

**WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY**



**CO-OPERATIVE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA**

**THE WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY**

---

**VERBATIM REPORT  
OF THE PROCEEDINGS**

---

**Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> June, 2014**

**WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY**

**WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY**

**16<sup>th</sup> Hearing**

**09:34hrs**

**25<sup>th</sup> June, 2014**

**Commissioners:**

Sir. Richard L. Cheltenham, K.A., Q.C., Ph.D – Chairman

Mrs. Jacqueline Samuels-Brown, Q.C.

Mr. Seenath Jairam, S.C.

**Secretary to the Commission:**

Ms. Nicola Pierre

**Counsel to the Commission:**

Mr. Glenn Hanoman

Ms. Latchmie Rahamat

**Administrator of the Commission Secretariat**

Mr. Hugh A. Denbow

**Attorneys for the People's National Congress (PNC):**

Mr. Basil Williams

Mr. James Bond

## **WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY**

### **Attorneys for Working People's Alliance (WPA):**

Mr. Christopher Ram

Mr. Moses Bhagwan

### **Attorneys for the Guyana Trades Union Congress (GTUC):**

Mr. Brian Clarke

Mr. Selwyn Pieters

### **Attorney for Dr. Patricia Rodney, Asha Rodney, Shaka Rodney and Kanini Rodney:**

Mr. Andrew Pilgrim, Q.C.

### **Attorney for Donald Rodney:**

Mr. Keith Scotland

**Attorney for the Ex-GDF (Guyana Defence Force) Association:** Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Joseph Harmon

### **Witness:**

Mr. Tecuma Ogunseye

## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

### Officers:

Ms. Pamela Binda	-	Editor
Mr. Kristoffer Sundar	-	Assistant Editor
Ms. Shanta Kumar	-	Transcriptionist
Ms. Tricia Peters	-	Transcriptionist
Ms. Karen Mohamed	-	Transcriptionist
Ms. Diane Gobin	-	Transcriptionist
Mr. Sahadeo Ramdular	-	Transcriptionist
Mr. Vickram Ragobeer	-	Audio Technician
Mr. Mahendranauth Sanichar	-	Audio Technician
Mr. Rui Constantine	-	Audio Technician

## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

### CALL TO ORDER

**Mr. Chairman:** If Mr. Ogunseye is here, please come to the witness stand.

**Attorney for the People's National Congress (PNC) [Mr. Basil Williams:]** Mr. Chairman, before we take the Witness, I would like to take a point *in limine*.

**Mr. Chairman:** Certainly, Counsel.

**Mr. Williams:** Yes Sir. My question is whether the Commission has had an extension of time to complete its work? Mr. Chairman, you would recall that your remit was for four months and the four months would have expired. I have not seen anything in the Gazette to the effect that the life has to be extended. I know on the last Commission of Inquiry, the Linden Commission of Inquiry, Chief Justice Wolfe did not return until the extension was in place so I do not know... We ought not... We have to be careful how we are proceeding when we do not have the imprimatur to proceed. It is just a clarification whether the life of the Commission has been extended so that we could properly proceed, for example, with Mr. Ogunseye.

**Mr. Chairman:** Counsel, I thank you for your enquiry which I regard as quite proper and I am to advise that I did write His Excellency, the President about the fact that the life was coming to an end at a particular point and I received communication to the effect that the life of the Commission has been extended until September's end. I think that is correct and that it would be gazetted; whether it has been as yet I am not sure, but I have that in a letter from the President that the life has been enlarged and to that extent, I feel wholly competent to proceed.

**Mr. Williams:** I am guided Mr. Chairman.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you. Commission Counsel, are you ready?

*[Mr. Tacuma Ogunseye entered the witness box]*

*[Secretary of the Commission administered the oath to Mr. Tacuma Ogunseye]*

**Mr. Tacuma Ogunseye:** Before I start my formal evidence, I would ask the permission of the Commissioners to make a very brief statement before which I think is very important.

## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

**Mr. Chairman:** By way of a prayer?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** No. Just to explain...

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, you promise us to be brief.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Yes. I want to put on record that the Working People's Alliance Executive really had an agonising period in terms of determining how to deal with this Inquiry. It was the first time in the long thirty-something years that we, as an Executive, was never able to have a unanimous position on anything related to Walter's death and the Inquiry. The compromise that the Executive agreed to was that any Executive member, any Leader of the Party and Member of the Party could come to the Commission and to give evidence. The only thing that the Party insists is that it be truthful, open, frank and discuss any aspect of the Party's work because the Executive is of the view that the outcome that we are looking for could be best realised in total openness and total frankness, so I have a commitment to my oath and I have a moral commitment to the Executive of the WPA to be very frank and very open. I wish to say that what I am going to say from this box, some of it, is not written in my statement. What I am going to say from the box, are going to be even more helpful to the Commission than what I have written in the statement.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you and we look forward.

**Counsel to the Commission [Ms. Latchmie Rahamat]:** Sir, could you please state your name for the record?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** I am Tacuma Ogunseye.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Mr. Ogunseye, while you give your evidence would prefer to be seated or would you like to remain standing?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** I would stand, at least for now.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Could you please indicate if you are currently employed or working anywhere?

## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

**Mr. Ogunseye:** I have always been a self-employed person from the time I left school. I have been a stall holder in the Kitty Market and I am also a craft man. I made wood crafts of different things.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Mr. Ogunseye, how old are you?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** I am 62.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Did you submit a written statement to the Walter Rodney Commission?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Yes, I did.

**Ms. Rahamat:** And you signed on that statement?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Yes, I did.

**Ms. Rahamat:** If you were to see your statement again how would you be able to recognise it?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** I would recognise it by my signature and the content of the statement.

**Ms. Rahamat:** My respectful application at this time, Mr. Chairman, would be to have the statement of Mr. Ogunseye, shown to him.

*[The Court Marshall took statement to the Witness]*

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Yes.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Do you recognise your signature on that document?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Yes, I do.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Is that a copy of the written statement which you gave to the Commission?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Yes, it is.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Respectful application to have same tendered and marked as an Exhibit, proposed tag TO 1.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, his witness statement has been admitted into evidence and so marked TO1.

## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

**Ms. Rahamat:** Now, Mr. Ogunseye, could you please, at this time, indicate what your connection with the Working People's Alliance is?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** I am a founding member of the Working People's Alliance and I have served as an Executive on the Party from the time of its formation to present.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Approximately what year was the Party formed?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** As a pressure group in 1974...

**Commissioner [Seenath Jairam S.C]** Mr. Ogunseye, do not go too fast. You seem to be going at a terrific pace.

**Ms. Rahamat:** You indicated a few moments ago that it was first formed as a pressure group.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Yes.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Could you explain what is meant by the term "pressure group"?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** By "pressure group" we mean something that is less than the Political Party. A political social group that will fight for political and social change, but it is not a Party to contest elections; something looser than a Party.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Who were the members of this social pressured group?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** The WPA formation, the groups that constituted the beginning of the WPA was the African Cultural Society for Cultural Relations with Independent Africa (ASCRIA), headed by Eusi Kwayana...

**Mr. Chairman:** I just want to enquire whether, as a pressure group, as you called it, before it was constituted as a Political Party, whether you had intended to contest elections as a pressure group.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** No.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thanks.



## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

**Ms. Rahamat:** You named ASCRIA. Was there any other component of the pressure group that was formed?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** (IPRA) Indian Political Revolutionary Associates, headed by Barrister-of-Law Moses Bhagwan.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Was there any other?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Ratoon, which was a group operating outside of the University involving personalities like Dr. Clive Thomas, Dr. Josh Ramsammy, Morris Odle and others, they constitute a group that was university based.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Mr. Ogunseye...

**Mr. Ogunseye:** But I am not finished, there is another one. The next component was the Working People's Vanguard Party (WPVP) which was headed by a former PPP Leader who had broken away, Mr. Brindley Benn and people like Walter's brother who gave evidence, Eddie – they constitute the membership – and a sister name Thelma Reece; I think I should get the Sister into the record.

