

Special

187

CONVERSATION BETWEEN H. H. STEVENS, M. P. AND DR. RUGHUNATH SINGH, HELD AT THE OFFICE OF THE CANADIAN IMMIGRATION DEPARTMENT VANCOUVER, BRITISH COLUMBIA, SATURDAY, JUNE 18, 1914, AT 4 P. M., WITH INSPECTOR HOPKINSON ALSO PRESENT AT THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE CONVERSATION.

MR. HOPKINSON (to Dr. Singh) Mr. Stevens is the Member of Parliament for the City of Vancouver, and as the representative of the Government - in that capacity - he wants to learn from you whatever you may be willing and able to inform him as to the treatment of the passengers.

DR. SINGH: (to Mr. Stevens) It might be that you put some technical questions that I may not understand.

MR. STEVENS: I want to have a chat with you about conditions on board the vessel. Mr. Borden and the Government at Ottawa are very anxious for me to learn something about it.

DR. SINGH: Ask me any questions you like and I will answer as well as I can.

MR. STEVENS: I want to be able to advise Mr. Borden first hand you understand just what conditions are now. They are telling me that you were a little bit afraid of your personal safety?

DR. SINGH: Yes, I was afraid of my safety.

MR. STEVENS: Some of them threatened you out there did they?

DR. SINGH: Yes, Gurdit Singh himself threatened me. He threatened me that they were going to kill me if I am going to come ashore and go near the gangway - because they understood that I was allowed to come ashore and make some purchases of medicine - they think that I have spoken something against them - the conditions of the ship.

MR. STEVENS: Most of these men Doctor are more or less ignorant I suppose, are they, and don't understand ~~they~~ the necessity of your coming ashore and then they suspect you and then Gurdit Singh I suppose lets them think that?

DR. SINGH: Yes, they are most of them, and do not understand. The real reason is another - Gurdit Singh is against me because I have been telling to the passengers what he has been doing to the passengers - he did not deal with them properly. I have been disclosing his secrets, - what he was going to do with them, so he was against me.

MR. STEVENS: Is it true that Gurdit Singh rules the ship - some of them tell me that for instance he puts them in irons?

DR. SINGH: Oh yes quite true that he rules the ship. He tried to put a man in orons once. He puts a guard on anybody's room if he thinks they are against him. That is what he did with me - he put five or six men in front of my cabin and about five or six on the top.

MR. STEVENS: All the time did he put a guard? You weren't allowed to go up on deck - on the upper deck?

DR. SINGH: I was not permitted to go on the roof.

MR. STEVENS: That is something he has no right to do - he had no right to do that.

DR. SINGH: This was for six or seven days. There was another man, Bhan Singh, who did not come before the Court of Inquiry. He has been prevented by Gurdit Singh not to come.

MR. STEVENS: Where did he pick him up Doctor - at Hong Kong?

DR. SINGH: He came from India. He wanted to come to land here as a student, because he is a master in a school there. He had been in Hong Kong for some time because

- 3 -

no Company issues tickets to Canada.

MR. STEVENS: Did you come from India to Hong Kong?

DR. SINGH: I came direct from Hong Kong.

MR. STEVENS: Your regiment was stationed at Hong Kong - what is your regiment, Doctor?

DR. SINGH: I have been at Hong Kong for three years - my regiment was stationed there. It is the Eighth Rajputs.

MR. STEVENS: About these men on board - the whole lot of them - most of them came from Hong Kong didn't they?

DR. SINGH: Not from Hong Kong some of them.

MR. STEVENS: Some of them came across from Manila to Hong Kong?

DR. SINGH: Some from Hong Kong, some from Shanghai and some from Manila - some of them had been in Hong Kong who came from India for the purpose of coming here who were not allowed to come because the Companies did not issue tickets. All the others come from Hong Kong, Shanghai and Manila - some from Yokohama.

MR. STEVENS: They are not really the best of the Hindu people are they? I know the Hindu people pretty well - I think a lot of them - most of them on board appeared to me to be pretty ordinary people - ordinary Hindus - you know, the ordinary working type.

DR. SINGH: That I cannot say. Most of them have been serving in the militia before and they had left the service. Of the men who came from Shanghai and Hong Kong practically all were serving in the police, or watchmen, or something like that.

MR. STEVENS: I see. Well now how did Gurdit Singh arrange this - did he take their money in Hong Kong for the passage - I want to try and get at the truth you see - as I understand it they paid him.

DR. SINGH: Oh yes.

MR. STEVENS: I heard that you know. I want to try and get the

- 4 -

truth of the thing.

DR. SINGH: But they are not going to publish it in the papers?

MR. STEVENS: This is for my own information and to advise Mr. Borden. It's a long way to Ottawa - 3,000 miles - and so hard to get accurate information.

DR. SINGH: There was a man who had been - I have heard that he had been deported or something - B. L. Verma - he has been here in Canada.

MR. STEVENS: He was deported and he started the expedition?

DR. SINGH: I do not know exactly - he went from Canada. I have heard from Mr. Hopkinson that there are one or two warrants against him if he comes back. He went to Hong Kong and he tried to get the ship. He got the ship from some German Company, but the people did not believe in him - he was a young man and he had no money apparently - not a single cent - so he could not succeed. Gurdit Singh was at Singapore, in the Malay States - a contractor over there - he heard of this thing and came over. The old man looks to be respectable so the people believe in him and then he got some pass books for the ship - he made his own.

MR. STEVENS: He got out tickets which he sold to these passengers - \$200.00 each - did they pay \$200.00 from Hong Kong?

