

Transcripts – Day 8

Day 8 – Wednesday, 25 November 1964

CHAIRMAN: Gentlemen, we have a very full day and we intend to make a start immediately. We have very few witnesses and we will try to get through with them.

KAMAL SINGH is sworn in and he states as follows:

CHAIRMAN: Now, you are living at Diamond Long Dam, Lot 43.

KAMAL SINGH: Yes Sir.

CHAIRMAN: You are employed?

KAMAL SINGH: Not at the present time.

CHAIRMAN: Previously you were living at Wismar?

KAMAL SINGH: Yes sir. Half Mile, Wismar.

CHAIRMAN: What work you used to do there?

KAMAL SINGH: I used to work at Sprostons stelling collecting tickets on the R.H. Carr.

CHAIRMAN: You were collecting tickets on the R.H. Carr?

KAMAL SINGH: Yes sir.

CHAIRMAN: On the 23rd May, 1964, did you see Mr. Jordan?

KAMAL SINGH: Yes sir.

CHAIRMAN: You saw Mr. Jordan and three other men. Did you see any other?

KAMAL SINGH: Yes. Sergeant Chalmers, Mr. King and Festus Adams.

CHAIRMAN: This was about what time?

KAMAL SINGH: This was around 3.30.

CHAIRMAN: In the afternoon?

KAMAL SINGH: Yes sir.

CHAIRMAN: Did you hear anything?

KAMAL SINGH: Yes. Mr. Jordan went to Sergeant Chalmers, Mr. King and Festus and asked them what they were waiting for; that they must go and rape the Indians.

CHAIRMAN: On 24th May, 1964, did anything happen?

KAMAL SINGH: Sergeant Chalmers was walking around the area Half Mile where I was living and I heard him say, "Don't be afraid. Everything is alright."

CHAIRMAN: Any incident occurred on Sunday?

KAMAL SINGH: Well no, not in my area, in another.

CHAIRMAN: You heard explosions on a house elsewhere?

KAMAL SINGH: Yes sir.

CHAIRMAN: Did you see anything?

KAMAL SINGH: Well, I did not see anything; the place was quiet.

CHAIRMAN: Where you went to work? At Wismar stelling?

KAMAL SINGH: Yes sir.

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CHAIRMAN: It is eight o'clock I am asking about.

KAMAL SINGH: I went to work at 7.00 a.m. About 8.00 I saw fire and a crowd.

CHAIRMAN: Did the crowd do anything?

KAMAL SINGH: Yes, they were beating one Ramnaresh.

CHAIRMAN: And did you know two of the fellows?

KAMAL SINGH: Yes.

CHAIRMAN: Can you tell me their names?

KAMAL SINGH: Frank.

CHAIRMAN: You have only given me the name of one person.

KAMAL SINGH: Both titles are Frank.

CHAIRMAN: Then you went home. What did you see?

KAMAL SINGH: I saw the whole place was broken up.

CHAIRMAN: Where was your wife and children?

KAMAL SINGH: They were still in the house.

CHAIRMAN: Yes.

KAMAL SINGH: I took them across to my neighbour to keep them.

CHAIRMAN: What is the name of your neighbour?

KAMAL SINGH: Mr. Rigby.

CHAIRMAN: Yes?

KAMAL SINGH: One fellow by the name of Johnson told them that they must not keep Indians. "This is not any time to save any Indians. Put them out."

CHAIRMAN: What time was that?

KAMAL SINGH: Two o'clock.

CHAIRMAN: What did you do with them? Did you put them anywhere?

KAMAL SINGH: I put them in the fowl pen.

CHAIRMAN: You had your family in the fowl pen?

KAMAL SINGH: Yes. After a while Mr. King, Mr. Festus Adams with Mr. Grant came up the hill.

CHAIRMAN: Is he the village overseer?

KAMAL SINGH: Yes. Mr. King is the village overseer. I asked them what they were doing about this story.

CHAIRMAN: Who did you ask?

KAMAL SINGH: I asked Mr. King, They replied, "We are taking revenge."

CHAIRMAN: Did you see any police or soldiers?

KAMAL SINGH: Yes, the Volunteer Force was there.

CHAIRMAN: How many?

KAMAL SINGH: About eight or nine.

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CHAIRMAN: At your place?

KAMAL SINGH: No. They were around the area and when they came up the hill they met a crowd of people and the crowd moved up. I asked the volunteers what they were doing and they said that they had nothing at all to do with it.

CHAIRMAN: This was about what time, when you spoke to the volunteers?

KAMAL SINGH: About four o'clock.

CHAIRMAN: You were hiding there and then later on what happened?

KAMAL SINGH: The volunteers came up and I asked them to take me to the station.

CHAIRMAN: The same set?

KAMAL SINGH: No, another set came up in a jeep.

CHAIRMAN: Were the others on foot patrol?

KAMAL SINGH: Yes.

CHAIRMAN: And this was about what time?

KAMAL SINGH: About six o'clock in the afternoon.

CHAIRMAN: Did they do so?

KAMAL SINGH: Well, yes. But we had our jewels and they refused to go for the jewel box. I had it hidden in the yard.

CHAIRMAN: How long would that have taken them?

KAMAL SINGH: About two seconds.

CHAIRMAN: Was your house burnt while you were there?

KAMAL SINGH: No. It was looted. I saw people looting it.

CHAIRMAN: After you left, what happened?

KAMAL SINGH: Well, they looted out all the furniture.

CHAIRMAN: Is your house still there?

KAMAL SINGH: No. I was informed by the police that it was burnt.

CHAIRMAN: You had two houses and you lost both, a motor car, three donkey carts all to the value of about seven thousand.

KAMAL SINGH: Yes.

CHAIRMAN: Yes, Mr. Shepherd.

SHEPHERD: It was on Saturday that you saw Sergeant Chalmers, and who was he with?

KAMAL SINGH: Yes, it was on Saturday and he was with Mr. King.

SHEPHERD: Anyone else?

KAMAL SINGH: Mr. Festus Adams and Mr. Grant.

SHEPHERD: Who is Mr. Grant?

KAMAL SINGH: He is the man who operates the trucks for the local authority.

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SHEPHERD: And what was Sergeant Chalmers doing at that time?

KAMAL SINGH: On Sunday morning he was walking around the area.

SHEPHERD: Was it the Saturday that you saw Mr. Jordan with the other men or was it on Sunday?

KAMAL SINGH: It was on Sunday morning.

SHEPHERD: I am talking about Saturday. The occasion when Mr. Jordan and three men came to the stelling. Was Sergeant Chalmers with them as they came from the stelling?

KAMAL SINGH: Yes.

SHEPHERD: Was he walking with them?

KAMAL SINGH: Yes.

SHEPHERD: Was he in uniform?

KAMAL SINGH: No, he was in ordinary clothes.

SHEPHERD: Do you know Sergeant Chalmers well?

KAMAL SINGH: Yes.

SHEPHERD: How many years have you known him?

KAMAL SINGH: Two years.

SHEPHERD: And when Mr. Jordan said "Go and beat the Indians," was Sergeant Chalmers with him at the time?

KAMAL SINGH: Yes sir.

SHEPHERD: How close was Sergeant Chalmers from Mr. Jordan?

KAMAL SINGH: About one foot.

SHEPHERD: And how far were you from Mr. Jordan?

KAMAL SINGH: About eight feet. He was just across the road.

MR. SHEPHERD: Did you see any other policemen?

KAMAL SINGH: No sir.

SHEPHERD: Let us come to the following day – the 24th. Did Sergeant Chalmers come alone?

KAMAL SINGH: Yes.

SHEPHERD: Was he in uniform?

KAMAL SINGH: Yes sir.

SHEPHERD: Why do you suppose he came to your place and said everything was all right?

KAMAL SINGH: I do not know.

SHEPHERD: Did you ask him to go to your place?

KAMAL SINGH: No.

SHEPHERD: You were surprised when he came to your place?

KAMAL SINGH: Yes sir.

SHEPHERD: So far as you know, he came to your place just to tell you that everything was alright.

KAMAL SINGH: Sergeant Chalmers did not come to my place alone. He told everyone in the area that everything would be alright.

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SHEPHERD: Where were you at the time?

KAMAL SINGH: I was at home at the time.

SHEPHERD: And he came into your house?

KAMAL SINGH: No. He passed by the road.

SHEPHERD: When he said everything was alright, how far was he?

KAMAL SINGH: About four feet.

SHEPHERD: He shouted?

KAMAL SINGH: He was not speaking to any one in particular.

SHEPHERD: Yes?

KAMAL SINGH: Calling out to someone, "Everything would be alright." In the area Indian people lived all around.

SHEPHERD: And Sergeant Chalmers said, "Boy, what are you doing; don't be afraid, everything will be alright."

KAMAL SINGH: Yes sir.

SHEPHERD: Was he alone?

KAMAL SINGH: Yes.

SHEPHERD: On Monday 25th when the volunteers and the crowd moved away, you spoke to them and they said they had nothing at all to do with it. What did they mean? Did they mean that they were not responsible for this mess?

KAMAL SINGH: The people were fighting and burning the place. I asked about these people beating and said they had nothing at all to do with it.

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PRATAP N. SINGH: At the time when you called on the Volunteer Force, were people being beaten?

KAMAL SINGH: Yes.

PRATAP N. SINGH: Did any of them try to stop the beating?

KAMAL SINGH: Nothing at all.

PRATAP N. SINGH: When you saw Ramnaresh being beaten, did you make a report to any member of the Police Force or Volunteer Force?

KAMAL SINGH: No.

PRATAP N. SINGH: Did you make a report to anybody of your house being looted?

KAMAL SINGH: At the time, no. Only when I reached down to town.

PRATAP N. SINGH: On the 23rd when Sergeant Chalmers and Jordan came to the stelling, Jordan said to Chalmers, "What are you waiting for? You should go and rape the Indians." Did Chalmers make any reply to this?

KAMAL SINGH: Nothing at all.

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SHEPHERD: I feel I should recall this witness for further examination. I will do so later when I have instructions. I may have to ask you to recall some of these people. It is only the trouble of having to give

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notice. Nevertheless, I wish to have inquiries made into the background of these people. It may be interesting in some cases.

MACDONALD: You saw eight or nine men of the Volunteer Force and five hundred people?

KAMAL SINGH: Yes.

MACDONALD: You saw eight or nine volunteers going up the hill?

KAMAL SINGH: No.

MACDONALD: Where did they go?

KAMAL SINGH: They stood in front of my house.

MACDONALD: They stood up? How long?

KAMAL SINGH: About half an hour and I talked with them.

MACDONALD: How long did you speak with them? Did you speak for an hour or a half hour?

KAMAL SINGH: No, I spoke with them for about fifteen minutes. I even gave them some water.

MACDONALD: Were they following the crowd?

KAMAL SINGH: No. They were just standing up.

MACDONALD: Now, you said that the crowd had gone in front of the volunteers. Did the volunteers try to catch up with the crowd?

KAMAL SINGH: No, they stood up there while the crowd moved up.

MACDONALD: Did they remove after the crowd had left?

KAMAL SINGH: Yes sir. After the crowd had gone somewhere else.

CHAIRMAN: The volunteers were following the crowd?

KAMAL SINGH: They allowed the crowd to go some other place and they in turn went some place else. They (the volunteers) stood up there for about one and a half hours until the crowd had disappeared.

CHAIRMAN: What did the volunteers do?

KAMAL SINGH: They stood up and watched the crowd doing mischief.

MOOTOO: Do you know any of these volunteers?

KAMAL SINGH: Yes, by their faces.

MOOTOO: Do they belong to Wismar?

KAMAL SINGH: Yes, they belong to Wismar.

MOOTOO: Did the other volunteers take you to the police station?

KAMAL SINGH: Yes.

MOOTOO: They belonged to the district too?

KAMAL SINGH: Yes.

CHAIRMAN: That will be all. Thank you.

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SANCHARA RAMKISHORE is sworn in, and he states as follows:

CHAIRMAN: What is your name?

RAMKISHORE: My name is Sanchara Ramkishore.

CHAIRMAN: Where do you live at present?

RAMKISHORE: I am living at Soesdyke, East Bank Demerara.

CHAIRMAN: Are you working?

RAMKISHORE: No sir.

CHAIRMAN: Were you living at Wismar?

RAMKISHORE: Yes sir. Half Mile, Wismar.

