

Transcripts – Day 3

Day 3 – Wednesday, 18 November 1964

CHAIRMAN: This session is now convened.

SUGRIM SINGH: Members of the Commission, I propose calling Mr. Rosane, Personnel Officer of the Demerara Bauxite Company.

CARTER: Before Mr. Rosane is called let me make two points. The first point is that I hope by now you could have got some of the transcripts for Monday. But I understand it is not forthcoming. I think it is important that sometime we get the transcripts so that we can correct them, and I hope by this weekend we could get a number of those transcripts and over the weekend we can correct them and any amendments can be raised on Monday morning.

That is the first point. I don't know what the position is. I understand from Mr. Beekie that they are not quite ready. They are not up-to-date. Even if we can't get up-to-date at least possibly for the first few days, but if it runs on too long, the evidence would not be fresh in our minds and we ourselves may not remember.

The second point is this. Mr. Rosane has very kindly prepared some figures for us and I should give the Commissioners two copies so that you may be able to follow the evidence which is being led by Mr. Rosane. These may be retained in your possession, Sir, for further consideration. Also my learned friend has a copy – my learned friend on either side of me.

CHAIRMAN: Mr. Carter, there is some difficulty in obtaining the transcripts as a tape-recorder was used and this proved inadequate. Arrangements are being made to have stenographers and you will have the transcripts as soon as they are ready.

MR. ROBERT ROSANE is sworn in and he states as follows:

SUGRIM SINGH: Your name is Robert Rosane and your official position at Demba is Director of Personnel. So it is within your jurisdiction to keep records of the personnel employed at Demba, local and foreign.

ROSANE: Only local.

SUGRIM SINGH: Now Mr. Rosane, could you from your records or from your own knowledge roughly tell this Commission that around the relevant date, 25 May this year, the local personnel employed at Demba was about how many persons?

ROSANE: Nearly four thousand.

SUGRIM SINGH: Do I gather from you that you have now got a break down of that personnel according to ethnic origin?

ROSANE: We do not keep that kind of record.

SUGRIM SINGH: But I am wondering if, from your experience and observation of the plant and personnel generally, if you could give this Commission some idea – roughly not accurately – of about what fraction of this total were people of East Indian origin – one quarter, one fifth, one sixth, or roughly what fraction.

ROSANE: I would say eight percent.

SUGRIM SINGH: Now, some of these live on the Mackenzie side of the river. But the greater part of these eight percent or, as a matter of fact, the greater part of the entire local personnel lives on the Wismar side?

ROSANE: I would say between one third and one half of our employees live on the Mackenzie side of the river and the rest of them live at Wismar and Christianburg.

The Wismar Commission Report

SUGRIM SINGH: Much obliged Mr. Rosane. And of course there is an efficient ferry service to and from Wismar to Mackenzie? There is a launch service taking employees across the river?

ROSANE: A number of small boats.

SUGRIM SINGH: Now, before we get down to your records, may I ask you, Mr. Rosane, how long were you personnel manager before 25th May?

ROSANE: About two and a half years.

SUGRIM SINGH: Now, during that period do you recall any occasion where there were other racial clashes or incidents of a racial background among the personnel employed by Demba?

ROSANE: Not to the best of my recollection.

SUGRIM SINGH: Now, apart from sitting at your desk as Personnel Manager, I think that you do visit and go around the Company's plant in their various departments having a look, or for some reason examining the personnel. In making those rounds Mr. Rosane, have you ever come across any quarrel or racial incident of any magnitude between or among the personnel employed in these departments?

ROSANE: I have made no such direct observation.

SUGRIM SINGH: And I take it as being unquestionable that in the recruitment of personnel at Demba there is no such thing as any racial consideration or racial favours, or anything of that sort? A man would be recruited according to his ability, isn't that so?

ROSANE: Yes sir. That is so.

SUGRIM SINGH: Among your personnel at Demba, perhaps you might be in a position to help this Commission. Does Demba have its own police force, paid or on the payroll of Demba?

ROSANE: They are 104 strong at the moment.

SUGRIM SINGH: And that is the number on your payroll?

ROSANE: We pay the bills. They are supernumerary constables who are subject to the jurisdiction of the Commissioner of Police.

SUGRIM SINGH: And, of course, they wear police uniform, don't they?

ROSANE: That's right – with a special Demba insignia – and as far as we know, they are subject to enjoy all the powers of a policeman.

SUGRIM SINGH: And they are subject to discipline and control as any other policeman under the Commissioner of Police in the police department?

ROSANE: As I said, I am not familiar with the details and procedures.

SUGRIM SINGH: I accept your answer. I do not want you to venture an opinion in a matter in which you have no specialised knowledge. Now you say that the force has about 104?

ROSANE: Yes. At that moment.

SUGRIM SINGH: I am wondering, Mr. Rosane, if from your records you could give us some idea of what was the strength of your force around the 25th of May this year?

ROSANE: I have no certain records here.

SUGRIM SINGH: But I will accept your opinion roughly that there might be a slight increase or there might be a slight decrease. What will your estimate be?

ROSANE: Approximately 94.

SUGRIM SINGH: Are you in a position to tell us whether these 94 supernumerary constables were under the supervision and control of the Superintendent of Police in that district, Mr. Hobbs?

Transcripts – Day 3

ROSANE: When?

SUGRIM SINGH: On the 25th May, to the best of your knowledge.

ROSANE: I can't be certain.

SUGRIM SINGH: And of course you have Major Langham actually on the premises of Demba. What is his position?

ROSANE: He is the Demba Security Officer when he is Mister Langham.

SUGRIM SINGH: I see, but when he is Major Langham what is he?

ROSANE: When he is Major Langham he is the officer who commands the B.G. Volunteer Force at Mackenzie.

SUGRIM SINGH: I appreciate that fine distinction. And Mr. Rosane, I am wondering if you are in a position to give any information. You may qualify it, as far as you know, because we expect to get the proper officer in due course. Are the services of these supernumerary constables, around 94 in number, available only for Demba, or could they be used otherwise?

CARTER: Sir, I do not want to interrupt my friend, but ho and I know that Mr. Langham is going to be here on Monday. I think one of those answers made by the witness is not entirely accurate. I am sure that when Major Langham comes we can have a full opportunity of knowing just what the functions of these men are. We would know under what jurisdiction they come, to what extent he is responsible for them, or to what extent Mr. Hobbs is responsible for them. I don't think it is fair to this witness to ask him questions of this type. After all, this witness is concerned generally with local personnel. Now it would be better for us to get the best evidence. We can't get the best evidence of the security guards from this witness. Ho is willing to cooperate and assist us. The witness is obviously trying to assist, so surely we can reserve these questions for Major Langham who will be here on Monday.

SUGRIM SINGH: Members of the Commission, I agree entirely with my friend and I think that it came from my lips that the proper officer will in due course give evidence, and I also put it to the witness as far as he knows. But I don't wish to proceed with this line of examination because I agree entirely with my friend that we must get the best evidence. I apologise to you, Mr. Rosane, for carrying you into fields outside of your jurisdiction. Now, from your records, can you tell us around May 25th, and say a few days afterwards, how many refugees came over to Demba from Wismar?

ROSANE: I have no record.

SUGRIM SINGH: Now, do you have any records of refugees or evacuees in any form?

ROSANE: You have been presented with a list,

SUGRIM SINGH: Now, you have this number of 365 individuals. You describe them as what?

ROSANE: Employees. They are employees of Demba who left their work from the period after the 25th May. People who were employed with us temporarily or permanently left as refugees or evacuees.

SUGRIM SINGH: So this figure 365 represents employees who have left the employment of Demba? Would you explain this?

ROSANE: Between 24th and 25th of May and the 8th of July we had a somewhat disturbed employment situation at Demba's operation at Mackenzie. We had many employees and people that worked during that period. A number of employees left their jobs either temporarily or permanently for reasons known to us, or they were evacuated as a result of the disturbances. In so far as I was aware there are still a number of employees who left their jobs temporarily or permanently for reasons not known – it is assumed by us because of social circumstances in the community. From my point of view as an employer that was all we

The Wismar Commission Report

could know. We had no system of interrogation of absentees. In so far as we have been able to interpret our absentees, we believe that the total of 365 represents the number of employees affected.

SUGRIM SINGH: Just let me get this clear. You are saying that the 365 persons absented themselves from – in other words, the disturbance at the time was the cause of this? Does this number include also the Wismar side?

ROSANE: As from the employer's point of view I do not have any records showing those from Wismar or Mackenzie.

SUGRIM SINGH: I see. This number represents the total. Well, the document speaks for itself and, Members of the Commission, I wish formally to tender the summary prepared and submitted by Mr. Rosane on behalf of the Demerara Bauxite Company. [*Document admitted and marked "Exhibit D and E"*]. Now Mr. Rosane, you are aware that these evacuees sought shelter on the Demba compound, particularly the Trade School and the Sports Club before they embarked for Georgetown?

ROSANE: Yes sir.

SUGRIM SINGH: Now, as Personnel Manager, Mr. Rosane, would you care to make a comment or observation or statement as regards the efficiency of the East Indian employees on the plant? What I am saying, if you see my point, from your point of view as employer of Demba, did you find the Indians as efficient in their respective departments.

ROSANE: Yes.

SUGRIM SINGH: Would I be correct to say, Mr. Rosane, that at the moment there is not a single person of East Indian descent, apart from the supernumerary constables on your payroll, at Demba?

ROSANE: That wouldn't be correct.

SUGRIM SINGH: Well, can you help this Commission? Tell us how many constables, employees, how many of them?

ROSANE: I can tell you we have 86 former evacuees working.

SUGRIM SINGH: 86 refugees of Indian descent?

ROSANE: No. 86 refugees.

SUGRIM SINGH: No. You told me earlier that you hadn't any breakdown on the question of race, but you're not in a position to say of this 86 how many are Indians?

ROSANE: I don't know, sir.

SUGRIM SINGH: Before I leave this point, from your own observation of these refugees who have come back as personnel on the plant, can you from your own observation as recent as yesterday or day before, give us some idea whether you have seen any East Indian employees in the plant?

ROSANE: I think perhaps there are names on the list I have given you which will give some indication if it is important to you, Mr. Singh.

SUGRIM SINGH: Yes. Did those who return to work strike you as being of Indian origin?

ROSANE: I know one refugee known as Baichulall; I am certain he is working at the moment,

SUGRIM SINGH: Did you ever go over to Wismar to look around?

ROSANE: I went only once.