DR. SINGH: \$200 each, that is the return journey - and more than that - twenty pounds means \$210 Hong Kong money - sometimes \$206 - sometimes \$215.

MR. STEVENS: That would be \$200 of Chinese money - \$100 of our money.

DR. SINGH: Chinese money.

MR. STEVENS: You paid too much.

DR. SINGH: The real fare is only \$50 - \$55 or \$50 - that was really return journey fare. To get the ship he had been

- 5 -

selling his tickets before he got the ship. He got about \$10,000 before any arrangement for the ship was made so far as I know.

MR. STEVENS: Did he have a regular printed ticket?

DR. SINGH: Yes he had printed tickets.

MR. STEVENS: Printed in Hindustani or in English?

DR. SINGH: In English, but he did not give the passenger certificates or get the charter party signed until he had \$10,000, and somebody informed the police and he was taken into custody for selling tickets without having any right to do so.

MR. STEVENS: He got \$10,000 before he got the charter signed?

DR. SINGH: Fortunately somebody informed the police and the police came to the Sikh Temple at Hong Kong - he had been to the Ship's Company on the very day to get the charter party signed - as soon as he got to the Sikh Temple he was taken into custody, and released on bail and the case went before the Magistrate. There were 376 passengers.

MR. STEVENS: Then let's say that would be \$40,000 he collected that way \$40,000 of Canadian Money.

DR. SINGH: Yes - \$40,000. of Canadian money - about \$80,000 of Hong Kong money. He was to pay \$66,000 for the ship's charter - he has paid only \$44,000.

MR. STEVENS: These fellows ashore paid the rest. There is some talk of him depositing money in Japan - do you suppose he did that - is that in addition to their tickets - money was entrusted to him by the passengers?

DR. SINGH: Money entrusted to him by the passengers.

MR. STEVENS: He collected money in Japan - how did he collect that?

DR. SINGH: Everybody was given a receipt that the money would be paid any time required.

-6-

MR. STEVENS: He got them to sign this document. How much money did he collect in this way?

DR. SINGH: About fourteen or fifteen thousand pounds Hong Kong currency- at Moji- he collected money there. He would tell the passengers that if they deposited the money with him he would give it back as soon as they wanted it- and he did not give anybody a cent. He got them to sign a paper that they won't ask for their money to be paid back unless Gurdit Singh gets ashore in Vancouver- that is a trick.

MR. STEVENS: Tell me this Doctor, do you think that any large portion of these men are satisfied now to go back

DR. SINGH: No.

MR. STEVENS: They all want to land do they and do they understand that they are violating the Immigration Law by coming in the way they did- I suppose they were led entirely by Gurdit Singh?

DR. SINGH: Yes. They did not know before they were not allowed to land- they are not anxious to go back they are anxious to land. They did not know at all at Hong Kong that they would not be landed here.

MR. STEVENS: They are afraid to do anything really because of the attitude of the larger number who are faithful to Gurdit Singh and believe in him.

DR. SINGH: That I do not know. I am not sure what Gurdit Singh told to the passengers. I cannot give any proof of that. One man has got telegrams sent by Gurdit Singh that when he left Shanghai or Yokohama that he has got permission from the Canadian Government to come here and all the men who go in his ship- all would be landed- in future no one would be allowed to come. That is what led the passengers to come- had they known that they would not be landed they would not have come.

MR. STEVENS: You brought your wife and child here are they

- 7 -

all right?

DR. SINGH: Yes. He even told them he would pay \$200 from his own pocket. Everybody fears him - but they think that you have treated them badly the men do. They blame so because Gurdit Singh and his men tell them that you should feed them. Legally he is the man who must feed them - he has \$200 - return fare. I know that a rough calculation of the sums he received and expended shows about \$20,000 Hong Kong money that he may have kept. Nobody is given a certificate of what he has done with the money - whether he has expended it really or not. He showed he has \$10,000 to the Immigration officers.

MR. STEVENS: Of course he tells them that we are supposed to feed them, and therefore they blame us, - he has no money with him has he?

DR. SINGH: No he has not got it here.

MR. STEVENS: He tells them that we are supposed to feed them and therefore they blame us, is that it?

DR. SINGH: They do not understand. I have tried to make them understand but they are against me.

MR. STEVENS: They are not all against you are they - are they kind of split up - two factions - some that are satisfied and some that are not?

DR. SINGH: There are two men who are all right but on account of a large party being on the other side they cannot do anything and they don't want to do anything, - they are afraid to do anything. All the men practically believe in him though they know in their minds what he has done to them.

MR. STEVENS: Is there anything else that we can do for you - for your wife and child - to make them comfortable and

- 8 -

and all right - you are all right now are you?

DR. SINGH: Yes I am all right, but I have only two months leave. I am overstaying my leave without getting any leave from the Government. I wrote when I reached here that I am held on the ship - to extend leave - I did not get any reply. When I go back I want a written order from you that I was detained by you.

MR. STEVENS: We will be very pleased to do that or give you anything else - what we want to know is that you have been treated as fairly and as reasonably as we could treat you. I wanted to know that you are satisfied, and I think if the men on board really understood that they would be very much more satisfied too wouldn't they?

DR. SINGH: Yes.

MR. STEVENS: I understand the difficulty is to get around this man Gurdit Singh. He has got some very strong control over their minds.

