

Thursday

19.11.64

Evidence by Mrs Gopi ^{and} ~~her~~ ^{husband}

COUNSEL: Members of the Commission may I ask you to sit this morning.

CHAIRMAN: Yes you may.

COUNSEL: Yesterday you ended where the Policeman opened the door, and you were able to pass through. Is that right?

MRS. GOPIE: Yes Sir, that is at the Mackenzie Police Station.

COUNSEL: How did you complain about this story first to anyone of the 32 men who were there.

MRS. GOPIE: Yes Sir, Mr. Deonarine Singh's father.

COUNSEL: You complained about this incident ^{involved} ~~what happened to you about~~ Policeman Brown to Mr. Deonarine Singh's father.

MRS. GOPIE: Yes sir.

COUNSEL: What he advised you to do.

MRS. GOPIE: He told me to go and speak to Mr. Hobbs.

COUNSEL: ~~Do~~ you see him here in court.

MRS. GOPIE: Yes sir. (Hobs identified)

COUNSEL: Did you tell Mr. Hobbs what Constable Brown had done to you when you went to his room.

MRS. GOPIE: Yes sir, but I didn't quite finish telling him, when he said get out of here. You hadn't any right to get soldiers to get your things, because he asked if I had already given a statement concerning the worries with my husband, and I told him yes.

COUNSEL: Do I understand you to say or suggest Mr. Hobbs was annoyed because of the statement.

MRS. GOPIE: Yes sir. The soldiers ^{accompanied} ~~accompany~~ me to the various places and people's homes in finding my things.

COUNSEL: Well then, after this incident you came back to Georgetown.

MRS. GOPIE: Yes sir, the next morning.

COUNSEL: Now you realise that when you were sworn in yesterday and took the oath in that box, all that you have said is the truth and you have not exaggerated or overstated anything.

MRS. GOPIE: No sir, it is nothing but the truth.

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MR. SHEPPARD: Before I explain my position with regards to your witness and other witnesses, may I say that a map was mentioned yesterday which has ^{now} been handed to me. It has no caption and it is a ^{were} tracing prepared I think by the Army. The map has markings which I think would be helpful to the Commission. As regards this witness and two others, I must admit that I ^{was} ~~am~~ taken aback by the statement concerning the manhandling of the baby child and other incidents regarding the Police. It is equally difficult for me to ~~cross~~ examine this witness as it was in respect of the one yesterday. I would now strongly urge that when the statements are made involving policemen that I be given copies of the statements so that I may receive instructions. ^{in advance}

MR. CARTER: Mr. Chairman what I am entirely concerned with ^{is} most of these witnesses. I see now there will be a lot of time lag. if this continues and Mr. Shepherd does not know what is coming. You know Sir, usually in criminal matters, so much of this evidence is almost like evidence in criminal cases ~~and~~ that you might have some idea of what is coming, so that you can cross examine from instructions before hand. The main feature is to see if you can expedite these proceedings.

CHAIRMAN: Mr. Singh can possibly show you his copy of the statement to Mr. Shepherd.

MR. CARTER: Mr. Singh can show his statement to Mr. Shepherd not necessarily to me, because I would not ~~cross~~ examine witnesses ^{for} a day or two ^{to come. If that be.} before, ~~so that he~~ can get proper instructions, otherwise it would mean hearing of a witness when there is no possibility of ~~cross~~ examining until instructions are given to Mr. Shepherd and ^{resulting in a} ~~if possibly~~ waste a lot of time. I don't see if Mr. Shepherd is going to be shown Mr. Sugrim Singh's statement. I see no objection for Mr. Sugrim Singh to see Mr. Shepherd's statement, because ^{and then} a number of these things seem surprising to me and he has got no instructions on it, ~~so~~ he would not be able to

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Singh that this is not a prosecution this is an examination in which everyone ~~who~~ ^{therefore} is trying to arrive at the truth, ~~so that~~ ^{purpose} if Mr. Sugrim Singh has statements in his disposal ~~if~~ possibly a day or two before he can give Mr. Shepherd and we would all get through faster.