SUGRIM SINGH: Now, let us move to an important point. Are you in a position, Mr. Rosane, to tell this Commission of any plans by your Company to re-employ Indians who have left their employment?

Transcripts – Day 3

CARTER: I see my friend is being carried away a bit now.

SUGRIM SINGH: Members of the Commission, the basis of my question is to find out from Mr. Rosane if his Company has any arrangements to sort of reserve the places occupied by East Indians with a view to their re-employment in the future.

CARTER: I ask the Commission to rule on this question. My main objection to this question is that it doesn't fall within the terms of reference – if I may borrow a terms of reference from my learned friend, Mr. Shepherd. The terms of reference are very limited. I don't think within the most liberal interpretation of those terms of reference is the question to be considered relevant. To inquire into the recent disturbances which took place at Wismar-Christianburg-Mackenzie up the Demerara River, to investigate the conduct of the Security Forces during the said disturbances, and to determine the number of deaths, etc, and to report thereon. So far as the word "loss" is concerned, sir, certainly this means physical and or capital loss, nothing else. It means it must be read in conjunction with the words, surrounding injuries, loss and damage suffered in the said disturbances. It must refer, I submit, to injuries suffered, the loss of homes and damage.

SUGRIM SINGH: Members of the Commission I am basing these questions on the question of loss which forms an essential term of reference. If these people cannot go back to their work it is a loss.

CHAIRMAN: We have before us evidence as to the actual loss to those concerned. The other matter would be out of our terms of reference.

SUGRIM SINGH: Much obliged. Mr. Rosane, my last question. Are you aware of any help in any form given by Demba to assist in the quelling of the disturbances or rescuing evacuees? What I want to say . . .
ROSANE: You mean from my personal observation?

SUGRIM SINGH: What do you know? If you don't know please don't answer. When I say Demba I am speaking about taking them to the Trade School, giving them refreshments, and so on.

ROSANE: They had the help of a number of employees who were embodied in the Volunteer Force. We tried primarily to keep our operations going. As you know, at the plant the operation is continuous. It was a struggle for management and workers to keep things from stopping.

SUGRIM SINGH: I appreciate that Mr. Rosane.

ROSANE: We did our utmost to comply with all the requests and requisitions of the Security Forces.

SUGRIM SINGH: Thank you, Mr. Rosane. That's all from Mr. Rosane.

CARTER: In addition to this, I understand that you provided refreshments for the evacuees at the Trade School and the Sports Club?

ROSANE: To the best of my knowledge, Mr. Carter, these services were provided by voluntary groups within the community. From my personal observation at the time, the food was prepared, bottles were found, babies' milk and so forth, but this was not an official Demba operation.

CARTER: I see. This was not an official Demba operation.

ROSANE: We did cooperate with the Volunteer Force in providing transportation.

CARTER: Did the Company contribute to the relief operations in money?

ROSANE: Substantially.

The Wismar Commission Report

CARTER: And you put all the hospital facilities at the disposal of the evacuees too?

ROSANE: The hospital at Mackenzie is always available,

CARTER: They were taken advantage of by those who were injured during the disturbances, and the "R.H. Carr" was also made available?

ROSANE: By Sprostons.

CARTER: I would just like to highlight some figures, just to bring to the attention of the Commission the significance of certain things. Now, the total number of evacuees on the 27th of May was 342; that's the first column the first statement submitted. Now between the 27th of May, 1964 and the 6th of July 1975 returned. Is that right?

ROSANE: Yes sir.

CARTER: 175 of the evacuees returned to Mackenzie?

ROSANE: Just one point. 23 of the total number did not evacuate on the day of the disturbances. 23 stayed on. And in addition 143 returned.

CARTER: Well the "Sun Chapman" incident was on the 7th – the night of July 6th and 7th, and then the figures show those who left after the "Sun Chapman".

ROSANE: 102 left their work on or about the time of the "Sun Chapman" incident so far as we are concerned. And 89 employees have returned to work at some time since the "Sun Chapman" incident, and at the moment 86 who were evacuees are employed.

CARTER: Now, then, of the others, leave of absence has been given to 163?

ROSANE: We told all of the 365 employees that they would have leave of absence until such time as they could return to work, based on the social stability of the area. We told then they could terminate voluntarily if they wanted. We did not encourage this. 115 voluntarily have terminated their services. 163 have not yet done so and remain on leave of absence.

CARTER: Now, this is more or less what Mr. Sugrim Singh wanted but in a different way. Are you aware that the Company sent over also three Land Rovers and a truck to assist in the rescue operations?

ROSANE: I was not personally aware of this.

CARTER: Perhaps we can get that from someone else. Thank you very much.

SHEPHERD: Mr. Rosane, you live on the right bank of the river going towards the mouth, that is to say on the Mackenzie side?

ROSANE: Yes sir.

SHEPHERD: Were you physically able to observe during this disturbing weekend of the 24th and 25th of May? You were in your office on the right bank of the river? You weren't on the Wismar side?

ROSANE: I was not personally on the Wismar side.

SHEPHERD: Did you personally witness what was going on in the Wismar-Christianburg area, in the sense of, were you able to observe how people were conducting themselves?

ROSANE: Not personally,

SHEPHERD: At the material time you were on the other side of the river. This is where you live, of course?

ROSANE: At the moment, sir, I was working 24 hours a day.

Transcripts – Day 3

SHEPHERD: I daresay you were pretty busy. You are of course Director of Personnel and thus you personally supervise all matters connected with personnel at Mackenzie including Sprostons?

ROSANE: I have nothing to do with Sprostons.

SHEPHERD: You have nothing to do with Sprostons. Sprostons employees are not included on this list? But the Sprostons employees are not numerous at Mackenzie?

ROSANE: Not in comparison with out staff.

SHEPHERD: And you have lived there for two and a half years – had lived there far two and a half years prior to May 1964?

ROSANE: Yes sir.

SHEPHERD: And your knowledge and experience is much more extensive than mine, I may say. My question, you see, is directed towards verifying information of which I have heard and which is probably common knowledge, but which extends prior to my arrival here. But I was interested, and no doubt the Commissioners were, at your statement that the people had lived in complete harmony. Was this the word? At least that there had not been racial disturbances between the people on the Demba side prior to May this year.

ROSANE: I believe I was asked about social disturbances in the plant. I hardly feel qualified to talk about social problems in general. I hardly feel myself close enough to the people in the community.

SHEPHERD: Well by social harmony I don't mean social harmony in the Wismar-Christianburg area, though you know much more about it than I do. I mean within the employment field of the Company at Mackenzie. You said something surely about there being harmony amongst the workers prior to May, and is not that exemplified by your figures, Mr. Rosane? I see, for example, that some of these people who are now among the evacuees had worked there for as long as 27 years with the Company.

ROSANE: Yes sir.

SHEPHERD: And it is obvious, isn't it, that employees of the Company who would remain in service for as long as 27 years were experiencing not only reasonable conditions of employment, but on the job, at any rate, reasonable harmony with their fellow workers?

ROSANE: Yes sir.

SHEPHERD: And I suggest that this is borne out by these figures. Here we have Ramcharitar. I don't know who he is – 27 years continuous service. Woolford, on page 2 – 22 years. On the next page Mendonca – 22 years; Sew Charran – 27 years. Many of them, Mr. Rosane, employees with very considerable years of service with Demba at Mackenzie. On the job, therefore, harmony ruled. Naturally they may have been, what shall I say, trade union matters. But as personnel officer you are satisfied that that were harmonious relations prior to the 25th May?

ROSANE: Yes sir.

SHEPHERD: And that observation applies, I suppose, for the whole period of the two and a half years during which you were Personnel Director?

ROSANE: Yes sir.

SHEPHERD: Then as to the social behaviour of people on the other side of the river, you have very little to say based upon your personal knowledge and experience? Is that what you said?

ROSANE: That is true, sir.

SHEPHERD: At any rate when these events blew up on the 24th and 25th May would it be correct to say that the suddenness – I am using the word that has been used by other witnesses – the suddenness and intensity of the outbreak came to you as a shock?

ROSANE: It was certainly unforeseen.

The Wismar Commission Report

SHEPHERD: It was unforeseen by you as Director of Personnel? Was it unforeseen by the other resident directors at Mackenzie?

ROSANE: I couldn't say.

SHEPHERD: At any rate Demba and its resident directors, so far as your knowledge goes, had no reason to anticipate this violent social outbreak?

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SUGRIM SINGH: Members of the Commission, I don't wish to interrupt my friend, but this witness cannot speak of what was the impression of the other directors of Demba. He has already said in answer in as far as I know "that is within my own personal observations"; and I suggest that this question is not proper,

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SHEPHERD: I disagree with the submission. As a director at Mackenzie he and the other directors meet together, I presume, to discuss matters, and it is relevant and indeed essential to know whether the Company had reason to suspect an outbreak. The relevance of it, of course, is this. The evidence materially placed before you is that although there were signs of rising tension, the suddenness and intensity of the outbreak came as a complete surprise to all responsible people who would be expected to know of the social situation at Wismar-Christianburg. It is highly relevant and I would be surprised, ladies and gentlemen, if you did not examine it very carefully yourselves. I don't quite understand why my learned friend, Mr. Sugrim Singh, is objecting to this very relevant question. It is a question without any sinister motives. I want you to see the whole picture.

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MACDONALD: My own problem is the phrasing of the question, Mr. Chairman. I don't see how Mr. Rosane can speak for the other directors but, perhaps, he could be asked if they agreed with his views.

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SHEPHERD: I would be glad to adopt such a course. It would be much more usual form possibly in a court, but this tribunal has a right to decide. Had any other director at Mackenzie during your discussions mentioned the possibility of such a violent outbreak?

ROSANE: I can't mention. It was certainly unlikely.

SHEPHERD: It was just not as it were on the agenda. You agree?

ROSANE: That is right.

SHEPHERD: It was nothing which even the shrewdest director of a mining company would have considered it necessary to trouble himself about. Is that your view or not?

ROSANE: I would hesitate to associate myself with the views of the other directors.

SHEPHERD: Well, you see, it is common knowledge. I don't know why this has to seem shrouded in a veil of uneasiness. It is common knowledge throughout British Guiana that this was an outbreak quite unheralded and quite unexpected. Though certain shrewd forecasts were made by police officers as to what might happen, even police officers themselves were stunned. And I am simply putting it to you that even the directors of Demba who live on the spot were stunned by the violence. You can see that there isn't anything sinister about this, Mr. Rosane.

ROSANE: No, I am not objecting to this Mr. Chairman. Speaking for myself I personally believed before that day that the Mackenzie-Wismar-Christianburg area had the makings of an integrated peaceful community.

