

The Wismar Commission Report

Day 17 – Saturday, 5 December 1964

CHAIRMAN: We will continue the inquiry now. Mr. Shepherd, you may continue your examination.

[*LIONEL HOBBS continues his evidence.*]

SHEPHERD: Superintendent Hobbs, did any question arise regarding the embodiment of the supernumerary constables at Demba?

HOBBS: No sir. They were not embodied for service in the Wismar site.

SHEPHERD: Why not?

HOBBS: The ordinance of the police, 39 of 1957, refers.

SHEPHERD: What was the section?

HOBBS: They were employed for service with the particular employer at Demba.

SHEPHERD: By this provision the supernumerary constable from Demba dealt with discipline and with police punishment for offences. The terms of employment are that they are used exclusively for the protection of property of their employers?

HOBBS: They were employed at Demba while they assisted in the operation.

SHEPHERD: Were they still in operation, and were driving the jeeps in the direct way as they were employed by courtesy of Demba? And they did everything in their power at Wismar-Christiansburg in cooperation with you Police Force too?

HOBBS: No, not at all.

SHEPHERD: Is there a record of special incidents covering a period of the 27th and the 28th of May?

HOBBS: I kept it at Wismar police station.

SHEPHERD: You have already explained in accordance with the book which deals with the complaints and action to the Commissioners. Were there special incidents recorded among them?

HOBBS: The entry of incidents was made in the "incidents book" and in accordance with the investigation during the rioting. With regard to the situation a register of special events is kept.

SHEPHERD: You have produced what is on the "occurrence book" taken by the police regarding the occurrence of incidents at Wismar police station. Now, produce the record of special incidents given in the same day that might be reported by telephone or some other source. I suggest they be marked "speech one" and "speech two". Have you in fact prepared for the period of the 13th to the 25th of May extracts from the situation reported from May, 1964? Now, how were the situation reports given in the first place?

HOBBS: The daily situation that was reported went by me by radio telephone or the ordinary telephone to the Force Control in Georgetown. It includes the evidence or crimes reported within my police district over the preceding twenty-four hours. The information was brought for the Commissioner of Police. This is an extract from the records of the headquarters of the situation which was sent to me.

SHEPHERD: It is an extract of the evidence, and was to hand formally on the 23rd of May, and the record was sent to the executive of the Legislative Council which was in the current book. A record of special incidents and the situation reported, and the running record was kept with evidence for the attention of the Commissioner. Was this kept at Mackenzie?

HOBBS: Yes, it was kept at Wismar and Mackenzie.

SHEPHERD: This was not your primary concern. I am formally going to put in an extract from the review. This report of the evidence was with the Commissioner.

Transcripts – Day 17

HOBBS: I was aware of this review of the organisation.

SHEPHERD: How long have you been in the Police Force?

HOBBS: Twenty-four years and nine months.

SHEPHERD: And you have a full rank of serving as superintendent for how many years?

HOBBS: Four years.

SHEPHERD: Have you ever served in the “E” Division before?

HOBBS: Twenty-four years ago I served as constable for “E” Division.

SHEPHERD: All your services have been in British Guiana?

HOBBS: Yes sir.

SHEPHERD: For how long have you been a constable in the “E” Division?

HOBBS: Three months.

SHEPHERD: And most of your services have been in what division?

HOBBS: Twenty-four years throughout the colony.

SHEPHERD: In May how long were you been in the “E” Division?

HOBBS: Four months.

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PRATAP N. SINGH: Mr. Hobbs, you have for the past two years, from '62 to '64, been in the colony. Have you any dealings before with such situations that existed at Wismar?

HOBBS: I have not.

PRATAP N. SINGH: Where were you in 1962?

HOBBS: I was in the United Kingdom on leave.

PRATAP N. SINGH: On 25th May when you reported to Georgetown about the situation at Wismar, were you of the opinion that you had given an accurate report?

HOBBS: About 7.45 I informed Mr. Puttock that the incidents had increased. Then later between 8.40 and 8.45, after my report, I received a report at Mackenzie about the outbreak of violence.

PRATAP N. SINGH: I suppose Mr. Isaacs came up there and went into conference with Major Langham?

HOBBS: About three o'clock I gave him the information I knew.

PRATAP N. SINGH: You were the individual best able to give information of the situation at Wismar?

HOBBS: I gave the full facts.

PRATAP N. SINGH: Do you know if Mr. Isaacs acted upon your advice?

HOBBS: I cannot say.

PRATAP N. SINGH: You know if he went into conference with any one else?

HOBBS: I cannot say.

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DRAYTON: Mr. Hobbs, you had gone over to Mackenzie?

HOBBS: Only for the conference.

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The Wismar Commission Report

PRATAP N. SINGH: Did you realise the gravity of the situation at Wismar?

HOBBS: I had gone back to Wismar following the report of the outbreak of violence.

PRATAP N. SINGH: Did you expect that type of outbreak?

HOBBS: A total surprise, having reported there at 7.20 everything was reasonably quiet.

PRATAP N. SINGH: Do you think that there was any necessity for any to assess the situation as existed at Wismar? Would you have sent somebody?

HOBBS: No, I would not have sent anybody.

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DRAYTON: You have had nearly twenty-five years of service, have you? Have you had any military service during the war?

HOBBS: No sir.

DRAYTON: Had you any training?

HOBBS: Six months training at Hendon's College in 1955.

DRAYTON: What were the subjects taught?

HOBBS: Police duties in general.

DRAYTON: Including dealing with riotous crowds?

HOBBS: No sir.

DRAYTON: I wonder if you would tell us before May 23rd if there were any reports made against the Indian community?

HOBBS: None at all.

DRAYTON: If they had people going around the area between 21st and 24th saying "Look what is happening elsewhere; we can go and kill too," it would have come to your knowledge?

HOBBS: I heard nothing at all.

DRAYTON: Was Mr. Jordon in the area between 21st and 23rd?

HOBBS: I had seen him recently; I cannot say what date.

DRAYTON: Did you speak to him?

HOBBS: Yes, I did.

DRAYTON: I know that it is many months since then, but did you remember the nature of the conversation?

HOBBS: Well it was just on a friendly basis.

DRAYTON: Do you know Mr. Harris?

HOBBS: Yes.

DRAYTON: You are friendly with him?

HOBBS: I know him.

DRAYTON: Are you positive that it was on the Saturday, May 23rd, at 12.30 to 1.00, or just after, you requested of Mr. Puttock a partial embodiment of the Volunteer Force?

HOBBS: I am quite positive. My reason for remembering it well is that I had just come back from the Valley of Tears taking action with Corporal King in putting out a fire.

Transcripts – Day 17

DRAYTON: And you say that you had made a general survey of the area?

HOBBS: Yes.

DRAYTON: Mr. Puttock said that it was not until the 24th May in the morning at 8.30 that you requested an embodiment of the Volunteer Force.

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SHEPHERD: I think there is a misunderstanding here because Mr. Puttock pointed out that his statement about the 24th wasn't really a statement to this Commission. He had a conversation with Superintendent Hobbs on Saturday, but he wasn't asked about this conversation on Saturday, and unfortunately, Mr. Puttock has never had an opportunity of talking about it. I think you mentioned the statement in which Mr. Puttock has put in writing that he had a meeting with Mr. Hobbs on Saturday.

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DRAYTON: Do you remember whether on Sunday morning which was the 24th at about 8.30 if you requested partial embodiment of the Volunteer Force from Mr. Puttock?

HOBBS: Not Sunday morning. My request was on Saturday. Approval was given on Sunday morning, and the number to be used was twenty-four.