**Commissioner [Mrs. Jacqueline Samuels-Brown, Q.C.]:** Now that the Witness has brought a Sister into the record, can I have the names again? I missed the males.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Could you repeat the names of the sister group?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Okay the Working People's Vanguard Party was headed by Brindley Benn who was a former member of the People's Progressive Party who broke away and formed... Eddie Rodney and Sister Thelma Reece. Those were the three activist and Leaders in that Party.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** Thank you.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Mr. Ogunseye, could you please explain what were the politics operated during that period when you formed this Working People's Alliance pressure group?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Okay, Guyana political landscaping have already determined by the political engagement during the Post-Colonial period in the 1960s.

## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

09.49hrs

**Mr. Ogunseye:** At the time, the two major political forces were the People's Progressive Party (PPP) headed by Dr. Cheddi Jagan and the People's National Congress (PNC) headed by Mr. Forbes Burnham. Those two political parties constituted the main political forces or players in the political equation. I do not know if I am going too fast.

**Mr. Chairman:** No. You go ahead.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** By 1974 the politics of the country was being driven by, I would say two major plans - ideology and racial voting. So ideology and race constitute a very important plan of Guyanese politics and landscape at that time.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Could you explain at this time what you mean by the ideology and voting according to race?

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** Before the Witness continues, I have observed that statement which have been put in evidence and I do not know if a missed it, but he did mention in his statement something about a Movement Against Oppression (MAO)? Was that listed?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Well the Movement Against Oppression participated in the mobilisation under the banner of Walter Rodney, but it did not join the WPA. They were not part of the WPA, but they were part of the activities in the mobilisation protesting the banner of Rodney.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** Who was the leadership of that; do you know?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Of MAO? I really cannot remember their details.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** Thank you. Sorry, Counsel.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Was the Movement Against Oppression, a part of the pressure group?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** No. They did not join. They were not a part of the WPA.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Were they involved in the activities of the pressure group?

## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

**Mr. Ogunseye:** No. Not involved in the activities of the WPA.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Okay. Now, Mr. Ogunseye, could you explain at this time what was meant by the “voting according to race”?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** I think you asked ideology first. Basically, Guyanese politics from since the colonial period probably was the most ideological, you know, politics in the region. The question of socialism versus capitalism, the question of anti-imperialism, the question of the role that the Soviet Union played in the politics, the role that the United States played on one...

**Mr. Chairman:** You are going too fast.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Sorry, sorry.

**Mr. Chairman:** You are speaking as though you are talking to yourself man.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** I have that weakness. You have got to slow me down sometimes. I am more comfortable with a rhythm.

**Mr. Chairman:** I think you need to start afresh.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** I am saying that from since the Colonial period, Guyanese politics has been very ideological between...

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** Pause.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Sorry.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** Continue.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Okay.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Continue now.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** They questioned of the role of the Soviet Union because the PPP were aligned to the Soviet Union, very early in development.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Yes. Now, please continue.

## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

**Mr. Ogunseye:** The PNC was more aligned with the United States and the Western powers. So the question of anti-imperialism and socialism were always a central part of the political discourse and struggle in Guyana.

**Mr. Chairman:** Go ahead.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Both the United States and Soviet Union had played roles in Guyanese politics through the various parties that they supported.

**Mr. Chairman:** Go ahead there.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Yes Mr. Ogunseye.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** The PNC was helped to come to power with the assistance of the Central Intelligence Agency in the United States of America (CIA) and in the context of the Cold War politics, Dr. Jagan and the PPP were locked out.

**Ms. Rahamat:** What year was this?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** The process started from since the 1960s, throughout the independence struggle and rolled onto...

**Ms. Rahamat:** Continue.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Okay, so even the economic discourse in the country was influenced by that political reality; whether we go a capitalist part or a non-capitalist part.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Under the role...