SHEPHERD: An integrated, peaceful community?

Transcripts – Day 3

ROSANE: But that didn't happen.

SHEPHERD: Now you have touched upon the security arrangements of Demba. Entirely from the personnel point of view, naturally in a large organisation such as yours separated from the capital of the country by 60 miles or so . . .

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CHAIRMAN: Mr. Shepherd, Members of the Commission would be grateful if you would put your question directly rather than introducing comments.

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SHEPHERD: This would be rather difficult because they will seem disjointed, but I'll do so as you wish. Your Company was large enough to need security arrangements of its own?

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SUGRIM SINGH: Members of the Commission, I rise to object to this question because we have it from counsel representing Demba authoritatively that the proper officer would be called, and as a result of which, I refrained from proceeding with an examination on that point. And what is good for me is also good for counsel for the police. In other words, let us refrain from asking this witness to speculate on the security arrangements until the proper officer comes at the time.

SHEPHERD: I don't agree. The proper officer, as my learned friend calls him, though an officer of the Volunteer Force, is an employee and not a director of Demba. The Personnel Director appoints, suspends, dismisses, discharges personnel, including personnel such as Mr. Langham. If he is not the person to speak about the employment of security forces I don't know who is. There is no speculation here. The rules of procedure you have laid down are as follows: Counsel will first examine the witness after which he can be examined by interested parties. I wish to conduct my examination in my own way, as long as it is not contrary to the rules of procedure laid down by the Commission.

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SUGRIM SINGH: Mr. Chairman, I am very sorry that my friend has any feelings that I want to sort of stifle cross examination. But the point I was making – and I had hoped that I was making myself clear – is that in my examination in chief – call it that – we were touching on security and the operation of security forces at Demba, and I was reminded by Counsel, and the objection was upheld by you, that let us leave those questions which are outside the ambit of the witness, because they gave the undertaking that the proper officer would be here to answer the question properly. From that point, I refrained from asking any questions about security operations and mechanism of the Volunteer Force. Having done that, I fail to see how my friend could trespass on that domain.

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SHEPHERD: I am not trespassing on any domain whatsoever, except the terms of reference which you, ladies and gentlemen, must consider. I am not going to ask this Director of Personnel anything about the operations, but only about matters on which he has personal knowledge.

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CHAIRMAN: Of which he has personal knowledge? We are of the opinion that you may ask him questions concerning his personal knowledge.

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SHEPHERD: You have personal knowledge about the recruitment, and you have personal knowledge about the functions of the security forces?

ROSANE: Yes I have.

The Wismar Commission Report

SHEPHERD: The security forces employed by Demba are part of the personnel of Demba?

ROSANE: They are paid by Demba.

SHEPHERD: They are paid by Demba you said. Didn't you?

ROSANE: Yes I said it. I would try to clarify the position as I understand it. We have on our budget an amount of money which is spent on wages to be paid technically by the police force to the 104 supernumerary constables. We have a very close working relationship between the constabulary officer Mr. Langham and the local head of the police force in respect to the supernumerary constabulary.

The regulations of this constabulary are laid down in the various laws of this country as to their responsibility to the Commissioner of Police. We use the supernumerary constabulary essentially for protecting the assets and the working arrangements of the Company. The constabulary is responsible in certain matters to the police and in certain matters to the Demerara Bauxite Company.

From my point of view I am concerned with the maintenance of law and good order in so far as Demba's operations are concerned. I exercise this through the subordinate security officer who works in close relation with the local B. G. police superintendent, and they have joint control of the 104 men in the constabulary.

SHEPHERD: That is extremely clear Mr. Rosane, and precisely what I wanted you to say – no more and no less. And all this you know from your personal knowledge? Now, Mr. Rosane, this is not the same type of question and if you can't answer it please don't hesitate to say so. At any time during your two and half years as Director of Personnel you had, as the person responsible for security, delegated no doubt any greater part of your duties to another? Had you any reason to complain to the police as to the general security arrangements for this part of British Guiana?

ROSANE: Not to the best of my knowledge. We have had intimate discussions with the police with respect to the allocation of the Force's responsibilities but there were certainly no complaints.

SHEPHERD: And in those discussions you have personally played a part, because you are the Director of Personnel?

ROSANE: Yes, or course.

SHEPHERD: Now, it is no secret, I think, that evidence has been given here, much as you have said, that on the whole there was racial harmony. Were you aware of any increase in tension either within the Demba works or socially beyond the river?

ROSANE: I was aware that we had a work disturbance. I don't know if that is what you mean.

SHEPHERD: It is quite adequate for my purpose, Mr. Rosane. I am quite happy to accept your reply. You were of course very busy after the outbreak on Sunday the 24th of May, weren't you? You were working 24 hours a day in your office?

ROSANE: Yes sir.

SHEPHERD: Could you tell the Commissioners whether during this period any member of the Council of Ministers came to see you?

ROSANE: Personally?

SHEPHERD: Yes.

ROSANE: No sir.

SHEPHERD: Did any member of the Council of Ministers telephone you?

ROSANE: No sir.

SHEPHERD: So far as your knowledge goes, did any member of the Council of Ministers arrive at the Demba works to pay an official or indeed an unofficial visit during the period of the 24th to the 26th May?

ROSANE: Between the 24th and 26th of May? Not to my knowledge.

Transcripts – Day 3

SHEPHERD: Now, as to operational details I must limit myself to what you know personally, as we have the ruling of the Commissioners on this subject. Personally, you are aware that Demba made available at once hospital facilities launches, jeeps, for the use of anyone who needed them after the 24th?

ROSANE: Yes. Hospital facilities.

SHEPHERD: Vehicles of any description, launches?

ROSANE: I can't speak from personal observation.

SHEPHERD: But is it within your personal knowledge and belief, Mr. Rosane, that your Company did loan launches and vehicles for the purposes of evacuating refugees?

ROSANE: As far as I know.

SHEPHERD: Thank you.

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SUGRIM SINGH: In re-examination I wish to ask you two questions Mr. Rosane. I think you might help this Commission. Are you aware of a strike or a temporary hold up on the railroad department of your operations, which came to an end on Saturday the 23rd of May, two days before the incident at Wismar? A strike or a temporary hold up on the railroad alone?

ROSANE: We had a strike situation in operations that were broader than the railroad.

SUGRIM SINGH: It may have been broader than the railroad but was that the one that came to an end on the Saturday before the disturbances?

ROSANE: I believe it was the Saturday.

SUGRIM SINGH: Are you aware of an incident – you may not know it of your own knowledge, but let us talk about a rumour – that some employees of the Company had used the words “cannibals” or “hooligans” in respect of the attackers in the Wismar tragedy? Did you hear that?

ROSANE: I think it first came to my attention from the newspapers.

SUGRIM SINGH: From the newspapers. Newspapers usually get their information; at least the assumption is that they got correct information.

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CARTER: In this country?

—

SUGRIM SINGH: After reading it in the papers, did you as Personnel Manager sort of enquire where all this was happening – who called who cannibals and so on?

ROSANE: Yes sir. We were quite concerned about this.

SUGRIM SINGH: And am I correct in saying – I have got some instructions and these instructions may not be correct, or may be correct, or may be half truth. Is it correct to say that this reference to the attackers as cannibals in their behaviour towards the Indians caused a little hold up – it may not be a strike – at Mackenzie?

ROSANE: That is correct.

SUGRIM SINGH: So you see my information is not altogether wrong. You may describe it as fishing, my learned friends. Now can you help this Commission on this point, Mr. Rosane, by telling us the name of the employee, whether local or foreign, who was alleged to have made this statement?

—

The Wismar Commission Report

CARTER: All that counsel is asking here was subsequent, some time after the disturbances. Certainly this is not leading up to the disturbances. It doesn't affect damage or loss. I think it would be a good thing, from what I know about this, to keep personalities out because it is not at all relevant, and I ask my friend to withdraw the question, and possibly I can speak to him privately about it if he insists.

SUGRIM SINGH: Members of the Commission, on this occasion I am very much surprised my friend has raised this point, because this Commission is concerned with injuries, damage, loss, and if there is an allegation by a person on the spot that the attackers behaved like cannibals, not only is it relevant although it occurred after the incident, but it forms part of the *res gestae*, and in law on both grounds it is admissible, because it serves to explain by someone on the spot what he observed, and who has made this allegation. I ask you to rule on this point.

CARTER; I don't think that my learned friend who is a practitioner of so many years experience could describe this as part of the *res gestae*. This is something that happened subsequent to the disturbances. There was a rumour and this has never been traced as far as I know.

CHAIRMAN: Mr. Singh, Members of the Commission would like to know if you propose to call this person concerned to give evidence?

SUGRIM SINGH: I do, sir.

CARTER: But how is it going to help this Commission decide on the disturbances if some comment was made some time after on the behaviour of the people?

SUGRIM SINGH: I was explaining to Members of the Commission that officer or employee must have observed . . .

CARTER: Conclusions . . .

SUGRIM SINGH: I am on my feet, Mr. Carter. He will give evidence to justify any such comment. We are interested in truth.

CARTER: May I with your permission sir, in view of the questions asked by Mr. Sugrim Singh – it does not really arise out of cross examination – may I have permission to examine just on these issues which have been raised by Mr. Sugrim Singh? So far as the strike referred to prior to the disturbances, which ended on the 24th of May – that is the first question which Mr. Sugrim Singh raised – did not strike have any political or racial overtones? Is this the wild-cat strike?

ROSANE: Not to the best of my knowledge. As far as I know it was just an industrial dispute.

CARTER: This was quite removed from what happened at Wismar or Christianburg. Now in regard to this statement about an employee calling persons cannibals, you will submit the name of that person to the Commissioners? Did you ever speak to that individual as to whether he made that statement?

ROSANE: I personally know about 15 names called or mentioned in connection with that statement. To the best of my knowledge all such 15 persons were tracked down and the statement was denied in all such cases. It is false to associate anyone with that statement.

Transcripts – Day 3

CARTER: So that in speaking to various members of the community, there are 15 persons connected to this statement, and each of those 15 persons denied having made that statement?

ROSANE: To the best of my knowledge.

DRAYTON. This temporary hold up at Mackenzie which took place following on the rumour somebody told some other people that they were being called hooligans and cannibals, when exactly did the accusation take place? How long after May the 25th?

ROSANE: It was a very imprecise sort of experience. We had a number of people in the community who were quite disturbed about it. We had a number of employees who continued to work; we had the majority of our employees who did not go to work. I am sorry, but I am unable to comment on the specific dates and times, but there was considerable hold up in that subsequent week. The majority of our employees did not work during that subsequent week.