DR. SINGH: I know that. If he was not in the ship there would be no trouble I think. Some of the men are his own men - he has promised to pay them something - I cannot say - I have no proofs as to that but I think so. But this statement that you are taking --

MR. STEVENS: This is made for myself and Mr. Borden. These local Hindus are sending out all manner of erroneous statements you see, and they send these statements to Eastern Canada and I want to get before Mr. Borden as nearly as I can the facts and you are kindly giving them to me and I shall send it to him you see, so that he will know - that is my whole object. This has nothing to do with the Immigration Department at all.

DR. SINGH: I don't want to make enemy of the Indians here.

- 9 -

MR. STEVENS: I don't know whether there is anything else I want to ask you or not. What is the condition of the men on board? Are they in fair health?

DR. SINGH: Some of them are getting bronchitis now. They were all right when they reached here.

MR. STEVENS: Will that be at all serious do you think?

DR. SINGH: I cannot say when it will get serious. One or two men have other trouble but the rest have only bronchitis - that is due to the climate of this place.

MR. STEVENS: Damp and cool.

DR. SINGH: And they don't keep the ship's condition sanitary - their own part - if one man has bronchitis or a cough he is going to spit all over the boat.

MR. STEVENS: Does Gurdit Singh make any effort to keep the ship clean and in shape - he directs everything and then orders the Captain around as far as I can see.

DR. SINGH: Yes I think so.

MR. STEVENS: Yet he won't take any responsibility about feeding them or keeping them healthy?

DR. SINGH: Do. He says that is not his duty. I have told him many times to Gurdit Singh to clean the ship and keep it clean. He says it is the work of the sailors - he is not going to do that. He does not think that anybody has got any authority to say to him anything. He is above everybody - he has got his little island over there and he rules that. He does not take any responsibility - he says he has been kept as a prisoner by the Government and the Government must pay.

MR. STEVENS: Daljit Singh, where does he come from?

DR. SINGH: He comes from India. He had been in Hong Kong for some time before sailing - I don't know the number of days - he had been for some time - one or two months.

MR. STEVENS: Well we will see that you get your letter Doctor

- 10 -

or anything else which you want that we can do for you - we will do it - within the law of course - and I wish you would let me know if things are not satisfactory.

DR. SINGH: I am satisfied with everything. I only fear for the military law under which I am. If I get a certificate that I have been held by the Immigration authorities and was not allowed to land or return it will be settled up all right.

MR. STEVENS: We will get you that and if necessary we will get it right from the Premier of Canada - we will get it from the best source that is possible.

DR. SINGH: That would be much better I think.

MR. STEVENS: Now that is all I wanted to ask - I wanted to get the story first hand as far as I could from you. Now tell me this, the Captain tells us he daren't get up steam - that the men on board crowd around him with sticks and won't let him.

DR. SINGH: I think so - it happened once before too.

MR. STEVENS: Does the Captain seem to be afraid of them?

DR. SINGH: He must be. They are a small crew and there are 350 of them. I think he does not fear much when he is here, but he has to deal with them the whole way from here to Japan.

MR. STEVENS: Do you think there would be any trouble when they once got out on the way?

DR. SINGH: I don't know - I cannot say - I do not think there would be any trouble.

MR. STEVENS: They couldn't run the ship if they made any trouble. Do you think they would go peaceably if provisions were put on board?

DR. SINGH: They do not want to go back - they will try their best to land.

- 11 -

MR. STEVENS: Do you think they will go to the extent of fighting?

DR. SINGH: They have not got anything to fight with, - nothing but clubs - they cannot row the boats even - they will try I think - I suppose so. They hold meetings every night - I was not allowed to go in there - I do not know - they may be proposing something to do.

MR. STEVENS: Well I am very sorry -- I think that is all I can ask you today Doctor, and let me know if there is anything further I can do.

CONVERSATION BETWEEN H. H. STEVENS, M. P. AND DR. RUGHUNATH SINGH, HELD AT THE OFFICE OF THE CANADIAN IMMIGRATION DEPARTMENT VANCOUVER, BRITISH COLUMBIA, SATURDAY, JUNE 18, 1914, AT 4 P. M., WITH INSPECTOR HOPKINSON ALSO PRESENT AT THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE CONVERSATION.

MR. HOPKINSON (to Dr. Singh) Mr. Stevens is the Member of Parliament for the City of Vancouver, and as the representative of the Government - in that capacity - he wants to learn from you whatever you may be willing and able to inform him as to the treatment of the passengers.

DR. SINGH: (to Mr. Stevens) It might be that you put some technical questions that I may not understand.

MR. STEVENS: I want to have a chat with you about conditions on board the vessel. Mr. Borden and the Government at Ottawa are very anxious for me to learn something about it.

DR. SINGH: Ask me any questions you like and I will answer as well as I can.

MR. STEVENS: I want to be able to advise Mr. Borden first hand you understand just what conditions are now. They are telling me that you were a little bit afraid of your personal safety?

DR. SINGH: Yes, I was afraid of my safety.

MR. STEVENS: Some of them threatened you out there did they?

DR. SINGH: Yes, Gurdit Singh himself threatened me. He threatened me that they were going to kill me if I am going to come ashore and go near the gangway - because they understood that I was allowed to come ashore and make some purchases of medicine - they think that I have spoken something against them - the conditions of the ship.

MR. STEVENS: Most of these men Doctor are more or less ignorant I suppose, are they, and don't understand ~~they~~ the necessity of your coming ashore and then they suspect you and then Gurdit Singh I suppose lets them think that?