COUNSEL: Members of the Commission I appreciate the difficulties and the disadvantages of my learned friend Mr. Shepherd in these matters. He has made two suggestions to overcome this difficulty and I would co-operate with him in facilitating the work of his commission. My difficulty is that we have some statements but have not made copies of them. And I would ask for some time to have those copies ready, and we have had ourselves to advertise as he must observed in the newspapers ^{for statements of} that they are coming in. As a matter of fact Mrs. Gopie is one of the new comers. In future before I put in a witness in the box, I shall see to it that I pass a copy of the statement to my learned friend Mr. Shepherd. I cannot do so immediately but I will do so as soon as the copy is ready so as to give you time to study that statement. But at the moment I do not know what to do with three previous witnesses who have made statements, that is ^{Mrs} ~~Mrs~~ Mohamed Alima Khan, and this witness who have so far as I can recollect given some evidence against the police and security forces. They could be asked to come back another day to be ~~cross-examined~~. As for Mrs. Alime Khan she tried to make a report but nobody took it down. I would recall here that Mrs. Shirley Mohamed was the most startling witness for yesterday when she gave evidence concerning the death of her child. I am taking Shepherd instructions and I may ask - I certainly shall try to ~~cross-examine~~ her again. Mrs. Gopie equally has made some alarming accusations and I have no instructions this morning that are worthwhile. I should leave it for the time and cross-examine her again on proper instructions.

witness Theophilus Lam. duly sworn states as follows.

COUNSEL: What is your full name?

WITNESS: Theophilus Lam.

COUNSEL: Mr. Lam you are residing at Wismar at the moment.

MR. LAM: Yes sir.

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COUNSEL: What lot?

MR. LAM: 16 Christianburg Demerara. *River.*

COUNSEL: You are a businessman up there.

MR. LAM: Yes sir.

COUNSEL: During the disturbances your property was destroyed and the looters broke the windows.

MR. LAM: On 23rd May about nine o'clock one Mr. Toolsie Persaud's foreman of the grant came into my hotel. He asked me to prepare two rooms for four men and Mr. Toolsie himself. They asked for supper which I did not have at the time. They went to a restaurant and they stayed there a very long time and then returned around 10.30 p.m. When they came in to my Hotel Bar there were two Indians one with a burn on his shoulder and the other one was also burnt with acid. Well I became suspicious and I wanted to know what really was the set up at that moment. At about 10.55 p.m. I went on to the Main Road, and from my Hotel bar I saw a group of men. They had small iron bars, rods, and knives and so on. I asked one of them what was it all about. He said nothing skipper nothing. I did not attach any importance however. I took it simple. At that time Mr. Toolsie Persaud and his men were in my shop. I usually close around 11.00 to 11.30 p.m. Then I went to the door and tried to pull it in. Just then there was a bomb but it did not hit me it exploded on the door. Bottles were then pelted.

COUNSEL: Were they empty bottles.

MR. LAM: Yes, they were empty.

COUNSEL: You closed this bar, while the crowd started pelting bricks, stones and bottles.

MR. LAM: Yes, then I heard them saying you have that man Toolsie in there put him out and when he heard the remarks ^{Toolsie} he ran to the backyard of my building. At that time I peeped through my window in a small space and I shouted saying that he had gone, but they would not believe me, and they started pelting stones in the upstairs section and they broke the store and

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started to loot. I sent my son-in-law to the police station.

COUNSEL: What is his name.

MR. LAM: His name is Richard Croft. In a few minutes the police were there. A Corporal and a few policemen came on the spot, and they helped me to prevent the looting. One of the East Indian men at the backyard came out. On Sunday morning Mr. Hobbs and a few other policemen came to my premises and asked me to give a statement. He asked me if I know the persons' names. I said I do not want him to make any charges in other words I would not call any names because I do not know them. I had to put that in writing.

COUNSEL: Was your place damaged subsequently on Monday morning.

MR. LAM: No, sir I closed my window and ^{the} looting took place downstairs.

COUNSEL: On Monday you suffered any loss. About how much?

MR. LAM: About \$8,000 (eight thousand dollars) I ^{had cash} kept my sales about \$300 (three hundred dollars).

COUNSEL: What about the loss of your stocks.

MR. LAM: It is about \$2,000 (two thousand dollars) that included washing machines and other big items such as fridges, oil stoves, etc.

COUNSEL: May I ask you one question more Mr. Lam. Was Banga Mary involved in the looting? Was he around that place? Did you see him?

MR. LAM: Yes. He was there earlier. He was with me speaking before any incident occurred. He told me to close my shop. Then I did not close it, but instead he closed it himself.

COUNSEL: Did you see any man there.

MR. LAM: No I did not see any man there.

MR. SHEPHERD: I understand you said that you did not want to make any charges.

MR. LAM: No I did not make any charges, because I was afraid and I refused to call the names, and generally I lived just there, and imagined what ^{had} would take place. I had to give it in writing.

Suraj Paul Singh duly sworn stated as follows.
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CHAIRMAN: What is your name?

WITNESS: Suraj Paul Singh.

CHAIRMAN: You now live where?

S.P. SINGH: In Alexander Village, lot 2 First Street.