CHAIRMAN: What type of work you used to do?

RAMKISHORE: I was an engineer on a launch “Lalta P” owned by Mr. Lalta Paul.

CHAIRMAN: You lived at Wismar with your wife?

RAMKISHORE: I lived there with my wife and children.

CHAIRMAN: How many children?

RAMKISHORE: Seven children.

CHAIRMAN: Now you know one Mr. Marshall living at Wismar. In May, did he tell you something about your house?

RAMKISHORE: Yes, he told me on Sunday while we were travelling down that the position was very critical and we would have to be on the alert.

CHAIRMAN: What did you do with your family?

RAMKISHORE: I nailed up my house and told Mr. Marshall to keep watch all night.

CHAIRMAN: You were interested in your house and family and so told him to keep watch that night?

RAMKISHORE: Yes. On Sunday I had to go to Georgetown and I left Mr. Marshall to watch over my place and my family.

CHAIRMAN: Do you have a baby of fourteen days old in your family?

RAMKISHORE: Yes sir.

CHAIRMAN: When you came down what did you see?

RAMKISHORE: Well, when I went down the place looked normal so I joined the boat and went across to Georgetown.

CHAIRMAN: You knew that the situation was very tense? Did you see any fire?

RAMKISHORE: No sir.

CHAIRMAN: When you arrived in Georgetown, did you report that the situation was very tense and that anything might happen?

RAMKISHORE: Yes, I reported it to Police Sergeant King before I left. He told me that it was alright. When I arrived in Georgetown, I used Toolsie Persaud’s telephone to ring Mr. Lalta Paul in order to find out about the situation. He told me that they had bombed three houses in the Valley of Tears, but that the other places were very quiet.

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CHAIRMAN: Now what did you do on Monday morning? Did you report this matter to anybody in Georgetown?

RAMKISHORE: No. On Monday morning at 9.30, we left with the fishing boat from the koker.

CHAIRMAN: You had to nail up your house, the situation was tense, you heard that three houses were burnt and the rest on fire, and still you did not communicate this fact to the police in Georgetown?

RAMKISHORE: The report was made to Mr. King at Wismar.

CHAIRMAN: The report was made to Mr. King at Wismar before you left. Alright. Now you went back on the Monday.

RAMKISHORE: On the Monday?

CHAIRMAN: You went back on Monday. You arrived at Wismar at what time?

RAMKISHORE: Well, I arrived at Gold Hill about three o'clock.

CHAIRMAN: At what time did you arrive at Wismar?

RAMKISHORE: At about four o'clock.

CHAIRMAN: When you reached, what did you see?

RAMKISHORE: I saw the whole place on fire.

CHAIRMAN: At Wismar, you saw the whole place on fire? That did you do?

RAMKISHORE: Well, all we had to do was to ask for assistance.

CHAIRMAN: Who did you ask for assistance? You saw the volunteer soldiers.

RAMKISHORE: At the stelling.

CHAIRMAN: What stelling?

RAMKISHORE: Well, we had our own little stelling.

CHAIRMAN: How far is that from the station?

RAMKISHORE: About 25 rods.

CHAIRMAN: And you saw volunteer soldiers there and you asked them to help you to get to the boat. You also asked for protection to go for your family. Did you get that protection?

RAMKISHORE: Yes.

CHAIRMAN: Did the volunteers protect you until you got to the station?

RAMKISHORE: Yes.

CHAIRMAN: Did you see your wife and children?

RAMKISHORE: Yes they were all there.

CHAIRMAN: You brought them to the boat and moved down to the river. Where did you go?

RAMKISHORE: Susannah's Rust.

CHAIRMAN: Is your house still there?

RAMKISHORE: No sir.

CHAIRMAN: How many houses had you?

RAMKISHORE: Three buildings.

CHAIRMAN: You had three buildings?

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RAMKISHORE: Yes.

CHAIRMAN: One two-storey?

RAMKISHORE: Two two-storey.

CHAIRMAN: How much do you value all the things lost?

RAMKISHORE: \$25,000 for everything.

CHAIRMAN: For the houses, furniture and everything?

RAMKISHORE: Yes. And a cake shop.

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CHAIRMAN: Yes, Mr. Shepherd.

SHEPHERD: No questions.

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CHAIRMAN: Mr. Carter.

CARTER: No questions.

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PRATAP N. SINGH: No questions.

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CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

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KISHORE MOHAN is sworn in and he states as follows:

CHAIRMAN: You are now residing at 18 Triumph, East Coast Demerara.

MOHAN: Yes sir.

CHAIRMAN: What work do you do?

MOHAN: I am a labourer at Eve Leary.

CHAIRMAN: You used to live at Wismar? What part of Wismar?

MOHAN: Valley of Tears.

CHAIRMAN: How long were you living there?

MOHAN: For fifteen years.

CHAIRMAN: You were employed by the police at Mackenzie as a labourer. As a result of the disturbances you were transferred to Georgetown headquarters. On the 25th May at about seven o'clock, you saw Indians on the public road. On seven o'clock on the Monday?

MOHAN: Yes, on the roadside.

CHAIRMAN: The road on the river side? Anything was happening?

MOHAN: When I was passing I saw some men beating some other men and one jumped overboard.

CHAIRMAN: What nationality?

MOHAN: They were Africans beating Indians, and they threw one of them overboard.

CHAIRMAN: You remained at work at about 10.30 and then you decided to go home. Where were you working?

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MOHAN: At Mackenzie headquarters.

CHAIRMAN: Did you see anything on your way home?

MOHAN: On my way home, I saw a group of men beating a fellow by the name of Nirgin.

CHAIRMAN: Is that the person who owned a launch?

MOHAN: Yes.

CHAIRMAN: What happened to Nirgin?

MOHAN: He fell down and a group of men picked him up and threw him in the house. They threw something in the house and lighted a fire.

CHAIRMAN: Did you go home?

MOHAN: No sir. I didn't reach my home. I turned back and Nirgin's son told me to run for my life.

CHAIRMAN: His son told you to run for your life and you ran away?

MOHAN: I ran away and went across the river.

CHAIRMAN: You have a family and they were living at the Valley of Tears? A wife and one child?

MOHAN: Yes sir. Now I have two children.

CHAIRMAN: One child at that time.

MOHAN: Yes sir. At that time.

CHAIRMAN: What happened when you went across to Mackenzie?

MOHAN: Well, I went across and spoke to Sergeant Simon and Corporal Joseph. I asked them to take me across to see my family.

CHAIRMAN: Did they take you at that time?

MOHAN: No sir.

CHAIRMAN: What time was that?

MOHAN: It was about 10.30 a.m.

CHAIRMAN: When did you get the escort?

MOHAN: About five in the afternoon. I went there and I saw my wife at the police station.

CHAIRMAN: Your wife and child? Were they there?

MOHAN: My wife was there. They told me that she was beaten by some men. She had run away into the bush but on seeing the police, she came out and was taken to the station.

CHAIRMAN: Did you go back to Demba with your family that evening?

MOHAN: Around eight o'clock that night we were transported from the police station to the trade school.

CHAIRMAN: Was the house yours?

MOHAN: Yes.

CHAIRMAN: How much have you lost?

MOHAN: I have lost seven hundred dollars in cash.

CHAIRMAN: How much did you lose in all – money, jewellery and household articles?

MOHAN: About four thousand dollars.

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SHEPHERD: Mr. Kishore Mohan, you said that you worked on the Monday. You went to work on the morning, and you left your wife and child in your house?

MOHAN: Yes.

SHEPHERD: Does your wife and child live with you?

MOHAN: Yes.

SHEPHERD: How old is your wife?

MOHAN: She is nineteen years old.

SHEPHERD: You said she was expecting a child at that time. How old is the child?

MOHAN: Six months.

SHEPHERD: Is the baby a healthy one?

MOHAN: No, not so healthy.

SHEPHERD: Whilst at work something happened and your wife and child were taken to the police station. Is that so?

MOHAN: Yes, after the disturbance.

SHEPHERD: When you returned after five o'clock, you found them safe in the police station.

MOHAN: Yes.

SHEPHERD: May I ask the name of your wife?

MOHAN: Yes. Isha Mohan.

SHEPHERD: When was the baby born?

MOHAN: I do not know the exact date, but I know that she was born in Georgetown.

SHEPHERD: After having crossed the river in an effort to save your life, you said you met Sergeant Simon. Did you report to him what you had seen?

MOHAN: Yes.

PRATAP N. SINGH: What did you tell him?

MOHAN: I told him that I had seen a man being beaten.

PRATAP N. SINGH: What was his reply to this?

WITNESS: He said that the coolie were beating the black all the time and now that the tide had turned they should not protest.

PRATAP N. SINGH: Who in particular told you this?

MOHAN: Sergeant Simon.

PRATAP N. SINGH: When was this?

MOHAN: It was about 10.30 a.m.

PRATAP N. SINGH: How many men were engaged in beating Nirgin?

MOHAN: About fifty to sixty men.

PRATAP N. SINGH: At the time when these men were beating Nirgin, were there any policemen or volunteers around?

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MOHAN: No sir.

PRATAP N. SINGH: Were there no policemen or volunteers even some distance from you?

MOHAN: No sir.

PRATAP N. SINGH: Now, within this area where the man was beaten, were there other houses on fire?

MOHAN: Only his house. One would have to travel a distance of about 100 rods before other houses on fire could be seen.

PRATAP N. SINGH: In which direction would one have to travel to make such an observation?

MOHAN: I do not understand.

PRATAP N. SINGH: Was that the only house set afire?

MOHAN: Yes. At that time.

PRATAP N. SINGH: Thank you.

MACDONALD: You said that about 10.30 a.m. you met Sergeant Simon and the corporal. You said you crossed the river at about 10.30. Now, is this so?

MOHAN: No, it was about 10.00

MACDONALD: So all this happened in half an hour?

MOHAN: Yes, I had a cycle.

MOOTOO: Where was Nirgin's house situated?

MOHAN: In the Valley of Tears.

MOOTOO: Did you recognise anybody who was beating?

MOHAN: Yes.

MOOTOO: Did they belong to that area?

MOHAN: Yes, but some were from Mackenzie.

MOOTOO: Thank you.

SHEPHERD: Was it 10.30 you said you crossed to Mackenzie?

MOHAN: Yes, I returned to Mackenzie between the hour of 10.00 to 10.30.

SHEPHERD: What time did you speak to Sergeant Simon?

MOHAN: I spoke to him between 10.00 and 10.30.

SHEPHERD: Are you quite sure? I want to get this straight.

MOHAN: Yes.

SHEPHERD: Are you sure that it was at Mackenzie side?

MOHAN: Yes sir.

SHEPHERD: Be careful, now. You were there and you spoke to him between 10.00 and 10.30?

MOHAN: Yes sir.

SHEPHERD: Thank you.

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CECIL PAUL FITT is sworn in and he states as follows:

CHAIRMAN: Your full name please.

FITT: My name is Cecil Paul Fitt.

MRS. A. KHAN: Please may I enter appearance for the Hand-in-Hand Fire Insurance Company. I am instructed by Mr. Edward De Freitas.

CHAIRMAN: Mr. Fitt, what post do you hold?

FITT: I am Secretary of Hand-in-Hand Fire Insurance Company.

CHAIRMAN: Do you deal with fire insurance alone?

FITT: Yes, I do.

CHAIRMAN: You have a list of claims of houses destroyed in the Wismar-Mackenzie area for the period May to July?

FITT: We dealt with on the 25th May.

CHAIRMAN: The one at Wismar on the 25th and the other on July 6th at Mackenzie.

FITT: I have with me present here a list of those claims.

CHAIRMAN: Let me see them please. This would be Exhibit "J." Mr. Fitt, are any of these claims paid?

FITT: Yes, there is one claim for six thousand dollars which was covered for riots and fires.

CHAIRMAN: Would that be the one for Sookram?

FITT: Yes, that would be the one for Sookram.

CHAIRMAN: The others have not been paid?

FITT: No.

CHAIRMAN: Any questions?

SHEPHERD: No, thank you.

CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much.

FITT: Thank you.

SAMUEL RAMLOCHAN is sworn in, and he states as follows:

CHAIRMAN: What is your name?

RAMLOCHAN: Samuel Ramlochan.

CHAIRMAN: Have you any other name?

RAMLOCHAN: No.

CHAIRMAN: Are you living at Chateau Margot, East Coast Demerara?

