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

In your reply refer to No. 587

CONFIDENTIAL

Immigration Branch

Department of the Interior

Canada

128. Extract from W.C. Hopkinson to W.W. Cory

WCH/DMAH.

Vancouver, B.C. 15th September

1914.

CONFIDENTIAL

Sir,

On the 6th inst, Mr. Reid, the Immigration Agent, sent Mr. Scott, the Superintendent of Immigration, the following night-lettergram:-

"Bala Singh our Hindu Interpreter after attending funeral of friend named Arjan Singh who was murdered on the 3rd inst which came right on top of the death of another friend named Harnam Singh also believed to be murdered, went to a meeting in the Sikh Temple last evening and within twenty minutes of his arrival according to several witnesses, drew two revolvers and first shot Bhag Singh, President of the Khalsa Diwan Society, seated close to him and then indiscriminately turned the weapons on the audience composed of about fifty or sixty of his countrymen. These injured are prominent members of the Sikh Temple agitators and total eight men - seven in Hospital. Bhag Singh died this afternoon, two others dangerously wounded and likely to succumb - apparently the recent Komagata Maru incident and the animosity to have him by members of his community for assisting Government, coupled with the murder of his two close friends, unbalanced his mind. He has made no statement - Hopkinson, Gwyther and myself have assisted the Police in this investigation. Chief of Police is of opinion that some drastic action should be taken to round up those connected with seditionary movement and house to house search made for arms, ammunition and incriminating documents. He is diffident to do so in case his action here leads to any trouble in India or the Imperial Authorities question the wisdom of such action, wishes to be advised by Government that he will not jeopardise situation by such action.

Bhag Singh was one of the charterers Komagata Maru and at time of incident was endeavouring secure arms and ammunition Sumas. Subsequently held there our request. Harnam Singh and Arjan Singh former murdered by cutting throat and latter by revolver were both friends of Bala Singh and this Department. Chief apprehensive that our white officers are also likely to be assassinated."

It is with regret that I have to advise you of the particulars of this affair, which have come to my knowledge during an investigation conducted by me on the night of the 5th inst and the day of the 6th.

On the 5th inst., at about 8 p.m., I was in the Department Store of David Spencer. Mrs. Hopkinson was with me at the time, and in calling up my residence by 'phone in connection with some private matter, was informed by her brother that some seven East Indians were shot in the Sikh Temple on 2nd Avenue West, and that the Police wanted me at once to come down and assist them.

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On receipt of this information, I at once left for the Police Sub-Station "C" where I arrived about 8-25 p.m. On my arrival, I found Bela Singh, our extra interpreter, in the custody of the Police - Mr. Reid, the Agent, was there at the time. I inquired for the Inspector-in-Charge, and was informed that he was in the Temple. Bela Singh recognised me; but did not say anything. I left this place within two minutes in company with Asst. Interpreter Gwyther and proceeded to the Temple, where on arrival, we found several East Indians in the hall of the Temple in charge of several Police Officers.

I was requested by the Police to ascertain particulars from these men - I took their names and advised the Police to have them removed to the Central Police Station and detain them there.

From the Temple I proceeded to the Hospital, and on arrival there found the under-noted East Indians with injuries admitted to this institution:-

(1) Bhag Singh, (2) Bedan Singh (3) Uttam Singh, (4) Dalip Singh, (5) Jowalla Singh (6) Bhattan Singh (7) Labh Singh.

The first three were not in a position to make a detailed statement, owing to the serious nature of their wounds. I examined the remaining men, and took down the statement of each in writing. Before I could take the statement of the fourth man, my presence was necessary at the bedside of Bedan to assist in securing his ante-mortem statement - Bhag Singh's ante-mortem statement was also recorded.

From the statements made by the injured men in Hospital, it would appear that about 35 or 40 of them attended the cremation ceremony of the late Arjan Singh, shot by a revolver in the hands of one Ram Singh on the 3rd inst. Bela Singh also attended the ceremony. About 7-30 in the evening, a religious service was being held in the Temple, there were about 45 or 50 people present.

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About 7.35 p.m., Bela Singh entered the Temple, and after making his obeisance to the altar, he went and sat down near the platform and about four feet behind Bhag Singh.

About 20 or 25 minutes after Bela sat down and appeared to be joining in the religious incantations, he suddenly stood up with a revolver in each hand and started shooting. From several witnesses it appears that Bela first shot Bhag Singh; as soon as the first shot was fired, everyone scampered for shelter, whereon Bela started shooting indiscriminately. Altogether 8 East Indians received injuries, including Sohan Lal. This man was hit in the leg, and managed to get away to his home where the Police found him. He was not treated in the Hospital; but at the Police Station, where together with 18 others, he was detained as a material witness.

I returned home at 3.30 a.m., and the following day visited the Hospital in company with the Police at 1 p.m., where Bela Singh was also taken for identification purposes. Both Bhag Singh and Sohan Singh, now deceased, before they expired, identified Bela Singh as the man responsible for the shooting and that he shot both of them.

Bela was asked if he had any questions to put to the dying men, and stated he was too sick of mind. Bela was taken back to the station and locked up.

I visited the Police Headquarters at 3.30 p.m. of the same afternoon and examined some twelve witnesses, and had their statements written down. Mr. Gwyther examined about 6, and did the same. The inquest was held on Wednesday afternoon.

Bela Singh has made no statement, and his act appears to be that of a man whose mind was unbalanced. In offering the following suggestions as causes that might have led up to this affair, I do not wish for a moment to tender any excuse for the deed that has

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been committed.

It was a great shock to me, in view of the confidence I had in Bela Singh - His work for the Department has been all that could be expected of him. There is no doubt, and this is borne out by several incidents, that Bela Singh's life was in danger. The lives of his friends have also been threatened. Bela, with the few that remained with him, were ostracised by the community.

The first definite fact of danger came in the finding of the body of Harnam Singh with his throat cut. Harnam was a close friend of Bela, and at the inquest the Jury brought in an open verdict. Bela and his friends are still of the opinion that Harnam was murdered.

Following the tragedy of Harnam Singh, whose remains were found on the 31st August after being missed since the 17th of the same month, another friend named Arjan Singh, was shot and killed on the 3rd inst., by a Hindu named Ram Singh, a member of the Temple Committee.

In this case, the witnesses, only four in number, swore that Arjan was killed accidentally, however, the fact remains that Arjan had expressed his intention of making enquiries into Harnam Singh's death.

Mr. Reid informs me, that on the evening before the shooting at the Temple, Bela Singh complained to him of the fact that his life had been threatened that day.

Mr. Reid will write the Department in connection with the whole situation.

So far, I have adopted an attitude of absolute impartiality, and have assisted those injured in every way possible, and intend

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to continue on this stand.

The jury inquiring into the deaths of Bhag Singh and
Badan Singh, returned a verdict of "Death by gunshot wounds in
both cases at the hands of Bela Singh.

Yours obediently,

W. C. HOPKINSON

W. W. Gory Esq., C.M.G.

Deputy Minister of the Interior.

Ottawa.