CHAIRMAN: Formerly you lived where?

S.P. SINGH: At Mackenzie, Christianburg, 170 Silvertown.

CHAIRMAN: What work you used to do?

S.P. SINGH: I was employed by Sprostons.

CHAIRMAN: What do you know of this incident?

S.P. SINGH: The incident took place on Sunday.

CHAIRMAN: That was Sunday 24th?

S.P. SINGH: It was around 8.30 in the night.

CHAIRMAN: Yes, what happened?

S.P. SINGH: They started to spray gasolene unknown to me.

CHAIRMAN: Where?

S.P. SINGH: On the house.

CHAIRMAN: How did you get to know that they were spraying gasolene?

S.P. SINGH: It was around 8.30 when I assumed that they were spraying gasolene.

CHAIRMAN: Why did you assume?

S.P. SINGH: It was nine o'clock. I had a friend who was stopping at me and the tenants upstairs opened his backdoor, and when he opened his backdoor the gasolene hit him and he shouted there was fire at the back. I jumped up from my bed and went upstairs, where I saw two pans with gasolene, and the steps from the top to the bottom were soaked. The pans had unlighted wicks. I went upstairs, took my foot and kicked the pans down the steps, took some water and washed the platform from the top right down, and then ~~was~~ ~~decided~~ ~~to~~ ~~keep~~ ~~wake~~ ~~the~~ ~~whole~~ ~~night~~ A few yards away a fellow by the name of Harry, who was a butcher, stood by his backdoor for the whole night looking to see if we would go in back to sleep. While he was looking, he felt to himself that we were not sleeping, so

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three times he extinguished his light and signalled to the people who were still awake. We stood there and watched him for the whole night, but he was watching at us, so he did not do anything.

CHAIRMAN: Did anything happen that night?

S.P. SINGH: Nothing.

CHAIRMAN: The next day?

S.P. SINGH: I left about 7,30 a.m. to go to work and I ordered my wife to go to the station to make a report, then from there we went to the wharf at Mackenzie. I was doing some repairs there for the boathouse. I lighted the fire to heat some glue, and then I saw the fire at Wismar Hill.

CHAIRMAN: Around what time would you say that was?

S.P. SINGH: Around 8 o'clock this fire started to blaze up the hill.

CHAIRMAN: Yes?

S.P. SINGH: Shortly after that I could not work anymore. I stood there and was looking to see what else was happening. Shortly after then they started to brick down Bissoon's store from the opposite boatlanding.

CHAIRMAN: Yes?

S.P. SINGH: Shortly after then we saw some fellows go upstairs and then they came down and disappeared. I stood there looking at the fire on the hill, but all I could see was flames all around the hill. About eleven o'clock I took a small boat and came ~~back~~ over.

CHAIRMAN: Which boat?

S.P. SINGH: Sproston's small boat. I remained there for the balance of the day.

CHAIRMAN: Remained where?

S.P. SINGH: At Sproston's wharf, Wismar. I was there hiding and looking.

At 2 p.m. they started to loot Bissoon's stores.

CHAIRMAN: Yes?

S.P. SINGH: After they finished looting Mr. Bissoon's stores, the ~~members~~ of the Volunteer Force could be seen ~~around~~ around.

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CHAIRMAN: Standing where?

S.P. SINGH: ^{He is of} The Volunteer Force ^{was} was standing on the premises looting and sharing ^{to} to the crowd, but the crowd was so large that I did not know anyone. They were crossing over to Mackenzie with the Quamina ^{Boat.} ~~we~~ ^{He has} have a boat service there.

CHAIRMAN: Is the boat named Quamina or the person who operates it?

S.P. SINGH: The person's name is Quamina. About half an hour later we decided to borrow a boat, and shortly after then we saw Bissoon's bouse on fire. Shortly afterwards then they were going around in circles, there were many of them, hundreds of them, until afterwards they decided to go at one D. Persaud's Rum Shop, and I stood up and watched as they were looting Mr. Persaud's Rum Shop, and I could have seen the Volunteer Force boys with bottles leaning to their mouths drinking, and that distance was about $\frac{1}{4}$ mile from where I was standing I could see the wharf from there, shortly after I saw girls being shaken in the water and then taken on the beach, I also saw men going over them, I could have seen the men between their feet. After that I do not know what happened to them but the Volunteers were standing around there. After ~~that~~ I saw two Indian boys pushed out in a boat and two others jumped into the river, some of the men of the crowd went behind them with a boat but could not catch them because the tide was against them. The Indian boys were going towards the hospital. The crowd of men that were going behind the Indian boys, seeing they couldn't make it turned back and went to Wismar and started to put fire on Mr. Persaud's building and a little afterwards they walked around and went to Mr. Hakim's building and set fire there too. Now I was trying to get conveyance to go for my wife and could not, I then approached ~~the~~ ^{the} Volunteer Force because ~~there were no~~ ^{there were} crowds around, ~~and then~~ I told them that my wife was hiding in the yard, and they said they would go, I met them again about two hours after and asked them if they found my wife and they said "man your wife isn't there but your house was burnt since 8.00 this morning." I stood there still waiting for my ~~M~~ ^M through to Wismar Police Station