RAMLOCHAN: Yes sir.

CHAIRMAN: What work are you doing now?

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RAMLOCHAN: I am unemployed.

CHAIRMAN: In May, you were living at Wismar Housing Scheme with your wife and nine children?

RAMLOCHAN: Yes sir.

CHAIRMAN: You were working at the Demerara Bauxite Company as a general mechanic.

RAMLOCHAN: Yes sir.

CHAIRMAN: On Thursday 21st May there was a strike at the Demerara Bauxite Company.

RAMLOCHAN: Yes.

CHAIRMAN: You joined the strike?

RAMLOCHAN: Yes sir.

CHAIRMAN: Now on Friday 22nd May, you were in company with Leslie Durant and some other friends?

RAMLOCHAN: Yes sir.

CHAIRMAN: Where were you?

RAMLOCHAN: I was at Chapman's residence.

CHAIRMAN: Did you hear any conversation there?

RAMLOCHAN: I heard one Corrica saying that we would be having some special guests so we were making special accommodation.

CHAIRMAN: On Saturday 23rd May at about what time did you come out from the boat landing?

RAMLOCHAN: About 4.30 in the afternoon I came from the boat landing. There I saw several crowds of people gathered on the main road and streets.

CHAIRMAN: Anybody else?

RAMLOCHAN: I saw one Robert Jordan, the representative for the Upper Demerara constituency.

CHAIRMAN: Did he speak to you?

RAMLOCHAN: Yes. He said, "Hi, Sam, I hope you are behaving a good boy." I replied saying, "I always behave a good boy."

CHAIRMAN: Now, anything else happened?

RAMLOCHAN: Yes. As I passed through the crowds I received several threats. They said, "You coolie, you walking on the road. We will kill you all so and so up;" and I became scared and took a different route and went home.

CHAIRMAN: Throughout that Saturday night did you see anything?

RAMLOCHAN: I saw several fires. Houses were being burnt.

CHAIRMAN: On Saturday night around 7.15 p.m., did you speak to anyone?

RAMLOCHAN: I had in my company one Sybil Bailey, one Leslie Durant, and one Miss Parks. They were at my home. I had a little entertainment, and during the course of the entertainment, Miss Parks said to me, "Hi, Uncle Sam, look fire." On looking through the door way, I saw fire and observed that it was one C. D. John's shop on fire.

CHAIRMAN: They left?

RAMLOCHAN: Yes, on account of the fires that they saw. I then went along accompanied by my wife and children who were at home at the time. Suddenly I saw a lot of men running. I told my wife that it

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appeared as if we were having soldiers in the area. Before that I had seen a few volunteers passing and had heard a familiar voice shouting to me saying: “Sam, do not be afraid, you will be alright.”

Immediately after they left, I saw fifty men running towards my direction. I said to my wife, “It appears as if we are having soldiers on the hill.” When the men reached opposite Sase Mohabir’s shop, they stopped, stood still for about ten minutes, then they dispatched themselves various crowds and started pelting with bottles and bricks on Sase Mohabir’s shop.

They later broke the gate and entered the compound. While in the compound they shouted “Like they have gone; we are going to burn their so and so out tonight.” In the course of pelting and damaging the building, I heard three shots. I ran out again. The gun was fired three times. I became afraid and closed my door. I turned off my lights. The crowd shortly left and ran in my direction and stood in front of my gate. I heard one Reece say to the men, “Leave him for tomorrow; he is not at home.” After a while they left. As I kept watch during the night I saw several fires and I heard explosions of several bombs. On Monday morning, after taking my tea

CHAIRMAN: At about what time?

RAMLOCHAN: About 8.15 a.m. As I stood at my window and looked out, I saw several Negro women jumping as if they were enjoying themselves. I went into the yard, and as I looked around, I saw several women and children rejoicing. I then went to the back my home and climbed to the top of my roof. As I stood on top of the roof of my house and looked around the district, I saw the entire district was on fire. I heard screams and saw several persons bleeding. When I looked in Wismar’s direction I saw a man was being beaten to the ground. Later I heard that he was dead. The house was set on fire. I saw several persons running up and down with lighted torches in their hands.

They then advanced to one Kaka’s home. I heard screams of children and immediately after the house was set on fire. They further advanced and went to one Nachar; he lives north of the housing scheme in the Valley of Tears. As his wife ran downstairs, some African men held her on the steps. They threw her on the ground and the crowd gathered around her. Immediately after, the house was set on fire. I became terribly afraid and jumped from the roof of my house to the sand. I told my wife to pass the children. The children were passed through the window into one Mr. Bailey’s hone where we were rescued.

CHAIRMAN: You and your family were rescued by Mr. Bailey?

RAMLOCHAN: Yes sir. As we were in the home looking through the window, I saw other houses being burnt. During this time I saw a police jeep coming up along with the Inspector and other policemen.

CHAIRMAN: Do you know the name of the Inspector?

RAMLOCHAN: Yes. Mr. Hobbs. They came out of the jeep.

CHAIRMAN: About what time?

WITNESS: Around nine.

CHAIRMAN: Why did you not come out although the police were there?

RAMLOCHAN: The Baileys were afraid that the people should see me coming out from their home. There were several persons running up and down and I saw the police go into the Valley of Tears and there were several persons looting and several houses were burning. The police paid no attention just as if they did not care.

While all the burning and looting was taking place, I saw policemen in the area, but they made no attempt to arrest anyone. While the houses were burning there was no lull. During the afternoon a few volunteers came on the hill. Some Indians were forced to leave their homes without getting the opportunity to take valuable things with them. When all the Indians had removed from the area, it was around five o’clock. I saw a Negro fellow whom I can well recognise if I should see him. He passed between my home and the Baileys and went in another direction, between Ramdeen’s home and Mohamed’s home. He pulled out a long sheet of paper from his waist and when he opened it, I observed that it was a plan. As a mechanic I knew it was a plan and not a drawing. He stood looking right and left

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and when he looked at the plan again he shook his head. I told my wife that within a few minutes they would be burning houses.

CHAIRMAN: Yes, what happened next?

RAMLOCHAN: About thirty minutes later I saw the houses on fire, and later volunteers came up. They continued burning houses until dark.

CHAIRMAN: At what time were you at the Bailey's home?

RAMLOCHAN: We were in the Bailey's home at about 7.15 that night. Around that time I saw a jeep known as "The Rockstone Express" and owned by the Demerara Bauxite Company. This jeep stopped in front of Mohamed's shop. On looking closely at the jeep I observed a set of volunteers. Immediately after a crowd came up, broke open the shop started to loot the home and the shop.

CHAIRMAN: Yes.

RAMLOCHAN: When they had completely looted the shop and the entire building they set it afire, and around 8.45 to 9.15 they threw two bombs. I saw a jeep, Number PP91, which I suspect to have been a police jeep. The night was bright and I observed two persons dressed in shorts approach the jeep. One was a man named Reece and the other was a customer of my shop. He was a Negro. The policemen gave the two men two jerry cans. They poured the contents in their own cans and gave back the jerry cans. I then saw the two men go in the direction of Mr. Bailey's home which was a few feet away. I saw two houses burning that night.

CHAIRMAN: That was Monday night?

RAMLOCHAN: Yes sir. During that night everybody was in their homes watching out. I was still in the Baileys home when Bailey said to me, "Sam, I am aging to check on the situation." When he came back he said "Boy, the government sent a boat and all the Indians are being taken to Georgetown." On hearing this, my wife and children started to cry. I told Bailey to go to the police station and see the soldiers, not the police, and inform them that there were some people in need of rescuing. He said he would be willing to do so but he was afraid that the people around the area would see me coming out of his home, and he would have to suffer like me.

I asked him what he thought of the idea of my getting cross to my home so that the people would see me coming out of my home. But I did not get any opportunity to go across as several crowds of people came to this very building that I was in. During that time I saw Reece, Ivan Bourne and several others who were killing sheep, people's goats, chicken and fowls. They stood alongside the Baileys' house. I later saw them standing in front of Ramdeen's house. We heard Reece say, "Man, we did a proper good job; we have everything under control. We are going to cook, eat and drink."

CHAIRMAN: Yes.

RAMLOCHAN: A few minutes later they left. Shortly afterwards, my wife came into the kitchen for something, and she had to creep on her knees. The baby cried a little. Later I heard the voice of a woman who knew my baby well. She said to Mrs. Bailey, "You so and so, you playing white woman. You would see what would happen to you just now. You got coolie in your house".

About twenty to thirty minutes later I heard a banging on the Baileys' door. When Mrs. Bailey looked through the window I heard a fellow say, "Look, if you don't put out those people we are going to bomb all of you." Mrs. Bailey started to cry. She came into the bedroom and said, "Well, I for myself would not like to put you out, but we are compelled to do so, and you would have to go." As I was about to leave, my wife and children held on to me and started to cry.

CHAIRMAN: What happened?

RAMLOCHAN: I closed my eyes and walked about 50 yards, then I heard a boy say, "Walk the other way; that is the safe way."

CHAIRMAN: Yes.

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RAMLOCHAN: I opened my eyes and I saw fire. That was Sharma's shop burning. I told my wife, "Let us turn left."

CHAIRMAN: That was Tuesday morning?

RAMLOCHAN: Yes, it was Tuesday morning. As we travelled through the hills right down into the Silver City Street we were not interfered with by anyone.

CHAIRMAN: You came right down into the Silver City Street and no interference?

RAMLOCHAN: We came right down, and we proceeded to go on to the main way. I saw fire all over the place. Walking, I saw a crowd coming my way. I escaped through the Gateway Valley. In this area all the Indian houses were completely burnt out.

CHAIRMAN: While you were going to the police station did anything happen to you?

RAMLOCHAN: When I reached by Betty a crowd came. They looted everything that we had in our possession.

CHAIRMAN: They looted?

RAMLOCHAN: They took away one hundred and eighty dollars from me, the children's bracelets, my wife finger rings, my shoes, my socks, the basket with the baby's nursing bottle, the Lactogen, sugar and everything. They started to beat us up, and we ran to the station. We were beaten from there until I nearly reached the first entrance to the station.

CHAIRMAN: Yes.

RAMLOCHAN: When I reached into the station myself and wife were in blood. All this happened in the face of the policemen and Reverend Sam. Then I checked on my children. I discovered two were missing. I ran upstairs and met Mr. Lashley and Mr. Hobbs and I appealed to them to help me find my children, adding that I suspected that they were dead. I was then asked to go downstairs. I ran downstairs realising no help from them would be obtained.

I went on the main road and saw three British soldiers. I held on to them and asked them to help me find my missing children. They seemed not to understand what I was saying. Then one said, "Children missing. Let's go." While searching for my children in Gateway Valley, I saw a jeep coming from the hills and as the jeep passed by I observed my two sons in it. I informed the three soldiers who stopped the vehicle. I later joined them at the police station.

CHAIRMAN: What was your condition?

RAMLOCHAN: My hands were swollen, my nose was bleeding. I had a cut under my neck and my head was swollen.

CHAIRMAN: Is your house still there?

RAMLOCHAN: After we come to town, we went back with Lalta Paul's launch the next Wednesday. We got police protection when we arrived at Wismar. At the police station we met Mr. Hobbs who allocated a vehicle, volunteers and armed policemen to take us to the different areas where we were living to see what could be had from our houses.

CHAIRMAN: Yes.

RAMLOCHAN: Lalta Paul and I were in the company of two British soldiers and one armed policeman. As we travelled we saw Mohabir's sawmill on fire.

CHAIRMAN: Was it burning?

RAMLOCHAN: The very day we landed we saw the fire on Mohabir's sawmill. When we reached the hill, Lalta Paul stopped at his place. He had three buildings and all were burnt. We left to go home. I went in my direction. I looked but I couldn't believe it was my home. It was flat on the ground.

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CHAIRMAN: Was it looted or burnt? How much do you estimate your losses?

RAMLOCHAN: It was burnt flat and I estimate my losses to be about nine thousand, five hundred dollars.

CHAIRMAN: You left to return to Georgetown the next day?

RAMLOCHAN: We left. Everything was completely lost. That night, Paul, the shop-keeper, came from Mackenzie. They loaded all their stuff and left that evening. We were stopped by British soldiers and taken to the police station. I was picked out from among the rest and was detained at Wismar police station. The others were not detained.