DRAYTON: Well, I agree that there is no mention of what happened on the Saturday. He definitely stated that at 8.30 Sunday morning a request was received from you for partial embodiment of the Volunteer Force and told you that he would consider it. At 9.30 he again spoke to you on the telephone and said that twenty-four volunteers would be embodied?

HOBBS: It was on the 24th that I spoke with him. I was in a position to tell Senator Ramjattan that I had made application at Georgetown, but I had not yet had approval. My first application was on Saturday between 12.30 to 1.00 p.m.

DRAYTON: We come to the Sunday 24th. Do you remember having a conversation with Major Langham about the adequacy of the twenty-four volunteers?

HOBBS: No sir. There was no discussion. I just passed on to Major Langham by telephone the instruction I had from Georgetown.

DRAYTON: He didn't express any opinion?

HOBBS: Not at all.

DRAYTON: Your situation report; you had seen these in daily records in the evening?

HOBBS: As incidents occurred they would be reported.

DRAYTON: Yes, but your situation report which you sent in daily would be sent in the evening or in the mornings?

HOBBS: There was not special time as to hours I reported. They are sent straight on to Force Control.

DRAYTON: Did you remember whether on Sunday night if you sent any report to Force Control in Georgetown about what had been happening over the period on Sunday? Do you think that the situation had become more serious?

HOBBS: No.

DRAYTON: You didn't get in touch with the Police Force Control?

HOBBS: I won't say that the situation had got more serious; it got more serious on Monday morning.

DRAYTON: Would you agree with Major Langham that there was an increase in tension on the Sunday?

The Wismar Commission Report

HOBBS: I would say on Sunday night.

DRAYTON: At about what time did you feel this sort of gradual build up?

HOBBS: I had surveyed the area on Monday morning after which I had intimated to Mr. Langham that the remainder of the Volunteer Force should be embodied for patrol.

DRAYTON: These arrangements that you made with Demba for the use of the aircraft – when you spoke to Mr. Puttock, you said, “Look, I would like to have my five men back now.” Were you given a job of arranging with Demba to place the other aircraft at the disposal of the B.G. Police Force? What time did you do this?

HOBBS: As soon as I had finished speaking to Mr. Puttock.

DRAYTON: To whom did you speak?

HOBBS: The general manager, Mr. Fraser.

DRAYTON: Did Mr. Puttock tell you in an hour the other aircraft would be standing by?

HOBBS: He said that he would contact Mr. Puttock and arrange it in an hour, and to my knowledge he did.

DRAYTON: When did you have a discussion with Mr. Isaacs about the situation? Was it at Mackenzie?

HOBBS: Well it was at Wismar. It was a superficial discussion.

DRAYTON: When you say “superficial” what do you mean?

HOBBS: Well, the amount of men operating at a certain place at a certain time; the number of people injured or killed as the case may be.

DRAYTON: Did Mr. Isaacs at any time go with you to visit the area?

HOBBS: Not on that occasion.

DRAYTON: What did he do after this discussion?

HOBBS: He went downstairs and spoke with a few of the Indian families and then he said he was going to see what arrangements could be made to accommodate the people at Mackenzie. And then we had another discussion at three o'clock.

DRAYTON: Before that, did he tell you “I have to telephone the Commissioner of Police, and I have requested the British Army?”

HOBBS: He did not tell me that. He said he spoke to the Commissioner.

DRAYTON: I know it is very difficult for you, Superintendent Hobbs, after this lapse of time in which you participated in the sense that you had a lot to do and to control. If the troops had arrived in the area say four or five hours earlier, would you say that you might have been able to save the day in the sense that fewer houses would have been burnt and fewer people beaten, raped and murdered?

HOBBS: I would say it might have been possible for fewer houses to be burnt.

DRAYTON: You think that the casualties would have been considerably reduced?

HOBBS: I would say within a matter of two or three hours of the morning the great number of casualties had been hospitalised. And my information was 8.40 a.m.

DRAYTON: Let us call it 9.00. By midday casualties had reached its peak and you had been sending reports to Georgetown?

HOBBS: Not me personally because I was out in the field.

DRAYTON: Not you personally, but reports had been going to Georgetown?

Transcripts – Day 17

HOBBS: Yes.

DRAYTON: So if the troops had arrived in the morning, I would say that may have reduced the number of houses burnt and the casualties.

HOBBS: Positively saying, it might have gone on until the 26th.

DRAYTON: The looting and damage as well?

HOBBS: I agree, sir.

DRAYTON: There might possibly have been a reduction of damage and loss?

HOBBS: Yes.

DRAYTON: Superintendent, when you spoke with Mr. Puttock on the Saturday afternoon, did you know about the emergency to be declared the Monday night?

HOBBS: Yes sir.

DRAYTON: Did you know that British troops were on their way?

HOBBS: From where?

DRAYTON: From the U.K. to British Guiana?

HOBBS: Yes, I knew.

DRAYTON: Did it occur to you that perhaps not only the volunteers but also the British Army were on their way on the Saturday or the Sunday?

HOBBS: Yes.

DRAYTON: Did it occur to you that they might have been useful?

HOBBS: No, it didn't. What came to me first was the help nearest and I asked for it.

DRAYTON: Thank you very much.

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MACDONALD: On Saturday and on the Monday at what o'clock were you around the district?

HOBBS: In the morning from the time I arrived till 12.30.

MACDONALD: You must have had a view of the people who were crowding the streets and on Monday particularly?

HOBBS: The time that I was around I operated in two streets particularly – the main street in Wismar and the Valley of Tears and along that route. Later in the afternoon I saw larger crowds passing to and fro in the streets.

MACDONALD: The crowd comprised of residents? There were any strangers to the district?

HOBBS: Well, I can't say I know all the people. It is a district with the population of 18,000 people.

MACDONALD: Some names have been mentioned of what have been described as well known criminal elements during this particular period.

HOBBS: One man by the name of Banga Mary, since I went to Mackenzie. He lived there pending charges from last year. I personally prosecuted him just a month ago. As far as I know he lived there.

MACDONALD: This question of the British troops, Mr Hobbs. You mentioned the possibility would have been lessened if the troops had been there on the night of the 25th and 26th.

HOBBS: A man was killed but his house was not burnt on the arrival of troops. Most houses were burnt on the 25th and up to the 29th.

The Wismar Commission Report

MACDONALD: Would it have made any difference to patrol the Monday morning at 8 o'clock? Would it have made the situation any better?

HOBBS: It is possible. But yet it is true that with the troops there, the damage continued except for this element of casualty, beatings, and so on.

MACDONALD: Yes?

HOBBS: As I said, the largest building was burnt after the arrival of British troops.

MACDONALD: Does this include looting and so on?

HOBBS: Yes.

MACDONALD: The incident of looting came on the Tuesday?

HOBBS: It was on that day.

MOOTOO: Did Demba report to you before the trouble of the 25th that they had lost any quantity of dynamite?

HOBBS: No report of any loss.

MOOTOO: About a month before was there no report at all?

HOBBS: No.

MOOTOO: Do you know if any dynamite was brought into the district?

HOBBS: By the Demerara Bauxite Company?

MOOTOO: By private people?

HOBBS: No.

MOOTOO: On the 23rd did you actually request that only twenty-four members of the Volunteer Force should be embodied?

HOBBS: I gave no figures. I asked for a portion.

MOOTOO: Did you get in touch with Major Langham?

HOBBS: No. I discussed strictly with my authority.

MOOTOO: Do you feel that you could have done better if there was another senior officer to help on the 23rd?

