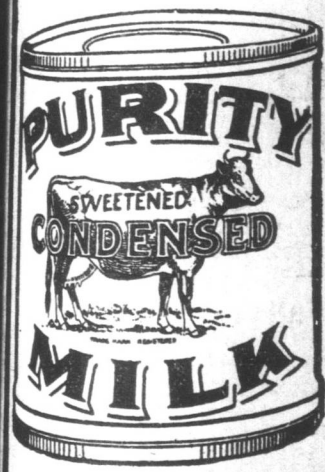




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### Saklatvala Focuses the Red Peril

COMMUNIST M. P. BARRED BY AMERICA HAS GAINED COVERT PUBLICITY.

By JOHN CARTER.

Before Secretary of State Kellogg's speech at the Inter-Parliamentary Union at Washington last week, Mr. Saklatvala had laid his plans for the future. "I am not a rich man," he said, "but as soon as I heard that the Inter-Parliamentary Conference was to be held in Washington I said: 'This is my chance.' At any rate, in lieu of the propaganda which he admitted, his desire to spread, the Communist M. P. has obtained newspaper publicity on the grand scale and has secured for the American State Department a case somewhat analogous to the famous Karolyi case of last year.

The State Department cites one of Saklatvala's speeches (made outside the House of Commons), in which he said: "I am going to America as a friend of the working classes. British imperialism ought to crumble in the dust. I am out to work for a revolution and for the day when the workers will control the whole world. But before this comes you will have to face cold steel."

Saklatvala has been debarred by the American Government on the strength of the immigration laws, which definitely exclude an avowed revolutionary. The act supplying this law was passed during President Wilson's second administration and remains upon the statute books unmodified by the immigration act of last year. Senator Borah objects, in this particular case, holding that there ought to be as much free speech in this country as there is in Britain, and is intent upon defeating the Communist before the Senate on the score that it is unwise for the Government to penalize the member of a foreign Parliament for his utterances in his home legislature.

If Saklatvala were not a member of the House of Commons he could be apprehended for sedition at the option of the Government, the discretion lying with the Home Secretary as to what constituted sedition. In this country it is different. The law specifically provides for the exclusion of revolutionaries professing the overthrow of the United States Government. Saklatvala professes a doctrine which aims at the substitution of proletarian dictatorship in the place of all governments, even that of this country. He desires the substitution of the Red Flag for all other flags, including the Stars and Stripes.

The question arises: Why was this man, whose record and opinions were well known, granted a visa in the first place? The answer is clear. Under instructions from the State Department, the Consul General at London was authorized to grant a "blanket visa" to all the members of the British delegation to the Inter-Parliamentary Conference at Washington. It was evidently not brought officially to the attention of Mr. Kellogg that Shapurji Saklatvala was a member of the delegation until Sept. 15, when John Daniels, Secretary of the American branch of the union, announced the personnel of the visiting Parliamentarians. Three days later the visa was revoked.

It is the policy of the British Government, as the Home Secretary has pointed out on several occasions, to take as little official cognizance of communism and of Communists as possible; but, even were this not the case, the Home Secretary, in the ordinary course of his official duty, has no power to prevent anybody's leaving the country, provided, of course, that the Public Prosecutor is not anxious for his company. Even then, criminal proceedings must be pending against him; otherwise he is safeguarded by the Parliamentary immunity which he enjoys.

#### Union Might Have Acted.

The one body that could seriously have interfered with Saklatvala's liberty in this respect is the Inter-Parliamentary Union. He could have been expelled from that body, but not reasonably on the sole ground of his political views. Any M. P. may become a member of the union, and when once a member is free to attend its sessions.

Cancellation of the visa was immediately followed by a repetition of the events which embarrassed the Administration during the Karolyi incident. The Civil Liberties Union organized a protest; Senator Borah protested, and Saklatvala usurped the front pages of the newspapers for several days, while the State Department's action was vigorously assailed in the editorial columns of the Democratic and Independent press.

Sir Robert Horne, a keen-minded, moderate and unexcitable Scot, suggests that the entire British delegation should decline to attend the conference at Washington. From this attitude it can be deduced that there is some feeling against the department's action—not as it appertains specifically to Saklatvala, but as it implies a distinct offense to the dignity of the Mother of Parliaments.

True, when it was known that Saklatvala intended to go to America with the British members, at least two Conservatives had refused to attend the session at Washington; Sir Robert Bird declining "to associate with a Communist, an avowed enemy of the British Empire and of all organized government." Saklatvala attended the

Inter-Parliamentary Union session at Copenhagen in 1923 in the company of numerous Conservative M.P.s. The present hostility toward him has no doubt developed, it is suggested, as a result of the recent outbursts of communism, which have frankly alarmed politicians and publicists.

There is not much hostility toward him on purely personal grounds. The fact that he is an olive-skinned Parsee is irrelevant, for two Parsees before him were Members of Parliament. One was Sir M. M. Bownager, the other Dadabhai Nowroji. Saklatvala is not very popular in the House of Commons. It is recorded that he "took the floor" for four hours while delivering his maiden speech—a distinct breach of etiquette, since new members are supposed to make their speeches as short as possible. He is still suffering from that "indiscretion." Whenever he rises to make a speech it is customary for members to begin stamping their feet.