CARTER. I want to get some clarification here. Is this the week commencing June 1st?"

ROSANE: That is right.

CHAIRMAN: These people who have been evacuated, for how long have they been paid?

ROSANE: It varies. New people were obviously paid for the time they were on the job. Others have received varied benefits from the rather complicated benefit plans of the Company.

CHAIRMAN: As a result, would you say that the majority of the evacuees received pay?

ROSANE: Because of the wide range of the benefits available, we had employees leaving on the 26th of May who would receive about 50 days, and others would receive more – employees who have been with us for a number of years, and employees in responsible positions. These would receive substantial benefits.

CHAIRMAN: Would you say if there was anyone who had not terminated his service who had worked with you for a number of years, would they have received any benefits?

ROSANE: I don't believe that we are still paying benefits to employees who are still on leave of absence.

SUGRIM SINGH: Thank you very much, Mr. Rosane. I wish to call the administrator of the Government hospital, Mr. Indar Persaud.

MR. INDAR PERSAUD is sworn in and he states as follows:

SUGRIM SINGH: Your name is Indar Persaud?

INDAR PERSAUD: Yes sir.

SUGRIM SINGH: And you are the administrator of the Public Hospital Georgetown?

INDAR PERSAUD: Yes.

SUGRIM SINGH: And you have been in that position for the past five years?

INDAR PERSAUD: I have.

SUGRIM SINGH: Now you remember around the 25th, 26, 27th of May this year?

INDAR PERSAUD: I do, sir.

SUGRIM SINGH: Did you receive an unusual number of admissions to the institution?

INDAR PERSAUD: I wouldn't say unusual.

The Wismar Commission Report

SUGRIM SINGH: But can you tell us, from your records – to be specific, did you admit any of the evacuees from the Wismar area?

INDAR PERSAUD: Yes sir.

SUGRIM SINGH: How many did you admit?

INDAR PERSAUD: We admitted 14 and we treated 13 at least and sent them away. Could I qualify that? I say at least because some of them gave addresses other than Wismar.

SUGRIM SINGH: So that from your records you couldn't accurately say they having given addresses other than Wismar. Did you have any deaths amongst those admitted?"

INDAR PERSAUD: I haven't any reference here that I recollect.

SUGRIM SINGH: Did these people go in the pauper section of the hospital or did they pay fees.

INDAR PERSAUD: Some did; others were admitted in the general wards.

SUGRIM SINGH: You object to the epithet "pauper"?

INDAR PERSAUD: I don't.

SUGRIM SINGH: I think that's all from this witness.

—

SHEPHERD: No questions.

—

SUGRIM SINGH: Have you prepared any record for this Commission?

INDAR PERSAUD: I have.

SUGRIM SINGH: May I have a look at them? You have prepared this statement from your records. Members of the Commission, I wish to tender this as "Exhibit F" in two copies. That's all.

—

SHEPHERD: No questions.

—

CARTER: No questions.

—

SUGRIM SINGH: Mr. Persaud, can you supply us with the charts or records with the names of the doctors who dealt with these persons?

INDAR PERSAUD: Yes sir.

SUGRIM SINGH: Could you do that as early as possible? Is there any additional information that you can supply from your records or is it all here?"

INDAR PERSAUD: If you want it now I can give it to you early.

SUGRIM SINGH: I will be very grateful if you will expedite the matter. Members of the Commission, I suggest we take the adjournment.

—

CHAIRMAN: Just a minute.

—

MOOTOO: Mr. Persaud, of those who were admitted, can you tell us if any had already been treated?

Transcripts – Day 3

INDAR PERSAUD: As far as my records show, one had been previously treated.

MOOTOO: Then all the others were fresh cases?

INDAR PERSAUD: Yes.

MOOTOO: Thank you.

—

MRS. ALIMA KHAN is sworn in and she states as follows:

SUGRIM SINGH: Alima Khan, you are now living at 54 Robb and King Streets, Georgetown?

ALIMA KHAN: I am stopping there.

SUGRIM SINGH: And you had a son named Richard Khan who is now dead?

ALIMA KHAN: Yes sir.

SUGRIM SINGH: You used to live at Wismar at the Valley of Tears with your husband and your five children?

ALIMA KHAN: Yes.

SUGRIM SINGH: Now on the 18th of May, the Monday before, anybody came to your house?

ALIMA KHAN: Yes. A fellow named Ishmael.

SUGRIM SINGH: Indian fellow?

ALIMA KHAN: No, a Black fellow named Ishmael Johnson.

SUGRIM SINGH: He said anything to you?

ALIMA KHAN: Yes. He asked me where my father was. My father was not there.

SUGRIM SINGH: Your father was called Mowzam? He asked you where your father was and what you told him?

ALIMA KHAN: Not here.

SUGRIM SINGH: He asked you about anything else?

ALIMA KHAN: He asked me about my son Richard. I told him Richard has gone to school in town.

SUGRIM SINGH: Richard went to Georgetown high school. After he had made these inquiries what did this man Ishmael Johnson tell you?

ALIMA KHAN: He told me he understands that Richard has gone to Cuba.

SUGRIM SINGH: Now, let us come down to this riot. Did he tell you anything about the riot?

ALIMA KHAN: No, he never told me anything about the riot.

SUGRIM SINGH: Did he tell you of any story to happen?

ALIMA KHAN: He did tell me about the Apan Jaat.

SUGRIM SINGH: Now, later on in the week did anybody to your house?

ALIMA KHAN: A next black fellow.

SUGRIM SINGH: You know him?

ALIMA KHAN: George came to my house.

SUGRIM SINGH: And what happened?

ALIMA KHAN: He asked me for a drink of water and I handed him a glass of water.

The Wismar Commission Report

SUGRIM SINGH: What next happened?

ALIMA KHAN: Afterwards he told me that bad things would happen.

SUGRIM SINGH: Now, let us move on to the morning of the 25th. Where were you?

ALIMA KHAN: The Monday morning at 2.45 to 3 o'clock somebody threw a bomb downstairs.

SUGRIM SINGH: You lived upstairs?

ALIMA KHAN: In my own building.

SUGRIM SINGH: Your building is on what lot on the Valley of Tears?

ALIMA KHAN: No lots.

SUGRIM SINGH: Now, as a result of the bomb was there any fire in the place?

ALIMA KHAN: Yes. The family ran out and put out the fire.

SUGRIM SINGH: And your flooring was scorched?"

ALIMA KHAN: Yes.

SUGRIM SINGH: Now did you go back in the house?

ALIMA KHAN: Yes.

SUGRIM SINGH: Did you notice anything strange about the house?

ALIMA KHAN: Plenty smoke about.

SUGRIM SINGH: And did you smell anything about the house?

ALIMA KHAN: Gasoline.

SUGRIM SINGH: You have African neighbours?

ALIMA KHAN: All about are Africans.

SUGRIM SINGH: And when you were putting out this fire, did they help you put the fire out?

ALIMA KHAN: No. I made a scream and no one came.

SUGRIM SINGH: After the explosion under your house, minutes later, did you hear anything else?

ALIMA KHAN: Yes, there was another bomb at a fellow named Paul Nirgin's house.

SUGRIM SINGH: How far from you?

ALIMA KHAN: Five lots after my house.

SUGRIM SINGH: At 7.00 a.m., did your husband leave to go to work?

ALIMA KHAN: Yes sir.

SUGRIM SINGH: Across at Mackenzie? Now about this bombing, did you go to the station and make a report?

ALIMA KHAN: Yes, on the Monday morning. They refused to take the report.

SUGRIM SINGH: You asked them to assist you to go back home and they refused to take you back home?

ALIMA KHAN: The same time the riot started on road and in the market.

SUGRIM SINGH: And you say you asked the police to take you back and they refused to do so? Therefore, you remained at the station?

ALIMA KHAN: Yes. I stayed at the station.

Transcripts – Day 3

SUGRIM SINGH: Did you get to your home that day?

ALIMA KHAN: Later I heard that there was a riot in the Valley of Tears and I screamed.

SUGRIM SINGH: That was where your house was, right?

ALIMA KHAN: Yes. And three policemen accompanied me to go home.

SUGRIM SINGH: Now, about this time where was Richard Khan?

ALIMA KHAN: I left Richard and Hassan home.

SUGRIM SINGH: You met them at home when you went.

ALIMA KHAN: No. I didn't see then when I got home. There wasn't any more house. The whole place was down flat on the ground. Burned down.

SUGRIM SINGH: When you went there and saw this house burned down flat, what did you do next?

ALIMA KHAN: I held on to a paling and screamed, and was left there unconscious.

SUGRIM SINGH: And then what next happened?

ALIMA KHAN: I found myself in a police jeep.

SUGRIM SINGH: And then eventually where?

ALIMA KHAN: While they carried me to the police station, a crowd came to the jeep and started to hit me. They picked up bottles and hit me on the head – Banks bottles.

SUGRIM SINGH: While you were in the police jeep how many policemen were in the jeep?

ALIMA KHAN: We had three policemen in the jeep.

SUGRIM SINGH: Did the policemen do anything?

ALIMA KHAN: They said they cannot help – we got to have Apan Jaat.

SUGRIM SINGH: Did any one of the three policemen try to help you?

ALIMA KHAN: None.

SUGRIM SINGH: Then what happened? You reached the station, right?

ALIMA KHAN: Yes.

SUGRIM SINGH: And from the station later on you went where?

ALIMA KHAN: Over to Mackenzie.

SUGRIM SINGH: Now while at Mackenzie did you get a message?

ALIMA KHAN: Yes. I got to understand that Richard Khan was dead.

SUGRIM SINGH: Who told you this?

ALIMA KHAN: Father Pink.

SUGRIM SINGH: Through Father Pink at about 11 o'clock you learned that your son Richard Khan died where?"

ALIMA KHAN: At the Mackenzie Hospital.

SUGRIM SINGH: And on the morning of the 28th of May you saw the dead body in Lyken's Funeral Parlour in Georgetown. It that right?

ALIMA KHAN: Yes.

SUGRIM SINGH: And you also heard that your husband was beaten?

ALIMA KHAN: Yes. He spent three weeks in Mackenzie hospital.

The Wismar Commission Report

SUGRIM SINGH: What is his name?

ALIMA KHAN: Mohamed Inshan Khan.

SUGRIM SINGH: Now, how far do you live from Ramnarace?

ALIMA KHAN: I don't know Ramnarace.

SUGRIM SINGH: Did you try to hide in the house of any neighbours?