HOBBS: No senior officer in my position could have done better than I.

MOOTOO: Why didn't you ask for more men from the Volunteer Force?

HOBBS: My reason for not asking was that I thought that the patrol would have been enough to act.

MOOTOO: But suppose you had asked for full embodiment and all the volunteers, don't you think now that it would have been better?

HOBBS: Yes.

MOOTOO: And you don't think if Major Langham had been on the scene he would have helped you?

HOBBS: We could have done better if we had more persons.

MOOTOO: But Mr. Hackim who owned Hotel Deluxe – did the police regard him as a suspect? Would you be surprised if any member of the Volunteer Force was on very special terms with him?

HOBBS: Well, I have known the police would be on friendly terms with such an individual.

Transcripts – Day 17

MOOTOO: Do you know if Constable Brown was on friendly terms with Hackim?

HOBBS: I do not know.

MOOTOO: Now, if Mr. Hackim had asked Constable Brown to keep his children during the disturbances, could that have indicated that he was on friendly terms with Hackim?

HOBBS: I cannot say. There might be two reasons for that. One might be a natural discharge of the human element. Or they might have been friendly. I know of incidents whereby Negroes came to the assistance of Indian families out any friendliness attached to it.

MOOTOO: Do you know if Mr. Chapman the owner of the boat had a criminal record?

HOBBS: I do not know.

MOOTOO: Do you know if the local authority garbage van driver had a criminal record? He is at Wismar; I do not know his name.

HOBBS: His name is Brandt, but I do not know if he has a criminal record. I could check on the record if the Commission so desires.

MOOTOO: This information which you gave on the 25th, couldn't this information have been obtained by Mr. Isaacs by telephone. Couldn't the Commissioner have obtained the same information from Georgetown by radio?

HOBBS: Yes.

MOOTOO: So then there was no need to send Mr. Isaacs all the way to Wismar to get the information?

HOBBS: I would say that the information was in Georgetown before Mr. Isaacs arrived.

MOOTOO: He could have consulted Major Langham by phone or radio?

HOBBS: Yes.

MOOTOO: So that the delay in sending Mr. Isaacs was unnecessary?

HOBBS: With all due respects, I would not respond to your suggestion. I would say that Mr. Isaacs' arrival was at such a time. I can only say when I first saw him.

MOOTOO: Do you think that it was necessary for him to come for information which he would have got from you?

HOBBS: You will realise that such a decision as to whether he should have come rests with an authority higher than myself.

MOOTOO: Did any member of the Police Force see anybody setting fire?

HOBBS: I had no report.

MOOTOO: It was done so cleverly that nobody actually saw then in the act?

HOBBS: Yes.

MOOTOO: If the intention of these trouble makers was to kill people do you think that they could have done this just as cleverly without being seen by the police?

HOBBS: I came to the conclusion that there was a strong concentration on the destruction of property and incidentally injuring people which later resulted in death.

MOOTOO: So then their plan was not to kill people but to destroy property. In other words there was an agreement among the trouble-makers that they should destroy property?

HOBBS: They were interested in destroying as much property as possible.

MOOTOO: If their intention was to kill they could have done it just as cleverly?

The Wismar Commission Report

HOBBS: Yes.

MOOTOO: So there was an agreement that they would be after property?

HOBBS: I can only say that I came to the conclusion that they organised it in such a way that property was their concentration.

MOOTOO: Do you think it was organised?

HOBBS: I am positive. It would have been impossible for any group to just move out and take such a wide scale area of Indian property without organisation. I concluded that the party or group of men women or children must have taken into consideration the territory, both up hill and down hill and the difficulty that any force must encounter if any such thing started, as did occur.

MOOTOO: Do you have a list of people who have licensed firearms?

HOBBS: We have a general firearms' register.

MOOTOO: Do you know how many people in Wismar have licensed firearms?

HOBBS: I cannot say, but I can produce the register if the Commission so desires.

MOOTOO: How do people qualify for firearms?

HOBBS: Responsible citizenship.

MOOTOO: Do you know Mrs. Gopie?

HOBBS: Yes, I got to know her when she came back to Wismar.

MOOTOO: Did she make a report about Constable Brown to you?

HOBBS: No. I spoke to her when she came back to Wismar after recovering some of her property.

MOOTOO: What did she tell you?

HOBBS: She told me that she had recovered them from her neighbours, but she claimed that she did not get all her stuff.

MOOTOO: Did she complain to you of Constable Brown?

HOBBS: No, not at all. I saw her in the morning.

MOOTOO: Do you know Constable Brown?

HOBBS: Yes. He is one of my constables.

MOOTOO: Do you know if he was friendly with Mrs. Gopie?

HOBBS: I do not know.

MOOTOO: Was there any report of a loss of one hundred sticks of dynamite?.

HOBBS: No.

CHAIRMAN: Was it never reported to you?

HOBBS: No, I can't remember.

CHAIRMAN: You had special constables, twenty-four volunteers and later ninety volunteers operating in the area?

HOBBS: Yes. Operating between Mackenzie and Wismar.

CHAIRMAN: Now with the exception of two members of the Police Force, the evidence led that no one actually saw looting or arson. Would you not regard that as strange with over one hundred members of

Transcripts – Day 17

the volunteers and Police Force going on regular patrol? With the exception of Mr. Lashley and Mr. Wishart, no one actually saw looting and arson being carried out.

HOBBS: No, I do not consider it strange. As I mentioned before the members of the Volunteer and Police Forces were inadequate.

CHAIRMAN: As far as I am concerned, I feel Assistant Superintendent Lashley saw the situation. He was prepared to deal with it effectively as such situation arose later. You know that the Volunteer Force were drawn from that area by the night of the 23rd and 24th. It appeared as if they had to suppress their own people in defence of the East Indians. It was evident to you that they could not cope with that problem?

HOBBS: I would say generally.

CHAIRMAN: You knew that between 9.45 p.m. on the 22nd and the 23rd of May when three houses were destroyed by fire and two damaged by bomb, and the 24th when two buildings were destroyed, that those were all directed against East Indians. Having regard to violence on the West Coast and East Coast that was going on, did you come to the conclusion that those attacks were directed against East Indians, because of their race?

HOBBS: No, I do not know of that.

CHAIRMAN: Did you hear any rumour in the area that because of the Buxton incident there may be a retaliation? You heard anything about this?

HOBBS: There was no rumour to my knowledge from the area of that whatsoever that there would be racial trouble in that district.

CHAIRMAN: In regard to the Wismar and Christianburg situation all the destruction was against East Indians who owned properties?

HOBBS: That is as far as racial composition is concerned.

CHAIRMAN: Do you agree with me that uprising was against the East Indian minority group in that area? Would you have been able to deal with the situation better if you had taken earlier action?

HOBBS: Not more than I did on that occasion.

CHAIRMAN: Did you consider that possibility?

HOBBS: Yes.

CHAIRMAN: Would you have thought that you could have dealt with it if they were a general uprising?

HOBBS: No better it could have been with the strength available in the district. On February this year we had a discussion with the District Commissioner, the chairman of the district, and myself personally in Wismar.

CHAIRMAN: So you are in charge of the district. You have a minority group in the area. Having regard to the racial composition of the volunteers at your disposal, do you now consider that if there is an uprising against these people you could depend on them to act impartially?

HOBBS: I have contemplated the attacks made against East Indians; that if there were an uprising involving them and Africans, I think nothing better could have been done.

CHAIRMAN: You were aware of the incidents created in 1963 in that area?

HOBBS: No.

CHAIRMAN: So you cannot say that it was all directed.