His few speeches have not been of the type to which the House has been accustomed to listen. On one occasion he declared that "the British Empire is made up of the aristocracy and the cunning, dirty dogs of Great Britain who will assail any one's country any time." On another occasion he cried: "Let us abolish the Union Jack!"

Still more humorous was the occasion of a recent budget debate, when Winston Churchill was obliged to resume his seat because of the deafening protests of the Opposition. Mr. Saklatvala arose and said: "The Chancellor of the Exchequer having failed (to subdue the noise), it falls to a Communist revolutionary to restore order."

#### Was Born an Aristocrat.

Like many other radical leaders, Saklatvala was born a capitalist, one of the aristocracy of Indian commerce known as the Parsees. This people, of whom there are only 100,000 in all India, living mainly in Bombay, consider business failure a positive disgrace. No resident of Bombay has ever seen a Parsee beggar.

As is obligatory for a Parsee infant, Shapurji was born on the ground floor of the paternal house in Bombay. His father, Dorabji, had married Jernbain, sister of J. N. Tata, the great Indian merchant, whom he later represented at Manchester. Seven days after the child's birth an astrologer was called in to make a forecast. What it was is not known, but it is likely that Neptune was in the ascendant, for Shapurji has since then continually been in water, sometimes very hot, often over his depth.

His education was completed at St. Xavier's School and the College of Bombay. "I was miseducated at Bombay University," he says, "and got really educated in human problems when spending three years in exploration work among the villages of India." This is perhaps more rhetorical than exact. After graduation he joined the family firm of Tata Sons, for whom he undertook a three years' trip in the jungle, prospecting for iron, coal and limestone. This resulted in the formation of the Tata Iron and Steel Works in India.

Shortly after that, he took up welfare work in the slums of Bombay during plague epidemics and affiliated himself with the Trade Union Congress of India, which he represented at various congresses in Great Britain. In 1905 Saklatvala moved to England, where his radical opinions did not prevent his becoming the London departmental manager for Tata, Ltd., or his marrying Miss Mehri Marsh of Tansley, Derbyshire. They have three sons and two daughters.

Immediately upon reaching England, he established relations with the Labor and Socialist parties, joined the General Workers' Union, and, in 1910, began to take an active part in Independent Labor Party politics. He also joined the British Socialist Party, the Clerks' Union and the Co-operative Movement. He represented Labor in North Battersea in 1922-1923, but, on the party's refusal to affiliate with the Third International, resigned and joined the Communist Party.

Like many radical politicians, Saklatvala is thoroughly bourgeois in his life. He resides in a suburban house, his only club is the "1917," his only recreation in chess. Outside of his political tracts on Indian Labor, he is one of the founders of the Workers' Welfare League of India, which aims to destroy unfair competition between Asiatic and European labor by raising the standards of living of the Indian laborer to those of the British worker.

The Communist Party numbers only 5,000 members in Great Britain. In Parliament Saklatvala sits with the Laborites, yet has no political standing in Labor Party councils. Notwithstanding this, he is in demand as a week-end lecturer, possessing extraordinary eloquence.

To-day, in his fifth year, he is still a typical Parsee, though lacking the Parsee's traditional mustache. With a light olive complexion, a great beaked nose which almost meets his chin, beady black eyes, heavy arched eyebrows and thick lips, he is the image of many a member of that extraordinary community of Bombay over which a Council of Eighteen holds despotic sway.—New York Sunday Times.

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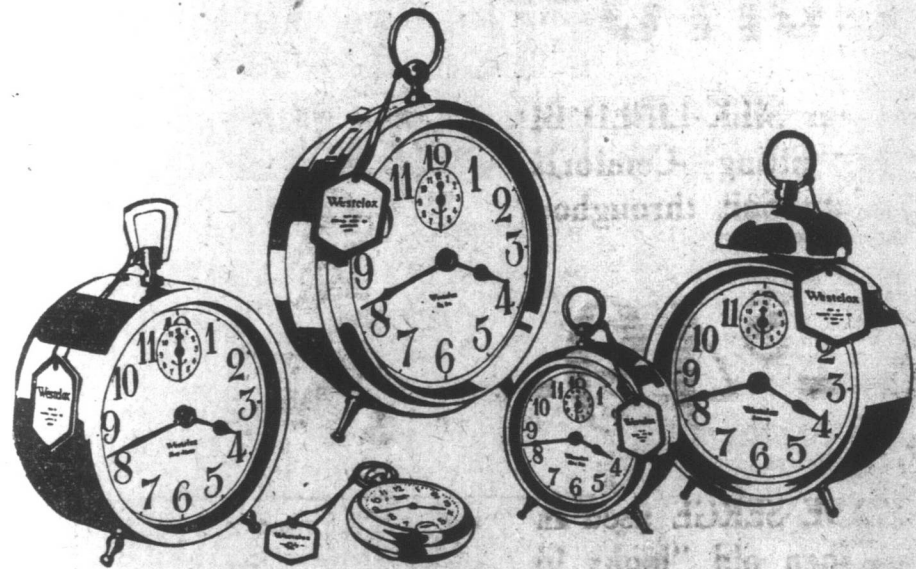
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