

## FACTS

Date: 3-4 September 1938

Page number: p. 9-16

Diary location: Danish National Gallery

Creator/key person: Ernest Mancoba

General comments:
Rules of transcription:
Spelling errors kept, followed by
correction as [sic: corrected spelling]
Necessary insertion of missing
punctuation marks added as [,]
Necessary paragraph breakage as [/P]
Illegible words indicated with
[illegible]
Scratched out letters and words not
transcribed
Full name of person mentioned [First
+ Last name]

Mentioned people: Gerry Brand T. C. Mehta

# **3-4 September 1938**

#### **SUMMARY**

On 2nd September 1938, Ernest Mancoba boarded a ship that left Cape Town, South Africa, for Southampton, United Kingdom. It arrived on the 19th September, 1938. Mancoba kept a travel journal of the voyage.

#### **TRANSCRIPTION**

[3 Sep]

At breakfast, A [Abraham] and Watson absent [,] both feeling seasick - N looks as hard as nails - I discover a queer self over confidence and complacency which makes me uneasy - He stares glassily too long at people and his movements at table seem to be a result of deliberate coaching and practice - He closes his mouth because probably he was told so and munches with the deliberateness of an animal - He is careful not to speak with food in his mouth etc - He never opens a conversation.

After breakfast we play bridge – Four [,] 2 Indians and 2 Africans - N soon picks up the essentials of the game but he is disturbingly inattentive – he gazes around like an infant [.] When the band strikes up he drums his hands on the table and with a backward and forward sway of upper body keeps time to the jazz tune - I win at Casino Grand Sweepstakes.

We sit on deck N + I and I soon learn he is off to Yale to study "Race Relations" - I try to open a conversation but he seems to be avoiding a discussion — I ask if he has a standpoint - he says no he is detached as a scientist shd [sic: should] be — I wonder & tell him of my dislike for the whites as a group, and I am disappointed he does not bother to know why

I potter around until dinner time [.] Again no A [Abraham] & W [Watson]. The menu is queer [,] has queer names [,] meaningless to me - I remark on this say why the waiter did not bring the things one after the other without bothering to question as we who have had no alternative to the inimitable mealie meal [a porridge made from corn meal] in South Africa. He replies that there are people who did not take certain kinds of foods. This was pointless as we at least did not know what would come next.

I asked him if he would like to travel on a Japanese boat to study Race Relations – No there was no need for that [,] one could always go to Japan etc.

After dinner took down some biscuits to A [Abraham]. He told me he felt better lying down - His girl told him to take biscuits and Worcester source [sic: sauce] on the voyage or against sea-sickness - He had prepared a mixture himself [,] but did not work - He was big eater and missed his



### food badly.

Hanged around till tea-time – N + I talked together [.] I told him I wished to keep away from cluster of whites – He wondered why & said I was going to live with them in Europe I might as well get used to it straight away.

I told him bluntly I had a strong aversion and couldn't help it — I asked him what the whites had done with Africa — Oh very well for themselves but also much for the Africans [.] I should not be on the boat if it was not for the Europeans. I should not be able to criticise them were it not for the work they had done if in Africa - etc etc — They could not help but do it. I protested. If they wished progress. The "Father of the Natives" version of trusteeship bunk all over again and I wonder at the simplicity of this man — No wonder he has lived all his life in the Reserves — and he has never been personally thwarted in his few primitive requirements. Does mere education civilize the Blackman — I wonder —

Mahtu [sic: T.C. Mehta] arrives late to tea [.] N stands up and tells the waiter to bring a cup — He is callous. Mathu [Mehta], sensitive fellow seeks our company. Speaks of books he has read specially on Black Problem in S.A. [,] mentions review in Forum on Africa Peril Abercrombie [H. R. Abercrombie "Africa's Peril: The Colour Problem", 1938] — I ask to see the Forum. Mathu [Mehta] brings it along [,] I read it—segregation (see cutting).

We discuss race relations Mathu [Mehta] + I. Gandhi & Nehru. He admires Gandhi's earlier life in London.

He picks up photograph of N's in academic gowns and all the odds and ends — remains of medieval education frills — I tell him of my aversion to educational tabs — education as means to an end — Welcome function for African doctor in Native village but people soon find his charges too high — higher than the old mission doctor's.