HOBBS: I was not in the district during that time.

CHAIRMAN: In Section C, Christianburg, were the East Indians attacked a little later in that area?

HOBBS: Yes.

The Wismar Commission Report

CHAIRMAN: These people were rounded up by the police and volunteers and taken to the station on the 25th May?

HOBBS: I did not direct that in any particular way. The patrols were sent out to rescue people everywhere.

CHAIRMAN: With the help of the British Army people were able to cross to Mackenzie, and arrangements were being made for them to evacuate to Georgetown. Patrols were not sent to help people in two sections in a lonely area. Why?

HOBBS: I personally have no knowledge of that.

CHAIRMAN: You didn't send the patrol to evacuate those people?

HOBBS: I sent the patrol generally through the whole district.

CHAIRMAN: Did you send them to evacuate those people?

HOBBS: I didn't send them in any particular area.

CHAIRMAN: It would be obvious by that time that Indians were being beaten and their places were being looted and they were trying to get out of the area.

HOBBS: I sent the patrol throughout the district.

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DRAYTON: Were you satisfied that the best organisations world-wide do not always obtain correct information. There is a failure in obtaining necessary details of information. Such a disaster as I referred to had a type or source in conception. I would not follow this up. We are looking at the situation now. You say that there was some organisation – about some plan. Do you think to yourself that if such information could have been obtained on Friday or Saturday?

HOBBS: I suppose so.

DRAYTON: In fact your source had not been warned, so after all you didn't hear any rumours about the attack on the East Indians on Friday or Saturday.

HOBBS: Not at all. I had no communication.

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SHEPHERD: Are you positive that it was organised? What do you mean? Are you equally positive it was a plan?

HOBBS: I would say it was discussed and it was a set up.

SHEPHERD: What do you mean by an organised plan?

HOBBS: To having known which of the houses were occupied by East Indians on One Mile, Half mile and Valley of Tears. They must have been surveyed properly.

SHEPHERD: The primary object of this plan was to destroy properties belonging to Indians?

HOBBS: I came to that conclusion.

SHEPHERD: Having regard to the three or four separate communities scattered about, it would have meant requisition of how many troops in that area?

HOBBS: I would say eight or nine hundred troops.

SHEPHERD: Probably there are not so many U.K. troops in this country today.

HOBBS: I do not know.

SHEPHERD: You never had more than two platoons British troops?

HOBBS: At no time at Mackenzie.

Transcripts – Day 17

SHEPHERD: Have you any knowledge of a man walking around with a plan?

HOBBS: Not at all.

SHEPHERD: You have not any idea of who this individual might be?

HOBBS: I have never heard of the individual.

SHEPHERD: Could it have been in your opinion spontaneous combustion?

HOBBS: I was surprised.

SHEPHERD: I suppose you have heard of the term “B.B.B”?

HOBBS: I have never heard of it before. A witness gave evidence here and it was first I heard of it.

SHEPHERD: You heard no rumours before the 23rd or 24th of B.B.B.?

HOBBS: There was common gossip; no rumours.

SHEPHERD: It was known in Wismar of the violence on the East and West Coast and in Georgetown?

HOBBS: I would say yes.

SHEPHERD: Were there any rumours that the African community was suffering?

HOBBS: Yes.

SHEPHERD: It was clear there was no plan to murder the East Indians. Is that so?

HOBBS: I would say so.

SHEPHERD: It cannot be denied that there were cases of rape?

HOBBS: No.

SHEPHERD: Is it true that the police and volunteers stood by and did not prevent it. Was that reported?

HOBBS: No such report, sir, was made to me. The only time I heard that was when I read the newspapers.

SHEPHERD: You don't believe that the police stood by and did nothing?

HOBBS: Not at all.

SHEPHERD: It is curious that what did happen is what we now know as “B.B.B.”. There was no organised plan to murder?

HOBBS: No.

SHEPHERD: The casualties considering the extent and intensity of the disturbances were particularly light?

HOBBS: Particularly so.

SHEPHERD: The fatalities were Mr. Bridgewater and Paul Nirgin who died on the 25th and Bridgewater was on the 26th. So the arrival of British troops did not save Bridgewater?

HOBBS: No.

SHEPHERD: Frankly, the security forces were mainly escorting people?

HOBBS: Yes.

SHEPHERD: Frankly if they had been ten times the number they would not have been able to prevent the wholesale looting if that had been the intention of the mobs?

HOBBS: I would say that if there was an increase of troops, many buildings that were burnt, particularly the Wismar waterfront, could have been saved.

The Wismar Commission Report

SHEPHERD: Do you agree with me that the saving of properties, compared with the safety of lives, was insignificant?

HOBBS: Yes. When I realised that there was an attack on life, I abandoned all attention from property to life.

SHEPHERD: The destruction of flimsy wooden houses and few personal belongings of the poor people of the community is a small problem compared with the loss of life.

HOBBS: I agree. I would like to amend that suggestion. There were some very valuable buildings; they were not flimsy, but despite their value, one's life to me was more than all the buildings.

SHEPHERD: Now, it has occurred to some people, Superintendent, that except for Superintendent Lashley who was obviously trained in mob control and Lieutenant Wishart who was with some patrols, that the police and volunteers did not seem to abhor looting, even when it was taking place wholesale?

HOBBS: All officers of the B.G. Volunteer Force are trained in mob control. I have been in charge of the Riot Squad of this colony during the years '60 to '62. As such, I consider myself competent to deal with any mobs, and the mobs that were obtained at Wismar on the 25th, 26th and 27th had to be dealt with by individual patrols as they met with mobs. Mobs were centred on streets as also any incidents of looting. The patrol coming up upon an actual act of looting was confronted with one form of action which was to arrest such looters, and in event of any of them attempting to escape to open fire on them. Such action was taken by Superintendent Lashley and Lieutenant Wishart, and other members of the Volunteer Force took similar action during the disturbances.

SHEPHERD: Now, the looting in general was a sequel of the 24th, 25th and the 26th?

HOBBS: Particularly the 26th?

SHEPHERD: This was because of the general disarray of houses and shops which were all there to come and loot?

HOBBS: In some cases shops which were open in general were looted, especially Chinese shops.

SHEPHERD: It has been suggested that your troops or police at any rate did not come across cases of looting actually taking place; so the burning did not interfere, for the primary duty was to save life. I want you to take this step by step.

HOBBS: I agree.

SHEPHERD: Secondly, they would open fire only if they saw crime being committed or a criminal was evading arrest.

HOBBS: If a looter is seen running away he could have been shot. That was the case of man named August English who was shot and killed. There was another man named Haynes who was also shot running away with loot. Sampson was also shot.

SHEPHERD: Thirdly, it was the duty of the police and volunteers, with the same powers of police, if they recovered the loot to take it to the police station where it was waiting to be claimed? Is that correct?

HOBBS: That's correct. Up to this day there are still on hand articles to be claimed.

SHEPHERD: So it is very possible that a volunteer or a policeman might be seen with loot in his hands, when he is in fact taking it to the police station, and since these events, people have been trying to recover their property?

HOBBS: Yes sir. I have personally conducted some of these distressed persons to the remains of their homes and they recovered some things from neighbours who had saved than.

SHEPHERD: And were some of these neighbours Africans?

HOBBS: In every case.

Transcripts – Day 17

SHEPHERD: And did any of them help by guarding their property?

HOBBS: Yes. I have known one case in which I was contacted from Georgetown about the belongings of an individual whose property had been rescued by three Africans neighbours beginning from a fridge to the smallest of the furniture. The articles were later sent to Georgetown.