When I asked Mr. Hobbs what was the reason for my detention, he told me that somebody reported that I had a machine gun. I told him that I had never seen one in my life. I was under police detention until 1.00 p.m. next day.

SHEPHERD: Where have you hidden the machine gun?

RAMLOCHAN: I have never seen one yet.

SHEPHERD: Do you ask me to believe that you have never seen a machine gun?

RAMLOCHAN: It is up to you.

SHEPHERD: How old are you?

RAMLOCHAN: Forty-two years old.

SHEPHERD: What is your weight?

RAMLOCHAN: I do not know.

SHEPHERD: Are you married?

RAMLOCHAN: Yes, certainly.

SHEPHERD: Healthy chap?

RAMLOCHAN: Not now.

SHEPHERD: Can you look after yourself?

RAMLOCHAN: I don't know.

SHEPHERD: How many children do you have?

RAMLOCHAN: Nine.

SHEPHERD: Did Jordan ask if you were behaving a good boy?

RAMLOCHAN: But this was always his remark.

SHEPHERD: So you usually misbehave?

RAMLOCHAN: No.

SHEPHERD: So you were hidden by Mr. and Mrs. Bailey and they are Negroes.

WITNESS: [*No answer*].

SHEPHERD: The Negroes did not seem to like Mohabir very much?

RAMLOCHAN: I do not understand.

SHEPHERD: The Negroes did not seem to like Mohabir?

RAMLOCHAN: I do not know.

SHEPHERD: Was there any dispute involving Mohabir?

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RAMLOCHAN: I know of no dispute.

SHEPHERD: Are you sure?

RAMLOCHAN: I do not know.

SHEPHERD: Was he a friend of yours?

RAMLOCHAN: No.

SHEPHERD: Would he be coming to give evidence before this Commission?

RAMLOCHAN: I do not know.

SHEPHERD: Have you seen him since?

RAMLOCHAN: I have never come into contact with him since we lived at Mackenzie.

SHEPHERD: When his shop and house were burnt to the ground, do you know that a glass jar containing two hundred and ninety-three machine gun bullets were found?

RAMLOCHAN: I do not know.

SHEPHERD: Did you go back the following day?

RAMLOCHAN: I went the following Wednesday.

SHEPHERD: Were you a passenger aboard the launch?

RAMLOCHAN: They were several passengers aboard the launch.

SHEPHERD: Where did you go when you went back?

RAMLOCHAN: We were escorted by soldiers to the police station.

SHEPHERD: The soldiers were kind to you?

RAMLOCHAN: I won't say so.

SHEPHERD: Were you harmed by the army, police or volunteers?

RAMLOCHAN: No, but my wife and one of my children were injured.

SHEPHERD: Not by the police or volunteers?

RAMLOCHAN: No.

SHEPHERD: So you went back and you were detained."

RAMLOCHAN: Yes.

SHEPHERD: Why were you detained?

RAMLOCHAN: Someone reported that they had seen me during the night coming out from Mohabir's place with a machine gun. The sergeant would be able to tell you more about it.

SHEPHERD: Perhaps you will be able to tell me about it. Were you anywhere near Mohabir's place?

RAMLOCHAN: We passed his place while we were being taken by the soldiers to my home.

SHEPHERD: Were you anywhere near Mohabir's place around 7.00 or 7.30 on Wednesday 10th?

RAMLOCHAN: No sir.

SHEPHERD: How about these machine guns bullets that were found at Mohabir's place? Do you know anything about them?

RAMLOCHAN: No.

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SHEPHERD: Do you know what a machine gun looks like?

RAMLOCHAN: I have never seen one.

SHEPHERD: Have you ever handled one?

RAMLOCHAN: No.

SHEPHERD: What did it feel like to be detained?

RAMLOCHAN: I could not understand why I was detained until I asked Mr. Hobbs. He told me that I had been picked out from among the crew because some one had reported that I had a machine gun.

SHEPHERD: Were you in the launch?

RAMLOCHAN: Yes, I came on the launch the Wednesday when we were going home.

SHEPHERD: Have you any idea who reported you?

RAMLOCHAN: I cannot say.

SHEPHERD: Then the allegations made against you were untrue?

RAMLOCHAN: Yes.

SHEPHERD: Have you any enemies?

RAMLOCHAN: No.

SHEPHERD: Have you any enemies amongst the Negroes?

RAMLOCHAN: I have been living at Wismar

SHEPHERD: Answer the question please.

RAMLOCHAN: I do not have any.

SHEPHERD: Thank you.

—

SHEPHERD: Mr. Chairman, I am not able to check up on the records. There seems to be difficulty in knowing who is coming before the Commission. If I am given two or three days' notice of probable witnesses, it would be unnecessary for me to suggest that I may have to re-examine a witness.

—

PRATAP N. SINGH: You said that you and your family were not harmed by the police, but not assisted by them.

RAMLOCHAN: No.

PRATAP N. SINGH: Now tell me something. Are you a mechanic?

RAMLOCHAN: Yes, a general mechanic.

PRATAP N. SINGH: Have you every handled a shot gun?

RAMLOCHAN: In my youth I had an air gun.

PRATAP N. SINGH: If you put bullets in a bottle and throw it in fire, what would happen?

RAMLOCHAN: It would explode.

—

DRAYTON: Mr. Ramlochan, you said that about 8.15 you saw some Negro women. How many were they?

RAMLOCHAN: About thirty-five in one direction and about fifty in another.

DRAYTON: What were they doing?

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RAMLOCHAN: They were enjoying themselves.

DRAYTON: Why did you not go down from your house top and into the street in order to discover what they were laughing about?

RAMLOCHAN: Because of my previous experience.

DRAYTON: You know that they were enjoying themselves?

RAMLOCHAN: It is my opinion that they were enjoying themselves.

DRAYTON: There were two groups of Negro women?

RAMLOCHAN: Sure.

DRAYTON: Why did you not come down and listen to them? Why did you stay on the roof top?

RAMLOCHAN: Because the tension was high.

DRAYTON: How long have you been going on your roof top?

RAMLOCHAN: About a week, since the tenseness of the situation began.

DRAYTON: Could you have seen everything?

RAMLOCHAN: Sure.

DRAYTON: You mean in other words that on Monday the 18th, you had been looking from the house top. Why?

RAMLOCHAN: Because the tension was high and other houses were burning.

DRAYTON: How long was the tension high?

RAMLOCHAN: Since last year during the strike.

DRAYTON: You claim that from your house top you had a clear view of what was happening.

RAMLOCHAN: Sure.

DRAYTON: How far was Nacca's house from you?

RAMLOCHAN: About 50 to 75 rods.

DRAYTON: How many people were at Nacca's house?

RAMLOCHAN: There were about thirty people.

DRAYTON: You saw when they assaulted Nacca's wife?

RAMLOCHAN: Yes. I saw when they lifted her from the stop and the crowd circled around her.

DRAYTON: Thank you.

MACDONALD: How far is your house from Nirgin's.

RAMLOCHAN: WITNESS: About 100 to 115 rods.

MACDONALD: You were on the house top and saw what was happening in the Valley of Tears. Don't you think that people could have seen you?

RAMLOCHAN: No.

MACDONALD: You mean that you could have seen them and they could not have seen you. You had a screen around?

RAMLOCHAN: No sir. I have plenty of trees surrounding my house. I have a mango tree papaw trees and bamboo trees.

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MACDONALD: What about the policemen? Did you see any?

RAMLOCHAN: When I went to the police station

MACDONALD: No, I mean when you asked you neighbour to see the soldiers not the police. How did you know about the soldiers that they had arrived?

RAMLOCHAN: From Bailey.

MACDONALD: You heard Bailey say that soldiers came up. What happened?

RAMLOCHAN: I asked him to see the soldiers.

—

MOOTOO: Was he somebody that belonged to the place?

RAMLOCHAN: Yes.

MOOTOO: What is your wife's name?

RAMLOCHAN: Ivy.

MOOTOO: Was she hospitalised?

RAMLOCHAN: No, we were not hospitalised, but we came down to Georgetown Hospital.

MOOTOO: Were your children injured?

RAMLOCHAN: Only one of the boys.

MOOTOO: What is his name?

RAMLOCHAN: His name is David.

MOOTOO: Was he hospitalised?

RAMLOCHAN: No.

MOOTOO: Thank you.

—

CHAIRMAN: Yes, Mr. Shepherd?

—

MR. SHEPHERD: You are a mechanic so you understand several things about machines. You were asked by Mr. Pratap Singh about machine gun bullets in a building on fire, and you said they would explode. Now suppose there is a hole in the concrete floor and there were bullets in a jar, do you suppose it would explode?

RAMLOCHAN: It depends on the intensity of the heat.

DRAYTON: There is just one question Mr. Ramlochan. You said that you were looking through the glass window of the Baileys' house. You saw two jeeps. One was a Demba jeep, "Rockstone Express," and the other was a police jeep. What time of the night was this?

RAMLOCHAN: I saw the "Rockstone Express" at about 7.25 and the police jeep at about nine o'clock.

DRAYTON: Could you have made out any of the people in the police jeep?

RAMLOCHAN: No.

DRAYTON: How do you know that they were police?

RAMLOCHAN: The light was bright and I could have seen the black clothes.

DRAYTON: But you said in the course of your evidence that they were in shorts.

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RAMLOCHAN: No, not them. The men going to the jeep.

DRAYTON: Did you recognise them (the policemen)?

RAMLOCHAN: No.

DRAYTON: And you saw one of them give two jerry cans to two men? Do you know the men?

RAMLOCHAN: One's name is Reece and the other I could identify anywhere.

DRAYTON: But if you could have seen Reece and the other men, surely you could have seen who were the men in the jeep.

RAMLOCHAN: For your information these men came from the western direction to the jeep. I could see their faces but the police was backing me.

DRAYTON: Thank you.

CHRISTINA RAMJATTAN is sworn in, and she states as follows:

CHAIRMAN: Are you a Senator?

RAMJATTAN: I was.

CHAIRMAN: You were a member of the Senate of British Guiana?

RAMJATTAN: Yes.

CHAIRMAN: You used to live at Wismar?

RAMJATTAN: Yes.

CHAIRMAN: Where?

RAMJATTAN: Yaw's Yard, Section D, Christianburg, Demerara River.

CHAIRMAN: In the month of May you were you living at Christianburg?

RAMJATTAN: Yes, before the 24th.

CHAIRMAN: On the 20th May, you spoke to Mr. Oscar Hobbs?

RAMJATTAN: Yes sir.

CHAIRMAN: What did you discuss?

RAMJATTAN: I drew his attention to the constant attacks on the Indians in the area, and I asked him for more protection for the people in the area. He said he was under-staffed and the police in the district were few, so they could not patrol the area as often as he would have liked. I reminded him about the constant attacks on the Indians, and he told me that it would be alright. The few police that were there would patrol the area by night.

CHAIRMAN: Do you know of any incidents?

RAMJATTAN: Yes. Pelting.

CHAIRMAN: Pelting what?

RAMJATTAN: Bricks.

CHAIRMAN: That was on Sunday night?

RAMJATTAN: No. Sunday morning around 5.00 a.m. It was around 7.00 to 7.30 that I saw Assistant Superintendent Mr. Hobbs and appealed to him for protection.

CHAIRMAN: Protection for yourself?

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RAMJATTAN: Protection for myself and the minority group of Indians.

CHAIRMAN: Yes.

RAMJATTAN: He said he could not give me protection for the house, but he could send a patrol around the place.

CHAIRMAN: Yes?

RAMJATTAN: He said he was not in a position to do so.

CHAIRMAN: Yes.

RAMJATTAN: I called him and told him that I would be leaving for Georgetown on that same night, and I would report the matter to the proper authorities. He then said he had already sent to let Mr. Puttock know what was going on, but he had heard nothing since. I then appealed for protection to take me to the launch. This he gladly agreed to do and around 6.00 p.m. a police jeep was sent.

CHAIRMAN: Where?

RAMJATTAN: To my home. Sergeant Chalmers and other policeman were in the jeep. Chalmers brought a message to me.

CHAIRMAN: What did he say?

RAMJATTAN: He told me that Mr. Hobbs said that everything would be alright because thirty-eight volunteers would be patrolling. Before he left my home, I drew the Sergeant's attention to my husband who was not well and would have been at home at all times. I had to get some African people to stay in the house after failing to get protection.

CHAIRMAN: Yes.

