

Transcripts – Day 13

Day 13 – Tuesday, 1 December 1964

CHAIRMAN: This session is now convened for today. Call Dr. Winfried Fries.

DR. WINFRIED FRIES is sworn in and she states as follows:

RAMSAROOP: Doctor, are you an intern at the Georgetown Hospital?

FRIES: Yes.

RAMSAROOP: In May of this year you were an intern also?

FRIES: Yes.

RAMSAROOP: Doctor, some time in May this year, did you examine two patients, Ivy Ramnarace and Seecharran?

FRIES: Yes.

RAMSAROOP: Can you tell me the exact day?

FRIES: Seecharran was the 27th May 1964, and the time of examination is not written here, but the time of admission is 7.11 p.m.

RAMSAROOP: What were the findings on your examinations of Seecharran?

FRIES: He was struck with a bottle and he had an incised wound on his head.

RAMSAROOP: And Ivy Ramnarace? When was she admitted?

FRIES: The 27th May, 1964, 7.10 p.m.

RAMSAROOP: And what are your findings there?

FRIES: She had multiple abrasions; she had blue marks and bruises; her hair was cut very short. She said she had long hair.

RAMSAROOP: Did she tell you how her hair was cut?

FRIES: She said she was raped by several men, and they cut her hair.

RAMSAROOP: You examined several other persons during that period?

FRIES: Yes.

RAMSAROOP: But you didn't have records of that examination?

FRIES: No. Only two persons were admitted. Those who were sent away records were not kept of them. Records were kept on the sheet; those in the hospital usually retain a sheet.

RAMSAROOP: That's all.

DRAYTON: You say that Ivy Ramnarace had been raped?

FRIES: She said so.

DRAYTON: Was there any evidence of serious injury?

FRIES: She said she was raped by thirty men, and had soreness in her womb.

DRAYTON: Any lacerations?

FRIES: No, not as far as I remember.

The Wismar Commission Report

MOOTOO: Had Ivy Ramnarace been seen by a doctor before you saw her – from Wismar or Mackenzie?

FRIES: I don't know. She didn't say.

MOOTOO: What about Seecharran? Was he sent by a doctor?

FRIES: We didn't ask him.

MOOTOO: They were not sent to you with a note from the Mackenzie Hospital?

FRIES: No.

MOOTOO: Did they come on their own or were they brought by somebody?

FRIES: They came into my office on their own.

MOTOO: Thank you very much.

VICTOR BALI SINGH is sworn in and he states as follows:

RAMSAROOP: Mr. Singh where are you living?

VICTOR SINGH: 171, Curtis Street, Albouystown.

RAMSAROOP: In May this year where were you living?

VICTOR SINGH: One Mile Hill.

RAMSAROOP: Did you carry on a trade?

VICTOR SINGH: Merchant and tailor.

RAMSAROOP: Did anything happen to you around the 24th May, this year?

VICTOR SINGH: No sir. It was the 25th.

RAMSAROOP: What happened?

VICTOR SINGH: I heard there was looting at Wismar market so I decided to close my business place. Shortly after that I saw a man by the name of Mr. Johnson, a man whom I know very well, pointing towards my building, Shortly after that a crowd gathered around my place – men women and teenagers, ages fifteen years to sixteen years. They demanded that I should open the place. With fright and lives at stake, I had to open the place; I was compelled to. As soon as I did that they rushed in and started looting the goods, finished and unfinished, ready-made and those hanging on the line. They left the building and walked away. A woman who I know – I don't know if this is her correct name – Irene Fraser shouted, "You can't leave him; you must beat him and burn him." They returned and started then to beat me. I tried to escape by going to the back of my yard, where a fellow by the name of Fitzroy gave me a few lashes with a paling stave. Irene Fraser came and did the same with the paling stave. A man by the name of Miggins who works at the aluminium company gave me about four lashes on my left hip. Well, I was unable to move; I fell to the ground. I heard my wife and child shouting, "The place on fire, the place on fire."

CHAIRMAN: Yes?

VICTOR SINGH: Well, shortly after a jeep came by. I remembered I saw a policeman. I was taken to the police station at Wismar and then from there to the Mackenzie Hospital where I was informed that I had a fractured left leg, and a fractured pelvis, which caused stoppage of water. That made me undergo two operations and I was then flown to the Georgetown Hospital.

RAMSAROOP: What do you estimate your loss?

VICTOR SINGH: Approximately five thousand to six thousand dollars, but I am stricken in my health since then.