ALIMA KHAN: No, I was at the station.

SUGRIM SINGH: And you estimate your house and everything as how much?

ALIMA KHAN: Over thirty thousand dollars with everything.

SUGRIM SINGH: You lost everything?

ALIMA KHAN: The crowd even pulled out my married ring.

SUGRIM SINGH: Did that happen in the presence of the police?

ALIMA KHAN: Yes sir.

SUGRIM SINGH: Anything else you know about? What you saw, not what you heard?

ALIMA KHAN: The night while I was at the station they came to throw a bomb in the station.

—
SHEPHERD: I want to know what she saw or heard. "They came to bomb the station." I don't know what that means.

—
SUGRIM SINGH: They? Who came?

ALIMA KHAN: A Negro fellow ran around the yard.

SUGRIM SINGH: You saw him?

ALIMA KHAN: Yes.

SUGRIM SINGH: I want you to tell me what you saw. You were in the station. You saw a black fellow ran around. About how many policemen were at the station that time?

ALIMA KHAN: Plenty. One of them shot the fellow in the belly – the fellow with the bomb.

SUGRIM SINGH: You don't know which policeman?

ALIMA KHAN: No.

SUGRIM SINGH: Is there any other incident you know of personally of your own knowledge?

ALIMA KHAN: No.

SUGRIM SINGH: That's all from this witness.

—
SHEPHERD: So three policemen accompanied you to your home?

ALIMA KHAN: Yes.

SHEPHERD: And you were taken by launch to Mackenzie?

ALIMA KHAN: Yes. Soldiers and police took me across.

SHEPHERD: Did you see your husband beaten?

Transcripts – Day 3

ALIMA KHAN: On the 25th of May I did not see him after he left for work.

SHEPHERD: Did you see your son shot? I am just asking. Was he shot? I don't know.

ALIMA KHAN: No. Richard was beaten to death.

SHEPHERD: Did you see him beaten?

ALIMA KHAN: I never went home.

SHEPHERD: You say the crowd took your marriage ring?

ALIMA KHAN: Yes.

SHEPHERD: Who took your marriage ring?

ALIMA KHAN: Boys, girls, and men started to cuff me up.

SHEPHERD: Who took your marriage ring?

ALIMA KHAN: I didn't know who took it.

SHEPHERD: Were there lots of people about?

ALIMA KHAN: Lots of people.

SHEPHERD: I have no other questions to ask this witness at this time.

—
CARTER: Are you known by any other name than Alima Khan?

ALIMA KHAN: Yes. Mabel.

CARTER: No other name?

ALIMA KHAN: No.

CARTER: Did you receive any injuries?

ALIMA KHAN: No.

CARTER: I'm sorry. I thought you said that taken to the hospital. Did she say that she had been taken to the hospital?

ALIMA KHAN: No. My husband was there.

CARTER: Did you go to the hospital at any time? To see your son?

ALIMA KHAN: No. I didn't get to go to Mackenzie Hospital.

CARTER: You say you came down by which boat?

ALIMA KHAN: The first boat in the morning.

CARTER: The "Barima"?

ALIMA KHAN: It was a big boat. The first boat.

CARTER: Did you ask the police to take you to the hospital?

ALIMA KHAN: I asked them to take me across to see my son.

CARTER: But you didn't want to go for treatment?

ALIMA KHAN: It was night when they took me across to Mackenzie and when I got the news it was about 11 o'clock. And I asked them to take me across to see my husband and my son Richard.

CARTER: And what happened? Did they take you?

ALIMA KHAN: No.

The Wismar Commission Report

CARTER: You were not yourself sufficiently injured to warrant treatment?

ALIMA KHAN: No. I have been seeing Dr. Persaud at Wakenaam.

CARTER: Who is Essick Mohammed? Is he any relative of yours?

ALIMA KHAN: No.

CARTER: Were there many Indians living in the Valley of Tears?

ALIMA KHAN: Yes.

CARTER: Did any of them come to your help?

ALIMA KHAN: No.

CARTER: Am I correct to say that they were very afraid? At the time this happened they were all scared?

ALIMA KHAN: The morning when the bomb was thrown nobody at all came to help.

DRAYTON: Mrs. Khan, you said you have five children. You only told us about two of them. Where were the other three?

ALIMA KHAN: The other three went to school in the morning shift.

DRAYTON: When your husband left for work that morning did you go along with him? You left the other two children in the house. You said soldiers and police took you home. What time did they take you to Mackenzie?

ALIMA KHAN: I can't remember.

DRAYTON: It was after six o'clock?

ALIMA KHAN: Yes.

DRAYTON: Where did you go?

ALIMA KHAN: At Mackenzie Trade School.

DRAYTON: At the Trade School you heard that your son Richard was dead. Were there any disturbances at Mackenzie?

ALIMA KHAN: No.

DRAYTON: Well, why were you afraid to go on the road?

ALIMA KHAN: It was in the night, and I was afraid to go on the road.

MACDONALD: Did you say that there were about 25 people in the compound? You said you saw a man running around the compound. Can you tell us about what time that was? Was it night?

ALIMA KHAN: Around 8 o'clock in the night.

MACDONALD: Was this fellow who was running around the station compound shot in the belly by a policeman? Did he fall?

ALIMA KHAN: The place was dark and I couldn't see.

MOOTOO: You said that your son was in high school in Georgetown. When did he come home?

ALIMA KHAN: He sat his exam and came home to spend two weeks.

MOOTOO: Did he spend any time with you?

Transcripts – Day 3

ALIMA KHAN: Yes. He spent seven days home.

MOOTOO: How old was he?

ALIMA KHAN: 19 years old.

MOOTOO: You said your younger child, Ishmael, had run home from school, and was picked up in a jeep and brought to the station?

ALIMA KHAN: I did not see the child till I went to Mackenzie.

—

SUGRIM SINGH: Now, can you assist us Mrs. Khan by bringing that child someday next week – that eight-year old child?

ALIMA KHAN: Yes.

SUGRIM SINGH: That's all from this witness.

—

SHEPHERD: How old would Richard have been if he was alive?

ALIMA KHAN: 19 years.

SHEPHERD: He was in high school, in Georgetown?

ALIMA KHAN: Yes.

SHEPHERD: What was he doing in Mackenzie?

ALIMA KHAN: He went home for a holiday.

SHEPHERD: Did he have any work? What work did he plan to do?

—

SUGRIM SINGH: Members of the Commission, these questions are completely irrelevant. While Counsel has a right to examine, this is a child gone to his mother for a holiday.

—

SHEPHERD: I understand. I apologise. And when he was in Georgetown where did he stay?

ALIMA KHAN: He was stopping at one of his aunts.

—

SUGRIM SINGH: We call Shirley Mohamed.

MRS. SHIRLEY MOHAMED is sworn in and she states as follows:

SUGRIM SINGH: Mrs. Mohamed, you are living at the moment where?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: 314, Middle Road, La Penitence.

SUGRIM SINGH: With your husband and how many children?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: Husband and two children. One died.

SUGRIM SINGH: Now up to the 25th, 26th of May where did you live?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: Half Mile, Wismar.

SUGRIM SINGH: You and your husband and three children. The last child on the 25th of May was how old?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: Seven months.

The Wismar Commission Report

SUGRIM SINGH: Your husband worked at Mackenzie?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: At Demba.

SUGRIM SINGH: And you stayed at home to look after your children. Now before the Saturday or Sunday, did you hear anything or anything dawned on you?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: A man by the name of Bertie Williams used to visit me.

SUGRIM SINGH: How close was Bertie Williams to you and your family?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: He was very close to us. He came to me on the Friday 22nd, and my husband asked him to stay with us, and he said that this is a different time now, and there will be burning out and a lot of things.

SUGRIM SINGH: That's Friday the 22nd, the Friday before the Monday?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: Yes sir.

SUGRIM SINGH: What next happened?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: Well after he told us so, he never slept with us again. Well, on Sunday night when they started to burn the house . . .

SUGRIM SINGH: Who started to burn the house?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: The Black people.

SUGRIM SINGH: Where they started to burn the houses?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: At Half Mile.

SUGRIM SINGH: That's near you?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: Yes sir. Crowds were passing and burning the houses at Half Mile.

SUGRIM SINGH: Yes? After this what happened next?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: We started to keep watch on Sunday night among the neighbours. Bertie William's wife was at me and her husband came and told her to go home and asked her why she can't keep herself at her own place.

SUGRIM SINGH: Did he use any expressions?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: Yes sir. He told her to go to her f****g house and stay there.

SUGRIM SINGH: And then what happened?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: Some boys came around, and just then Corporal King came up and searched the boys and didn't find anything on them, and he told them to go home and sleep.

SUGRIM SINGH: What next happened?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: Corporal King and about six policemen went to Ramnarace place at about 2.00 p.m. and Ramnarace gave them beers, and they said they will look after him.

SUGRIM SINGH: Were there police and volunteers?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: Yes sir.

SUGRIM SINGH: Well, what next happened?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: We kept watch right through the night. In the morning my husband went to work and I sent lunch for him about 8 o'clock. Then I got ready to go to the market and a Black lady next to me asked me where I was going. I said that I was going to the market. She then said that I must not go out on the road; that I must lock up and stay in my house.

Transcripts – Day 3

SUGRIM SINGH: And you did lock up?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: No sir. My children were at the next door neighbours, and I went outside and left my door open. Then I saw the Negroes removing from the East Indian houses and I was afraid.

SUGRIM SINGH: And what you did next?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: I went for my baby and children who were at the neighbours. And then I went to some Chinese people and asked them if I can stay and they said it is alright; that I can stay, but I mustn't peep out.

SUGRIM SINGH: Yes? What next happened?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: At half past ten on Monday morning the husband came home from work and told me to stay and I mustn't be afraid. Well, then a group of Black boys came up and went to a house where a Black man was living with an East Indian lady. They pushed down the post of the house and the house fell and they bored the lady in the belly.

SUGRIM SINGH: You saw that?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: Yes sir.

SUGRIM SINGH: Did they burn the house?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: No. It was a Negro chap's house.

SUGRIM SINGH: After that?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: I was peeping from my neighbour's place when I saw about seventeen volunteers came up, and the lady was shouting and her children too, and the volunteers passed straight on.

SUGRIM SINGH: Do you know the name of the lady?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: Yes. Barker.

SUGRIM SINGH: That name sounds a little funny?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: Well the lady was married to the Negro man, Barker.

SUGRIM SINGH: Oh, I see. Well, after that what happened?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: Well they went to One Mile and the Black boys came back and they were saying that they should go to Ramnarace store first.