DR. SINGH: Yes, they are most of them, and do not understand. The real reason is another - Gurdit Singh is against me because I have been telling to the passengers what he has been doing to the passengers - he did not deal with them properly. I have been disclosing his secrets, - what he was going to do with them, so he was against me.

MR. STEVENS: Is it true that Gurdit Singh rules the ship - some of them tell me that for instance he puts them in irons?

DR. SINGH: Oh yes quite true that he rules the ship. He tried to put a man in orons once. He puts a guard on anybody's room if he thinks they are against him. That is what he did with me - he put five or six men in front of my cabin and about five or six on the top.

MR. STEVENS: All the time did he put a guard? You weren't allowed to go up on deck - on the upper deck?

DR. SINGH: I was not permitted to go on the roof.

MR. STEVENS: That is something he has no right to do - he had no right to do that.

DR. SINGH: This was for six or seven days. There was another man, Bhan Singh, who did not come before the Court of Inquiry. He has been prevented by Gurdit Singh not to come.

MR. STEVENS: Where did he pick him up Doctor - at Hong Kong?

DR. SINGH: He came from India. He wanted to come to land here as a student, because he is a master in a school there. He had been in Hong Kong for some time because

- 3 -

no Company issues tickets to Canada.

MR. STEVENS: Did you come from India to Hong Kong?

DR. SINGH: I came direct from Hong Kong.

MR. STEVENS: Your regiment was stationed at Hong Kong - what is your regiment, Doctor?

DR. SINGH: I have been at Hong Kong for three years - my regiment was stationed there. It is the Eighth Rajputs.

MR. STEVENS: About these men on board - the whole lot of them - most of them came from Hong Kong didn't they?

DR. SINGH: Not from Hong Kong some of them.

MR. STEVENS: Some of them came across from Manila to Hong Kong?

DR. SINGH: Some from Hong Kong, some from Shanghai and some from Manila - some of them had been in Hong Kong who came from India for the purpose of coming here who were not allowed to come because the Companies did not issue tickets. All the others come from Hong Kong, Shanghai and Manila - some from Yokohama.

MR. STEVENS: They are not really the best of the Hindu people are they? I know the Hindu people pretty well - I think a lot of them - most of them on board appeared to me to be pretty ordinary people - ordinary Hindus - you know, the ordinary working type.

DR. SINGH: That I cannot say. Most of them have been serving in the militia before and they had left the service. Of the men who came from Shanghai and Hong Kong practically all were serving in the police, or watchmen, or something like that.

MR. STEVENS: I see. Well now how did Gurdit Singh arrange this - did he take their money in Hong Kong for the passage - I want to try and get at the truth you see - as I understand it they paid him.

DR. SINGH: Oh yes.

MR. STEVENS: I heard that you know. I want to try and get the

- 4 -

truth of the thing.

DR. SINGH: But they are not going to publish it in the papers?

MR. STEVENS: This is for my own information and to advise Mr. Borden. It's a long way to Ottawa - 3,000 miles - and so hard to get accurate information.

DR. SINGH: There was a man who had been - I have heard that he had been deported or something - B. L. Verma - he has been here in Canada.

MR. STEVENS: He was deported and he started the expedition?

DR. SINGH: I do not know exactly - he went from Canada. I have heard from Mr. Hopkinson that there are one or two warrants against him if he comes back. He went to Hong Kong and he tried to get the ship. He got the ship from some German Company, but the people did not believe in him - he was a young man and he had no money apparently - not a single cent - so he could not succeed. Gurdit Singh was at Singapore, in the Malay States - a contractor over there - he heard of this thing and came over. The old man looks to be respectable so the people believe in him and then he got some pass books for the ship - he made his own.

MR. STEVENS: He got out tickets which he sold to these passengers - \$200.00 each - did they pay \$200.00 from Hong Kong?

DR. SINGH: \$200 each, that is the return journey - and more than that - twenty pounds means \$210 Hong Kong money - sometimes \$206 - sometimes \$215.

MR. STEVENS: That would be \$200 of Chinese money - \$100 of our money.

DR. SINGH: Chinese money.

MR. STEVENS: You paid too much.

DR. SINGH: The real fare is only \$50 - \$55 or \$50 - that was really return journey fare. To get the ship he had been

- 5 -

selling his tickets before he got the ship. He got about \$10,000 before any arrangement for the ship was made so far as I know.

MR. STEVENS: Did he have a regular printed ticket?

DR. SINGH: Yes he had printed tickets.

MR. STEVENS: Printed in Hindustani or in English?

DR. SINGH: In English, but he did not give the passenger certificates or get the charter party signed until he had \$10,000, and somebody informed the police and he was taken into custody for selling tickets without having any right to do so.

MR. STEVENS: He got \$10,000 before he got the charter signed?

DR. SINGH: Fortunately somebody informed the police and the police came to the Sikh Temple at Hong Kong - he had been to the Ship's Company on the very day to get the charter party signed - as soon as he got to the Sikh Temple he was taken into custody, and released on bail and the case went before the Magistrate. There were 376 passengers.

MR. STEVENS: Then let's say that would be \$40,000 he collected that way \$40,000 of Canadian Money.

DR. SINGH: Yes - \$40,000. of Canadian money - about \$80,000 of Hong Kong money. He was to pay \$66,000 for the ship's charter - he has paid only \$44,000.

MR. STEVENS: These fellows ashore paid the rest. There is some talk of him depositing money in Japan - do you suppose he did that - is that in addition to their tickets - money was entrusted to him by the passengers?

DR. SINGH: Money entrusted to him by the passengers.

MR. STEVENS: He collected money in Japan - how did he collect that?

