

DETAILS OF THAT KOMAGATA RIOT

When Hindus of the Trouble Ship Attacked Officers in India.

Official Report of the Government of Bengal Published by London Times.

The London Times just to hand contains a detailed account of the riot of the Komagata Maru Hindus on their return to India, short reference to which has already been received by cable. The Times publishes the following official communique issued by the Government of Bengal on October 1:

“Passengers on the Komagata Maru who were being repatriated by the government of India arrived in Hooghley last Saturday evening. The government of Bengal, having been asked to arranged for the safe conduct, at the expense of the government, to the Punjab, and so a special steamer at Budge Budge yesterday morning. A number of Punjab officers and magistrate of twenty-four parganas with others had met the steamer, and after persuasion prevailed upon the men to land; this was effected about 2 p. m., but they were still unwilling to believe the assurance of the magistrate that they were to travel direct to Punjab. The Magistrate had power under Ordinance No. 5 of 1914 to compel them to follow his instructions, but scrupulously refrained from exercising powers till he found that the men refused to enter the train, and were determined to march by road to Calcutta.

“He then produced the ordinance and explained its terms to the leader but in complete disregard of his orders they proceeded on the Calcutta road, and he had not sufficient force to prevent them. Troops and police were then requested to stop them, and they were stopped when they had gone three or four miles. Sir William Duke, who had proceeded with troops, met them there taxed their leader with a breach of the ordinance, and told them that what

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they had to say would be considered at Budge Budge, whither they must return. On this they went back without further demur, followed by police, and at a distance, by troops.

First, a special train had already gone off with about sixty men, who most willingly had already gone on, and Sir. W. Duke preceded the party to Budge Budge, and procured a second special. He was actually inside the station making final arrangements when the following occurrence took place:

“As soon as the party arrived at the station just after dusk, Mr. Donald called for the leader with the intention of explaining the position. The men suddenly became very excited, and without warning a hot revolver fire was opened on the police and officers, while others charged them with staves knives, and even one or two swords. The revolver fire was returned by four out of the posse of sergeants, who alone were armed with revolvers. In a few seconds Sargent(?) Major Eastwood was brought to the ground, shot in the back. Sir Frederic Halliday was wounded in the foot; Mr. Petrie was shot through both legs and arm; Mr. Humphreys was seriously injured; Mr. Lomax, assistant traffic superintendent of the Eastern Bengal Railway, was fatally shot through the body, and several sergeants were badly wounded in the head.

“Troops were behind, and the affray was partly screened from them by railway fencing; also police and officers were at first mixed up with their assailants. It was only when this front was cleared, although that may not have taken many seconds, that troops could be ordered to fire; even when they did so the rioters made two or three further rushes, while one party occupied some shops from which they maintained steady fire, and here the majority of their casualties took place—sixteen rioters killed, as well as two innocent onlookers.

In addition to the casualties above mentioned the Punjab Police had one killed and six injured. The Punjabis scattered through the surrounding villages, a certain number surrendering to the police and picquets. An extensive combined sweeping movement is being made by the military and

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police to collect the rest, and up to an early hour this morning thirty-two prisoners had been made.

“The Government of Bengal deeply deplore the lost(Sic) of life which has occurred. They were acting in pursuance of openly declared intention of sending to their homes the passengers who had suffered so much in pocket by the voyages of this ship. They were aware of the existence of a certain amount of strong political discontent amongst some of the passengers, and in full concurrence with the Government of the Punjab considered that the return to their native country should be prompt and direct. No one had the smallest suspicion that any of the party were armed for desperate and unprovoked attacks on British officers.”