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through the phone in order to get conveyance to go for my wife, when my Manager got through he said no Police were at the station. About two o'clock Tuesday morning I met the soldiers and I lay my story to them again. At that time I was at the Sprostons Wharf on the Wismar side, and they said they would see what they could do for me. They didn't do anything, and when I saw them again they said they could take me to the Police Station, and they took me there to the Police Station and there I met Major Langham and I told him that my wife is in the yard hiding, he said "look I feel that your wife has gone over to Mackenzie, and I am sending you with a guard, go over check at the Sports Club and if you do not find her there ask the Officer to bring you back."

CHAIRMAN: You checked, did you find your wife.

S.P. SINGH: No sir, I returned back and met Mr. Langham he told me that a woman with quite a few little children had just come in, so I must go and check as I was going I saw my little girl ^{come} ~~came~~ running down the steps.

CHAIRMAN: Did you see your wife?

S.P. SINGH: Yes sir.

CHAIRMAN: Where was your wife during the day and what did she tell you?

S.P. SINGH: She is ^{and} in the Pomeroon River. ^{She told me that} Mr. Green took her and the children and hid her in the house. He begged her not to allow the children to keep any noise and don't come out and let anybody see you. About 7 o'clock the crowd came in Mr. Green's house. They told Mr. Green that he was hiding some people in his house. Mr. Green told them 'no.' They told Mr. Green if they find out they are going to burn his house. They went away. My wife had hidden some of the things in the yard and Mr. Green told her to show him the things and he is going to keep it for her.

CHAIRMAN: Did you get those things back?

S.P. SINGH: No. Not unto now.

CHAIRMAN: You and your wife had gone to Mackenzie over the other side.

S.P. SINGH: Yes.

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CHAIRMAN: What is your loss? The house is your house?

MR. SINGH: I am a tenant of Mr. Bacchus. My loss is about \$700 because the furniture I made myself.

MR. SHEPHERD: Your wife and children were saved.

MR. SINGH: Yes.

MR. SHEPHERD: You said you saw some men soaking some under pants.

MR. SINGH: Yes.

MR. SHEPHERD: Did you try to call the police?

MR. SINGH: My wife went to make a report that day. That was Monday morning.

MR. SHEPHERD: The fire sprang ^{up} all around.

MR. SINGH: Yes.

MR. SHEPHERD: You saw the fire.

MR. SINGH: Yes

MR. SHEPHERD: Up the hill and on the other side.

MR. SINGH: Yes.

MR. SHEPHERD: You saw a crowd going around.

MR. SINGH: Yes.

MR. SHEPHERD: ^a The crowd of whom.

MR. SINGH: A crowd of men, women and children.

MR. SHEPHERD: I thought I heard you said they were Africans.

MR. SINGH: Yes they were Africans.

MR. SHEPHERD: They were the same crowd?

MR. SINGH: No. Different crowds about 100 each. They were making noise and the place was in ~~a~~ confusion.

MR. SHEPHERD: The Police and Volunteer Force had a lot to do with it at the time?

MR. SINGH: I did not see any Volunteer Force.

MR. SHEPHERD: Did you say you saw them drinking from bottles.