RAMJATTAN: Mr. Chalmers told me that I must go to Georgetown with the clear mind that both my husband and my house would be looked after. They then took me away in the jeep to the station. I stayed there until five minutes to seven then the jeep took me to the launch stelling. The police jeep stayed at the stelling until the launch pulled off from Wismar.

CHAIRMAN: When did the launch leave Wismar?

RAMJATTAN: The launch left Wismar stelling at 7.00 p.m. and went across to Mackenzie. A large crowd was over there. The captain of the launch invited me into his cabin and told me to remain there and not to come out. He told me the reason for putting me in the cabin was because he had heard that they were going to murder me, if they know that I was on the launch.

CHAIRMAN: What is the name of this captain?

RAMJATTAN: His name is Dennis Rambarran.

CHAIRMAN: Yes, continue.

RAMJATTAN: After the launch left Mackenzie on its way to Georgetown around 7.30, I looked to Wismar. I saw two houses on fire, on Wismar Hill.

CHAIRMAN: When did you arrive in Georgetown?

RAMJATTAN: I arrived in Georgetown at 1.30 on Monday morning.

CHAIRMAN: Did you come to Georgetown for any special reason?

RAMJATTAN: Yes, to attend a Senate meeting.

CHAIRMAN: For what time was it scheduled?

RAMJATTAN: It was scheduled for Monday 25th May.

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CHAIRMAN: When you arrived in Georgetown did you tell anyone what was happening at Wismar?

RAMJATTAN: I went to the Senate meeting.

CHAIRMAN: Now you arrived at 1.30 a.m. What time was the Senate meeting?

RAMJATTAN: The Senate meeting was at 9.00 on 25th May.

CHAIRMAN: Did you try to contact anybody?

RAMJATTAN: It was difficult to do.

CHAIRMAN: Difficult for you to contact anybody?

RAMJATTAN: Difficult for me to contact anybody at that hour of the morning, and I could not risk my life to go to the police station at that hour of the morning.

CHAIRMAN: In Georgetown?

RAMJATTAN: Yes, in Georgetown.

CHAIRMAN: But after the Senate next morning did you contact anyone? How long did the meeting last?

RAMJATTAN: The meeting lasted for a half hour. After the meeting I went up to Eve Leary to discuss the situation with Mr. Owen, the Commissioner of Police.

CHAIRMAN: Yes.

RAMJATTAN: I went up to Eve Leary to discuss the situation with Mr. Owen, Commissioner of Police.

CHAIRMAN: Could you have brought up this matter in the Senate.

RAMJATTAN: I did not do it there.

CHAIRMAN: You did not discuss it with anybody officially or privately?

RAMJATTAN: I discussed the matter privately. I handed the Minister of Home Affairs a resolution moved by the Wismar group and that resolution spoke for itself.

CHAIRMAN: Do you have a copy of the resolution?

RAMJATTAN: I kept a copy for myself but it was destroyed in the fire.

CHAIRMAN: Is that the only copy?

RAMJATTAN: I do not know if the ex-Minister of Home Affairs has one.

CHAIRMAN: Could you make some enquiries about the possibility of a copy of the resolution being obtained?

RAMJATTAN: I will try.

CHAIRMAN: What did the people of Wismar resolve?

RAMJATTAN: They resolved the right for protection and that the Minister should call on the police to give more protection to life and property in the area.

CHAIRMAN: You went to Eve Leary. Did you see Mr. Owen?

RAMJATTAN: On my arrival there I was told that I would have to make an appointment, so I did not get to see him.

CHAIRMAN: Did you speak to anyone else?

RAMJATTAN: I told officer that it was a very urgent matter. I returned home. I later received news from a friend who works at Sprostons head office that Wismar was on fire. I then went to Freedom House, my party headquarters. All this time I made efforts to see the Minister of Home Affairs, failing which I contacted the police station by telephone.

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CHAIRMAN: You contacted the Wismar police station?

RAMJATTAN: Yes.

CHAIRMAN: What happened?

RAMJATTAN: I got an answer from Wismar police station at around 6.30 to 7.00 in the evening. I made some enquiries from Mr. Hobbs who answered the telephone. I asked him if my house was safe. He said he could not say, but my husband was safe with him at the police station. On hearing this I broke down because I realised that I had much to lose.

CHAIRMAN: What did your household comprise of?

RAMJATTAN: Myself and husband.

CHAIRMAN: Any children?

RAMJATTAN: No.

CHAIRMAN: Was your father living with you?

RAMJATTAN: No sir.

CHAIRMAN: Near you?

RAMJATTAN: No, he lived across the way.

CHAIRMAN: What was his fate?

RAMJATTAN: I learnt that he was murdered.

CHAIRMAN: Was that true?

RAMJATTAN: Yes, that is true.

CHAIRMAN: How much do you estimate your losses to be?

RAMJATTAN: I estimate my losses to be over \$16,000.

CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

SHEPHERD: Mrs. Ramjattan, when you telephoned Mr. Hobbs on Monday evening, you said he told you that your husband was safe, but he could not give you the same assurance about your house.

RAMJATTAN: Yes.

SHEPHERD: Was it on Sunday that you were taken to the police station in a jeep or was it twenty four hours earlier?

RAMJATTAN: It was at 6.30.

SHEPHERD: You again asked for protection and you were told that no police protection could be given to your home but your husband would be looked after.

RAMJATTAN: Yes.

SHEPHERD: Of course you were not surprised?

RAMJATTAN: Sure, I was surprised.

SHEPHERD: Why were you surprised?

RAMJATTAN: Because I felt that the police had enough time to protect people and property and prevent this wholesale burning, looting, etc. on May 25th, 1964.

SHEPHERD: How long have you been a Senator?

Transcripts – Day 8

RAMJATTAN: About three years.

SHEPHERD: From 1961 to 1964?

RAMJATTAN: Yes. Please speak a bit louder.

SHEPHERD: You were aware that the police at Wismar at that time were not enough to patrol the area?

RAMJATTAN: Well. . . I knew when I came here I cannot get to express myself.

CHAIRMAN: Madam, I have asked you enough questions from your own statement which I thought necessary. Please do not make any such remarks. Please be careful of what you say and answer the questions when asked.

SHEPHERD: Are you aware that the Commissioner of Police submitted a memorandum to the Minister which states that there was likelihood of trouble at Wismar?

RAMJATTAN: Yes.

SHEPHERD: Do you think at such a time when confusion was around the police were enough to patrol Wismar including the coastal area?

RAMJATTAN: But, sir, I am strictly concerned with Wismar not the coastal strips.

SHEPHERD: You were not satisfied when the police told you that your husband would be looked after. After he was rescued, you wanted them to save your house? You are a housewife and you manage a home, and you know that you cannot spend more than you earn. All these things were around the city. I put these things to you and you are a Senator.

RAMJATTAN: I am well aware of the disturbances round the country and I know, sir, for a fact during the eighty days' strike in '63 I was attacked and beaten. My house was also damaged, and today I am suffering from attacks and blackouts from the blows which I received in the head. All these things I drew to Mr. Hobbs' attention when he came into the district. So I think that if the proper protection had been given to the people in Wismar what had happened on the 25th could have been avoided.

SHEPHERD: As a Senator you are supposed to be a responsible person. I suggest you were never a responsible person, because you never seem to understand a simple question about the economy of the country or even the simple ones of home economics.

RAMJATTAN: Sir, it is because I asked you to speak a little louder.

SHEPHERD: I am not trying to be offensive, but I am just trying to say that the police cannot do more than is reasonable, and it is not human to expect both your home and your husband to be protected during the events of the 25th May. It would not be reasonable to expect that sort of service from the Police Force stretched almost beyond endurance. But you will not agree with me. Now, on the 25th, you spoke to Superintendent Hobbs and drew his attention to the tense situation at Wismar?

RAMJATTAN: Not on the 25th, sir. I drew his attention on the 20th and on the 24th. Because there was a high tension in the area I drew his attention believing that he might have sent a radio message to Police Headquarters for assistance, and I felt since the police were few if they had asked for the help of the volunteers things would have been much better. I am saying all these things would not have been destroyed.

SHEPHERD: Do you not agree that you are not in possession of all the facts even now, yet though you are not in possession of all the facts you are prepared to express an opinion. Haven't you been a Senator for three years? Don't you know that it is the duty of everyone to ascertain the facts before expressing an opinion? Don't you know that?

RAMJATTAN: Yes, I do.

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SHEPHERD: Well, you told me that as a Senator you are aware that there was a night patrol in Christianburg before the 20th May.

RAMJATTAN: That is not so, sir.

SHEPHERD: Weren't you informed that the night patrol would be increased? It was increased on the 22nd May, that is, the Friday night.

RAMJATTAN: Not to my knowledge.

SHEPHERD: That is the trouble. You do not know. Are you aware that on the 23rd which was Saturday the Minister was informed by the Commissioner of Police that there was going to be trouble at Wismar, if something was not done by the government? [*Mr. Shepherd refers to statements made by the Commissioner of Police by the Minister of Home Affairs dated 23 May.*]

RAMJATTAN: I do not know of that statement.

SHEPHERD: On the 24th the D Company of the Volunteer Force was embodied. Did you know that?

RAMJATTAN: Yes.

SHEPHERD: It was on the 24th May that Superintendent Hobbs told you that 38 members of the Volunteer Force were not patrolling, but whether he knew or not the whole of the D Company of the Volunteer Force was embodied was unknown. That was on Sunday. Did you know that?

RAMJATTAN: I can't say, sir, because I mentioned that I left the district on the 24th and Mr. Hobbs informed me that 38 members of the Volunteer Force would be out on that night. I cannot say for a fact that the Volunteer Force was out.

SHEPHERD: Are you still determined to criticise the police?

RAMJATTAN: I would have my reasons.

SHEPHERD: I just want to get this from you. Are you still prepared to criticise the police? Did you hear the statement made by the Hon. Janet Jagan?

RAMJATTAN: I did not follow up her statement.

SHEPHERD: Are you aware of the contents of her statement? I want you to listen very carefully; the reason for this is that the Minister claims that the law abiding people have lost all confidence in the Police Force.

—

CHAIRMAN: And that part should be extended as meaning to her responsible evidence in support to the idea of the witness. I did not object to this statement. Are you satisfied that the evidence whether credible or incredible that there is evidence that the police stood there while people were being beaten and assaulted? I have a copy of this evidence in paragraph 9.

SHEPHERD: There is evidence I think that the statement should be put to the witness.

CHAIRMAN: I saw the statement.

—

SHEPHERD: Do you agree that this statement was highly irresponsible?

RAMJATTAN: Well, no sir, I do not agree that this statement was highly irresponsible.

SHEPHERD: Do you agree with the Hon. Janet Jagan?

RAMJATTAN: Yes.

SHEPHERD: Let us read this paragraph over carefully; the result of all this is that law abiding citizens lost their confidence in the Police Force. Did you put yourself in the police protection?

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RAMJATTAN: Sir, to take me to the launch and stelling was not enough; people were abusing me; they wanted to get rid of me.

SHEPHERD: Why were they trying to get rid of you?

RAMJATTAN: For some reason best known to themselves. My life was threatened several times.

SHEPHERD: You mentioned on one occasion you or your husband was threatened in the presence of the police.

RAMJATTAN: I can't remember the time, but Sergeant Chalmers, Corporal King, P. Fraser and London and others were there when accusations were made to me. These policemen were there when Banga Mary was calling me ill names and they did nothing to prevent this. I was the black sheep in the area.

SHEPHERD: I understand that you are a Senator and residing at Wismar. That is a great tribute to the community, and as I understand it the police were there to protect all persons. Yet, this Police Force was neglecting their duty. I put it to you that you are not being fair. Yet you yourself expected this protection, and you were confident of the police providing such protection.

RAMJATTAN: Yes sir, but to this situation, nobody trusted the Police Force anymore; they lost confidence in them.

SHEPHERD: At any rate, when you arrived in Georgetown on Monday morning at 1.30 a.m., why did you not contact the nearest police station or report the matter to Senator Janet Jagan?

RAMJATTAN: I intended to report the matter to the Commissioner of Police, but not at such an hour of the morning. He would not have been in office.

SHEPHERD: What make you feel that he would not have been in office?

RAMJATTAN: Because I expected him to be busy.

—

CHAIRMAN: Yes, Mr. Carter.

CARTER: No questions.