He tells me his father wishes him to be more a social success [,] a family honour more than for the people — He shows the usefulness of knowledge of law — He on his way to Lincolns Inn<sup>1</sup> in London. Tells me Watson the West African down with see sickness –

Standing in the passage I see Watson just disappearing into his cabin like Conrad's Nigger of the Narcissus [Joseph Conrad, "The Nigger of the Narcissus: A tale of the Forecastle", 1897] —

Abraham down with sea. s. [sic: sea sickness] anxious to know of result of



Test Match Eng. Vs SA. [sic: rugby test match between England and South Africa] excited to learn of SA success 19 to 3. He is sorry Gerry Brand did not play — It strikes me as queer as G. Brad [sic: Brand] as S African might have brutalized many a coloured person in his time — Humans are strange creatures —

Meet on upper deck other two Indians —

They thought N somewhat queer — His stare [,] strut etc. We sat in smoking room expecting music but none — I felt very strange uneasiness knowing that tho [sic: though] they did not say they hated the idea of niggers in their midst — I whisper to Mathu [Mehta] that if they had a Jewess on board someone would have protested against the niggers —

As some gos [sic: goes] away from the chairs near [,] I felt hot and cold with uneasiness — I have been brutalized many a time in the Transvaal — I think of an incident when I attempted to board a tram car in Johannesburg to get to Rosettenville to break the news to my sister of the passing of my mother [,] as I reached for the steps the driver jerked the car and shook me off, to the amusement of standersby.

We discuss the Xtian [sic: Christian] religion and agree it was the result of fears in the pre scientific period of human history — out of place now except to bluff the simpleminded — X explains the systems of religion in India.

Mathu [Mehta] is as sensitive and uncomfortable as I [,] we get up and leave the smoking room to my immense relief. I get down to my cabin — and vow never again to sit in that Devils Hole —

4 Sep.

[/P] Up for breakfast still no Watson and Abr [Abraham]

After breakfast sat on desk (we four) — X tells me a white passenger had been speaking to him and told him it was hard to believe an African capable of studying art and appreciating and doing a doctorate in Philosophy — These hypocrites who have reduced the African to near animal stage now turn round & say it is hard to believe the African to be human —

We read on the deck cold wind blowing all the sunny places occupied by whites on the decks — I go downstairs and see Watson [.] he had vomited much from sea sickness, he looks terribly [illegible] down — He is glad to



see me and he says he has missed me much because of the interest I have shown in West Africa — We talk [.] He believes the English best Colonial administraters [.] Compares the Belgian and French Colonial policy with English — Africans in both have migrated to English Dakar & Ashanti.

I tell him of N — He says Xtians [sic: Christians] have brought advantages and disadvantages e.g. Slavery abolished — But Methu [sic: T.C. Mehta] intervenes — it is more profitable to have wage-slaves.

We talk of African fetishism which served a useful purpose in keeping intact the African society morally and physically — W [sic: Watson] tells of how in his country a woman will not sleep with a man who is not her husband because She would offend the fetish and die — He points out nevertheless the cheapness of human life in African Society e[.]g[.] when a king died [,] his councillors got a number of other people killed to accompany the king — Nevertheless Xtian [sic: Christian] nations still wiped each other out in Wars — But the Africans knew how to adjust themselves to each other as individuals — The League of Nations let wars drift and had no practical suggestion to make to stop war and yet Xtian [sic: Christian] —

Early missionaries asked us to throw away all fetishes — In Accra there is a cenotaph to the War dead and a ceremony is conducted in which the chief citizens took part and the Governor laid a wreath and then walked backwards to a point before giving his back to the cenotaph. This looked like worship of the pile of stone — like a fetish to the African contradictions.

W. [Watson] shows us his passport and I tell him how difficult it was to get a passport for a "native" in SA [.] 3 months — with thorough investigation by all gov [sic: governmental] departments [.] He is astonished. He tells how had planned to travel round Africa by the East Coast and then to London. But at CapeTown he was refused passage in all boats travelling via the East because he would be the only black on board and S Africa whites resented travelling with blacks. He felt he was grateful to us for even though his plans were upset he still would have stopped in CapeTown longer than the month. He showed a letter of introduction to the Governor of ----- for his white departmental chief.

W. [Watson] gets sick again and he vomits convulsively [.] We ask him to dress up – and walk him up & down the lower deck [,] the upper deck is crowded with whites. He feels better and goes back to his Cabin.

It's lunch time - N still down - After lunch we play bridge [,] the band



strikes up a tune - Dinner.

An officer comes along to assist in the election of a Sports Committee – Mathu [Mehta] in a queer way surprised us by bawling out SV Naidoo – My foot and Naidoo's flick confusedly at Mathus [Mehta's] shin. Still he bawls out the second time [,] but to our relief no one takes notice of him - I think inactivity begins to tell on his nerves - The game is dull & we go down - sleep

 $<sup>^{1}</sup>$  W. Sze: A society of barristers in London, named after the estates Inns of Court and Inns of Chancery where students and apprentices of law stayed