MR. SINGH: Yes

MR. SHEPHERD: From the

from was it to where to Vol. were

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- MR. SINGH: ^{about} From a $\frac{1}{4}$ mile away I could have seen rather clearly.
- MR. SHEPHERD: What sort of bottles were they drinking from?
- MR. SINGH: Black bottles. These bottles were coming from the shop.
- MR. SHEPHERD: From bottles that were looted from the shop?
- MR. SINGH: Yes
- MR. SHEPHERD: How did you know these bottles were looted?
- MR. SINGH: Because I saw them coming from the shop.
- MR. SHEPHERD: You said at the beach later during the day you saw some girls and men. They were raping the girls.
- MR. SINGH: Yes.
- MR. SHEPHERD: What time it was?
- MR. SINGH: Around 4 p.m.
- MR. SHEPHERD: You were at Sprostons Wharf.
- MR. SINGH: Myself and five others were hiding there.
- MR. SHEPHERD: How far these girls ^{away were} ~~were~~ being raped?
- MR. SINGH: About $\frac{1}{4}$ mile away.
- MR. SHEPHERD: What were these girls doing?
- MR. SINGH: They were calling for help.
- MR. SHEPHERD: There were five of you.
- MR. SINGH: Yes.
- MR. SHEPHERD: Did you try to interfere.
- MR. SINGH: I could not.
- MR. SHEPHERD: You and four men could not help.
- MR. SINGH: We could not help.
- MR. SHEPHERD: You said there were Volunteers - how many were there.
- MR. SINGH: Roughly about 12 Volunteers, sir.
- MR. SHEPHERD: Can you recognise them?
- MR. SINGH: No. They were from Georgetown.
- MR. SHEPHERD: You said they went to Mackenzie.
- MR. SINGH: Yes sir.
- MR. SHEPHERD: You re^{re} were not from Mackenzie.

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MRS. MOOTOO: You said that ^{wife} they were looting Bissoon's store, they were sharing clothes. Who were they?

MR. SINGH: The looters.

MRS. MOOTOO: Then you said you were trying to get over to the River and you asked the Volunteers to help you - What did they say?

MR. SINGH: They will see, and they went away.

MRS. MOOTOO: You asked another set?

MR. SINGH: They ^{said} ~~say~~ they would see too.

PROF. DRAYTON: Mr. Singh at what time of the day was Bissoon's store burnt?

MR. SINGH: Around 2 p.m.

PROF. DRAYTON: Were you at Sprostons at that period of time.

MR. SINGH: I was there until dusk. I did not go anywhere else. I was just hiding and looking.

PROF. DRAYTON: How far away is Bissoon's house?

MR. SINGH: About 50 yards away.

PROF. DRAYTON: I am not familiar ^{with the distance}, how far was this house.

MR. SINGH: It was two times the distance from those people across the road. (witness indicates the lane across the road)

PROF. DRAYTON: Mr. Singh you said you saw people looting Mr. Bissoon's store at 2 p.m. in the day.

MR. SINGH: Yes, I saw people looting the store at that time.

MRS. MOOTOO: You said you saw the store and Police Carter standing with the crowd; you said in cross-examination you were not far from that place and that the Volunteers were not from Mackenzie but from Georgetown. How do you know that the Volunteer Force were not from Mackenzie?

MR. SINGH: I know most of them. I knew them before I got employment at Sprostons. They were living at Bacchus' home, and I know their names, and they know me as Carpenter Singh.

PROF. DRAYTON: You confirm then that you did not see the Volunteers taking part in the looting of Mr. Bissoon's store.

MR. SINGH: Yes.

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PROF. DRAYTON: Where is this shop? How far away is it?

MR. SINGH: This is about quarter or half mile away.

Rev. McDonald
PROF. DRAYTON: Now firstly - one thing Mr. Singh you said you saw girls being shaken in water. Were they only shaken or were they raped?

MR. SINGH: Yes. Then they were shaken in the water and brought back to land and raped again.

where you were against the river bank.
PROF. DRAYTON: Was the stelling ~~right up to the wharf?~~

MR. SINGH: Yes.

MR. MCDONALD: How many people comprised the crowd that was around the girls that were being shaken and raped?

MR. SINGH: There were about 100 (one hundred) of them, but they could not get close to the river.

PROF. DRAYTON: You said you saw this between the legs of the people.

MR. SINGH: Yes. I was in the line of the riverside, so I could have seen the ~~River~~ ^{whole} view.

you said the until
PROF. DRAYTON: Did you work at Mackenzie side on that morning at 11 o'clock. *And then you* You crossed to Wismar. You came across with a small boat to Wismar *for* work. What about that boat.?

MR. SINGH: It was tied and remained there all the time.

to use the telephone
PROF. DRAYTON: As regards the efforts that were made ~~to locate your wife.~~ *you said not*
 Do you think that it was possible for you to get through to the Police Station by telephone?

MR. SINGH: Yes.

Could
PROF. DRAYTON: Can you give a reason ~~why~~ they would not answer the telephone?

MR. SINGH: I did not worry to wait for any statement.

PROF. DRAYTON: Did the Police simply refuse to answer the telephone?

MR. SINGH: Yes, I suppose so.

Dr. Dayton

why do you think the police were not
answering the telephone with ~~every~~
~~witness~~ Smith ~~every~~ that was happening at
witness that day.

witness I believe the police were
cooperating with the Court

at this stage adjournment was taken
away to the illness of Mr. Rife at
20.11.64 8.30 a.m.