SUGRIM SINGH: That's the shop and business?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: Yes sir.

SUGRIM SINGH: Yes, go on?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: One Negro woman by the name of Yvonne Hart said all who got coolies in their house put them out or we will burn them out too.

SUGRIM SINGH: Did that statement affect you in any way?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: No. The people didn't put me out. The girl told me to stay inside. Well, after that they went to Ramnarace and called him out.

SUGRIM SINGH: You could have seen from where you were?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: Yes, just opposite.

SUGRIM SINGH: About how many feet?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: From where I am standing to where you are standing. [15 feet].

SUGRIM SINGH: Yes, go on.

The Wismar Commission Report

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: They pelt down the house and they took an iron bar to open the gate, and then they opened the shop and started to loot the place. And after that they threw oil and light the place on fire. Then Ramnarace came out of his place and started to pray.

SUGRIM SINGH: And that crowd was about how many?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: About ninety-six people.

SUGRIM SINGH: You know some of the names?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: Yes. Yvonne Hart and a boy called Jubilee. Well, after the fire started to blaze Ramnarace came down stairs and asked them not to trouble him, and he gave the crowd some money.

SUGRIM SINGH: He took out the money from where?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: From his pocket. And the wife gave some too. And he asked them to leave him alone and they asked him for his wife.

SUGRIM SINGH: And what happened?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: I saw one of the crowd throw her on the ground and jumped on her.

SUGRIM SINGH: You saw one of them go on her?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: Plenty of them. When one came off the other would go on.

SUGRIM SINGH: How old was this woman?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: About thirty years.

SUGRIM SINGH: Has she got children?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: No.

SUGRIM SINGH: What happened next?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: Well, immediately after that the heat catch on to the Wong's house and the crowd started to throw water.

SUGRIM SINGH: Before we leave Mr. Ramnarace, did you hear any shouting from Mr. or Mrs. Ramnarace?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: Yes sir. Mrs. Ramnarace was shouting and her husband was standing with his hands full of blood.

SUGRIM SINGH: Did any police or volunteer pass there at the moment?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: No. They were more in front.

SUGRIM SINGH: Did they come up later?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: No.

SUGRIM SINGH: Well, then, from Walter Wong's house the fire went over to you?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: Yes. The Black people started to come in Wong's house and move out the things and they caught me in the corner standing with my baby.

SUGRIM SINGH: They came in your house and caught in a corner?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: Yes. The same Bertie Williams came in and took the two children who were holding on to me and put them outside, and I asked him to save us. And he said "This is no f*****g time to save anybody."

SUGRIM SINGH: This same fellow who used to occupy a room in your house? You still had your baby?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: Yes.

Transcripts – Day 3

SUGRIM SINGH: What next happened?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: We walked out. We saw the crowd was removing the things from my house. I ran in with my children in a Black girl's yard and I asked her if I can stay and she held my hands and put me out of the yard.

SUGRIM SINGH: Had your husband come home yet?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: No. Well, after that I walked down and a group of Negro boys came and surrounded me with my baby in my hand. One of the crowd held my dress and tore it down.

SUGRIM SINGH: What part did they tear?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: The upper of my dress, and just the skirt was left.

SUGRIM SINGH: Yes, I know this is embarrassing to you, but we want to hear everything.

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: They took away my baby, and after that one of them slapped me behind my neck, and I asked them to leave me because I don't trouble anybody. And they said it is we who troubled the people at Buxton and then some of them said "Let's throw the baby down", and they were squeezing my baby all the time.

SUGRIM SINGH: And the baby died. May I have a look at the baby's picture?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: Yes sir. The baby died.

SUGRIM SINGH: What next?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: They said they will throw the baby in the fire, and I begged them not to throw the baby because if they throw the baby they will have to throw all of us.

SUGRIM SINGH: Did any police or Volunteer pass at this time?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: No. They were standing not too far away.

SUGRIM SINGH: How many feet away were they standing from you?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: I can't really say, but they could have heard me bawling.

SUGRIM SINGH: Can you – I know this is a bit embarrassing to you – what were the words you used when you were hollering?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: "Ow, all you help me".

SUGRIM SINGH: Now, they had your baby. They had wanted to throw the baby in the fire and you begged them. All this time your husband wasn't home or didn't come back from work?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: No.

SUGRIM SINGH: Now, Mrs. Mohamed, tell me did any male member of that crowd try anything?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: Yes. At the time when they were holding me, one tried to throw me down. Then a boy by the name of Jubilee, he told them to leave me alone, that I am good people. They then threw back the child at me and I caught her. Then the rain started to fall.

SUGRIM SINGH: Then what next happened?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: All of them started to run and shelter. And I went down the hill and I met a girl, Yvonne Hart, and she told me that I mustn't walk so or else I will meet with another crowd; that I must go towards Silvertown. I took her advice and went. Then whilst passing a shop a group of boys were sheltering there, and they said "You better pass quick before the rain is over or else you are going to see what we will do to you." I met two policemen standing underneath a house sheltering from the rain.

SUGRIM SINGH: Did you talk to them?

The Wismar Commission Report

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: Yes. I asked them to follow me to the station, and they said I must go along my way and search for Cheddi.

SUGRIM SINGH: Did they accompany you?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: No.

SUGRIM SINGH: Now, were you all this time without any upper garment, and you were wet?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: Yes sir. After that, I went into a shop and the Black man put me out.

SUGRIM SINGH: What happened next?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: They pushed me out of the shop in the rain.

SUGRIM SINGH: This time you still had your seven months' baby in your hands?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: Yes.

SUGRIM SINGH: What happened next?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: I went across and I stood up by the boat landing by the market. After a while, my brother-in-law came along with a boat and I asked him to carry me to Mackenzie. We were under the Pullman shed when the men were going in to work.

SUGRIM SINGH: Just a minute. The Pullman shed at quarter past twelve?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: Yes. And we stood up crying and the men passing said we must carry our so and so.

SUGRIM SINGH: What words they used?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: They said we must "move our coolie rass from here and get out before we finish you".

SUGRIM SINGH: Was there any policeman present when they were saying so?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: Yes.

SUGRIM SINGH: Did the policeman say anything?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: No.

—
SHEPHERD: They were saying what? I don't quite hear. That they were saying "so and so"? What does that mean?

—
SUGRIM SINGH: You said in evidence that these men passing back to work said "Carry your coolie rass from here." And there were policemen and volunteers there and they didn't say anything. Did these policemen do anything?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: No.

—
SHEPHERD: Then these were words of abuse hurled at this witness and nobody interfered? Right?"

SUGRIM SINGH: That's right.

SHEPHERD: Thank you.

—
SUGRIM SINGH: Now from there, where were you taken?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: A Demba constable jumped out of a van and took me to the constabulary headquarters.

Transcripts – Day 3

SUGRIM SINGH: And from there you went where?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: To the Trade School.

SUGRIM SINGH: And from the Trade School you went to Georgetown?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: Yes.

SUGRIM SINGH: And your baby died where?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: They took us to the industrial site.

SUGRIM SINGH: Has your baby recovered from that squeezing since?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: The baby died.

SUGRIM SINGH: Is this a picture of the baby? Members of the Commission, I wish to tender this as an exhibit. I'm going to deprive you of this for a little while, but we will return it to you.

—

SHEPHERD: Why? It's very nice to have a bouquet of photographs, but they hardly seem very relevant. I don't object at all, but it is just a matter of relevancy.

—

SUGRIM SINGH: Members of the Commission, I am surprised at my friend. The baby has been referred to in this evidence – a seven months' baby.

SHEPHERD: I think . . .

SUGRIM SINGH: I am still on my feet.

SHEPHERD: Well, so am I. May I make a submission now?

—

CHAIRMAN: You are taking objection to this photograph being tendered in evidence?

SHEPHERD: No. I would simply ask what it represents that is relevant. It is a beautiful baby, and I am a father, but I cannot see any evidence of injuries on the baby, and could I be informed why it is relevant?"

—

SUGRIM SINGH: I explained that this witness has said that this baby was squeezed. Number two, this is the picture of the baby, and she has submitted this photograph and I am respectfully submitting that it is relevant, and I am surprised at my friend asking this question. He knows that in other enquiries, picture of that nature is admissible in evidence.

—

CHAIRMAN: It will be admitted. It is marked "Exhibit F".

—

SUGRIM SINGH: Much obliged to you, sir. Mrs. Shirley Mohammed, the house in which you were living in the Valley of Tears, did it belong to you?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: I lived at Half Mile, Wismar.

SUGRIM SINGH: Sorry. Did it belong to you?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: No, we were renting it.

SUGRIM SINGH: Now tell us about your husband. What was he doing while all this was happening there?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: My husband was working in the mines and they told him from headquarters what was happening in Wismar, and he took a jeep and he came down. He came down about half past ten.

The Wismar Commission Report

SUGRIM SINGH: He came home?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: Yes, but I didn't see him. He was crossing the river at about 11 o'clock and he got beaten. I saw him about 7 o'clock in the Wismar police station.

SUGRIM SINGH: That was after you went to Mackenzie.

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: Yes.

SUGRIM SINGH: That's all from this witness.

SHEPHERD: Do you know any of the names of the volunteers who passed by?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: No.

SHEPHERD: Would you recognize them if you saw them again?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: I don't know.

SHEPHERD: I am referring to the volunteers who passed by before the lady was bored in the belly, as you put it. Wasn't it before the lady was assaulted that the volunteers passed?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: The lady was hollering when the volunteers passed.

SHEPHERD: How many?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: About seventeen of them.

SHEPHERD: Seventeen? Were they marching? Were they walking two and two?"

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: In three sets.

SHEPHERD: In three sets?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: Yes.

SHEPHERD: Were there any other people about?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: There were many people standing about.

SHEPHERD: About what time is this?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: In the morning about half past ten.

SHEPHERD: This was Sunday?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: No sir, on the Monday.

SHEPHERD: Did some Black boys come out and interfere with you?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: Yes.

SHEPHERD: How long after?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: About one hour after.

SHEPHERD: And was this in your house?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: I ran in somebody's house.

SHEPHERD: Was it the neighbour's house?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: Yes, the neighbour's house.

SHEPHERD: Was anyone in the house?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: Yes sir. When I went in I saw a man.

Transcripts – Day 3

SHEPHERD: A man was there? What man was that?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: A kind of a red man.

SHEPHERD: A red man?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: Yes.

SHEPHERD: And what was the red man doing?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: He was standing up in the kitchen, and he told me to hide. And then the owner of the house came and she held my hand and put me out and I begged to stay but she still put me out.

