this boat, and joined Mr. Reid, when I learnt that he had received a letter from Gurdit Singh making further demands for provisions viz:-

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for some eggs, chicken and sheep, and that on receipt of this letter, he had called out the Militia, inasmuch as he was not going to stand for any further parleying with these people. He asked me to accompany him for a conference with Commander Hoes e, whom he intended to instruct to give the "Komagata Maru" fifteen minutes to pull up her anchor, and get out. I told Mr. Reid that he could go on board and hold a conference with the Commander; but that I was going up to the office, and would at once arrange to send for and call into consultation on this new demand, The Hon: Mr. Martin Burrill, Mr. Stevens, our Solicitors and the Solicitors for the Hindus. Within about half an hour, I was able to collect these gentlemen in our office, and having got them together, I informed them that the Militia had been called out by Mr. Reid in view of some further demand by the Hindus; but that before taking drastic action, I had advised Mr. Reid to hold a consultation with them.

The question of the new demand was thoroughly gone into on Mr. Reid's arrival, and Mr. McNeill, Solicitor for the Hindus, stated that there would be no difficulty in meeting the situation. This being about 11 p.m. the chickens and sheep were not obtainable; but he would undertake to give them three cases of eggs as soon as it could be arranged to get them from a grocery.

Within half an hour or so the eggs were taken on board, as well as certain members of the shore committee. Before permitting the committee on board, I obtained from H. Rahim, who appeared to be in charge of all the arrangements, a letter to the effect that all shore Hindus would be taken off the boat at 4 a.m. of the 23rd inst, and that the ship would weigh anchor and sail at 5 a.m.

At 3.55 a.m., I personally called at the gangway of the "Komagata Maru" on our launch, and as arranged, took away the shore

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committee members, including Rahim, there were altogether 13 men. It might be noted here, that these men had practically spent the whole night on the "Komagata Maru", and what transpired on the boat, I am not in a position to say.

At 4.55 a.m., the pilot was put on board by a launch from the "Rainbow", and at 5.10 a.m. the "Komagata Maru" weighed anchor and left the Harbour, followed by the tug "Sea Lion" and H.M.C.S. "Rainbow".

At the request of Rahim, we granted him permission to sell tickets to any Hindus who wished to return to India on the "Komagata Maru". Early in the day, Rahim stated that there would be 7 or 8 men; but when the "Komagata Maru" sailed, she did not take any passengers from among the shore Hindus, as those that had made arrangements to leave would not come through with the fare; but were under the impression that they would be permitted to take passage free of charge in view of the work they intended to do in India.

I am enclosing you herewith one dozen copies of photographs in connection with the "Komagata Maru" and her passengers.

I shall be pleased for you to let me have two copies of each of these photographs, and if you consider it advisable, send the necessary number to all parties concerned, including Mr. Wallinger. I have made notations on back of each.

This closes the enterprise of Gurdit Singh and his 355 countrymen. I regret that there should have been any clash between the police and these men, resulting in injury to both sides. Happily however, no firearms were used by the Police or our Officers.

Reverting to the attempt made by the Police, I feel it but right to acquaint you of the fact that this matter was undertaken against my wishes and advice.

I was aware that the Police intended to try and give

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Captain Yamamoto possession of his ship; but I did not think they would undertake to do so in the night.

As soon as I learnt that the Police and Specials were going out in the night, I at once advised Mr. Reid against such an undertaking at night.

I went so far as to make certain proposals in writing which I delivered to Messrs Stevens and Reid, advising them to defer the night attack.

In conclusion, I wish to say that I exerted all my power and ability to try and to avert bloodshed, and am glad to say, that beyond the incident of the 19th instant, which was not under our control, the Immigration Department have come out of the situation without the use of force, loss of life or bloodshed, on either side. This affair will cost the Canadian Government a very large sum of money.

Yours obediently,

W. C. HOPKINSON

W. W. Cory Esq., C.M.G.

Deputy Minister of the Interior,

Ottawa.

(Copy for the information of W. D. Scott Esq.,
Superintendent of Immigration,
Ottawa.)