DR. SINGH: Everybody was given a receipt that the money would be paid any time required.

- 6 -

MR. STEVENS: He got them to sign this document. ~~that they~~

~~wanted~~ How much money did he collect in this way?

DR. SINGH: About fourteen or fifteen thousand pounds Hong Kong currency - at Moji - he collected money there. He would tell the passengers that if they deposited the money with him he would give it back as soon as they wanted it - and he did not give anybody a cent. He got them to sign a paper that they won't ask for their money to be paid back unless Gurdit Singh gets ashore in Vancouver - that is a trick.

MR. STEVENS: Tell me this Doctor, do you think that any large portion of these men are satisfied now to go back?

DR. SINGH: No.

MR. STEVENS: They all want to land do they and do they understand that they are violating the Immigration Law by coming in the way they did - I suppose they were led entirely by Gurdit Singh?

DR. SINGH: Yes. They did not know before they were not allowed to land - they are not anxious to go back they are anxious to land. They did not know at all at Hong Kong that they would not be landed here.

MR. STEVENS: They are afraid to do anything really because of the attitude of the larger number who are faithful to Gurdit Singh and believe in him.

DR. SINGH: That I do not know. I am not sure what Gurdit Singh told to the passengers. I cannot give any proof of that. One man has got telegrams sent by Gurdit Singh that when he left Shanghai or Yokohama that he has got permission from the Canadian Government to come here and all the men who go in his ship - all would be landed - in future no one would be allowed to come. That is what led the passengers to come - had they known that they would not be landed they would not have come.

MR. STEVENS: You brought your wife and child here, are they

- 7 -

all right?

DR. SINGH: Yes. He even told them he would pay \$200 from his own pocket. Everybody fears him - but they think that you have treated them badly the men do. They blame so because Gurdit Singh and his men tell them that you should feed them. Legally he is the man who must feed them - he has \$200 - return fare. I know that a rough calculation of the sums he received and expended shows about \$20,000 Hong Kong money that he may have kept. Nobody is given a certificate of what he has done with the money - whether he has expended it really or not. He showed he has \$10,000 to the Immigration officers.

MR. STEVENS: Of course he tells them that we are supposed to feed them, and therefore they blame us, - he has no money with him has he?

DR. SINGH: No he has not got it here.

MR. STEVENS: He tells them that we are supposed to feed them and therefore they blame us, is that it?

DR. SINGH: They do not understand. I have tried to make them understand but they are against me.

MR. STEVENS: They are not all against you are they - are they kind of split up - two factions - some that are satisfied and some that are not?

DR. SINGH: There are two men who are all right but on account of a large party being on the other side they cannot do anything and they don't want to do anything, - they are afraid to do anything. All the men practically believe in him though they know in their minds what he has done to them.

MR. STEVENS: Is there anything else that we can do for you - for your wife and child - to make them comfortable and

- 8 -

and all right - you are all right now are you?

DR. SINGH: Yes I am all right, but I have only two months leave. I am overstaying my leave without getting any leave from the Government. I wrote when I reached here that I am held on the ship - to extend leave - I did not get any reply. When I go back I want a written order from you that I was detained by you.

MR. STEVENS: We will be very pleased to do that or give you anything else - what we want to know is that you have been treated as fairly and as reasonably as we could treat you. I wanted to know that you are satisfied, and I think if the men on board really understood that they would be very much more satisfied too wouldn't they?

DR. SINGH: Yes.

MR. STEVENS: I understand the difficulty is to get around this man Gurdit Singh. He has got some very strong control over their minds.

DR. SINGH: I know that. If he was not in the ship there would be no trouble I think. Some of the men are his own men - he has promised to pay them something - I cannot say - I have no proofs as to that but I think so. But this statement that you are taking --

MR. STEVENS: This is made for myself and Mr. Borden. These local Hindus are sending out all manner of erroneous statements you see, and they send these statements to Eastern Canada and I want to get before Mr. Borden as nearly as I can the facts and you are kindly giving them to me and I shall send it to him you see, so that he will know - that is my whole object. This has nothing to do with the Immigration Department at all.

DR. SINGH: I don't want to make enemy of the Indians here.

- 9 -

MR. STEVENS: I don't know whether there is anything else I want to ask you or not. What is the condition of the men on board? Are they in fair health?

DR. SINGH: Some of them are getting bronchitis now. They were all right when they reached here.

MR. STEVENS: Will that be at all serious do you think?

DR. SINGH: I cannot say when it will get serious. One or two men have other trouble but the rest have only bronchitis - that is due to the climate of this place.

MR. STEVENS: Damp and cool.

DR. SINGH: And they don't keep the ship's condition sanitary - their own part - if one man has bronchitis or a cough he is going to spit all over the boat.

MR. STEVENS: Does Gurdit Singh make any effort to keep the ship clean and in shape - he directs everything and then orders the Captain around as far as I can see.

DR. SINGH: Yes I think so.

MR. STEVENS: Yet he won't take any responsibility about feeding them or keeping them healthy?

DR. SINGH: Do. He says that is not his duty. I have told him many times to Gurdit Singh to clean the ship and keep it clean. He says it is the work of the sailors - he is not going to do that. He does not think that anybody has got any authority to say to him anything. He is above everybody - he has got his little island over there and he rules that. He does not take any responsibility - he says he has been kept as a prisoner by the Government and the Government must pay.

MR. STEVENS: Daljit Singh, where does he come from?

DR. SINGH: He comes from India. He had been in Hong Kong for some time before sailing - I don't know the number of days - he had been for some time - one or two months.