The music ends will god Save the king and the Mussoli go don steers a finge of fire disaffers on the waves fright into the night. at breakfast, a and bation absent loth feeling seasick - I looks as hard as leaders - I discover a queer self over confidence which makes we meany. He stares glassik too live at people and his movements at table seen to be a sepult of deliberate coaching and fractice He class his pout because probable he was told so and munches like a self, the deliperaters of antition anisal - He is careful not speak with Oforta to month etc. He here opens a Convessation I after breakfort be play bridge - Four stand Indians and Dapican - N soon ficks up the essentials of the gave but he is destublingly inattertive he gazes around like as infant When the band stocks up he drun, his hands on the table and lit a backward and forward son of upper body keeps the tothe be sit on deck 179 and I soon lean the s MK yale to Study "Race Kelaturas - Almy tooper an log restation but he seems to be arriday a discussion -Lask if he has a standpoint he says to be is detached as a scientist shale - I wonder. I tall him

of my deslike for the white as a group and I am Usapported he does not tothe to know whenagain no The penu is quee has queer naves sen who the baile did not brong the things one of the the other without tother to greation as be who have had no attendive of the maritable heale heal in Sort africa. He nephes that there are people sho died ast take Cartan kinds of foods, The was pointless as be at least did not know that sould one next. Lasked, his offer sold like to travel, on a Jefanse but to Study have Relating - no there was Ofter dirrey took down some biscuits to a -He told me he felt letter lying down - His girl told him to take bisteries and horcest source attrongue or against sea secknoss - He had prefared a history himself but did not rock. He how his eate and rise his food tall -Hanged around till tea time 1 + I touth I told him histed to keep away from Cluster of thites He bondered they said how going to live littles a Turge I

hight a shell get used thit straight away Itold him blusty Ihad a strong aversion and could not help it - Darked him what the Shile Red done with aprica - Ob very well fortherselve not also much for the african Ishald not be able to continue the more as also the the it not for the book the had doe of a Ofrica etc etc. The could not help but do it, I postested. Atta insted progress. The fatte of the native," version of trusteeship bunk all over again and Standar at the surplial of this pan. No words, he has lived all his life in the Reserves - and he has never been personally threated in his few frimitive requirerer to Does here education mother comes late to ten n stands up and tells the vaile this a cup - He is called Mather persitive fellow seeks our Corpany Sleaks i SA. herties rebier i Forum or Africa Real (Uke crombie - Lask to see the Forum. Matha frings it along Iread it - segregation (see cutting) Ne discuss race relations mather of gandhi + Nehon - He admires Gandhi's earlier life in London

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Hay thought n Sorishet gacer - Hi stan Stoutch we sat in Aroking room expectly having but none - I felt very strage uneasiness persone that the they did not say they haled the idea frigger i their hidst I whisper to mathe that I the had a lover on board someone would have worth protested against the higgers -As fore gos and with chairs year I felt the and cold with measures - Shave been brutelised hang a tre the Francoal - I think I an indert when fatterpless to board, a the very to him to get to Rosettenville to break the very to him side of the jesson of as mother. It as I reached for the sleps the drops forked the car and shook he of the anueres Alanders by-He brand the Khan religion and agree its A human Thistin - Out of place miss except. I bluf the sinfle piveled - X explains Aysterd of religion in a dia - man for table as the get of and leave the troply room to and voir never again to Sit - that Dents Hole -4 Select. Up for treakfast still no platon and abor.

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pools and physicall - Wills ofher a bis country a woman will not sleep with a man who is not for husband because spe sold spend the fetish and die - He point out reverteless the cleasorers of huna life in Ofrican facilities when a king died his Connaillon got departe of otto people billed tackon fany the king-Nevertheles Khan hatrons still in ped each other out hors - but the african sever how to adjust thenselves Leach otte as a dividuals - The League of Notions let wars drift and had so practical Enggestin trake tstobbar and yet Khan-Tarly hymens asked us to throw away all letishes - In accra there is a cerateph to the War the chief cities tok pot and the governor laid a soveath and the parket fackgood to point before ging bis back Alt Cerately The looked like Anship of the pile of Store - like a fetral tothe african Contradisction Mathrax Jule Hogot up ad to balk W. shows us his postport and I tell his how Smooths with thorough a valtegath in all sounder travel found Africa by the East hast another the forder Bout at aparting the was refused passage i all troots travelly via

the East because he would be the ong black on bound and Alma Hule reserted travelly with blacks. He Harles us for felthe los groupt the for even though he plant stere upset he still world have topped i Capet on brek than the month. He showed a letter of it wouldn't felto sovenor of - for his shite departmental chief -W. get sick again and he vorito convulsively He ask him to dress of - and halk him uf + down the love deck the upper deck is consided with whiles He feels better and goes back to his Calin-It's lunch time - M still down - after land he play bridge the band states up a time - Linne by Red time and bridge again I flan a badgare Mall an officer comes along to assist in the election of a Sport Committee Matthe in a great Day Inforsed his I by barbles not SV Naidon - my lost and Muidos's plack confriguely at Mathy shin. Still be back at the second time but to market begins to on his nerves - The game is dall + me go down - Sleep Selet I go don alle breakfast smalket mather calls me up tagare of bridge Te Sit Corner - Nation Comes also At the writing table. A huge form of reality which makes the