**Mr. Ogunseye:** What is the role of the working people as against the role of other classes in the political menu - all of there were critical parts of the ideological debate and discourse.

**Mr. Chairman:** I am surprised that you have not mentioned the role of the racial divide.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** I have to deal with race at the second point.

**Ms. Rahamat:** He is dealing with ideology first, Sir.

## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Well let me turn now to race.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Yes.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Race has always been a historical reality in Guyana. From the time the Colonialists plant Africans and Indians into this environment, we were plant...sorry.

**Ms. Rahamat:** A good indication, Mr. Ogunseye, would be to look at the pens of the members of the Commission. Mr. Chairman?

**Mr. Chairman:** *[Inaudible]*

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Yes, I was saying that it was a historical problem. From the time they plant Africans and Indians here, they put us in competition. That competition has influenced our politics up to this day. So by the 1950's when the national movement was a United PPP, a national united movement fighting for independence. The United States played a role in engineering the split between Burnham and Jagan. They also had other internal factors, but there was a split and the unity that was built in the 1952 period eventually was fractured. The Africans in the main moving towards the PNC and the Indians remaining with the PPP, and that was basically the political engagement, I think, up to this present time.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Mr. Ogunseye, could you say why the split went in that direction? Why did the East Indians move towards the PPP and why did the Afro-Guyanese move towards the PNC with the split?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Okay. Dr. Jagan was the Leader of the PPP, he was Indo-Guyanese, and Burnham was African Guyanese, and he was also Leader of the Party. Once they split, I think, the various races literally followed their perspective Leaders. I must say that the African community was a little more complex.

**Mr. Chairman:** Who is it that uttered the expression "apanjan"?

## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

**Mr. Jairam:** “Apanjat”.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Well you know I have be a little circumspect about that. As I got it, the PNC always accused the PPP of saying that. Historical evidence is that a visiting Indian pundit, he visited the country, and it was he who made the statement. The statement did not originate from the PPP.

**Mr. Chairman:** What does it mean? Tell the ...

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Race for race.

**Mr. Chairman:** Pardon.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Race for race, something like that I think.

**Mr. Chairman:** I have heard the interpretation, vote race.

**Mr. Williams:** Vote for your own.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Yes, something like that.

**Mr. Chairman:** Vote for your own.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** I am sorry about when this would have been? This visiting Indian pundit who would have made that statement?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** It might be in the mid or early 1960's, I really cannot remember.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** I am sure now; it seems from your posture, that you do not remember the name or the occasion?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** No.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** Thank you.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** It is a pity you did not ask brother Kwayana. He would have surely provided you with it.

## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

**Ms. Rahamat:** Now, Mr. Ogunseye, in paragraph five of your statement on page one, you referred to in response to this unhealthy political situation; could you have a look at your statement, do you recall?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** I remember.

**Ms. Rahamat:** You remember?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Yes, I can recall.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Could you now explain what was the response to the unhealthy situation you spoke about?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Unhealthy situation. By that time, it was clear to any serious Guyanese that the country was really in problems and that the racial politics was undermining the development of the country, and the unity of the country, and we felt you need to address it. I will probably have to go a little bit beyond your Terms. By 1973, there was great alienation from the PNC by African community and in the 1973 elections, Burnham engaged in the biggest demonstration of electoral fraud. We in ASCRIA, initially in the early 1960s, helped Burnham to come to power. It is on ASCRIA's back, Kwayana's back, that we mobilised the African community because Burnham was very popular in the city, but he had problems with the African people in the rural areas that had problems with his sophisticated language. They never too probably understand him you know, and he had problems there, and the earlier elections, they lost a lot of involvement there. And ASCRIA and Kwayana, we had to mobilise the African community. So by the 1964 and 1968 elections, they were able to have the votes between the PNC and the PPP, much narrower. So ASCRIA was in alliance with the PNC.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** Before you go on, so are you saying that ASCRIA had the same aims and objectives as the CIA at that time?

## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

**Mr. Ogunseye:** CIA?

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** You said the CIA created the split, did you not?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Yes, in the 1950s.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** Okay.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** But we are now in the 1960s.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** I see.

**Mr. Jairam:** Mr. Ogunseye, as I understand it, the aims and objectives of ASCRIA, were very different. Did Mr. Burnham in those days display a black consciousness, an awareness that is attracted to you?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** To me?

**Mr. Jairam:** Yes.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Burnham was an African Leader. Nobody could deny that Burnham was an African Leader. He did have some concern about African interest. I do not think you can take that away from Burnham. That was never an issue for us. We always respected Burnham as an important African Leader. But let me see if I can start from here. ASCRIA, we were allies with them, we helped them to come to power and by 1970s, African people were complaining to ASCRIA about the conduct of some PNC Leaders and the corruption was surfacing in the Party on Government.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Continue.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** One of the most painful ones was that there was the practice of sexual exploitation of women for jobs. Sex for jobs and ASCRIA as a cultural organisation, we could not ignore the women's complaint on this issue. We asked Brother Mr. Kwayana to speak to Burnham on this matter, of a corruption and so forth. He went and he spoke to Burnham and



## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

Burnham announced to the Nation that he is setting up the Office of the Ombudsman to deal with corruption and anybody who have evidence of corruption, could report it to the Ombudsman and it would be addressed.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Was ASCRIA satisfied with that decision?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Yes. We were satisfied up to that point. We held off for a while...

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** *[Inaudible]*

**Mr. Ogunseye:** That was around early 1970's, 1971, I cannot remember.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** In fact, I believe it is in the constitution where that Office of Ombudsman was created and established, constitutionally. I have seen it in, I believe, the 1973 Constitution or some later Constitution.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** ASCRIA decided to test Burnham's good faith and we took two Government Ministers to the Ombudsman. Mr. Hamilton Greene who was an African Guyanese and we felt as an African organisation, we had evidence about Indian Minister named David Singh, and we felt that we could not just take Hamilton Greene, we had to take both of them. And we took both of them to the Ombudsman and that began the war between ASCRIA and the PNC.

*10.04hrs*

**Mr. Ogunseye:** They began to dismiss "Ascrians". It was at that time "Ascrians" almost... You would find that members of the PNC were also members of ASCRIA. Burnham made it very clear that you had to choose – "You either deal with me or you deal with Kwayana". A reign of terror, to put it lightly, was unleashed on ASCRIA members and that was the beginning of the fracture between ASCRIA and the PNC and the beginning of the fracture between in the African community, politically.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** Counsel, I just need to get the chronology. You are saying that this was after 1973 Elections you are talking about?

## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

**Mr. Ogunseye:** No, we took them to the Ombudsman before.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** Yes but supported the PNC in the 1973 elections?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** No. By 1973, you have to say, the PNC had already declared war on us.

**Ms. Rahamat:** I believe the evidence, Madam, was that they helped him to come to power in the 1960s.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** In the 1960's.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** In the 1960s that is why I need to get the chronology because I was a bit confused.

**Mr. Williams:** Mr. Chairman, I know it is a very good and nice history lesson. I do not know why brother Ogunseye thinks he should write on that period, but it is way outside our remit. I am not sure how his testimony is going to help us discover how Dr. Walter Rodney died. We got to be careful that we do not use this forum to go on all these excursions. We have five Terms of Reference and the discourse in the 1960's, for example, do not relate to that. The split was in the 1950's. I do not know who that would help you and help us in the charge of finding what caused this explosion that killed Dr. Rodney and who was responsible for it? Mr. Ogunseye could call a seminar somewhere and deal with this. We need to get down to business in respect to the Terms of Reference.

**Mr. Chairman:** Counsel, you would take note of Mr. Williams' comment and you make sure that we do not spend too much time by the way of background.