MR. STEVENS: Well we will see that you get your letter Doctor

- 10 -

or anything else which you want that we can do for you - we will do it - within the law of course - and I wish you would let me know if things are not satisfactory.

DR. SINGH: I am satisfied with everything. I only fear for the military law under which I am. If I get a certificate that I have been held by the Immigration authorities and was not allowed to land or return it will be settled up all right.

MR. STEVENS: We will get you that and if necessary we will get it right from the Premier of Canada - we will get it from the best source that is possible.

DR. SINGH: That would be much better I think.

MR. STEVENS: Now that is all I wanted to ask - I wanted to get the story first hand as far as I could from you. Now tell me this, the Captain tells us he daren't get up steam - that the men on board crowd around him with sticks and won't let him.

DR. SINGH: I think so - it happened once before too.

MR. STEVENS: Does the Captain seem to be afraid of them?

DR. SINGH: He must be. They are a small crew and there are 350 of them. I think he does not fear much when he is here, but he has to deal with them the whole way from here to Japan.

MR. STEVENS: Do you think there would be any trouble when they once got out on the way?

DR. SINGH: I don't know - I cannot say - I do not think there would be any trouble.

MR. STEVENS: They couldn't run the ship if they made any trouble. Do you think they would go peaceably if provisions were put on board?

DR. SINGH: They do not want to go back - they will try their best to land.

- 11 -

MR. STEVENS: Do you think they will go to the extent of fighting?

DR. SINGH: They have not got anything to fight with, - nothing but clubs - they cannot row the boats even - they will try I think - I suppose so. They hold meetings every night - I was not allowed to go in there - I do not know - they may be proposing something to do.

MR. STEVENS: Well I am very sorry -- I think that is all I can ask you today Doctor, and let me know if there is anything further I can do.

CONVERSATION BETWEEN H. H. STEVENS, M. P. AND DR. RUGHUNATH SINGH, HELD AT THE OFFICE OF THE CANADIAN IMMIGRATION DEPARTMENT VANCOUVER, BRITISH COLUMBIA, SATURDAY, JUNE 18, 1914, AT 4 P. M., WITH INSPECTOR HOPKINSON ALSO PRESENT AT THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE CONVERSATION.

MR. HOPKINSON (to Dr. Singh) Mr. Stevens is the Member of Parliament for the City of Vancouver, and as the representative of the Government - in that capacity - he wants to learn from you whatever you may be willing and able to inform ~~him~~ as to the treatment of the passengers.

DR. SINGH: (to Mr. Stevens) It might be that you put some technical questions that I may not understand.

MR. STEVENS: I want to have a chat with you about conditions on board the vessel. Mr. Borden and the Government at Ottawa are very anxious for me to learn something about it.

DR. SINGH: Ask me any questions you like and I will answer as well as I can.

MR. STEVENS: I want to be able to advise Mr. Borden first hand you understand just what conditions are now. They are telling me that you were a little bit afraid of your personal safety?

DR. SINGH: Yes, I was afraid of my safety.

MR. STEVENS: Some of them threatened you out there did they?

DR. SINGH: Yes, Gurdit Singh himself threatened me. He threatened me that they were going to kill me if I am going to come ashore and go near the gangway - because they understood that I was allowed to come ashore and make some purchases of medicine - they think that I have spoken something against them - the conditions of the ship.

MR. STEVENS: Most of these men Doctor are more or less ignorant I suppose, are they, and don't understand ~~they~~ the necessity of your coming ashore and then they suspect you and then Gurdit Singh I suppose lets them think that?

DR. SINGH: Yes, they are most of them, and do not understand. The real reason is another - Gurdit Singh is against me because I have been telling to the passengers what he has been doing to the passengers - he did not deal with them properly. I have been disclosing his secrets, - what he was going to do with them, so he was against me.

MR. STEVENS: Is it true that Gurdit Singh rules the ship - some of them tell me that for instance he puts them in irons?

DR. SINGH: Oh yes quite true that he rules the ship. He tried to put a man in orons once. He puts a guard on anybody's room if he thinks they are against him. That is what he did with me - he put five or six men in front of my cabin and about five or six on the top.

MR. STEVENS: All the time did he put a guard? You weren't allowed to go up on deck - on the upper deck?

DR. SINGH: I was not permitted to go on the roof.

MR. STEVENS: That is something he has no right to do - he had no right to do that.

DR. SINGH: This was for six or seven days. There was another man, Bhan Singh, who did not come before the Court of Inquiry. He has been prevented by Gurdit Singh not to come.

MR. STEVENS: Where did he pick him up Doctor - at Hong Kong?

DR. SINGH: He came from India. He wanted to come to land here as a student, because he is a master in a school there. He had been in Hong Kong for some time because

- 3 -

no Company issues tickets to Canada.

MR. STEVENS: Did you come from India to Hong Kong?

DR. SINGH: I came direct from Hong Kong.

MR. STEVENS: Your regiment was stationed at Hong Kong - what is your regiment, Doctor?

DR. SINGH: I have been at Hong Kong for three years - my regiment was stationed there. It is the Eighth Rajputs.

MR. STEVENS: About these men on board - the whole lot of them - most of them came from Hong Kong didn't they?

DR. SINGH: Not from Hong Kong some of them.

MR. STEVENS: Some of them came across from Manila to Hong Kong?