SHEPHERD: Now I want to come to the question of strangers. I heard you mention Banga Mary.

HOBBS: To my opinion he was not a stranger to the district.

SHEPHERD: You had prosecuted him a month before. On what offence?

HOBBS: For malicious appropriation.

SHEPHERD: Were there persons in the crowd that you did not recognise?

HOBBS: I am not familiar with the persons at Wismar.

SHEPHERD: We have evidence that young men in uniform were entering Wismar? In white shirts and black pants?

HOBBS: I saw men in white shirts and black pants but not in groups.

SHEPHERD: Did you see them doing anything?

HOBBS: Not at all.

SHEPHERD: By the 25th Monday not only by the evening British troops had arrived, but during the night more British troops had arrived.

HOBBS: Yes.

SHEPHERD: But other important strangers had come to the neighbourhood. Did any politicians arrive to see what was going on?

HOBBS: On the 26th I saw Mr. Burnham and Robert Jordan.

SHEPHERD: On the 26th? You didn't see them on the Monday?

HOBBS: No.

SHEPHERD: Had they any reasons to be there in the neighbourhood before Tuesday and after Friday?

HOBBS: As I mentioned before I am not certain but for Mr. Burnham I believe he was not there before the 26th.

SHEPHERD: What was the difference in the situation when they arrived on the 26th?

HOBBS: There was no change.

SHEPHERD: What were Mr. Burnham and Mr. Jordan doing?

HOBBS: I was just leaving the Demba office when I saw Mr. Burnham and Mr. Jordan in a car, and the car stopped and Mr. Burnham asked me if I was having a difficult time.

SHEPHERD: What did Mr. Burnham say?

HOBBS: He asked me, "Superintendent, you seem to be having a difficult time." I said that was true.

SHEPHERD: And that in effect was your conversation with Mr. Burnham?

HOBBS: Yes.

SHEPHERD: What was Mr. Burnham doing in Christianburg-Mackenzie as far as you know?

HOBBS: I couldn't say.

The Wismar Commission Report

SHEPHERD: And other important visitors on the 26th as far as you know?

HOBBS: None.

SHEPHERD: Mention was made of a night patrol. Was it in order long before the happening?

HOBBS: Yes sir.

SHEPHERD: Explain to the Commission what took place before the 22nd by night patrol.

HOBBS: There was a normal night patrol; two constables during the early part of the night and two constables in the later part of the night.

SHEPHERD: Were they armed?

HOBBS: Not armed.

SHEPHERD: When did they first start on the 24th, Sunday night? When were their numbers first increased?

HOBBS: After the incident on the 13th May. I increased my patrol from Mackenzie every night from the incident on the 13th May, to one officer and two constables.

SHEPHERD: What was that incident on the 13th May?

HOBBS: On the 13th a loud explosion was heard at 346 and 347 Mackenzie.

SHEPHERD: Any damage was done?

HOBBS: Some explosive device was thrown into an open yard.

SHEPHERD: After you increased the strength of your patrol, you decided on Sunday night that you must have an armed patrol with the volunteers? After the experience of Sunday night you decided Monday night patrol must be even stronger?

HOBBS: Yes.

SHEPHERD: And you asked for full embodiment? And that was granted what time?

HOBBS: My request for full embodiment was shortly before eight o'clock the Monday morning.

SHEPHERD: And that full embodiment would have been enough from 7.00 p.m. on Monday night? Was it?

HOBBS: It wasn't. Full embodiment took place before that time.

SHEPHERD: So on Monday night you had a further strength on your patrol?

HOBBS: There was.

CHAIRMAN: Mr. Shepherd, you were examining this witness before on this matter.

SHEPHERD: Thank you very much.

MOOTOO: Could you let us know the first set of evacuees who came to Wismar police station?

HOBBS: I do not know. I was in the field dealing with fire in the Valley of Tears.

MOOTOO: What time?

HOBBS: When I arrived it was about seven o'clock.

MOOTOO: At what time did the first set of evacuees leave for Mackenzie?

HOBBS: The general evacuation started on the evening after the U.K. troops had arrived; about 6.30.

Transcripts – Day 17

MOOTOO: What sort of refreshment did you provide?

HOBBS: I did not provide any refreshments. The police headquarters prepared something for the evacuees.

MOOTOO: Do you know on the whole that the African people are easy-going and friendly type?

HOBBS: With the Indians?

MOOTOO: On the whole?

HOBBS: Wismar is one of the few districts of the colony with a mixed population – the good the bad and the indifferent.

MOOTOO: Were there many friendly Africans amongst the people at Wismar?

HOBBS: Even among the good, the bad and the indifferent you would find friendly people.

MOOTOO: Do you say that they needed somebody to incite them?

HOBBS: No. Because of the mixture you could find a good person amongst the bad.

MOOTOO: Do you know if Mr. Robert Jordan incited them? If he did, do you know?

HOBBS: No.

MOOTOO: You said that none of the damage was done before Monday 25th?

HOBBS: Yes.

MOOTOO: By that time a full embodiment of the Volunteer Force had not yet taken place which means that a full embodiment of the Volunteer Force and the British troops arrived after the bulk of the damage had been done. They arrived too late. There were orders for the full embodiment of the volunteers but these were received too late, and orders for the British troops to arrive in Wismar were made too late?

HOBBS: I wouldn't say that.

MOOTOO: If they had come earlier would they have been able to save some properties?

HOBBS: I would say yes.

MOOTOO: Which means that they arrived too late?

HOBBS: Yes, I would say so.

MOOTOO: The order for the full embodiment of the Volunteer Force was received too late and order for the British troops to arrive in Wismar was too late?

HOBBS: I could not say.

MOOTOO: But you would say that they arrived too late?

HOBBS: I would say that too arrived late.

MOOTOO: Thank you.

—

CHAIRMAN: Mr. Hobbs, you may step down. You have no objections to Mr. Hobbs remaining?

PRATAP N. SINGH: No.

—

CHAIRMAN: We will now recall Colonel Celso De Freitas.

—

COLONEL CELSO DE FREITAS is recalled:

The Wismar Commission Report

RAMSAROOP: Do you have in your possession a record a confidential and private report of occurrences during and covering the period before and during the disturbance at Wismar-Christianburg?

DE FREITAS: Not before. From the 23rd May.

RAMSAROOP: Kindly submit it please. It will be marked as Exhibit "DD".

SHEPHERD: This is a report submitted to you by a subordinate officer Major Langham, the officer commanding the "D" company of the Volunteer Force at Mackenzie and it covers the period from 22nd May to September?

DE FREITAS: Yes.

SHEPHERD: And the day of the commanding officer's report was on the 10th October?

DE FREITAS: Yes, on the 10th or 8th.

SHEPHERD: So this confidential report is from a junior officer, the officer commanding the "D" company of the Volunteer Force?

DE FREITAS: Yes.

SHEPHERD: I think, Mr. Chairman, that such reports should be kept *in camera*. Sir, I mention this, in case it is desired that details be obtained, you should perhaps consult your learned counsel as to whether it should be taken into account.

CHAIRMAN: Yes, his advice would he sought.

DRAYTON: Colonel DeFreitas, was this report sent to you?

DE FREITAS: Yes, there is nothing sinister in withholding this report from the Commission. It is a confidential report requested by me from my commanding officer for the information of the Commission. As a matter of fact, every one of my commanding officers had been requested by me to submit a report of incidents that occurred in the area under their command. Reports are sent down and I go through them, but only the factual reports are taken into consideration. No opinions are asked for, or taken into consideration except at commanding officers' conference. Major Langham's reports which I submitted to His Excellency the Governor and also the one you have got are the only ones dispatched on the 23rd, 24th and 25th. This additional one gives a report of families as well as expenditure and this information was added to the original report.

