

Chief Secretary

I came back from Bombay by air on Monday afternoon (Aug.19) and managed with some difficulty to reach the Presidency College at about 6 p.m. The Eden Hindu Hostel with about 200 inmates was barrickaded. I heard a general account of happenings of the last few days from the Hostel Supdt., Prof. S. N. Majumdar and the boys. There were several attacks on the Hostel and attempts to set it on fire which were defeated by day and night vigilance. One house on the west of the College grounds had been set on fire; but the women and children somehow managed to escape and were helped to get refuge in the Cal. University building by our boys. Other families in the neighbourhood were also helped in the same way. A large number of persons had also been given shelter in the Hostel itself and were still living there. Food position was difficult but not acute. Additional supplies had been secured on Monday morning. Electricity, water supply and flushing arrangements were in working order.

The Supdt., and the boys were evidently in a state of tension and were apprehending attacks from the North-west corner of the College grounds which touches a number of Muslim houses in contact with the Kalabagan Bustee. I was told that raids and attacks had mostly originated from this quarter. I must mention here that the North-west portion of the College grounds has been a plague spot for a long time. In the past on many occasions hooligans and ruffians scaled the boundary wall on the north or the west and entered the college ground. During the short time of my principalship of about a year I had occasion to report more than once of theft and burglary in the college buildings facing this corner and also two cases of fire in the north-west portion of the college ground both of which were caused by hooligans in this neighbourhood.

I am told by the Hostel Superintendent and the boys that persons were often seen sitting on the boundary wall, and on at least one occasion on Saturday I am informed a large number of persons were observed to come down into the college ground but were chased back by college bearers. On Monday night I slept in the Hindu Hostel. The boys maintained a continuous watch from the Hostel from where the whole of the north-west portion of the college ground can be clearly seen. On more than one occasion shadowy figures near and on the walls were pointed out to me. Except for occasional shoutings there was however no disturbance on Monday night 19/20 August.

I spent the whole of Tuesday in the Presidency College and had my meals in the Hostel. In the evening when I was sitting in the Hostel Library talking with some of the boys some one came to the window from outside and spoke to some of the boys stating that news had been received of arrangements being made in the north-west corner (near Kalabagan Bustee) for a raid on the College, the Hostel, and Calcutta University Building, during the night. In view of the disturbed condition and also of the fact that the College Laboratories contained much valuable apparatus and stores I decided to sleep in the Principal's room in the south-east corner of the first floor of the main building. At about 8-30 p.m. I went there and found that about 50 college bearers, peons, gardeners etc. had collected with about 10 women folks. All along the bearers had guarded the buildings by themselves, small groups staying at night in the Hare School and the Baker Building with the major portion in the main building.

I went to bed at about 10 p.m. on Tuesday night (20/21 August) but was awakened by loud cries and shouts at about quarter to eleven. On coming out on the south verandah I heard shouts of 'Allah ho Akbar', 'Jai Hind' and 'Vandemataram'. I walked round and asked our men to remain quiet. They told me that they had seen people near and on the boundary walls in the north-west and had also heard shouts of incitement to attack and great commotion near Pulin Babu's house adjoining the college compound. A military car was patrolling in the College Street. Things quietened down after a little while and again I went to bed.

A little later, at about 00-10 a.m. (20/21 August) I got up on hearing loud shouts. Basanta, a night watchman, came running into the Principal's room and reported that he had seen a big man carrying some kind of weapon in his hand near the Chemistry Honours shed within the College quadrangle, a little to the east of the ARTS LIBRARY. Basanta came running to inform Baban Singh, another night watchman, and saw two other persons in the College ground near the Astronomical Observatory to the west of the ARTS LIBRARY.

Just about that time a military car had come to the college gate. I went down and opened the gate and spoke to the officer-in-charge, Mr. Woodroffe, who had requested the gate to be opened and had asked me to come down as there were loud cries and shoutings in the neighbourhood.

While I was coming down some of the bearers told me that some women had fled from Pulin Babu's house and were being given shelter in the College. I asked them to bring the refugees to the first floor. While talking to Woodroffe, a young man, (who I believe, is a brother or relation of Pulin Babu) came to meet us at the college gate saying that Pulin Babu and his children were in great danger. He was evidently in a state of great fright and almost on the point of collapsing. I briefly explained the general positions to Woodroffe and told him personally that my impression was that the situation was greatly a matter of strained nerves. However in view of the fact that women had actually taken refuge and a young man was imploring us to help his relations I suggested to Woodroffe to go through the college grounds and enquire. He asked the young man to show the way and went in the military car leaving two pickets near the college gate to maintain contact. I stayed with them and asked all our men to remain absolutely quiet. While the Military car was in the college ground I went upstairs as I heard the women refugees were in a very bad condition. One young woman came out of the room and asked me to rescue her father and other relations and also two babies. She was evidently in practically a hysterical fit. While coming down the stairs I heard two or three rounds of fire, evidently from the military car. Just at this time Pulin Babu and a few others came to the main building to take shelter. The military car had also come back to the college gate and Mr. Woodroffe stated that he had to fire three rounds in order to get Pulin Babu and others away. I then spoke to Woodroffe about the babies and I went round with Woodroffe to the Hare School and Baker buildings but they were not there. It later appeared that they had been deposited with the Military pickets and they were brought back safely in a Military car quite cheerful and smiling. Pulin Babu stated that a gang had attacked his house. He also told me that he had handed over his gun to the officer-in-charge of the military car. From the college building I could see a great deal of commotion and shouting near Pulin Babu's house, and from what Woodroffe told me I think they had to fire out of sheer necessity.