Transcripts – Day 13

RAMSAROOP: There is a permanent disability of your health since the Wismar disturbances?

VICTOR SINGH: Yes sir.

SHEPHERD: You know a man by the name of Henry King?

VICTOR SINGH: Yes sir.

SHEPHERD: Did he have anything to do with you?

VICTOR SINGH: I usually sew for him.

SHEPHERD: And you know a man by the name of Marshall?

VICTOR SINGH: I don't think so, sir.

SHEPHERD: You didn't know a man by the name of Marshall? Is Henry King here today?

VICTOR SINGH: I don't know, sir. I have not seen him.

SHEPHERD: Thank you.

—

HAFIZ KHAN: When you saw the crowd, did you see Johnson? Was this crowd armed?

VICTOR SINGH: Well, coming towards my place the crowd had sticks, hatchets, hammers and bottles containing liquid.

HAFIZ KHAN: The crowd was at the front?

VICTOR SINGH: Yes.

HAFIZ KHAN: What about the crowd at the back?

VICTOR SINGH: The crowd at the back – they were looking on.

HAFIZ KHAN: This was what time?

VICTOR SINGH: Between ten to eleven a.m.

HAFIZ KHAN: On the morning of the 25th did you see any policemen?

VICTOR SINGH: Not until I had been picked up from my yard.

HAFIZ KHAN: Did you see any police or volunteers at that time?

VICTOR SINGH: No.

HAFIZ KHAN: Until then you did not see any patrols?

VICTOR SINGH: No.

HAFIZ KHAN: How far were you from the police station?

VICTOR SINGH: One mile.

HAFIZ KHAN: That is all.

—

DRAYTON: Did you know these people well, Johnson and Irene Fraser?

VICTOR SINGH: Yes, I can point them out at any time.

DRAYTON: How long have you been living in the area?

VICTOR SINGH: Since the 6th July, 1959. Five years now.

DRAYTON: You moved around with both ethnic groups?

VICTOR SINGH: Yes sir.

The Wismar Commission Report

DRAYTON: So far as you know did you make any report after you regained consciousness at the Mackenzie Hospital?

VICTOR SINGH: A police came there and took a statement.

DRAYTON: You did not know his name?

VICTOR SINGH: No. Mr. King will be able to say.

DRAYTON: You did report the names of these people that beat you?

VICTOR SINGH: Yes.

DRAYTON: So far as you know, has action been taken?

VICTOR SINGH: Not to my knowledge.

DRAYTON: This was a policeman at Wismar?

VICTOR SINGH: Yes.

DRAYTON: Before the 25th had you been aware of any tension in the area?

VICTOR SINGH: My little son used to be at one Mr. Clarke. About two months before he heard Mr. Johnson making remarks. I did not pay any attention.

DRAYTON: What made you afraid?

VICTOR SINGH: My son Vishu Singh heard what Johnson said, and if I knew his evidence was necessary, I would not have sent him away. But he is now in Trinidad.

DRAYTON: Thank you, Mr. Singh.

MOOTOO: You saw all these people with things in their hands?

VICTOR SINGH: With some thing. Who hadn't a bottle with liquid, had hammers, hatchets, some with sticks. As far as I was concerned the crowd had something in their hands.

MOOTOO: And did everybody take everything from you?

VICTOR SINGH: They took all the things. I had to stay aside and when they took everything some went away but the remainder under the leadership of one Irene Fraser beat me and burned my house.

MOOTOO: Were there any strangers?

VICTOR SINGH: They had few strangers in the crowd.

MOOTOO: When did you first see them?

VICTOR SINGH: I did not see them before.

MOOTOO: When did you first start to hear rumours at Wismar?

VICTOR SINGH: I told you about two or three weeks ago.

MOOTOO: When did you start keeping watch?

VICTOR SINGH: Two weeks before it happened. One house was burned about half a mile away. The house was owned by James Karim and seeing that, I kept my house mostly in darkness. I was alarmed and started to keep watch.

MOOTOO: Did you see Banga Mary?

VICTOR SINGH: Not in my shop.

MOOTOO: He threatened you?

Transcripts – Day 13

VICTOR SINGH: Yes.

MOOTOO: Why did he threaten you? Did he do you any harm?

VICTOR SINGH: Yes. I turned him out of my business place once because he asked me for some information which I couldn't give him, and he used indecent language.

MOOTOO: What is his name? Is it Banga Mary?

VICTOR SINGH: He is known by that name.

MOOTOO: What is the name of the man whose house was burnt?