DRAYTON: Mr. Shepherd, precisely what do you mean when you say that such reports should be kept *in camera*?

SHEPHERD: Well, sir, that can be answered in two ways. Naturally, you, sir, and your fellow Commissioners would like explanations particularly on methods and that would be information which should be taken *in camera* and not for public knowledge. The report itself should not be published, in my submission, but as the other report takes this form, in my submission, it should not be included as an appendix to the Commission's report because it is confidential communication. The publication of this report would destroy the intimate relationship which exists between the Commander and the Colonel. It will also destroy the morale, discipline and fitness of the Volunteer Force. It is only for that reason that, in my submission, the report should not be made public. Perhaps, your learned counsel would advise you further.

DRAYTON: This does not mean that relevant sections could not be quoted in our final report to justify or to back up any conclusions that we might have arrived at. It may not be prudent or necessary for the entire report to be included as an appendix to this Commission's report, but I feel that if there are relevant

Transcripts – Day 17

sections or passages in this so-called confidential report which need to be quoted in this Commission's report to back up conclusions, then they will have to be quoted.

SHEPHERD: I have here evidence to prove this procedure was adopted by the Wynn Parry's Commission. Their learned counsel had submitted that they exclude public sittings when such reports were given, and I expect that this procedure would be recommended by your learned counsel. I mention this because as far as I know that statement gives the necessary aspects during this period. Perhaps one of the questions which would not be good will see the officer in a different light if this document were made public.

DRAYTON: Mr. Chairman, did you know our recent statement said that this report is being sent to the Governor or head of administration about happenings at Wismar? The whole of this should be published.

PRATAP N. SINGH: I think this report that the officer had given was not correct. You have to give the reasons. We would have to publish this.

SHEPHERD: Would you give me the personal particulars of the evidence you should want published, whether you recognise this or not?

DE FREITAS: If I may request that the publishing of this document may damage the opinion in which this officer is held. All the information I had, I put it to you.

DRAYTON: What I will say, at least, you should have a listing of this confidential report.

CHAIRMAN: We will now recall Mr. Rohit Persaud.

ROHIT PERSAUD is recalled and he states as follows:

RAMSAROOP: Could you inform this Commission of the names of the *post mortem* performed at Mackenzie on 7th July, 1964.

ROHIT PERSAUD: One – Adjit Alli; two – [name illegible]; three – Morris Bacchus; four – Victor Kero; five – Robert Khan.

RAMSAROOP: What were the results of the *post mortem*?

ROHIT PERSAUD: Head injuries and lacerations of the brain. Victor Kero had stab wounds. I have a chart for one Sheila Prashad who was admitted on 3rd June and discharged 28th June. One Ramnarace was admitted on 26th May and discharged 8th June.

RAMSAROOP: How many persons were treated at Wismar?

ROHIT PERSAUD: 26th, 27th, 28th, 29th. Fourteen persons were treated and sent away; thirteen admitted.

RAMSAROOP: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mr. Persaud. Call Sergeant William Chalmers.

SERGEANT WILLIAM CHALMERS is sworn in, and he states as follows:

RAMSAROOP: You are Police Sergeant Number 4825?

The Wismar Commission Report

CHALMERS: Yes.

RAMSAROOP: Where are presently stationed?

CHALMERS: Wismar police station.

RAMSAROOP: And are you subordinate officer in charge of that station?

CHALMERS: Yes.

RAMSAROOP: About 12.10 a.m. on the 25th May, 1964 were you on patrol in the district?

CHALMERS: Yes. In company with Constables 6238 Roberts and 6243 Griffith. Whilst on patrol, we saw a concrete building of Doreen Sookram on fire. The constables and myself formed a bucket brigade and we tried to put out the fire unsuccessfully.

RAMSAROOP: You carried out investigations as to the source of this fire?

CHALMERS: Yes, on the spot.

RAMSAROOP: Did you report this matter to anyone?

CHALMERS: Yes. To Mr. Hobbs.

RAMSAROOP: And this incident was going on with any other incidents?

CHALMERS: Yes. Shortly after, I received information of another fire in First Alley. I then went to the scene and the house was already burning.

RAMSAROOP: This was reported to Mr. Hobbs? Now at 8.15 on the 25th did you receive a telephone call?

CHALMERS: Yes. The person said, "Chalmers, that 's'* you did last night with the soldiers and the police going around making yourself a 's'* , we are going to take you today. You did not see what's happening on the West Coast and other places?" I tried to get the name of the person speaking but the person put down the phone. [*Editor's note: * Obscenity*]

RAMSAROOP: And about 10.15 a.m. on the 25th, Superintendent Hobbs and a party of policemen and yourself put out another fire?

CHALMERS: Yes. That was in the Valley of Tears.

RAMSAROOP: Was there any incident after that?

CHALMERS: Whilst there we received information that a man was lying dead.

RAMSAROOP: Where?

CHALMERS: In a trench in the Valley of Tears. His name is Paul Nirgin. I escorted the body to the Mackenzie Hospital where it was stored.

RAMSAROOP: Now, about 1.00 p.m. on Monday the 25th you were in company with Ramnaresh.

CHALMERS: Yes. He pointed out a man Robert Dayman. He said the man had beaten him. I escorted him and took him to the police station.

RAMSAROOP: Did you make inquiries?

CHALMERS: Yes. The man was subsequently charged.

RAMSAROOP: On the 25th May, around 1.25 p.m. did you go anywhere? Did you see anyone by the name of Mohamed Hackim?

CHALMERS: Yes, Mohamed Hackim and Inshanally Khan approached Mr. Hobbs. They all asked for police protection. In fact, we dealt with Inshanally Khan first. He said he had his wife and children in the housing scheme and he was afraid that anyone might have hurt them, and he was asking for police assistance. Hackim, at the same time, said he had some money and jewellery and other property at his

Transcripts – Day 17

hotel. In company with Sergeant Simon, Constable Martin, I left Wismar police station in the police jeep driven by Constable London for Silvertown, Wismar, to the hotel of Mohamed Hackim. Hackim, his wife, Constable Martin, and myself went in the hotel. Hackim collected his property and we rejoined the jeep. We then went back on to the street which took us up to the housing scheme, and handed over Hackim and his wife to the volunteers who were patrolling the area.

RAMSAROOP: Why did you have to do this?

CHALMERS: Because we were going up to Inshanally Khan's place which was in the housing scheme.

RAMSAROOP: Did you go to Inshanally's place?

CHALMERS: Yes, to remove his family. He was in the jeep too.

RAMSAROOP: Was his family relieved?

CHALMERS: Yes. They were safe, and were brought to the station.

RAMSAROOP: You returned to the station and you saw over 1,200 families?

CHALMERS: Yes.

RAMSAROOP: Now, Tuesday 26th May, while you were on duty at the station's inquiries office, you received several reports of arson, assaults, and damage to property?

CHALMERS: Yes.

RAMSAROOP: Now, have you ever seen personally anyone burning houses, or beating or assaulting Indian persons?

CHALMERS: No.

SHEPHERD: How long have you been in the division?

CHALMERS: Three years.

SHEPHERD: How long have you been in the Police Force?

CHALMERS: Twenty-one years.

SHEPHERD: Are you well-known to the inhabitants of Wismar-Christianburg?

CHALMERS: Yes.

SHEPHERD: And you know them pretty well?