SHEPHERD: The Black fellows who tore your dress you say. Was the tearing in the house or outside?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: Outside.

SHEPHERD: And you hollered?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: Yes.

SHEPHERD: And what did the red man do when you hollered?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: I left him in the house and when I came out I didn't see him again.

SHEPHERD: Didn't he come out and help you?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: No.

SHEPHERD: Did he run for help any where?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: No sir.

SHEPHERD: Did he run to fetch the police?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: No.

SHEPHERD: Did you see any police about?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: Just down the foot of the hill.

SHEPHERD: Did the red man run and ask the police to help you?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: No.

SHEPHERD: And how many police were there?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: More than three.

SHEPHERD: What sort of uniforms were they wearing? A blue uniform like that constable?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: Yes. And there were volunteers too.

SHEPHERD: And volunteers too?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: Yes. They had on khaki.

SHEPHERD: How many constables and many volunteers?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: I saw two police but I cannot say how many volunteers.

SHEPHERD: Do you know their names?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: No.

SHEPHERD: Could you recognise them if you see them?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: Yes.

SHEPHERD: Have you reported this before to the police?

The Wismar Commission Report

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: No.

SHEPHERD: It was the same day that the Demba constable jumped out of his van and took you to the Trade School?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: Yes.

SHEPHERD: Did you say anything about this to the constable?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: No.

SHEPHERD: Did you ask him to take you to the police to make a report?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: No.

SHEPHERD: When were you taken to Georgetown?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: Tuesday morning.

SHEPHERD: Did you make a report of this to the police in Georgetown?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: No. I was taken to the Industrial Site.

SHEPHERD: There is a police station there? Isn't there?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: I don't know.

SHEPHERD: Did you ask any one to take you to the police station?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: No.

SHEPHERD: Well, why not? After this event did you make any attempt to go to the police?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: No.

SHEPHERD: But did you ask anyone to take you to the police? When you got to Georgetown did you make any attempt to go to the police to make a report?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: No.

CARTER: Did you make any attempt to get medical treatment for your baby?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: At the Industrial Site.

CARTER: What attempt did you make?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: I carried her to the doctor.

CARTER: You carried her to the doctor at Mackenzie hospital?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: No. There was a doctor at the Industrial Site at Georgetown.

CARTER: Did you make any attempt to see the doctor at Mackenzie?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: No. When we were carried to the constabulary we were locked in a room there. There were about 15 of us, all East Indians.

CARTER: Do you mean that this was the police station at Mackenzie,, or was this something different?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: This was the Demba constable's office.

CARTER: Did you go to the constable and tell him that your child was injured and you wanted help for her?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: No. We hardly saw anybody until the night when they carried us to the Trade School and then they took me over to Wismar police station. Two policemen took me over there.

Transcripts – Day 3

CARTER: You made any attempt then to get treatment for your child?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: No. Then we went back to the Trade School and soldiers gave me a blanket and some baby clothes, and the next day we came to town and saw a doctor.

CARTER: When you came to town that was the first time you saw a doctor? What is the name of the doctor who examined the baby?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: Dispenser Frederick Williams.

CARTER: This was in Georgetown? Did a doctor see your baby?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: The dispenser saw her first and I told him what happened to the baby, and after, a doctor came to see her.

CARTER: Which doctor saw the baby?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: Dr. Ramjohn. I don't know his name, but I believe it was Dr. Ramjohn.

CARTER: Did you ever ascertain the cause of death of the baby? Did the doctor tell you what caused the death of your baby? A death certificate must have been issued. Have you got a copy of that death certificate?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: I left the Industrial Site Saturday and went to my father in West Ruimveldt, and Sunday afternoon she got worse, and I carried her to see the doctor at the Industrial Site.

CARTER: The same Dr. Ramjohn?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: Dr. Jaikarran. They told me that if she doesn't feel better I must carry her back. So I took her on Sunday afternoon, and the doctor told me to carry her to the Public Hospital.

CARTER: Do you know which doctor saw her there? Did you go with her in the ambulance?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: Yes.

CARTER: And did you go in the hospital with her?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: Yes. We left her there in the afternoon and went back the next morning and we had to go away for a while; and when we came back the baby was looking worse and after a while they told us that the baby was dead.

CARTER: And after the death of the child, did you receive a death certificate telling you the cause of death?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: No.

CARTER: I wonder if Counsel to the Commissioners could possibly get that certificate so that you could know the cause of death of that child.

—
SHEPHERD: May I say that I have had no instructions at all about this.

CARTER: No. I meant Mr. Sugrim Singh.

SHEPHERD: No, but from the police point of view this is a very serious matter and there should have been a report and an opportunity for criminal investigations. If there is any assistance that can be given to the police this is the time to give it. We don't want any further delay. If this is true it is evidence of a crime of murder. This is an entirely new event so far as the Police Force is concerned, and my object in referring to evidence that has been put in is that we are here to be objective, and if crimes are committed reports must be made to the police and investigations made and the proper persons charged. Appeal to sentiment is not enough. We must have clear evidence and an opportunity as soon as possible to conduct the criminal investigations.

The Wismar Commission Report

SUGRIM SINGH: Members of the Commission, may I allay my friend's anxiety by telling him that there are scores of such cases, and these people were disabled from giving information to the police because they had to leave this area, but what strikes me most, Members of the Commission, is that I am not asking any questions on this. There is a volunteer officer, Major Langham, at Mackenzie who is a witness summoned by me, and has forwarded a statement. And I am told by the head of the Volunteer Force, Mr. Celso De Freitas that that statement is in the hands of my learned friend and has not been handed to me so that I can cross-examine this witness on the facts of that statement. It is not yet delivered to me. So I'll have to ask this witness to come back again for further cross-examination. Why is this statement being kept?

SHEPHERD: The statements required by the Commission will of course be available to the Commission whenever they require them. But I really had to ask my learned friend to desist from whispering in my ears for a moment, because I was losing the trend of what was happening. I certainly can provide any statements from any volunteer officers that have been made if I had some notice. I had only this moment heard of what my learned friend was attempting to convey to me. There are adjournments, you know, when he can discuss things with me, and I'll do what ever I can to facilitate matters.

SUGRIM SINGH: This is an investigation, as I say, to discover the truth. Counsel for the Demerara Bauxite Company has placed at my disposal documents containing the relevant information. I have made a request as Counsel to this Commission for Major Langham to send up a statement for several days now, and the Head of that Department informed me that that statement is here for me and I haven't got in up to now, and I need that statement.

SHEPHERD: If he asked me during the adjournment . . .

SUGRIM SINGH: I have asked him, having heard from Colonel Celso De Freitas, and I went over to my friend just now . . .

SHEPHERD: The whole matter can be settled quite amicably, really.

CARTER: Mrs. Mohammed, what was the name of the child?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: Bibi Swabrin Mohamed.

CARTER: Do you remember the date when the child died?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: The 1st of June.

CARTER: You say that when the trouble started there were some Black people who were moving out of Indian homes?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: Yes.

CARTER: Were they renting these homes from Indians?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: Yes.

CARTER: Because by that time houses owned by Indians were being burned?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: Yes.

CARTER: Apart from Ramnarace, did you see any other Indians at about that time when you were being attacked, or Mrs. Ramnarace was being attacked?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: No. There were other Indians in the place but they were locked in their homes.

CARTER: Did you see any of them on the road?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: No.

CARTER: Did you see the volunteers or the police accompanying any Indians from Half Mile?

Transcripts – Day 3

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: No.

CARTER: Did your husband ever return to Wismar to work at Mackenzie?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: No.

CARTER: He has resigned from the job?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: Yes.

CARTER: And he is being compensated?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: Yes.

CARTER: How long did he work for the Company?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: About five years.

SHEPHERD: Could I ask one more question of this witness before she leaves? On the 25th you were taken across to the Wismar police station at about 7 o'clock, I think, to see your husband?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: Yes sir.

SHEPHERD: Did you go into the police station to see your husband?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: Yes.

SHEPHERD: Did you make a complaint then about these events?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: No sir. There were plenty of people there in the station – all over the place.

SHEPHERD: Did you say that your baby had been crushed?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: No sir.

SHEPHERD: But even then the baby was suffering?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: Yes.

SHEPHERD: I don't doubt for a moment the truth of what you have said, but I want to know why you didn't do something about it when you were in the police station at Wismar.

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: We were punishing, and we couldn't go upstairs because of the crowd.

SHEPHERD: You saw your husband though, did you?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: Yes sir.

SHEPHERD: How was your husband when you saw him?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: He had bruises in his head, and his clothes were torn.

SHEPHERD: Was he able to talk with you?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: Yes.

SHEPHERD: Did you tell him about the baby?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: Yes.

SHEPHERD: Didn't he say you should make a report at once?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: No sir. He came over and the whole place was in confusion.

SHEPHERD: No more questions. As to the report of Major Langham, I am afraid I haven't it here, but I will have it by tomorrow.

The Wismar Commission Report

SUGRIM SINGH: My anxiety is simply that I was told that the report is in my friend's possession and was sent for me. Maybe, out of that report I would need some facts to examine the witness, but I haven't got it. We will have to recall those witnesses, and perhaps this might have saved time.

SHEPHERD: I am sorry. If I had been informed, you could have had it the first thing this morning.

CHAIRMAN: Mr. Singh, have you only just now made enquiries about this report?

SUGRIM SINGH: No, I was told by Mr. De Freitas that he was asking the Counsel to deliver this report to me. I want to make the matter a matter of principle. This is a commission of inquiry and all relevant documents in my possession I am prepared to place at the disposal of my learned friends and what they have I expect them to be placed at my disposal. I also learn that there is a plan prepared by the police. Not when the inquiry is over or their main witness comes in they will produce the statement or the plan. They are keeping them till the end of this inquiry or when the Commissioner comes?

SHEPHERD: We have no plan, sir, except those supplied by Demba before you. Are the police expected to produce plans?

CHAIRMAN: We were told that the day we visited the area that there was a plan made up showing the damage.

SHEPHERD: I don't know who told you that, sir, because I wasn't there at the time, but know nothing of such a plan. I think it was probably a schedule he meant, and not a plan. This is the first I've heard of a plan.

SUGRIM SINGH: Members of the Commission, I must tell you that the Police Force and the Volunteer Force are represented by counsel. The Demerara Bauxite Company is represented by Counsel. We got all the statements from the Demerara Bauxite Company. Up to now I haven't got a single statement from any member of the Police or Volunteer Force. They will hand in all those statements when the inquiry is through?