VICTOR SINGH: James Karim.

MOOTOO: Can you tell me exactly what your son heard?

VICTOR SINGH: Mr. King would be able to tell you more about that.

MOOTOO: But your son didn't hear any rumours before that?

VICTOR SINGH: Three weeks ago he said he heard Mr. Johnson making threats.

MOOTOO: What did Mr. Johnson say?

VICTOR SINGH: Mr. Johnson said that they are going to burn out all the so and so coolie on the hill.

MOOTOO: Who is Mr. Johnson?

VICTOR SINGH: A Negro fellow who works at the Demerara Bauxite Company.

MOOTOO: Thank you very much.

RAMSAROOP: Mr. Sase Narain was supposed to be here at 8.30 a.m. but he is not – and also Dr. Sankar.

DRAYTON: Has any effort been made to telephone Dr. Sankar?

RAMSAROOP: We will do so.

[Inquiry is adjourned temporarily to await the arrival of witnesses.]

DR. CHARLES ABRAHAM FUNG-A-FAT is sworn in and he states as follows:

RAMSAROOP: Doctor, you are serving your internship?

FUNG-A-FAT: I have completed my internship.

RAMSAROOP: In May this year did you examine persons from the Wismar area?

FUNG-A-FAT: I have examined two persons. They were admitted to the hospital.

RAMSAROOP: Who was the first?

FUNG-A-FAT: Percy Taharally.

RAMSAROOP: What is his address?

FUNG-A-FAT: Parika, East Bank Essequibo presently.

RAMSAROOP: Could you say what are the findings?

FUNG-A-FAT: He was admitted on 3rd June, 1964 complaining of headaches and when I examined him I found he was suffering from conjunctival haemorrhage.

RAMSAROOP: Could it be caused by a blow on the eye?

FUNG-A-FAT: Possibly, yes.

The Wismar Commission Report

RAMSAROOP: Was he admitted?

FUNG-A-FAT: Yes. The surgical ward.

RAMSAROOP: Who was the other patient?

FUNG-A-FAT: Zabeeda Alli. Age seventeen.

RAMSAROOP: Where was she living?

FUNG-A-FAT: B.G. corporation bond at Ruimveldt, East Bank Demerara.

RAMSAROOP: On what day?

FUNG-A-FAT: On the 27th May, 1964.

RAMSAROOP: What are your findings?

FUNG-A-FAT: She was sent by a doctor. She was in pregnancy six months. She had a miscarriage. She was sent up in the gynaecological ward for an internal examination.

RAMSAROOP: Did you know who examined her?

FUNG-A-FAT: Dr. Hamilton.

RAMSAROOP: What are his findings?

FUNG-A-FAT: Slight abdominal pains in the uterus, and there was a breached delivery, still-born.

RAMSAROOP: You didn't examine any other person?

FUNG-A-FAT: No.

—
SINGH: In the case of Taharally was he referred to any ward?

FUNG-A-FAT: He was sent to the surgical ward and referred to Dr. Denbow.

SINGH: Would you be informed about Dr. Hamilton's report concerning Zabeeda Alli? From that report did you find any history of rape?

FUNG-A-FAT: Dr. Hamilton mentions nothing of rape. It possibly could have been caused by rape in rapid succession accompanied by blows.

—
DRAYTON: This muscular wasting could have been caused by a blow on the head which could have damaged the central nervous system?

FUNG-A-FAT: Yes. A blow on the head caused these signs in the central nervous system.

DRAYTON: When you examined him on the 3rd July, you said that he was suffering from conjunctival haemorrhage, having pain in the head at that time, and also there were evidences of muscular wasting?

FUNG-A-FAT: He had wasting in the muscles of the head.

DRAYTON: Was the wasting in the muscles separate from the haemorrhage of the head?

FUNG-A-FAT: Yes.

DRAYTON: But Dr. Denbow did not comment on the other aspect of Taharally. Was he cured?

FUNG-A-FAT: It must have been cured.

DRAYTON: How long did he stay?

FUNG-A-FAT: From the 3rd June, 1964 to 27th June, 1964.

Transcripts – Day 13

DRAYTON: Was his conjunctival haemorrhage cleared up as well as the pain in his chest and headache?
FUNG-A-FAT: There is no note here. If they discharged him he must have been cured.

MOOTOO: Were these two cases sent from Mackenzie Hospital?
FUNG-A-FAT: I have heard that they were refugees.

MOOTOO: But you did not know if anybody at Mackenzie Hospital sent these two cases before they were treated by you?
FUNG-A-FAT: I wouldn't have it. The administrator has it.