DR. SINGH: Some from Hong Kong, some from Shanghai and some from Manila - some of them had been in Hong Kong who came from India for the purpose of coming here who were not allowed to come because the Companies did not issue tickets. All the others come from Hong Kong, Shanghai and Manila - some from Yokohama.

MR. STEVENS: They are not really the best of the Hindu people are they? I know the Hindu people pretty well - I think a lot of them - most of them on board appeared to me to be pretty ordinary people - ordinary Hindus - you know, the ordinary working type.

DR. SINGH: That I cannot say. Most of them have been serving in the militia before and they had left the service. Of the men who came from Shanghai and Hong Kong practically all were serving in the police, or watchmen, or something like that.

MR. STEVENS: I see. Well now how did Gurdit Singh arrange this - did he take their money in Hong Kong for the passage - I want to try and get at the truth you see - as I understand it they paid him.

DR. SINGH: Oh yes.

MR. STEVENS: I heard that you know. I want to try and get the

- 4 -

truth of the thing.

DR. SINGH: But they are not going to publish it in the papers?

MR. STEVENS: This is for my own information and to advise Mr. Borden. It's a long way to Ottawa - 3,000 miles - and so hard to get accurate information.

DR. SINGH: There was a man who had been - I have heard that he had been deported or something - B. L. Verma - he has been here in Canada.

MR. STEVENS: He was deported and he started the expedition?

DR. SINGH: I do not know exactly - he went from Canada. I have heard from Mr. Hopkinson that there are one or two warrants against him if he comes back. He went to Hong Kong and he tried to get the ship. He got the ship from some German Company, but the people did not believe in him - he was a young man and he had no money apparently - not a single cent - so he could not succeed. Gurdit Singh was at Singapore, in the Malay States - a contractor over there - he heard of this thing and came over. The old man looks to be respectable so the people believe in him and then he got some pass books for the ship - he made his own.

MR. STEVENS: He got out tickets which he sold to these passengers - \$200.00 each - did they pay \$200.00 from Hong Kong?

DR. SINGH: \$200 each, that is the return journey - and more than that - twenty pounds means \$210 Hong Kong money - sometimes \$206 - sometimes \$215.

MR. STEVENS: That would be \$200 of Chinese money - \$100 of our money.

DR. SINGH: Chinese money.

MR. STEVENS: You paid too much.

DR. SINGH: The real fare is only \$50 - \$55 or \$50 - that was really return journey fare. To get the ship he had been

- 5 -

selling his tickets before he got the ship. He got about \$10,000 before any arrangement for the ship was made so far as I know.

MR. STEVENS: Did he have a regular printed ticket?

DR. SINGH: Yes he had printed tickets.

MR. STEVENS: Printed in Hindustani or in English?

DR. SINGH: In English, but he did not give the passenger certificates or get the charter party signed until he had \$10,000, and somebody informed the police and he was taken into custody for selling tickets without having any right to do so.

MR. STEVENS: He got \$10,000 before he got the charter signed?

DR. SINGH: Fortunately somebody informed the police and the police came to the Sikh Temple at Hong Kong - he had been to the Ship's Company on the very day to get the charter party signed - as soon as he got to the Sikh Temple he was taken into custody, and released on bail and the case went before the Magistrate. There were 376 passengers.

MR. STEVENS: Then let's say that would be \$40,000 he collected that way \$40,000 of Canadian Money.

DR. SINGH: Yes - \$40,000. of Canadian money - about \$80,000 of Hong Kong money. He was to pay \$66,000 for the ship's charter - he has paid only \$44,000.

MR. STEVENS: These fellows ashore paid the rest. There is some talk of him depositing money in Japan - do you suppose he did that - is that in addition to their tickets - money was entrusted to him by the passengers?

DR. SINGH: Money entrusted to him by the passengers.

MR. STEVENS: He collected money in Japan - how did he collect that?

DR. SINGH: Everybody was given a receipt that the money would be paid any time required.

- 6 -

MR. STEVENS: He got them to sign this document. ~~that they~~

~~would~~ How much money did he collect in this way?

DR. SINGH: About fourteen or fifteen thousand pounds Hong Kong currency - at Moji - he collected money there. He would tell the passengers that if they deposited the money with him he would give it back as soon as they wanted it - and he did not give anybody a cent. He got them to sign a paper that they won't ask for their money to be paid back unless Gurdit Singh gets ashore in Vancouver - that is a trick.

MR. STEVENS: Tell me this Doctor, do you think that any large portion of these men are satisfied now to go back?

DR. SINGH: No.

MR. STEVENS: They all want to land do they and do they understand that they are violating the Immigration Law by coming in the way they did - I suppose they were led entirely by Gurdit Singh?

DR. SINGH: Yes. They did not know before they were not allowed to land - they are not anxious to go back they are anxious to land. They did not know at all at Hong Kong that they would not be landed here.

MR. STEVENS: They are afraid to do anything really because of the attitude of the larger number who are faithful to Gurdit Singh and believe in him.

DR. SINGH: That I do not know. I am not sure what Gurdit Singh told to the passengers. I cannot give any proof of that. One man has got telegrams sent by Gurdit Singh that when he left Shanghai or Yokohama that he has got permission from the Canadian Government to come here and all the men who go in his ship - all would be landed - in future no one would be allowed to come. That is what led the passengers to come - had they known that they would not be landed they would not have come.

MR. STEVENS: You brought your wife and child here, are they

- 7 -

all right?