**Ms. Rahamat:** I agree please, Mr. Chairman, but I believe this bit of information would be very relevant in relation to the aspect of this particular Witness' testimony because he was part of the founding members of the WPA when it was a pressure group and there were certain situations, certain circumstances, that existed there both politically and socially that this Witness is in a position to tell you first-hand, why this social group changed from the social group and became a Political Party. And I believe that this bit of information is very relevant given the stand point

## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

that this Witness is coming from and I believe it would come in line with the Terms of Reference (i), please, members of the Commission.

**Mr. Chairman:** I think what Mr. Williams is also suggesting is that it might be done economically. I think we are going far too slowly on it and remember that do not be too taken up by the fact that we are writing. In the end, we have a verbatim record so you cannot go at our pace. I do not think that you need to go on our pace. We are trying to make a note, but if you do that, why are you having a verbatim report? You will balance that.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Yes, Sir. Mr. Ogunseye, could you please just, for the purposes of completing the record, explain to us how it is that ASCRIA split and moved on to forming and being a component of the Working People's Alliance pressure group?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** As I already explained, the problems in the 1970's began the breaking away of ourselves and the PNC, but in 1973 elections, when Burnham and the PNC commit significant electoral fraud, ASCRIA through our publications, named *The African Drums*, criticised the PNC and Burnham, and accused them of electoral fraud, but significantly, we said that we regret in Guyana that there was not an Indian political group that was willing to criticise the Indian political leadership as we were doing with the African political leadership. Mr. Moses Bhagwan had just returned... Sorry, am I going too fast?

**Ms. Rahamat:** No, you are not. You can continue, Mr. Ogunseye

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Mr. Bhagwan had just returned from studying Law and he was working with some young Indian Guyanese organisation that they had called IPRA and when he saw our statement, he made contact with Kwayana and ASCRIA, and a working relationship between ASCRIA and IPRA developed and that was highlighted by our decision to have a Race Commission to go into the communities to discuss with the people, the racial problems. Both the PNC and the PPP attacked us as the races were coming together, but anyhow, we held the Commission and out of the Commission's findings, we were convinced that the African and Indian communities wanted this problem to be addressed and that really began the starting point, the embryonic point, of the formation of the WPA and because it coincided with the Rodney

## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

mobilisation of IPRA and ASCRIA, who were the nucleus, other groups joined, and we ended up with the WPA.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Mr. Ogunseye, you indicated in your statement, again in paragraph 5, “the Alliance will address itself to the contradictions between Indian and African sections of the population and to the historical exclusion of the Amerindians from the political process”.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** I will probably start from the bottom because the Indian/African thing was well established. In our view, this country belongs to the Amerindian people; in our view. If you take any historical look, the Amerindians were the first settlers in the land, but the historical process has driven them to the background of national development and the numbers, in the context of electoral politics, based upon numbers, the Amerindians would never have justice in Guyana; if we stick to politics and numbers. We, as the WPA, felt that an important part of the WPA’s mobilisation was to address that historical wrong to the Amerindians and to build a movement, and to create a political atmosphere where the Amerindians would have equal rights like Africans and Indians, not based upon numbers, but based on constitutional renovations. So we felt that we had to highlight that. The Africans and Indians were already well represented in the perspective Parties.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Mr. Ogunseye, you spoke about the ideology and the ethnic divide that existed at the time. Could you now just indicate whether Walter Rodney was present in Guyana at the time when the WPA was formed as a pressure group?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** No, Walter Rodney was not present.

**Ms. Rahamat:** What year did Walter Rodney return to Guyana?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** I think he came back in 1975.

**Ms. Rahamat:** How was it that the pressure group, the WPA, became associated with Walter Rodney?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Walter had applied for a position to Head the History Department of the University of Guyana (UG).

## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

**Ms. Rahamat:** Continue, Mr. Ogunseye.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** The academic board, I think, had agreed to his appointment, but the Guyana Government was instrumental in getting them to rescind the appointment. When the situation was drawn to our attention, ASCRIA, brother Kwayana and us in the ASCRIA Leadership, met and decided that we had to do something to mobilise a defence of Walter and to condemn his high-handedness in the Burnham regime.