MOOTOO: Was the girl Zabeeda Ally sent from Wismar?
FUNG-A-FAT: Yes.

MOOTOO: Doctor, you have a list of all the people who have been sent from Wismar?
FUNG-A-FAT: Yes.
MOOTOO: No more questions. Thank you.

CARTER: Percy Taharally is entered on pages 2 and 3, but Zabeeda Ally is not entered in the report tendered by Dr. Roza. There are no other doctors here as yet. I respectfully ask for an adjournment, sir.
CHAIRMAN: For fifteen minutes.
SHEPHERD: There are two or three constables coming down to give evidence, but their launch has broken down, and they cannot be here this morning. I am hoping that they will be able to be here tomorrow to give their evidence.

DR. SHEER RAHAMAN is sworn in and he states as follows:

RAMSAROOP: Your full name is?
RAHAMAN: Sheer Rahaman.

RAMSAROOP: And you work as a medical practitioner at the hospital.
RAHAMAN: Yes sir.

RAMSAROOP: And where are you residing?
RAHAMAN: In Georgetown, Middle Street.

RAMSAROOP: What lot?
RAHAMAN: 280 Middle Street.

RAMSAROOP: During May this year you examined several persons from the Wismar-Christianburg-Mackenzie area?
RAHAMAN: I had examined three cases and I have the record here.

RAMSAROOP: You have a record of their names and findings?
RAHAMAN: Yes, the first case is Mrs. Sheila Persaud, twenty three years of age. I saw her in the casualty ward of the Public Hospital, Georgetown at about 2.30 p.m. She gave a history of having been raped and assaulted the day before. On examination, she had a laceration on the chin and the right side of her jaw and laceration on the mandible region which had to be sutured and there was also a small laceration under the right eye. On vaginal examination there was laceration of the *labia minora* and slight bleeding of the area. Wall of vagina and *fornices* appear normal. She had children before so I cannot tell of any actual damage.

The Wismar Commission Report

RAMSAROOP: When was that? On the 26th?

RAHAMAN: Yes. We did an X-ray on her and there was a vertical contusion on the right side of her *zygomatia-temporal* which was sutured. Those were my findings.

RAMSAROOP: But aside from that, was anymore injury found?

RAHAMAN: She was subsequently admitted in the ward where she had been seen by another doctor.

RAMSAROOP: Did he examine her?

RAHAMAN: Yes, I suppose so.

RAMSAROOP: At the time you carried out this examination you saw that the injuries were dangerous, depending on the severity of these injuries?

RAHAMAN: The injuries were serious.

SINGH: To whom was she referred to in the ward?

RAHAMAN: When the patient was seen in the casualty, she was sent to the gynaecology ward. In this case she was sent to the surgical ward.

CHAIRMAN: Sorry to interrupt. Did you examine other cases?

RAMSAROOP: Yes? You examined other cases?

RAHAMAN: Another case was with Miss Ramrattie Persaud. She is twenty-one years of age. She was also seen in the casualty that day. Oh admission, she also alleged that she was raped by men. On examination, she had *haemotoma* and abrasions on the right side of her chin, both sides of her left forearm, and larger abrasions between the thighs. Her history is one of rape. There was a ruptured hymen which was bleeding. It was recently ruptured. There was a small laceration on the posterior wall of the vagina continuous with *perineum*. From that actually I concluded that she had been recently assaulted.

RAMSAROOP: How would you speak about the danger to her health? Would you say that they were serious to health?

RAHAMAN: One cannot really assume the danger of intercourse unless you know of the circumstances in which it is being done. There is no immediate danger.

RAMSAROOP: On that score, how would you be able to say whether that person was raped more than once?

RAHAMAN: Well, no it is very difficult to say because one man can do the same damage on several different occasions.

RAMSAROOP: You did not find any foreign matter in the vaginal part?

RAHAMAN: No.

RAMSAROOP: Yes, Doctor, your next case?

RAHAMAN: The next case I saw was Doreen Sookram. She was fifteen years old. She also gave a history of alleged rape and assault. She was seen by me in the casualty. There were so many cases in the casualty that afternoon they were done without any measure of thoroughness. But when they were admitted to the ward, they were more thoroughly examined. She was conscious and she had injury in her left elbow and a swollen wrist. The elbow was also swollen. There were abrasions under her chin. After general examination, I found she had a torn posterior wall. There was a perforated hymen which I would say was

Transcripts – Day 13

recently perforated. I paid attention to this girl because she was so young and she seemed to be in agony and pain.

