

We are making out a full and detailed report but it takes time to collate the enormous amount of information which we have collected. The trouble started early on the morning of the 16th and both sites were equally responsible. The Hindus started putting up barricades at Tala Bridge and Belgachia Bridge and other places to prevent Muslims processions coming into the town and Muslims goondas went round forcing Hindus to close their shops. As previously mentioned in my D.O. of the 15th the air was electric and this caused crowds to gather, lathis were produced and in no time North Calcutta was a scene of mob riot. By 1100 hours there were brick bat fights all over North Calcutta. During the first few hours the students were taking a fairly prominent part, but by the afternoon they had realised that it was very much more than an ordinary rowdy such as they had been indulging in for the past 9 months. The student element then cleared out and went to their houses and homes and did little more than defend themselves and their families if attacked.

By late in the afternoon the situation changed and the persons involved on both sides were gwallahs, rickshaw pullers, teashop wallahs, pan berri wallahs, cart pullers, cart men, goondas of the worst type. Soon after midnight on the 16/17th these gangs fought out the most desperate battles, murder and butchery of a worst type were carried on in the side lanes and byways of North Calcutta. Round Vivekananda Road/ Central Ave., crossing about 50 Hindu Behari rickshaw pullers were caught in a cul-de-sac and butchered. Further up Central Ave., round the temple which stands in the middle, a party of some 30 Mohamedans were killed. It was during the period midnight 16/17th and 0700 hours on the 17th that most of the casualties occurred. All the roads in the affected areas were red with bricks.

Our patrols were out but due to the tremendous fights that were going on it was impossible for us to force our way into the areas in which the main killings were taking place.

The police opened fire in Harrison Road at about 1100 hours on 16 Aug 1946, 2 rounds of buck shot and Barnes and Smith emptied their pistols into the crowd. The crowd dispersed, formed up in Bow Bazaar St and a fight started between the Hindus in Bow Bazaar St. and the Muslims coming up from Lower Circular Rd. I was there at the time and the police finally dispersed the crowd with tear gas. By 1200 hours there were fights in every street and alley from Sealdah to Shambazar. Eastern Command Intelligence Centre jeeps dispersed some of these crowds and stopped the fights without firing, but as soon as we had gone the fights started again. By 1400 hours on the 16th Government were considering calling out troops but the police had only fired the above mentioned number of rounds.

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3. Apart from a few senior officers, the police themselves were unwilling to open fire and I don't blame them. If they had done so and succeeded in quelling the outbreak, but mind you they would only have succeeded if they had fired quickly and a very large number of rounds, they would have been blamed for unnecessary firing.

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I don't say that the whole riot could have been quelled by the Calcutta Police without the aid of military support, but I am confident that if all ranks had known that they would be supported to the hilt, nothing like the state of affairs which occurred would have taken place. There is no doubt that this situation will be put right in the very near future and I trust it will be an example to other provinces.

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5. One of the most interesting points was that Europeans were not attacked. No bricks were thrown at army lorries except in stray cases, or when they took an active part in dispersing mobs. In fact, both sides were only too pleased to offer advice as to how to act and beat up the other side.

6. From the time the riots started every little blacksmith was working like mad in his house manufacturing spears, rods and knives. The iron rods used in reinforced concrete building works were all stolen and sharpened at both ends, and the butchery that these crude weapons did has got to be seen to be believed. Men, women and children were slaughtered by both sides indiscriminately and when Mullick Bazar was burnt three Hindu children were thrown into the flames.

7. The result of this riot has been complete mistrust between the two communities. Most of the Babus dare not go to their offices because they have to pass through Muslim areas, and they are afraid of being stabbed. Though the city is quiet there are still stabbing cases and both sides are very very frightened. The trams are running today (22nd). There are buses and taxis and the city is fast returning to normal. We have cleaned up practically all the corpses, D.D.T. has been sprayed and everything possible has been done.

8. There is a lot of talk in the town that the army should have been called in in aid of civil power earlier during the riot. Personally, I think that it would have been a mistake if this had been done. It is the duty of the police to first try and quell a disturbance and only when they had expended all the power they have, then should the troops be called in.

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11. There is hardly a person in Calcutta who has a good word for Suhrawardy, respectable Muslims included. For years he has been known as "The king of the goondas" and my own private opinion is that he fully anticipated what was going to happen, and allowed it to work itself up, and probably organised the disturbance with his goonda gangs as this type of individual has to receive compensation every now and again. It is difficult to estimate the number of casualties but I should say it is somewhere in the region of 2 to 3 thousand at least. There were corpses all over North Calcutta, they were in the river, canals, side lanes, in fact, everywhere. The number of shops looted and burnt must be somewhere in the region of 2 to 3 thousand. I personally think that the killings of both sides were fifty, fifty, or if anything, more Muslims than Hindus, but damage financially has been much greater to the Hindus than to the Muslims.