CHALMERS: Yes, pretty well.

SHEPHERD: You know Kamal Singh? He said he used to collect tickets on the R.H. Carr? Is that right?

CHALMERS: Yes sir.

SHEPHERD: He is presently unemployed?

CHALMERS: I don't know.

SHEPHERD: And he is living at Diamond Long Dam?

CHALMERS: I don't know about that.

SHEPHERD: Anyway, he says he knows you.

CHALMERS: Yes sir.

SHEPHERD: On Saturday 23rd May, he said he saw you with Mr. Jordan and three other men. Is that right?

The Wismar Commission Report

CHALMERS: He is not correct.

SHEPHERD: He mentioned one of the others – Mr. King. Do you know Mr. King?

CHALMERS: Yes sir.

SHEPHERD: He is the overseer. Kamal Singh says you were in conversation with Mr. King near the stelling, and he says that Mr. Jordan said to you, "What are you waiting for: why don't you go and rape the Indians?" Did any such conversation take place?

CHALMERS: No sir.

SHEPHERD: Did you hear anyone at any time that day in May say anything to that effect?

CHALMERS: No, I did not hear anything like that.

SHEPHERD: Is it within your knowledge that people were looting Bissoon's store?

CHALMERS: I didn't see anyone looting.

SHEPHERD: Were you asked to go to Bissoon's store?

CHALMERS: No time.

SHEPHERD: According to my knowledge, you arrived there and people were running about. You said "Alright!" and you started to collect terylene shirts and shorts and you carried them back to the police station.

CHALMERS: That is not true.

SHEPHERD: Hackim Khan said that he was at the police station and you said "Let me have something," which means you are asking for some money.

CHALMERS: No. That is not true.

SHEPHERD: Did he at any time offer you a price to save his property?

CHALMERS: No.

SHEPHERD: Have you had occasion to investigate any of Hackim Khan's affairs?

CHALMERS: Several times.

SHEPHERD: For what purpose?

CHALMERS: Receiving.

SHEPHERD: Receiving what?

CHALMERS: Contraband goods.

SHEPHERD: For the offence of smuggling? Just look at the record. [*Shows witness the police record*] Is this the man?

CHALMERS: Yes sir.

SHEPHERD: You know a man named John Jagdat?

CHALMERS: Yes.

SHEPHERD: Is he employed at Demba?

CHALMERS: Yes.

SHEPHERD: Now it is alleged that he made a complaint to you about some offence and that you told him "Don't put your nose in this." Can you remember?

CHALMERS: No sir.

Transcripts – Day 17

SHEPHERD: Did he ask you anything?

CHALMERS: For the three years Jagdat has never made any report to me.

SHEPHERD: Thank you.

PRATAP N. SINGH: Did you say you saw crowds?

CHALMERS: Several times.

PRATAP N. SINGH: What were they like?

CHALMERS: Just looking ordinary on the road.

PRATAP N. SINGH: When was this?

CHALMERS: Monday morning.

PRATAP N. SINGH: Were they a peaceful crowd?

CHALMERS: They were going on ordinarily.

PRATAP N. SINGH: Well then, they were peaceful, or not peaceful?

CHALMERS: I would say they were peaceful.

PRATAP N. SINGH: Crowds of about how many people?

CHALMERS: In some cases, five or six.

PRATAP N. SINGH: What were they doing?

CHALMERS: Walking along the road and sometimes they stood up on the road.

PRATAP N. SINGH: Doing what?

CHALMERS: I couldn't say what they were doing.

PRATAP N. SINGH: Did you order them to disperse?

CHALMERS: I spoke to them and they walked away.

PRATAP N. SINGH: The peaceful crowd that you met and spoke to, what did you tell them – “Break up that crowd; go away?” Why you told them that?

CHALMERS: Well, I know it was unlawful for three or four persons to be standing.

PRATAP N. SINGH: So you always thought it is unlawful for three or four persons standing together. It would be unlawful for them to stand and talk?

CHALMERS: Yes, I would say so.

PRATAP N. SINGH: Why?

CHALMERS: Because I know it was unlawful.

PRATAP N. SINGH: Where did you get that knowledge from?

CHALMERS: During my course of training.

PRATAP N. SINGH: You were told that it was unlawful for three or four persons to stand up on the road and carry on a conversation?

CHALMERS: If I were to see a crowd of more than four I would ask them to disperse.

PRATAP N. SINGH: What about a crowd of ten? Would you ask them to disperse?

The Wismar Commission Report

CHALMERS: I would ask them to leave because it was an offence for groups of more than four standing at the road side.

PRATAP N. SINGH: How many times did you disperse crowds?

CHALMERS: Twice.

PRATAP N. SINGH: How long were you on patrol on 25th May?

CHALMERS: I cannot remember.

PRATAP N. SINGH: How many square miles did you cover on that day?

CHALMERS: I don't know.

PRATAP N. SINGH: Four persons were placed on trial and convicted. Do you know if one Ramnarace was put on trial?

CHALMERS: I don't know.

MOOTOO: At what time did you go on patrol duty on the 25th?

CHALMERS: Around 11.30 p.m. on the 24th I went on duty.

MOOTOO: I am speaking about the 25th.

CHALMERS: Well, the 25th saw me on patrol. I went right through the night and finished about five o'clock on the morning of the 25th.

MOOTOO: After that where were you?

CHALMERS: At my quarters.

MOOTOO: When did you go back on duty again on the 25th?

CHALMERS: At six o'clock in the morning I was at the station, and I went out again around seven o'clock.

MOOTOO: How long were you on patrol duty?

CHALMERS: For about twenty minutes mobile patrol, and then I went back to the station.

MOOTOO: How many mobile patrols did you do on the 25th?

CHALMERS: I can't remember.

MOOTOO: But you were on patrol duty what time?

CHALMERS: Not all the time; we took breaks

MOOTOO: How long did this other patrol duty last? Did it last the whole day?

CHALMERS: Throughout the day, the night, and the following Tuesday.

MOOTOO: According to the evidence given by Superintendent Hobbs, we were told that the bulk of the damage was done on the 25th; the most between eight and eleven o'clock, and you were on duty during that time, and you said just now that you didn't see any large crowds, any beating or burning? Is that correct?

CHALMERS: That's correct.

MOOTOO: Thank you very much.

SHEPHERD: This Exhibit "G" is the list of persons charged for offences committed on the 25th to the 27th of May. Are they all Africans or don't you know?

CHALMERS: They are all Africans.

Transcripts – Day 17

SHEPHERD: Are any of the names familiar to you? You have been there for three years?

CHALMERS: Yes sir.

SHEPHERD: Did you have anything to do with the rest of these forty-five Africans?

CHALMERS: No, I didn't.

SHEPHERD: Are all the complaints from police constables or subordinate officers?

CHALMERS: Constables and subordinate officers.

SHEPHERD: Is it for the policemen on duty at the station to note all occurrences and make out a chart where the offence had been committed?

CHALMERS: Yes sir.

SHEPHERD: On the 24th of May, that is Sunday of course, it was said that you went to Half Mile and you were standing in the street partly addressing everyone. In this report you said that everything was alright. Did you know if anything like that occurred on the Sunday or any other time. Can you remember?

CHALMERS: No.

SHEPHERD: Can you suggest any reason why Kamal Singh can tell this lie about you?

CHALMERS: No.

SHEPHERD: Now do you know a person by the name of Richard Bholai Singh know as Richard Lowe. He has a general merchant grocery store.

CHALMERS: Yes.

