The Odyssey of a Revolutionary Hindu

Arrested in London, he tried to escape to Marseille. - The maritime police apprehend him on the quays and deliver him to British Authorities. — We interpellate the House about this incident.

An arrest made recently in our port—hushed up to avoid any surrounding publicity, that thereby it may pass unmarked—will be the negation of French character and any defense of individual liberty if not brought to light. In other words, Thursday, July 8 in the morning, a Hindu student, arrested in London on charges of complicity in murder in India, was apprehended in French territory by the maritime police as he escaped by swimming from the Morea, aboard which he was travelling guarded by British detectives in charge of his transfer to Bombay.

First the Daily Mail and then the Humanite has reported this unprecedented event that will resound in the Gallery of the House where it will be carried by citizens Cadenat and Jaurès; our investigation confirms the unfortunate facts of this event.

THE STORY OF AN HINDU AGITATOR

First, let us understand this young man whose arrest has made so much outcry:

Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, age twenty-eight years, belongs to the highest class of Hindus, the Brahmins, to which the priests belong. Born in Nasik, near Bombay, he was educated at its University and at an early age, became noted for his dislike of British domination.

In 1906 he expatriated to London to take the bar examination. Remarkably gifted, he easily won a degree which was not, however, granted to him as his ideas were too progressive.
Already, this young man has written articles, deemed rebellious, in local newspapers and after having translated the *Life of Mazzini* into his native language, he had the daring to publish a *History of the War of 1857*, which is prohibited in India. After his rejection at the bar, he was being closely monitored, until such a time as he could be stopped on various pretexts. So he left for Paris to visit his countrymen, some fifty of them, for the most part in the pearl trade, and all of whom hold him in high esteem.

Savarkar was charged with making a seditious speech in 1906 in Nasik, and being an accomplice to the murder of the collector (prefect) Jackson, who was killed on December 23, 1909 at Nasik. The young student was living in London for three years when the crime was committed but informers claimed that he had sent twenty-five revolvers there, one of which was the murder weapon. Savarkar, with the penalty of death by hanging hovering over his head, suffered the agony of a trial lasting four months starting from March 13, and despite the intelligent and selfless efforts of his always loyal friends, he was sentenced by the trial judge's instruction to be transferred to Bombay to receive final judgment. Two appeals remained fruitless and the student whose brother, too, was punished with a life sentence of hard labor for a political crime, was taken aboard the *Morea*.

**The EVASION AND RECOVERY**

The ship, owned by the Peninsular Oriental Co. was moored at pier C in the morning of Thursday, July 8 last, when the Hindu student escaped. Damodar Savarkar had expressed the wish, immediately granted, to take a shower. The policemen took him to the bath-room. They guarded the entrance; but the porthole was open. Without hesitation, the student deftly squeezed through and jumped into the water ... French water. Swimming, he reached the dock, once his feet were firmly planted on the ground he fled, wearing only shorts and a lightweight jersey. Thus clad, he passed the shed, crossed the tracks, the platform and reached the dry docks. This is where, when physically exhausted, he was joined by the maritime police and the British police aboard who had kept up with him, and
then brought back to the Morea, which must be reaching Aden today.

This astounding escape was immediately followed by cries of “Stop thief!” chasing behind the prisoner. Soon, hundreds of dockhands and the curious assisted in catching him whom they took for a thief. The truth came out only when the Daily Mail and the Humanite publicized this fact.

**IS THE ARREST ARBITRARY?**

It was not expected that we question this arrest; the information would certainly have been refused to us by the Sergeant and the maritime police involved in it. Even so, we were able to find out the truth of this incident that can, now, no longer be refuted by the police.

The maritime police are present upon the arrival of every foreign vessel, if requisitioned by the Consul of the government to which it belongs. Placed at the disposal of the captain by the administration of the District of Marseilles, these maritime police are responsible for preventing any desertion of the crew and their actions aboard.

In this case, they saw a man getting away and assumed he was a sailor or a native taxi driver, especially after hearing the yells of "Stop thief!" dogging the heels of the fugitive. Not for a moment after they had caught Savarkar, accompanied by the British police, did they think they had committed an illegality. On the contrary, confident that they had followed instructions promptly and were within their right in the performance of their duty, they handed over the student.

However, Damodar Savarkar, being pursued for political offenses, was on French soil and should have first been taken to a French magistrate, better informed about the thorny issues of international law than mere police. It was not thought of, it seems, and there arose from the Hindu Colony in Paris an uproar regarding this incident; immediately they went to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and, after having submitted the matter to Mr. Pichon, asked citizens Jaures and Cadenat to intercede.
THE OFFICIAL INVESTIGATION

We have good reason to believe that as soon as the information was officially requested from Marseilles, it confirmed some details of our investigation. Overall, of this we are certain, that the materiality of the fact is recognized. They do merely quibble, passing the buck from one to the other, a continuance that nothing seems to mitigate. It is therefore to be hoped that before a dispute comes to magnify this untoward affair, happily the first of its kind, a measure of clemency shall intervene. It will be unanimously approved in the two friendly countries and also by the freedom lovers.

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