**Ms. Rahamat:** What, if anything, was decided was needed to be done to address this?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** ASCRIA decided that Walter was a very important political person and we should use his issue to bring about a political situation in which people could participate regardless of race, class or party loyalties, so we invited the People's Progressive Party, of course, we invited our ally, IPRA, we invited the Working People's Vanguard Party, the people of Ratoon; there were a number of individuals. We decided to have public meetings to highlight and brought to the attention to the country what Burnham did and the first meeting we held was at Durban and Louisa Row.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Continue, Mr. Ogunseye. What, if anything occurred, at that meeting?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** That meeting was attended by thousands of persons. An important part on the site of that meeting, it was the first time that brother Kwayana and Dr. Jagan were appearing on the same political platform for many years so that in itself was a very significant development. I think the PNC was not sure how to deal with it. I think they thought that people would not attend the meetings, but to their surprise, thousands of African and Indian people attended the meeting and they tried to disturb the meeting...

**Mr. Jairam:** When you say thousands, approximately, how many?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** There were about four or five thousand persons. It was one of the biggest meetings for a long time.

**Mr. Chairman:** Four or five thousand is regarded as a big meeting? A mammoth meeting in Barbados would be 15,000, really huge 20,000.

## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

**Mr. Ogunseye:** In Guyanese terms, at that time, to muster that, it was a big meeting.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** Prior to then mass meetings would attract how many people? What are you comparing it to?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** I do not know in terms Guyanese terms, in terms of the usage. I think public meetings are the normal meetings. I think when there are rallies, the Parties put more resources into them and mobilise more people throughout the country and bring them in buses and so on. The rallies would be different from the public meetings.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** Apart from that, public meetings such as this one would have previously attracted about how many people?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** I think before that you would have few hundred persons.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** Thank you.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** It was not a period of very high... except election times and high points and so.

**Mr. Jairam:** Did people not have a consciousness or were they intimidated? Did they not care? What was it? What caused that sort of lack of enthusiasm?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** I think, generally, by that time, the population had gotten tired with the politics. It was taking them nowhere and apart from elections, they decided to address their lives and leave the politicians and politics aside.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** I just want to, at the risk of holding the Commission up, clarify something. You said ASCRIA had taken the decision to hold this meeting so it means therefore, am I correct, that even after the WPA, the alliance was formed, each of the contributing organisations maintained their own identity and structure even though they were a part of this alliance?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Yes.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** I see.

## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Each organisation still maintained their own leadership, their own structure of their Party.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** Did this continue until the 1980's?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** It continued until we form into a Party.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** ...until you formed into a Party. You mentioned the Working People's Vanguard Party?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Yes.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** Earlier this Commission had been told that it was associated with the PPP.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** It came out of the PPP because Brindley Benn was a major Leader of the PPP and he broke away from Jagan because they had their political differences and there was a fraction...

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just wanted to cement those details for my purposes.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Mr. Ogunseye you spoke a few moments about there being four to five thousand persons present at this meeting at Louisa Row and Durban Street. Could you indicate what, if anything, occurred during that particular meeting?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Well the PNC sent persons out there basically to disturb the meetings and that form that it took was heckling but I think the numbers were too much for them and we were able to prevail. For the second meeting that was organised now at Middle and Cummings Streets, they came more prepared and that was also...

**Ms. Rahamat:** When you say "they came prepared", who are you referring to?

*10.19hrs*

**Mr. Ogunseye:** The PNC, House of Israel, they came with a clear intention to smash up that meeting and they did succeed in smashing it up.

## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

**Ms. Rahamat:** When you say, “They came prepared”, what did they come prepared with or how did they change their method of disrupting?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Well, once the meeting began, they began hurling bricks and bottles on to the podium and created ...

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** Once again, I am sorry; I am concerned about broad statements being made without supporting material. Why does the Witness say it was the PNC? Why the Witness does say it was the House of Israel? I do not know. He just made these statements.