—

PRATAP N. SINGH: Mrs. Ramjattan, you consider yourself a representative of those people at Wismar?

RAMJATTAN: Yes sir.

PRATAP N. SINGH: Do you think it is your duty and in your power to protect the people?

RAMJATTAN: Yes sir.

PRATAP N. SINGH: Do you feel that you did everything these people?

RAMJATTAN: Yes sir.

PRATAP N. SINGH: Let us see if you did. When did it first come to your knowledge that trouble would have been in the area?

RAMJATTAN: About two weeks before.

PRATAP N. SINGH: You felt that the tension was rising. Did you feel that the police protection was adequate or only for special people?

RAMJATTAN: No sir.

PRATAP N. SINGH: You did not. Did you get in touch with any Minister of the government about this state of affairs?

RAMJATTAN: No sir.

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PRATAP N. SINGH: When you spoke to Mr. Hobbs concerning the police protection at Wismar, were you satisfied with his explanation?

RAMJATTAN: No sir.

PRATAP N. SINGH: Did you then proceed to get in touch with any superior officer, for example, the Commissioner of Police?

RAMJATTAN: I tried to.

PRATAP N. SINGH: By what means?

RAMJATTAN: By telephone.

PRATAP N. SINGH: Was the telegraph system from Wismar to Georgetown in operation?

RAMJATTAN: Yes.

PRATAP N. SINGH: Did you employ this method?

RAMJATTAN: No.

PRATAP N. SINGH: Was the postal system in operation?

RAMJATTAN: Yes.

PRATAP N. SINGH: Did you employ that method?

RAMJATTAN: No.

PRATAP N. SINGH: Did anybody leave Wismar in whom you have confidence during that period to take a message to Georgetown?

RAMJATTAN: No sir.

PRATAP N. SINGH: What time you said you arrived in Georgetown that Sunday morning?

RAMJATTAN: About 1.30.

PRATAP N. SINGH: You went home. What time was the schedule for the meeting?

RAMJATTAN: Nine o'clock in the morning.

PRATAP N. SINGH: Where did this meeting take place?

RAMJATTAN: In the Public Buildings.

PRATAP N. SINGH: On your arrival was Mrs. Jagan there?

RAMJATTAN: She came a little later, after the meeting was in progress.

PRATAP N. SINGH: Was Senator Ashton Chase there, before the meeting commenced?

RAMJATTAN: I arrived about five minutes before the meeting commenced. Mr. Chase was in the committee room.

PRATAP N. SINGH: What was he doing at the time?

RAMJATTAN: He was discussing with some other Senators.

PRATAP N. SINGH: What was he discussing?

RAMJATTAN: I do not know. I was not in the discussion.

PRATAP N. SINGH: Did you consider anything that had happened at Wismar vital?

RAMJATTAN: Yes.

PRATAP N. SINGH: Did you seek to communicate with Mr. Ashton Chase?

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RAMJATTAN: I tried but I could not. Many persons were meeting him shortly after the meeting.

PRATAP N. SINGH: What was the agenda of the Senate meeting on that day?

RAMJATTAN: I can't remember.

PRATAP N. SINGH: Was this in presentation of the lives of the people at Wismar?

RAMJATTAN: No.

PRATAP N. SINGH: Did you think that it was necessary to get in touch with the authorities who may have been able to check the death rate of the people?

RAMJATTAN: I agree with that but I tried to. I remember now that I received a telephone call two minutes before the meeting had taken place and that telephone call was from a person at the Public Building to say that thirteen houses were already on fire. I realised that I had my house to lose and I became worried.

PRATAP N. SINGH: With a slight apprehension?

RAMJATTAN: And I thought of my husband and other relatives.

PRATAP N. SINGH: How much time elapsed before you could have composed yourself?

RAMJATTAN: After the meeting was finished.

PRATAP N. SINGH: And all this time you sat at the meeting contemplating on the fate of your father and husband?

RAMJATTAN: Yes, I went there with a distressed heart.

PRATAP N. SINGH: I do not think so. Don't you think it would have been better to have absented yourself from the meeting for the safety of the people at Wismar? Did you hear anything of people being killed, raped and their property looted?

RAMJATTAN: At that time I only heard of the burning.

PRATAP N. SINGH: What would you think had happened before? What time did the meeting end?

RAMJATTAN: Thirteen minutes after nine.

PRATAP N. SINGH: What did you do after the meeting?

RAMJATTAN: At about ten o'clock I went to Eve Leary to get in touch with the Commissioner of Police.

PRATAP N. SINGH: Why? You did not give the reason.

RAMJATTAN: I went to Freedom House to contact the PPP General Secretary, but I did not see her.

PRATAP N. SINGH: Don't you think you should have spoken subsequently to the Commissioner's deputy?

RAMJATTAN: I was too worried to consider speaking to his deputy.

PRATAP N. SINGH: Mrs. Ramjattan, you have already said what was in the agenda. Could you not have moved the standing rules to raise the situation?

RAMJATTAN: I could not do so. I was too grieved at the moment.

PRATAP N. SINGH: You were grieved about your husband, but what about the other people?

RAMJATTAN: It is my husband, therefore I must grieve.

PRATAP N. SINGH: Did you know of the resolution?

RAMJATTAN: I went to see Janet Jagan but I did not see her, but I passed it down to another member to call her.

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PRATAP N. SINGH: You had the sense to pass it over?

RAMJATTAN: Yes.

PRATAP N. SINGH: Did you pass over a note and told her about the situation at Wismar?

RAMJATTAN: No sir.

PRATAP N. SINGH: At the time when you were passing this resolution couldn't you have written her a note about the situation at Wismar?

RAMJATTAN: I didn't do that.

PRATAP N. SINGH: Why?

RAMJATTAN: I didn't think of it then.

PRATAP N. SINGH: You thought of passing the resolution. What happened when you went to Freedom House?

RAMJATTAN: I tried to seek Mrs. Jagan, the Senator.

PRATAP N. SINGH: Did you see her?

RAMJATTAN: I didn't get to see her. I was told that she was faced with duties, one after another.

PRATAP N. SINGH: She was engaged.

RAMJATTAN: She left in a hurry.

PRATAP N. SINGH: Why didn't you tell her about this critical situation at Wismar?

RAMJATTAN: You just couldn't get to see her.

PRATAP N. SINGH: Why, if you were at that meeting and you had seen your husband murdered wouldn't you have run to him?

RAMJATTAN: I don't know what I would have done.

PRATAP N. SINGH: Alright, you didn't see the Minister of Home Affairs. Did you contact the Premier?

RAMJATTAN: I contacted Mr. George Bowman.

PRATAP N. SINGH: I didn't ask you that. Did you contact the Premier?

RAMJATTAN: No sir.

PRATAP N. SINGH: Did you contact the Deputy Premier? Who is he?

RAMJATTAN: Mr. Brindley Benn. Yes.

PRATAP N. SINGH: At what time?

RAMJATTAN: I couldn't remember.

PRATAP N. SINGH: You must help us.

RAMJATTAN: Between 1.00 and 3.30 o'clock.

PRATAP N. SINGH: What were you doing all this time?

RAMJATTAN: I was making telephone calls from Georgetown to Wismar.

PRATAP N. SINGH: Do you really think you did your duty to those poor people?

RAMJATTAN: Sir, I was grieved.

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PRATAP N. SINGH: And so were wives, mothers, children and fathers and hundreds of them were grieved. But you are a Senator, a responsible person, not putting away the fact that you are a human being. But didn't you think that you were put there because you are a responsible person?

RAMJATTAN: Sir, I know I should have, but at that time I couldn't keep a balanced mind.

PRATAP N. SINGH: Who were the watchmen?

RAMJATTAN: George Woolford and one Hackett.

PRATAP N. SINGH: What Hackett?

RAMJATTAN: Sir, I don't know his first name.

PRATAP N. SINGH: Where did he work?

RAMJATTAN: He worked with some contractor in the area doing some casual work.

PRATAP N. SINGH: Tell me something, do you know any other men by the name of Hackett?

RAMJATTAN: No sir.

PRATAP N. SINGH: You are quite sure?

RAMJATTAN: Yes sir.

PRATAP N. SINGH: Now, did you finally get through to any of the Ministers or responsible people of the government. Did you inform them of what was going on?

RAMJATTAN: No sir.

PRATAP N. SINGH: Did you see Mrs. Jagan?

RAMJATTAN: No sir. She was at a council meeting. I told the secretary to the council of Ministers to convey the message for me.

PRATAP N. SINGH: At what time?

RAMJATTAN: Between 4 to 4.30 and 5 o'clock.

PRATAP N. SINGH: Now, between 10 o'clock and 5 o'clock did you try to get in touch with anyone?

RAMJATTAN: No. Because more and more I thought of my husband and my relatives who were left behind.

PRATAP N. SINGH: Is Hackett a member of the PPP?

RAMJATTAN: I don't know if he is a member of the PPP. What I do know is

PRATAP N. SINGH: Is he a supporter?

RAMJATTAN: I don't know.

PRATAP N. SINGH: What about Woolford?

RAMJATTAN: Sir, he was in the district just about a few months.

PRATAP N. SINGH: Was Woolford a member of the PPP?

RAMJATTAN: Woolford? Yes.

PRATAP N. SINGH: How did you get hold of Hackett?

RAMJATTAN: George Woolford recommended him to me.

PRATAP N. SINGH: Thank you very much.

—

DRAYTON: Mrs. Ramjattan, in Georgetown when you came, where did you stay?

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RAMJATTAN: I stayed at 16 New Market Street.

DRAYTON: Could you speak up please. With whom?

RAMJATTAN: With some very good friends by the name of Juman.

DRAYTON: Do they have a telephone?

RAMJATTAN: No sir.

DRAYTON: Where did the launch dock?

RAMJATTAN: By the fish koker.

DRAYTON: Is there a police station near the fish koker?

RAMJATTAN: Ruimveldt police station.

DRAYTON: How did you get from the fish koker to the where you were staying?

RAMJATTAN: I went by taxi.

DRAYTON: Why didn't you tell the taxi to take you where you can make a report of the terrible things what you had seen begin at Wismar?

RAMJATTAN: I didn't do that because I felt we have a police station at Mackenzie and Wismar to report to headquarters in Georgetown.

DRAYTON: In your evidence you said you couldn't risk your life to go to the station. Why?

RAMJATTAN: Lots of people travelled down by the same launch with me, and lots of people opposed to my party were in the same car and many others.

DRAYTON: There is one thing, Mrs. Ramjattan. You have a strong PPP organisation at Wismar?

RAMJATTAN: No sir.

DRAYTON: It is a working organisation?

RAMJATTAN: Yes sir.

DRAYTON: You knew there was going to be trouble at Wismar? Did you call together a meeting of party members to talk about this?

RAMJATTAN: We passed a resolution.

DRAYTON: Did you think of organising anything?

RAMJATTAN: Yes sir.

DRAYTON: Did you organise any defence for the community?

RAMJATTAN: I had organised the members keep watch on the houses. It was difficult for the members of the PPP to keep watch.

DRAYTON: Mrs. Jagan in the course of her evidence said that one of the members of the Senate who had come down on Sunday passed her information to the effect that things were looking bad at Wismar. Was it you who passed this information?

RAMJATTAN: Yes, I believe so.

DRAYTON: So it was you who passed such information to Mrs. Jagan.

RAMJATTAN: I can't remember.

DRAYTON: Did you inform Mrs. Jagan of the happenings at Wismar?

RAMJATTAN: I can't remember. I did so by telephone.

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DRAYTON: On the 21st of May you saw Robert Jordan ride to the market telling persons, etc. Would you be able to say what issue of the *Graphic* he had in his hands?

RAMJATTAN: I do not know.

DRAYTON: It might have been two months old?

RAMJATTAN: Yes, maybe.

DRAYTON: You heard him say that “Coolie were killing blackman at Buxton, and look at this poor unfortunate couple that were shot at Buxton?”

RAMJATTAN: He was telling it to the people on the street. He was talking loudly enough for other people to hear him.

DRAYTON: Thank you.

—

MACDONALD: You mentioned that you saw two policemen. Were they in uniform?

RAMJATTAN: Yes.

MACDONALD: Do you know their names?

RAMJATTAN: Yes. Their names are Battersfield and London.

MACDONALD: Were they as close to Mr. Jordan as you were?

RAMJATTAN: No, they rode pass Mr. Jordan, but they could have heard what he was saying.