CARTER: I'm just anticipating that members of the Volunteer Force would be called. If these volunteers have to be called, you will see the difficulty to have them all travelling to Georgetown. So at this stage I am going to ask the Commission to bear this in mind for a future date; for we may have to spend a few days at Mackenzie taking evidence. But if you insist on bringing these people down, well, then, we will have to cooperate with you.

SUGRIM SINGH: I didn't want to rise again. I went to the extent of calling at Messrs. Cameron and Shepherd. I went to my friend but I must admit we didn't discuss the question of time. My instructions are that those statements should have been handed in since Monday's sitting so that we may have them available to cross-examining witnesses. There it is, the inquiry is going on and I don't have any statement in my possession.

DRAYTON: What is your estimated cost of your belongings?

SHIRLEY MOHAMED: Sir, well, I can't really tell. I can tell you what and what we had. A bed, \$168, a dinette set valued \$175, a machine that we didn't finish paying for, an arborite table, a cabinet, vanity, rocking chairs, and another table and four welcome chairs.

SHEPHERD: Before this very interesting witness goes I would say that the statements of Mr. Langham wouldn't throw any light at all on what happened to this lady and her child . . .

Transcripts – Day 3

SUGRIM SINGH: Members of the Commission, that may be so in the Counsel's opinion, but it may not be in the opinion of the Counsel for the Commission.

Call Kowsillia Gopie.

MRS. KOWSILLIA GOPIE is sworn in and she states as follows:

SUGRIM SINGH: Now, Kowsillia Gopie, you are living at Success, East Coast Demerara?

GOPIE: Yes sir.

SUGRIM SINGH: And you are a school teacher?

GOPIE: Yes sir.

SUGRIM SINGH: On the 26th May this year you were residing at Wismar?

GOPIE: Yes sir.

SUGRIM SINGH: With your husband called Johda Gopie?

GOPIE: Yes sir.

SUGRIM SINGH: He worked at the Mackenzie plant?

GOPIE: Yes sir.

SUGRIM SINGH: And did you do any teaching down there?

GOPIE: No sir.

SUGRIM SINGH: Now, on Monday the 25th May beginning from the morning around 6.15, what happened?

GOPIE: Well, my husband left for work around 6.15. That was the usual time he left for work. And my little daughter and myself remained home.

SUGRIM SINGH: What next?

GOPIE: Around 9.00 a.m., Mr. John Hodge, my landlord, came and told me that I must get out from his place.

SUGRIM SINGH: Where is that?

GOPIE: Bruce Alley.

SUGRIM SINGH: What you did?

GOPIE: I started to cry and asked him to wait until my husband comes home.

SUGRIM SINGH: Just then, what happened?

GOPIE: A group of about 14 people came in, men and women.

SUGRIM SINGH: What kind of people?

GOPIE: Negroes. All were people I knew.

SUGRIM SINGH: What next happened?

GOPIE: I was standing by the door. They pushed and went inside the house and searched for my husband. One Joyce Bacchus and Jack, a well known butcher at Wismar, they asked me for my jewels and money, and I told them I don't have any. Then Joyce Bacchus went to my vanity and took out \$15 in cash and a

The Wismar Commission Report

watch band valued \$35, all in my presence, and a chain valued \$12. I had my daughter Padmawattie in my hands with a pair of gold bangles and Joyce Bacchus pulled it away. This bangle valued \$15.

SUGRIM SINGH: And did Joyce Bacchus tell you anything about your husband?

GOPIE: Yes sir. She told me that I mustn't expect to see my husband Jodha Gopie alive again.

SUGRIM SINGH: Yes? At 11.00 a.m., later, did you see anything?

GOPIE: Yes, I saw my husband coming home with his head all over in blood and his pants torn. He came in and told me to lock the door and keep inside. Just then, I peeped through the glass window and saw Jack with a 4 by 4 greenheart wood in his hands, and one John who was working with my husband had a long knife in his hand.

SUGRIM SINGH: What did they do?

GOPIE: They came to my house, both of them. I went to Yvonne Ross's house when my husband told me that they were coming. After that, I heard a window smash and the door opened, and a voice saying "He is not here." Another voice said to look under the bed. I heard him scream.

SUGRIM SINGH: Did you see your husband come out the house or crowd?

GOPIE: No. Ross told me that my husband was lying near the fence. That was about 11 a.m. and he was there until 3.30 to 4.00 p.m.

SUGRIM SINGH: What next happened?

GOPIE: Well, I remained at the Ross's place. I heard the sound of a car and I asked the neighbour what is happening and she said they had taken Jodah away.

SUGRIM SINGH: What did you do afterwards?

GOPIE: Well, I went to close the door when a group of women approached me again. Reverend Hyleger, the minister of the Pilgrim Holiness Church, was there. I asked him to help me and he didn't answer me. Joyce Bacchus, Irene Brown, Mrs. Beckles and a woman named Penny took away my radio, clothes, ice flask, travelling bags, and so on.

SUGRIM SINGH: What happened next?

GOPIE: Just then, the landlord came and nailed two boards on the door with the rest of the things in the house.

SUGRIM SINGH: Yes? What happened next?

GOPIE: Three policemen came and took me to the station.

SUGRIM SINGH: Did you see your husband there?

GOPIE: No. He was already taken to the hospital.

SUGRIM SINGH: Now, while you were at your home did any police or volunteer pass?

GOPIE: While I was in the jeep there was a girl they were raping near a shop.

SUGRIM SINGH: Wait a minute! How many police were in the jeep?

GOPIE: Three policemen and about four volunteers, at the back of the jeep.

SUGRIM SINGH: What was the name of the Chinese shop where the girl was being raped?

GOPIE: Leu Brothers' shop.

SUGRIM SINGH: Did the jeep stop there?

GOPIE: Yes sir.

Transcripts – Day 3

SUGRIM SINGH: Did the girl shout or anything?

GOPIE: Yes sir. She was shouting for help and hollering, “Oh my daddy! Oh my daddy!”

SUGRIM SINGH: From where this jeep stopped to where this raping was going on, Mrs.Gopie, was how far?

GOPIE: Not far at all.

SUGRIM SINGH: Did the police do anything?

GOPIE: No sir. They told the girl that in a few seconds they would be back.

SUGRIM SINGH: When the jeep drove off and left the girl there, did any policemen or volunteers attempt to come out of the jeep?

GOPIE: No sir.

SUGRIM SINGH: Well, you went to the station. Did you meet any other East Indian people there?

GOPIE: Yes sir.

SUGRIM SINGH: You stayed there?

GOPIE: Yes sir.

SUGRIM SINGH: Now, tell us what happened at the station?

GOPIE: The police were receiving boxes of terylene shirts, pants length, and so on.

SUGRIM SINGH: Did you see this?

GOPIE: Yes sir. They were taking these things to the middle room near the toilet.

SUGRIM SINGH: Now, in respect to you while you were at the station, Mrs. Gopie, it's embarrassing, but tell us what happened?

GOPIE: Nothing happened then. It was when I went back to Mackenzie in early June. That's when I went back to collect my things. I was the only female who went back with 32 men, East Indian men.

SUGRIM SINGH: Did you go to the police station?

GOPIE: Yes sir. I went there and asked for protection to collect my things at the landlord's home in Blackett's Alley. And the sergeant refused.

SUGRIM SINGH: Now that next happened?

GOPIE: I told Mr. Fields, the Lieutenant – the British officer – that the sergeant refused to give me protection to go for my things, and he sent six soldiers with me to collect my things at Blackett's Alley.

SUGRIM SINGH: Did you collect any of your things?

GOPIE: Yes sir.

SUGRIM SINGH: Yes? What next?

GOPIE: I told Mr. Fields I saw two people, John, the boy who had the knife in his hand, and Joyce Bacchus at the station. I told the police that these were two of the people who attacked my husband and they didn't even listen to me.

SUGRIM SINGH: What next happened at the station?

GOPIE: I told Mr. Fields and he took me to the Wismar police station to the sergeant. And Mr. Fields told him that I would like to go and identify some people and the sergeant said that he wouldn't like me to go because that will spark off another trouble.

SUGRIM SINGH: Did you give a statement at Wismar police station?

The Wismar Commission Report

GOPIE: No, at Brickdam. I gave the names of persons who attacked my husband.

SUGRIM SINGH: Did anything come out of these statements?

GOPIE: No sir.

SUGRIM SINGH: Now, Mrs. Gopie, let us go back to the station. While you were at the station at Wismar, do you recall any incident that happened there?

GOPIE: No sir. That is when I went to the C.I.D., Mackenzie police station, the night after the sergeant refused to let me go and identify the man to the soldiers.

SUGRIM SINGH: Now, go slowly and tell us what happened at the Mackenzie police station.

GOPIE: I went and asked one Mr. Brown, a well known policeman stationed up there, for two bags to sleep under the station.

SUGRIM SINGH: What time was that?

GOPIE: Around 7.30 p.m.

SUGRIM SINGH: You didn't have anywhere to sleep?

GOPIE: No sir. I was going to sleep with the other people who came back to collect their things.

SUGRIM SINGH: Did you get the bags?

GOPIE: No sir. Mr. Brown asked me if I wouldn't like to spend the night with him.

SUGRIM SINGH: Yes? After that what happened?

GOPIE: I told him he take his blasted eyes and pass me, and I walked down the steps and went back downstairs.

SUGRIM SINGH: What next?

GOPIE: Around 8.30 p.m. the same night I told a man called Sack the story. A little later I heard someone called for Mrs. Gopie. Well, I went and I saw a person had on a white shirt, black pants and the voice said that I can get two bags here. The person was very dark – at that time I didn't know that it was the same Mr. Brown. I went in the room for the bags and shortly afterwards the door slammed.

SUGRIM SINGH: Who slammed the door?

GOPIE: The police chap. The Mr. Brown. At that moment it dawned on me that it was the same Mr. Brown.

SUGRIM SINGH: Go on.

GOPIE: Sir, he was squeezing me and my dress was torn in front and I started to scream.

SUGRIM SINGH: In other words, did he make advances to you?

GOPIE: Yes sir. He held my breast.

SUGRIM SINGH: What else did he do?

GOPIE: Suddenly after screaming, I heard a policeman pushing the door – another Negro policeman.

SUGRIM SINGH: Well, after this policeman pushed this door, did this policeman say anything?

GOPIE: Yes sir. He said, "Brown is that you?" And then I pushed my way through the door.

SUGRIM SINGH: That's all from this witness. Members of the Commission, I'll ask this witness to come back tomorrow for cross-examination.

[Adjournment]