DR. SINGH: Yes. He even told them he would pay \$200 from his own pocket. Everybody fears him - but they think that you have treated them badly the men do. They blame so because Gurdit Singh and his men tell them that you should feed them. Legally he is the man who must feed them - he has \$200 - return fare. I know that a rough calculation of the sums he received and expended shows about \$20,000 Hong Kong money that he may have kept. Nobody is given a certificate of what he has done with the money - whether he has expended it really or not. He showed he has \$10,000 to the Immigration officers.

MR. STEVENS: Of course he tells them that we are supposed to feed them, and therefore they blame us, - he has no money with him has he?

DR. SINGH: No he has not got it here.

MR. STEVENS: He tells them that we are supposed to feed them and therefore they blame us, is that it?

DR. SINGH: They do not understand. I have tried to make them understand but they are against me.

MR. STEVENS: They are not all against you are they - are they kind of split up - two factions - some that are satisfied and some that are not?

DR. SINGH: There are two men who are all right but on account of a large party being on the other side they cannot do anything and they don't want to do anything, - they are afraid to do anything. All the men practically believe in him though they know in their minds what he has done to them.

MR. STEVENS: Is there anything else that we can do for you - for your wife and child - to make them comfortable and

- 8 -

and all right - you are all right now are you?

DR. SINGH: Yes I am all right, but I have only two months leave. I am overstaying my leave without getting any leave from the Government. I wrote when I reached here that I am held on the ship - to extend leave - I did not get any reply. When I go back I want a written order from you that I was detained by you.

MR. STEVENS: We will be very pleased to do that or give you anything else - what we want to know is that you have been treated as fairly and as reasonably as we could treat you. I wanted to know that you are satisfied, and I think if the men on board really understood that they would be very much more satisfied too wouldn't they?

DR. SINGH: Yes.

MR. STEVENS: I understand the difficulty is to get around this man Gurdit Singh. He has got some very strong control over their minds.

DR. SINGH: I know that. If he was not in the ship there would be no trouble I think. Some of the men are his own men - he has promised to pay them something - I cannot say - I have no proofs as to that but I think so. But this statement that you are taking --

MR. STEVENS: This is made for myself and Mr. Borden. These local Hindus are sending out all manner of erroneous statements you see, and they send these statements to Eastern Canada and I want to get before Mr. Borden as nearly as I can the facts and you are kindly giving them to me and I shall send it to him you see, so that he will know - that is my whole object. This has nothing to do with the Immigration Department at all.

DR. SINGH: I don't want to make enemy of the Indians here.

- 9 -

MR. STEVENS: I don't know whether there is anything else I want to ask you or not. What is the condition of the men on board? Are they in fair health?

DR. SINGH: Some of them are getting bronchitis now. They were all right when they reached here.

MR. STEVENS: Will that be at all serious do you think?

DR. SINGH: I cannot say when it will get serious. One or two men have other trouble but the rest have only bronchitis - that is due to the climate of this place.

MR. STEVENS: Damp and cool.

DR. SINGH: And they don't keep the ship's condition sanitary - their own part - if one man has bronchitis or a cough he is going to spit all over the boat.

MR. STEVENS: Does Gurdit Singh make any effort to keep the ship clean and in shape - he directs everything and then orders the Captain around as far as I can see.

DR. SINGH: Yes I think so.

MR. STEVENS: Yet he won't take any responsibility about feeding them or keeping them healthy?

DR. SINGH: Do. He says that is not his duty. I have told him many times to Gurdit Singh to clean the ship and keep it clean. He says it is the work of the sailors - he is not going to do that. He does not think that anybody has got any authority to say to him anything. He is above everybody - he has got his little island over there and he rules that. He does not take any responsibility - he says he has been kept as a prisoner by the Government and the Government must pay.

MR. STEVENS: Daljit Singh, where does he come from?

DR. SINGH: He comes from India. He had been in Hong Kong for some time before sailing - I don't know the number of days - he had been for some time - one or two months.

MR. STEVENS: Well we will see that you get your letter Doctor

- 10 -

or anything else which you want that we can do for you - we will do it - within the law of course - and I wish you would let me know if things are not satisfactory.

DR. SINGH: I am satisfied with everything. I only fear for the military law under which I am. If I get a certificate that I have been held by the Immigration authorities and was not allowed to land or return it will be settled up all right.

MR. STEVENS: We will get you that and if necessary we will get it right from the Premier of Canada - we will get it from the best source that is possible.

DR. SINGH: That would be much better I think.

MR. STEVENS: Now that is all I wanted to ask - I wanted to get the story first hand as far as I could from you. Now tell me this, the Captain tells us he daren't get up steam - that the men on board crowd around him with sticks and won't let him.

DR. SINGH: I think so - it happened once before too.

MR. STEVENS: Does the Captain seem to be afraid of them?

DR. SINGH: He must be. They are a small crew and there are 350 of them. I think he does not fear much when he is here, but he has to deal with them the whole way from here to Japan.

MR. STEVENS: Do you think there would be any trouble when they once got out on the way?

DR. SINGH: I don't know - I cannot say - I do not think there would be any trouble.

MR. STEVENS: They couldn't run the ship if they made any trouble. Do you think they would go peaceably if provisions were put on board?

DR. SINGH: They do not want to go back - they will try their best to land.

- 11 -

MR. STEVENS: Do you think they will go to the extent of fighting?

DR. SINGH: They have not got anything to fight with, - nothing but clubs - they cannot row the boats even - they will try I think - I suppose so. They hold meetings every night - I was not allowed to go in there - I do not know - they may be proposing something to do.

MR. STEVENS: Well I am very sorry -- I think that is all I can ask you today Doctor, and let me know if there is anything further I can do.