SHEPHERD: Well now, on the Thursday 21st of May, he said he saw you in a jeep, about eight o'clock in the morning and you and your driver offered Jordan a ride in the police jeep. Is it true?

CHALMERS: No.

SHEPHERD: Did you offer anybody a lift at any time?

CHALMERS: Yes, but unless they have to be taken to the police station.

SHEPHERD: Now, I want to refer to Mohamed Hackim Khan? What sort of place he had? Was it a hotel?

CHALMERS: Yes.

SHEPHERD: And he is also known as Shick, and the police could be seen there some times.

CHALMERS: Very often.

SHEPHERD: Is that a place where the jeep always picked up the police.

CHALMERS: No.

SHEPHERD: On Sunday 24th, did Mohamed Hackim get in touch with you on the telephone? Can you remember?

CHALMERS: I can't remember.

SHEPHERD: Was Hakim's place burnt and looted?

CHALMERS: Yes.

SHEPHERD: Do you know a person by the name of Bissoon. Was his store burnt and looted?

CHALMERS: Yes. His place was burnt during the morning hours.

SHEPHERD: When was that?

The Wismar Commission Report

CHALMERS: That was on Monday 25th of May.

SHEPHERD: Did you go that way?

CHALMERS: No.

SHEPHERD: What happened to Hackim Khan? He had a hotel and a store.

CHALMERS: His hotel was burnt on the afternoon of the 25th May.

SHEPHERD: He has also a store.

CHALMERS: No. Another person's shop.

SHEPHERD: Was a store in the place?

CHALMERS: A tailor shop which he rented to someone

SHEPHERD: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN: Thank you Sergeant Chalmers. We will now recall Mr. Kamal Singh.

KAMAL SINGH is recalled:

SHEPHERD: This evidence that you gave about Sergeant Chalmers, Corporal King and Festus Adams I heard it is not the truth.

KAMAL SINGH: Yes sir?

SHEPHERD: Did you see Sergeant Chalmers?

KAMAL SINGH: I saw him.

SHEPHERD: Did you have any trouble with any police?

KAMAL SINGH: What sort of trouble?

SHEPHERD: About selling plantains over the price.

KAMAL SINGH: No sir.

SHEPHERD: Perhaps for a very long time?

KAMAL SINGH: Did I kill somebody? I don't understand.

SHEPHERD: Are you known as Sonny Boy?

KAMAL SINGH: Yes sir.

SHEPHERD: According to the regulation you were selling sweet potatoes and plantains over the price and had a few convictions.

KAMAL SINGH: I can't remember.

SHEPHERD: Some ten or twelve years ago?

KAMAL SINGH: No. That is not the truth.

PRATAP N. SINGH: Did Sergeant Chalmers ever charge you? Do you have any grievance against him? Did he ever charge any of your family?

KAMAL SINGH: No.

PRATAP N. SINGH: Have you ever been in trouble with the police?

Transcripts – Day 17

KAMAL SINGH: I was charged for cursing.

—

CHAIRMAN: Mr. Singh, you may step down. We will now recall Mr. Mohamed Hackim Khan.

—

MOHAMED HACKIM KHAN is recalled:

SHEPHERD: Now Mohamed Hackim Khan, you keep a hotel of ill repute, is that so?

HACKIM KHAN: I don't know about that.

SHEPHERD: Your hotel – did it ever have any trouble with the police?

HACKIM KHAN: No.

SHEPHERD: Were you ever charged for assault by Magistrate Fraser?

HACKIM KHAN: No.

SHEPHERD: Were you born at Railway Street, Kitty?

HACKIM KHAN: I was born at De Willem, West Coast Demerara.

SHEPHERD: Were you ever convicted by Justice Bollers?

HACKIM KHAN: That is not true.

SHEPHERD: How long have your hotel been in existence?

HACKIM KHAN: Since 1956.

—

PRATAP N. SINGH: Now, you know you have to renew your license. Was your application ever refused?

HACKIM KHAN: No time at all.

PRATAP N. SINGH: At any time during those disturbances did you speak to Corporal Brown and ask him to take your family to safety?

HACKIM KHAN: No.

—

DRAYTON: Do you know where he was on the 24th-25th?

HACKIM KHAN: I know he was living at Mackenzie.

DRAYTON: You cannot just send your family to a man's house and not let him know they are coming. Did you speak to Mr. Brown at any time during May?

HACKIM KHAN: I cannot remember.

DRAYTON: Did you see Mr. Brown at anytime during May?

HACKIM KHAN: I cannot remember.

DRAYTON: I am trying to find out whether you saw Constable Brown during the month of May.

HACKIM KHAN: I cannot remember.

DRAYTON: Have you been a good friend of Constable Brown?

HACKIM KHAN: Yes.

DRAYTON: For you to send your family to a man's home and tell the man's family to keep your family you have to be very friendly with him.

The Wismar Commission Report

HACKIM KHAN: I never visited Mr. Brown's home. I just knew him by speaking to him.

DRAYTON: Why, of all the people, did you choose Constable Brown as the person to give protection to your family?

HACKIM KHAN: Because he was living near to station and I felt that was the safest place.

DRAYTON: You were not friendly with Mr. Brown?

HACKIM KHAN: As I told you I never visited Mr. Brown's house.

DRAYTON: When last did he come into your shop?

HACKIM KHAN: I cannot remember.

DRAYTON: Do you know Mrs. Kowlessar Gopie?

HACKIM KHAN: I just know her by living in the village.

DRAYTON: Did she visit your hotel regularly?

HACKIM KHAN: No.

MOOTOO: How often did the police at Wismar frequent your hotel?

HACKIM KHAN: Whenever they were on patrol.

MOOTOO: Do they come to you as customers? While on duty?

HACKIM KHAN: They do not come to buy.

MOOTOO: When they are off duty do they come to your hotel?

HACKIM KHAN: Yes, whenever they want something.

MOOTOO: Do they use it as a brothel?

HACKIM KHAN: I don't know it as a brothel; I know it as a hotel

CHAIRMAN: Thank you Mr. Khan. We will now recall Mr. Samuel Ramlochan.

SAMUEL RAMLOCHAN is recalled:

SHEPHERD: When you gave evidence you said that the police jeep with Superintendent Hobbs and other police came along and the police strolled along and made no attempt to arrest anyone. On another occasion you said that the police jeep PP 91 had a man name Reece who came out and then they went away. You remember giving evidence and you said that the police did not care and they just continued patrolling?

RAMLOCHAN: I guess so.

SHEPHERD: This evidence is found to be untrue, and I suggest that you are telling a lie because you have been in trouble with the police.

RAMLOCHAN: I cannot remember.

SHEPHERD: You remember being convinced in 1954 for exposing your person and you were reprimanded and discharged. How about the conviction on the same day for disorderly behaviour and indecent language? A fine of twenty-six dollars or two months hard labour, and five years later in 1959 you were convicted by Mr. Parsram, the magistrate, for disorderly behaviour and was fined fifty-two dollars?

Transcripts – Day 17

RAMLOCHAN: I remember that. It was a Phawah festival and the man came into my shop and he asked me to give him drinks free, and he then assaulted me because I did not give him.

—

DRAYTON: Mr. Ramlochan, you sometimes take a drink, do you?

RAMLOCHAN: Occasionally.

DRAYTON: Sometimes you take more than you can carry?

RAMLOCHAN: Well when we are celebrating a festival I drink to enjoy myself.

DRAYTON: Have you been in trouble recently with the police within the last three years, apart from those offences that Mr. Shepherd just mentioned?

RAMLOCHAN: No sir.

—

CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mr. Ramlochan. We will now adjourn for today.

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