Things quieted down and I sent Pulin Babu and his family to the first floor. I then arranged with Woodroffe to close the college gate, and to shout for them in case there was further trouble and also to sound the college gong. I came back to my room at ~~11~~ 01-05, and noted down briefly what had happened. Went to bed at 01-20.

At about 02-00 I was again called down by Woodroffe. He enquired about the licence of the gun, and I sent for Pulin Babu, who appears to be an employee of the Geological Survey. He mentioned the collecting of spears and swords in the corner adjoining his house. At my suggestion Woodroffe with one or two of his men together with two young men - relations of the Geological Survey employee - went to the north-west portion of the College ground. Two shots were fired as they found a ~~xxxxx~~ crowd as Woodroffe told me on coming back.

Woodroffe and the military car then withdrew from College grounds. It was arranged that our men should keep watch. If the gang scaled the college wall and came into the compound we would open the main gate and shout for the military car which would ~~it~~ drive straight into the college grounds. I gave detailed instructions to our men. They must keep watch and inform me if anybody came into the college compound. They must not shout and they must wait until I gave them the order to call for the military. The decision must be made by me and not by them whether we should call for military help. I finished the note at 02-33 and went to bed.

I was called up again 03-20 by two Police Inspectors, one Sergeant and Mr. Woodroffe. One Inspector enquired how Pulin Babu came to be within the college compound. I briefly explained and told them that I had a short note written out which they could see. They said they would see in the morning (which they have not done upto Wednesday 12-50 afternoon which appears to be rather surprising). I then retired. The Inspectors asked Pulin Babu what had happened and were making enquiries when I came away. I finished writing notes at 03-40.

Nothing further happened after this. Early in the morning I was awakened by the same young woman who had spoken about her babies. She told me that Pulin Babu had been arrested by the Police and I must do something. I told her that I could not possibly do anything then and she must wait. She was apt to be hysterical, and I had to be rather curt in sending her away.

I got up about 9 o'clock and found the young man who had given us information about Pulin Babu waiting for me. He asked me to arrange for Pulin Babu's bail. I told him that was none of my business. He then asked me to arrange for food etc. for the women and children. I asked him to take his family away to

some refugee camp, and spoke to our men to inform the Marwari Relief Society. I understand that the family was removed a little later.

I have been practically without telephone connection since Monday and in the general break down I have not been able to communicate with the Secretariat. I typed myself the earlier portion of this note, but Saral Babu (my steno) having come I am now arranging to send this report typed by him. While dictating, Mr. D. N. Bhattacharyya of 3, Bhawani Dutt Lane and Mr. Hasnad of 7, Bhawani Dutt Lane came to see me at about 12 noon and informed me that they were working on behalf of a joint Hindu-Muslim Peace Committee (United Peace Committee) which had been formed recently. They requested me that I should stop slogans being shouted by the College bearers to which I readily agreed. I have assured them of my full co-operation in their efforts. It is a pity that they did not know of my presence in the college yesterday and also that they did not contact the Hostel Superintendent.

Both Mr. Bhattacharyya and Mr. Hasnad suggested that a Military or some kind of picket should be posted at the north-west corner of the college compound. I strongly support this recommendation. As a matter of fact in my diary written last night I had noted that a picket must be posted here.

I must note here that much valuable apparatus, stores and books are housed in the college buildings which it would be impossible to replace. There is a great deal of Government records in the Statistical Laboratory. The Chemistry Department also is extremely vulnerable to fire.

No officer except myself has been on duty in the college building or compound so far. From what I have seen on Monday and Tuesday nights, and in view of the prevailing state of tension in the neighbourhood, I have no hesitation in requesting Government to place suitable Military or Police Picket in the north west corner of the College for the protection of College Building and property and also the Statistical Laboratory. I should also request arrangements being made, if possible, telephonic communication being maintained with No.B.B.875 in the main building and B.B.1422 in the Science Laboratory.

Sd/- P. C. Mahalanobis

Memo No.2477 dated 2.9.46.

Copy to the D.P.I.

Sd/- G. D. Bhar
2.9.46.