MACDONALD: You said that they went away without saying anything to Mr. Jordan, but that they could have heard what he was saying?

RAMJATTAN: Yes.

MACDONALD: You said that you were making constant efforts to contact Senator Janet Jagan on Monday?

RAMJATTAN: Yes sir.

MACDONALD: You sent no message to her?

RAMJATTAN: Yes, I sent a message by telephone.

MACDONALD: Except for a telephone message, did you try to send any note concerning the Wismar affair to her?

RAMJATTAN: I can't remember.

MACDONALD: You said in an answer to a question by Mr. Pratap Singh that you considered yourself representative of “these people” at Wismar. What do you mean by “these people?”

RAMJATTAN: Well, I meant the Indians in the community.

MACDONALD: So this is what you meant by your answer?

RAMJATTAN: Yes sir.

—

CHAIRMAN: Now that you knew what occurred at Wismar-Christainburg, are you surprised at the intensity of it after leaving for Georgetown on the Sunday morning?

RAMJATTAN: Yes.

CHAIRMAN: Did you feel that matters would have come so far the Monday morning when you got the message?

RAMJATTAN: I heard that thirteen houses had been set on fire.

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CHAIRMAN: Did your information include beating, looting and raping?

RAMJATTAN: No. My information was burning and murdering.

CHAIRMAN: At what time did you get the message?

RAMJATTAN: At 10.35 a.m.

CHAIRMAN: Were you surprised when you got the message?

RAMJATTAN: I realised that the situation had gone so far that there might have been beating, looting and burning.

CHAIRMAN: So you realised that?

RAMJATTAN: Yes.

CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

MR. FESTUS ADAMS is sworn in, and he states as follows:

CHAIRMAN: I have no statement (copy) for you but your name was mentioned in someone's statement. Are you the Chairman of the Wismar-Christianburg Local Authority?

ADAMS: Yes.

CHAIRMAN: You live at Mackenzie?

ADAMS: Yes.

CHAIRMAN: What work do you do? What is your occupation?

ADAMS: I am a clerk at the moment employed at Demba.

CHAIRMAN: During the month of May would you say the Wismar-Christianburg area was very tense?

ADAMS: Yes.

CHAIRMAN: The tenseness was in relation to what?

ADAMS: The tenseness was in relation to the over-all picture, to what was going on in the country.

CHAIRMAN: How did the people go about their work?

ADAMS: They went about their work as usual.

CHAIRMAN: What is the population of your area?

ADAMS: Indians, Negroes and Chinese. Mostly Negroes.

CHAIRMAN: Negroes were the majority in your area?

ADAMS: Yes sir.

CHAIRMAN: Was there racial tension between the Negroes and Indians?

ADAMS: No. There was none.

CHAIRMAN: No racial tension between these two races?

ADAMS: None at all.

CHAIRMAN: On Thursday did you discover any tension between the two races?

ADAMS: No.

CHAIRMAN: Do you know Robert Jordan? He is the representative there?

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ADAMS: Yes sir. I know him.

CHAIRMAN: Did you have any conversations with him on Thursday, Friday and Saturday?

ADAMS: No sir.

CHAIRMAN: On the 23rd May, did you hear an explosion and would you say that the tenseness increased more in the country?

ADAMS: No. I did not hear any explosion. The tenseness was quiet.

CHAIRMAN: What about fires?

ADAMS: On Sunday morning I saw one fire.

CHAIRMAN: Did you hear anything about PYO boys poisoning the water?

ADAMS: Yes sir.

CHAIRMAN: You said you saw one fire. Don't you say that was unusual?

ADAMS: No. Not necessarily.

CHAIRMAN: You made any inquiries about this?

ADAMS: Well, that was not alarming.

CHAIRMAN: Did you hear any threats being made?

ADAMS: No.

CHAIRMAN: Did you see groups of people gathering in the streets?

ADAMS: Yes, I did.

CHAIRMAN: What time did you go to work?

ADAMS: Eight o'clock in the morning.

CHAIRMAN: What time did you leave the area?

ADAMS: Ten to one o'clock.

CHAIRMAN: What time did you leave on Saturday?

ADAMS: For lunch, between my usual hours.

CHAIRMAN: But you have not told me what time is your usual time.

ADAMS: Around 10 to 11 a.m. or 12 noon to 1 p.m.

CHAIRMAN: Did you see any fire?

ADAMS: I did not see any fire.

CHAIRMAN: Did you speak to anyone at Wismar or Mackenzie? Do you remember saying that you are a god at Wismar?

ADAMS: This is fictitious.

CHAIRMAN: On Sunday you heard any explosion? On Sunday night?

ADAMS: No.

CHAIRMAN: When you saw this one fire did you contact the police?

ADAMS: Yes.

CHAIRMAN: Did you tell them? What did you tell them?

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ADAMS: I told them that there was a fire in the district and they went down to the area.

CHAIRMAN: Did they tell you that they heard bombings in the area?

ADAMS: No.

CHAIRMAN: Did it not occur to you that there would be something happening in the area?

ADAMS: Yes. Rumours were being spread abroad.

CHAIRMAN: You are a responsible person and naturally the police would listen to you more than an ordinary individual going to that extreme to discuss such things. If such a thing happened what would be the position?

ADAMS: I do not know. That was a matter for the security force.

CHAIRMAN: Didn't you discuss it with the security force? Did the police suggest to you means by which it could be prevented? Mr. Adams, you re the chairman of the village council and a respected member of the community. Could you allow these people to about and spread such rumours? Did they request you to do that?

ADAMS: It was told to me by some responsible individual.

CHAIRMAN: Did the police tell you that?

ADAMS: I cannot remember who brought it to my notice.

CHAIRMAN: Did you go around to speak to them?

ADAMS: I did. I spoke to people in groups.

CHAIRMAN: On the night you said you saw fires, did you talk to any police on Sunday?

ADAMS: No. I did not go across the river.

CHAIRMAN: Did you go to the Mackenzie police station?

ADAMS: I got in touch with the security officer, who is Mr. Langham, and informed him what was going on in the district; that fires were blazing in Mackenzie, people's houses were being burnt.

CHAIRMAN: What time was that?

ADAMS: That was about nine o'clock.

CHAIRMAN: That is Sunday night.

ADAMS: Yes.

CHAIRMAN: You did not go across to Wismar. You went home. Did you hear any explosion or see anything?

ADAMS: I cannot remember.

CHAIRMAN: What time did you get up Monday morning?

ADAMS: I went to work as usual at seven.

CHAIRMAN: When you got up did you see any fires?

ADAMS: Well, I saw the smoke and buildings smouldering and so on.

CHAIRMAN: You did not go to Wismar to see what was happening?

ADAMS: No.

CHAIRMAN: When did you say that something was brought to your notice that the conditions at Wismar had deteriorated?

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ADAMS: I got phone calls from people across at Wismar and from the village office telling me what was going on.

CHAIRMAN: You got any phone calls from the police or volunteers?

ADAMS: No.

CHAIRMAN: Did you go over to Wismar?

ADAMS: I went over after lunch.

CHAIRMAN: What did you see after lunch?

ADAMS: Well, I saw smoke all over the place when I was looking from the office door. All over the place.

CHAIRMAN: All over which place?

ADAMS: I cannot say over which place. But where I was I could have seen smoke all over the area.

CHAIRMAN: You went over around one o'clock.

ADAMS: Yes, about that time.

CHAIRMAN: When you went over there what did you see?

ADAMS: I saw Indians being taken into the police compound.

CHAIRMAN: How many?

ADAMS: About fifty people.

CHAIRMAN: What was their condition?

ADAMS: Some of them without clothes and some were half-clothed; some were in blood stains.

CHAIRMAN: And after you saw that you spoke to the police?

ADAMS: I spoke to Mr. Hobbs.

CHAIRMAN: What did you tell him?

ADAMS: I said, "What is all this about; this is terrible trouble." He said, "Well, we are trying to do our best over here." And he said at the moment we haven't got much force and he is trying to protect lives, because that is the best he could have done at the time.

CHAIRMAN: Did he say whether he was expecting force?

ADAMS: I did not ask him.

CHAIRMAN: Don't you think you should have asked? We have got evidence of people all over the area in blood stains. Fires were all around. The Police Superintendent has complained to you that he has not got enough force.

ADAMS: I saw the horrible things and I did not stay around. There is nothing I could have thought to help.

CHAIRMAN: How long did you stay over there?

ADAMS: About an hour or two.

CHAIRMAN: And during this time where were you?

ADAMS: I went around the district. I went first to the District Commissioner, Mr. Bender. I had a talk with him on the situation and said it was very grave.

CHAIRMAN: Did the police agree that the situation was very grave? You are the village chairman. Was there any talk about what should be done to remedy or prevent the situation from getting worse?

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ADAMS: It was at its worst then.

CHAIRMAN: Was there another suggestion to stop it going further?

ADAMS: There was no police.

CHAIRMAN: Did you think it would spread across to Mackenzie or was only found at Wismar?

ADAMS: It was possible it would have spread.

CHAIRMAN: Did you discuss that possibility with Mr. Bender.

ADAMS: Well, we thought we should assist in whatever way we thought possible.

CHAIRMAN: What do you see that was possible to be done?

ADAMS: Well, we tried to rescue them. While I was talking to the school-master, Mr. Thomas came over to the school.

CHAIRMAN: What he came about?

ADAMS: I don't know what he came about.

CHAIRMAN: Did you ask Mr. Thomas to come across?

ADAMS: No.

CHAIRMAN: What about the other three thousand people that were in the compound?

ADAMS: They were transported by a ferry boat to Mackenzie.

CHAIRMAN: Did yourself and Mr. Bender ever thought of getting the Red Cross?

ADAMS: We don't have a Red Cross.

CHAIRMAN: What about the St. John's Ambulance?

WITNESS: About two or three o'clock they were not in operation at Mackenzie.

CHAIRMAN: After you spoke to Mr. Bender, on your way around the area, did you see anything?

ADAMS: I saw smoke oozing from various buildings. They would burst into flames.

CHAIRMAN: Did you see crowds of people on the road?

ADAMS: At various points.

CHAIRMAN: How many would you say was in the crowd?

ADAMS: About a hundred people.

CHAIRMAN: What were the crowds doing?

ADAMS: Some were moving backwards and forwards and some were trying to put out fires.

CHAIRMAN: You know you have a fire brigade at Mackenzie?

ADAMS: We have a fire engine, but it is not in use.

CHAIRMAN: You stayed how long at Wismar on the Monday?

ADAMS: About two or three hours.

CHAIRMAN: When you went back to Mackenzie did you see any Indians in need of rescuing? Or hiding in swamps or in the drains?

ADAMS: No.

CHAIRMAN: Did you see all Indian premises being set on fire?

Transcripts – Day 8

ADAMS: I saw premises on fire, but I didn't stop to see if they belonged to Indians or Africans. It was a time of excitement, but now I can say it was both Indians and Africans.

CHAIRMAN: How many places were burnt?

ADAMS: Sixty-one. Fifty five were Indians and six were Africans.

CHAIRMAN: Mr. King gave evidence. We have documents stating that only three African premises were destroyed by fire. Would you agree with that?

ADAMS: I am doubtful.

CHAIRMAN: After you went over to Mackenzie and you saw what was going on, did you organise any boat for them?

ADAMS: I had no cause.

CHAIRMAN: Now when you got over to Mackenzie what did you do?

ADAMS: Well, I went to my home and had something to eat, and I moved around Mackenzie and I went to the school compound. I went and looked around and saw people, some of whom I knew and some of whom I do not know.

CHAIRMAN: You spoke to any of these people?

ADAMS: Yes, I did, and after that I went to the hospital.

CHAIRMAN: Did you arrange for any refreshment to give to these people?

ADAMS: No, I didn't.

CHAIRMAN: You are the chairman of this district and at the time of emergency you neither rescued nor give aid to the people?

ADAMS: Well, I did the best I can.

CHAIRMAN: Mr. Adams, you are the chairman. How long have you been chairman?

ADAMS: Five years.

CHAIRMAN: Are you still chairman?

ADAMS: Yes.

SHEPHERD: Now you are responsible for the village council equipment. What are they?

ADAMS: Water, light, drainage, sanitation and roads.

SHEPHERD: Does security come within your authority and responsibility?

ADAMS: No sir.

SHEPHERD: At any rate you are you regarded as the father of the community as being chairman, aren't you?