RAMSAROOP: What were your observations Doctor?

RAHAMAN: She seemed to be very nervous as if she had been undergoing a terrible nervous strain, probably a reaction from the day before. She was actually admitted to the ward and she had to be sedated.

RAMSAROOP: Were there any other cases?

RAHAMAN: Those were all the cases. Those girls had to be taken to the operation theatre, where *dilatating curitage* had to be done.

—

SINGH: You said that you had to make internal examinations on Sheila Persaud. She was treated and sent to the ward. What were the findings of Dr. Mitra's X-rays when she was examined in the ward? She was found to be raped and assaulted by a group of Negroes.

SINGH: That's right. She also complained of pains throughout her body, bleeding through her vagina, abrasions on the chest and chin.

SINGH: What are the X-ray findings? Any bones fractured?

RAHAMAN: No.

SINGH: What would be the effect on a girl of fifteen who was raped?

RAHAMAN: It might affect her. It depends on the nature of the person. She was sedated for two days.

SINGH: What was the condition of Ramrattie Persaud?

RAHAMAN: She was nervous. What I saw that they were going through a nervous strain because they were so innocent and young.

—

DRAYTON: Do you think that any other thing besides the male organ could have caused these lacerations?

RAHAMAN: Yes. The injuries to the vagina could have been caused by the male organ or something being forced into her.

—

MOOTOO: Could Mackenzie Hospital have treated these cases?

RAHAMAN: I am not aware of the Mackenzie situation.

MOOTOO: How were these cases sent to you?

RAHAMAN: I understand by launch.

MOOTOO: You think that they were in serious conditions?

RAHAMAN: They were bleeding.

MOOTOO: Did it look as if they could have been kept in the hospital at Mackenzie?

RAHAMAN: I don't think so.

MOOTOO: For X-rays?

RAHAMAN: I don't know if they had X-rays.

MOOTOO: If you were at Mackenzie would you have kept the patients or sent them to Georgetown?

RAHAMAN: I don't know if I can answer that question. I am not acquainted with Mackenzie Hospital.

The Wismar Commission Report

MOOTOO: Were they bleeding?

RAHAMAN: Yes, they were bleeding.

MOOTOO: But was it wise to send these three women to Georgetown without any doctor to accompany them?

RAHAMAN: I won't say so.

—

CHAIRMAN: Do you know if these three women received medical aid before they reached you?

RAHAMAN: I was told so.

CHAIRMAN: Did you see any signs of medical treatment?

RAHAMAN: No.

CHAIRMAN: Would you have expected to see signs of treatment?

RAHAMAN: Yes.

CHAIRMAN: If they were bleeding why is it they had travelled down from Mackenzie? Could they not have been treated at Mackenzie?

RAHAMAN: I do not know the facilities at Mackenzie hospital.

CHAIRMAN: But although this girl was treated at the Mackenzie Hospital yet, when she came to Georgetown, she was bleeding?

RAHAMAN: Apart from having intercourse, if a young girl had never had sexual intercourse and had had been sexed she would bleed a lot as a case I had not very long ago. A young girl just married had never had sex before and she went home to her husband. After intercourse she bled all the night until next day. It could arise from shocks and injuries.

CHAIRMAN: I see.

—

DRAYTON: And in this case this is what happened to this girl, Doreen Sookram?

RAHAMAN: Yes sir.

DRAYTON: They came down on the 26th by M.V. Barima?

RAHAMAN: I think so.

DRAYTON: In the public hospital there were several serious injuries on that day?

RAHAMAN: Yes, there were.

—

CHAIRMAN: Doctor, was Ramrattie operated on subsequently? She gave evidence that she was operated on later.

RAHAMAN: Do you mean as far as her injuries were concerned immediately after admission?

CHAIRMAN: She said she underwent an operation subsequently. How many days after?

RAHAMAN: She had this operation about seven days after.

CHAIRMAN: And that is for what?

RAHAMAN: For D and C.

CHAIRMAN: Doctor, I wonder if you can make these records available, that we can refer to them in our deliberations.

Transcripts – Day 13

RAHAMAN: As a matter of fact, I have them here. Two of these were referred to the specialists of the hospital, Dr. Johnson and Dr. Das Gupta, who said that a patient said she had trouble with her ears, that sand was stuck in both ears.

CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

[Some pages of the original transcript are apparently missing here.]

© Copyright 2004, by Odeen Ishmael