ADAMS: I would agree with that.

SHEPHERD: Some people say you are the god of Wismar.

ADAMS: No. I would not agree with that.

SHEPHERD: Well, is fire protection within the responsibility in the village council? You know every modern community has fire brigade, so I must ask you, does fire protection fall within your authority?

ADAMS: It is not.

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SHEPHERD: Now, there was trouble in 1963. When there was?

ADAMS: Yes. There was fire.

SHEPHERD: Looking back on it now, generally did the village authority do something about the fire brigade?

ADAMS: Yes, something was done.

SHEPHERD: There, the authority was concerned. Who saw to that?

ADAMS: Through the Local Government Board. For such an equipment to be given, we approached the government through local authority for such equipment in 1963.

SHEPHERD: Was anything done?

ADAMS: Nothing was done.

SHEPHERD: Do you agree that the task of the patrols would be very much easier?

ADAMS: It would have been.

SHEPHERD: You were worried about the absence of the proper equipment very much?

ADAMS: Yes sir. I was worried about it.

SHEPHERD: When you spoke to Superintendent Hobbs on Monday, he said to you we have a force and we are trying to protect lives? He said he hadn't enough force and they were trying to protect lives and not property? They hadn't enough force to protect lives and property so they protected lives. Do you agree in these circumstances it was necessary?

ADAMS: I will agree with that.

SHEPHERD: In the circumstances then, have you anything except praise to the police and not criticism?

ADAMS: I have nothing else but praise for their work.

SHEPHERD: And have you praise also for the work of the police and British forces?

ADAMS: Yes, certainly sir.

SHEPHERD: Because if you have any criticism, let us have it now.

ADAMS: No criticism.

SHEPHERD: And in the light of what we now know, don't you think that your authority or village council would be in a better position if the fire fighting services are adequate?

ADAMS: We did everything possible.

SHEPHERD: But all you did is to fight the fire?

ADAMS: And we went as I said to ask the government through the Local Government Board for a new equipment.

SHEPHERD: On what date you went to the Government Board? 1963 or 1964 on your position?

ADAMS: On the 2nd March, 1963. I have a report. I will read it to you.

“The Minister of Home Affairs,
Ministerial Building,
Brickdam, Georgetown.

Dear Sir,

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In reply to the village council's request, Mr. Watkins, the Fire Chief, along with Mr. Storey of the Ministry visited the district on the 13th February, 1963, when they made a thorough inspection of the district and was met later by members of the local authority.

On hearing the reports of the many fire hazards by the Fire Chief which exist in the district, members agreed to approach government on the question of proper fire fighting equipment.

To begin with, hydrants should be first considered and after taking into account that eighty three hydrants are likely to be the required amount to take care of the entire district and the cost which will be entailed. Members agreed that the council should not undertake installation of more than twelve hydrants yearly and at the same time to make reservoirs along the creeks and other sources wherever practical. Also to introduce self help where found necessary.

The local authority respectfully seek government approval towards a loan of six thousand dollars to cover the cost of initial capital expenditure and in the meantime if government could provide all appliance completed with equipment on loan for an indefinite period.

The local authority is very much indebted to Government for the prompt action taken which resulted in the best interest of the Chief Fire Officer and at the same time wish to express their gratitude to the Chief Fire Officer for bringing to their attention the grave fire risk that exist in the district.

Yours truly, . . . ,”

Now, I want to say a little further. I received from the Fire Chief a letter on 11th September, 1963: “I have the honour to refer to the above subject and to inform you on the 4th and 5th September, 1963 for the public to obtain on the spot information and assistance.”

CHAIRMAN: Is the letter available?

ADAMS: I gave you the last one.

SHEPHERD: Did you ever receive any reply from the government?

ADAMS: No sir.

SHEPHERD: Did you ever receive the loan to build the reservoir?

ADAMS: No sir. To build our reservoir and the dams and the creeks, we did it ourselves and so at this moment they are awaiting the arrival of a machine which would assist at times when there are fires.

SHEPHERD: Without an appliance is there any means of conveying the water from the dam in case of a fire?

ADAMS: There are reservoirs made up in creeks. There is an area and a creek which runs right through and discharges in the river. In the case of fire we can enough water.

SHEPHERD: You are still awaiting the appliances?

ADAMS: Yes sir.

SHEPHERD: You have referred to the tension of the area prior to the 25th night of May. You said there were other situations in the country. Do you remember the reports of Buxton murder coming to Wismar?

ADAMS: Yes.

SHEPHERD: Do you think the arrival of those reports had anything to do with it?

ADAMS: Certainly.

SHEPHERD: How?

ADAMS: Human nature.

SHEPHERD: At what hour did this outbreak start at Wismar?

ADAMS: It was a reprisal.

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SHEPHERD: You were not the only one to anticipate a reprisal?

ADAMS: No sir.

SHEPHERD: Indeed you told the Commissioner of Police about the same time you had anticipated a reprisal and others too. What do you feel you should do about this, Mr. Adams? At this time did you feel that there was something you could do?

ADAMS: There was nothing I could, individually.

SHEPHERD: When you heard, were you surprised?

ADAMS: I was not surprised by the outbreak.

SHEPHERD: Fires, raping, beating. Were you surprised it came so suddenly?

ADAMS: No. As to what was happening in the country. It was not a surprise.

SHEPHERD: You knew that the outbreaks were directed against the Indians?

ADAMS: The outbreaks, sir?

SHEPHERD: Against the Indian community.

ADAMS: I went on the other side of the river.

SHEPHERD: Are you employed?

ADAMS: Yes, I have regular hours of work.

SHEPHERD: And you are employed at the clerk's office at Demba?

ADAMS: Yes, sir.

SHEPHERD: Did you think of asking for time to go and do your duties as you were the chairman?

ADAMS: I asked after lunch.

—

PRATAP N. SINGH: So then, Mr. Adams, you did see acts of violence on the 25th May?

ADAMS: I saw the results.

PRATAP N. SINGH: You never saw the acts of violence?

ADAMS: None.

PRATAP N. SINGH: During your two-hour stay at Wismar how far did you say you had walked?

ADAMS: The distance is about one and a half miles in length and the width roughly about half a mile.

PRATAP N. SINGH: How far would you say you had walked in two hours?

ADAMS: About a mile I would say.

PRATAP N. SINGH: Did you walk down the street which ran along the river-side? What is the name of that street?

ADAMS: It hasn't got a name.

PRATAP N. SINGH: Did you go by Silver City? Did you pass by the Valley of Tears?

ADAMS: No, I did not go there.

PRATAP N. SINGH: Were you walking?

ADAMS: At one time?

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PRATAP N. SINGH: What distance, and what time did you walk?

ADAMS: It would be very hard for me to say.

PRATAP N. SINGH: Give me an average.

ADAMS: It would be very hard for me to tell you what distance I walked. Maybe, half the distance.

PRATAP N. SINGH: Maybe half the mile distance. What distance?

ADAMS: Maybe about half a mile.

PRATAP N. SINGH: Was it during the course of your walk that you saw groups of about one hundred?

ADAMS: Yes.

PRATAP N. SINGH: Of course you were unmolested.

ADAMS: Nobody troubled me.

PRATAP N. SINGH: Do you appreciate the oath you took? Are you asking this Commission to believe that during the state of violence on 25th May, 1964 when people were being beaten, murdered and raped you did not see any act of violence?

ADAMS: May I ask what is your interpretation of the word “violence?”

PRATAP N. SINGH: By violence I mean beating, burning, etc. Did you see anybody being beaten?

ADAMS: No.

PRATAP N. SINGH: Did you see anybody burning buildings?

ADAMS: None.

PRATAP N. SINGH: About how many groups about a hundred did you see?

ADAMS: I cannot answer that question.

PRATAP N. SINGH: Was it one group?

ADAMS: I said I saw groups of people at every corner that I turned.

PRATAP N. SINGH: How many corners did you turn?

ADAMS: It was more than two. I can't remember. You see groups of people everyday.

PRATAP N. SINGH: Yes. But not in groups of one hundred.

ADAMS: No.

PRATAP N. SINGH: Did you recognise any of the people in the group?

ADAMS: Certainly, but I cannot remember any of them now.

PRATAP N. SINGH: You said that there was violence in the area?

ADAMS: I said I heard of violence.

PRATAP N. SINGH: To whom did you attribute this violence?

ADAMS: Well, there are two ethnic groups

PRATAP N. SINGH: I asked you a very simple question, Mr. Adams. To whom do you attribute this violence?

ADAMS: I cannot answer that question.

PRATAP N. SINGH: Did you attribute it to people living at Wismar?

ADAMS: Well, in any case it happened to people at Wismar.

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PRATAP N. SINGH: Whom did you think caused it?

ADAMS: Well, to be honest, the cause of it was due to some responsible element who did not seem to see it fit to call a halt to the violence in the country.

PRATAP N. SINGH: I am not talking about the country as a whole. I am talking about Wismar. Which element is responsible?

ADAMS: The same responsible element.

PRATAP N. SINGH: But who actually started it?

ADAMS: The same element.

PRATAP N. SINGH: Which element?

ADAMS: The same people who started it.

PRATAP N. SINGH: Who are the people who started it?

ADAMS: They are people who in my opinion did not belong to the area.

PRATAP N. SINGH: Who are the people who started it? What race of people are they?

ADAMS: I do not know.

PRATAP N. SINGH: Whom do you associate with the element that started it?

ADAMS: It was said that the PYO started it.

PRATAP N. SINGH: Did you see any strange East Indians up there?

ADAMS: Certainly.

PRATAP N. SINGH: How many?

ADAMS: I can't answer that. It is difficult to say.

PRATAP N. SINGH: Two years ago Demba supplied the local authority with a fire engine in perfect working condition.

ADAMS: I wouldn't say so.

PRATAP N. SINGH: Was it working?

ADAMS: Yes.

PRATAP N. SINGH: What happened to this machine when buildings were being burnt like matchwood?

ADAMS: It was out of commission long before the day of the fire.

PRATAP N. SINGH: To whom was the engine given?

ADAMS: The local authority.

PRATAP N. SINGH: Why was it given to you and your councillors?

ADAMS: So we could use it in times of fire.

PRATAP N. SINGH: So when you told Mr. Shepherd your council was not responsible for fire, this was an untruth?

ADAMS: I never said so.

PRATAP N. SINGH: Did you not tell Mr. Shepherd your council was not responsible for the fire?

ADAMS: Yes.

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PRATAP N. SINGH: Well, you were not speaking the truth.

ADAMS: The council was not responsible.

PRATAP N. SINGH: Why did Demba give this engine to you?

ADAMS: Demba was trying to assist us.

PRATAP N. SINGH: So Demba held your council responsible?

ADAMS: No.

PRATAP N. SINGH: Why did you ask for it?

ADAMS: Because I saw the need for it.

PRATAP N. SINGH: Who looked after the fire equipment?

ADAMS: The local authority.

PRATAP N. SINGH: Who is responsible for its maintenance?

ADAMS: It is not being maintained.

PRATAP N. SINGH: Why

ADAMS: It is not in working condition.

PRATAP N. SINGH: If it were in use the council would have been responsible for it?

ADAMS: No. Government is responsible.

PRATAP N. SINGH: If it were working the government would have been responsible?

ADAMS: Yes, the government would have been still responsible.

PRATAP N. SINGH: When it was handed over to you by Demba was it working?

ADAMS: Yes.

PRATAP N. SINGH: Who was responsible for it them?

ADAMS: The local authority.

PRATAP N. SINGH: When it is working you are responsible. When it is not working you are not responsible. Did you write Demba a letter thanking them?

ADAMS: No.

PRATAP N. SINGH: What happened at Wismar? The reprisal. What do you mean by the word “reprisal”?

ADAMS: Well, I shall quote you the scriptural part of it.

PRATAP N. SINGH: Please, I do not want the scriptural explanation of this. Explain what you mean.

ADAMS: Okay, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.

PRATAP N. SINGH: Well, violence did occur at Wismar. Was an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth?

ADAMS: Well, then violence did occur at Wismar.

PRATAP N. SINGH: Mr. Adams

—

CHAIRMAN: Mr. Pratap Singh, I think we should adjourn the hearing as it is one hour past the lunch for the typists.

—

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CARTER: Mr. Adams has taken leave, but we will fix it so that Mr. Adams can be present here tomorrow.

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