**Ms. Rahamat:** I will clarify it for you, Ma’am. Now ...

**Mr. Williams:** Where was the next meeting, sorry, Mr. Chairman?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** It was Middle and Cummings.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Now, first of all, were you present at that meeting at Middle and Cummings Streets?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Yes, I was the Chairperson at the meeting.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Now, why do you say that it was members of the PNC and House of Israel?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Well, I am a political person, we had activists there and we knew PNC activists, and some were not strangers to us.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Could you identify any of them by name at this time?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** I do not think that I could do that now, it was a long time, you know, but we knew them and also there were members of the House of Israel. I was subsequently charged with ... I was the only person charged at the meeting for public terror. I was convicted and I refused to pay the fine up to today.

**Mr. Jairam:** Sorry what did he say?

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** He was charged for public terror.

**Attorney for Mr. Donald Rodney [Mr. Keith Scotland]:** And he was convicted.



## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

**Mr. Ogunseye:** And I was convicted and I refused to pay the charge.

**Mr. Scotland:** Up to this day.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** I think the argument they were making is that they bring a witness to say, I from the podium picked up a bottle and pelt it back at the crowd and knocked some inspector, creating terror.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** Is that not an offence in Barbados? Creating public terror?

**Mr. Chairman:** No.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Other than throwing these bottles on to the podium or the stage, was there any other method that was adopted that ...

**Mr. Williams:** Mr. Chairman, which year is this? Have we reached 1978 to 1980? Most of the morning has gone already. I am not sure where we are going with this. How is this going to help us to discover how Dr. Rodney died? I did not know he could say that they had a meeting and this happened with the details and all of these ... we are dwelling too much outside of the mid period.

**Mr. Chairman:** Well, try to take into account, though I would make the point that it is always difficult to start at a particular point, in 1978 when you are dealing with activities that really started before. You do not want to go back to 1960, but it might have started a few years before.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Yes, Sir.

**Mr. Chairman:** So, we will spend a little time on that and we will give you that latitude.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Yes, Sir.

**Mr. Chairman:** But the point being made now is that we have been running for close to an hour and a half and that by now we should have gotten beyond the background. Yes, the meetings when Walter came back, I think that is important to the narrative.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Yes, Sir.

## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

**Mr. Chairman:** But let us get ahead, I think you are going a little too slowly.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Yes. Now, Mr. Ogunseye would you please indicated at this point in time, exactly when did the WPA become a political party? Just give us the year, perhaps.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** That was 1975.

**Ms. Rahamat:** 1975

**Mr. Ogunseye:** No, it has to be 1978.

**Ms. Rahamat:** 1978.

**Mr. Chairman:** What are you talking about now?

**Ms. Rahamat:** When the WPA became a political party. It became a political party you are saying in 1978?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Either 1978 or 1979, it is in the statement, I just cannot remember the exact date. It is in the statement.

**Mr. Chairman:** I do not think that is what is in the statement, though. What is in the statement?

**Ms. Rahamat:** I will point you to paragraph 6 of page 2.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Paragraph?

**Ms. Rahamat:** 6 of page 2.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** 2?

**Ms. Rahamat:** No. 2.

**Mr. Chairman:** You mentioned 27<sup>th</sup> July, 1979.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Yes.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** At the top.

**Mr. Chairman:** Paragraph 2.

## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

**Ms. Rahamat:** Paragraph No.6.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Yes, that is the date.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Now, at that point in time when the WPA became a political party, who was recognised as its Leader?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** The WPA never had a one man leadership structure. We had a collective leadership structure.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Who were identified as being the constructive Leaders of the WPA?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Well the Executive ... okay, acting collectively was the leadership organ in the party. We tried to break away from “one-manism” and the cult of personality. We never in our formation identify any leader as the Leader. In the mobilisation, Walter emerged in the public space as the Leader, but he was never the Leader made by the WPA. We would never have done that because we believe that it would have put Walter in great difficulties and it was against our whole political philosophy.

**Ms. Rahamat:** With that being said, then who were the collective Leaders identified?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** The executive.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Who were the members of the Executive?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** You want me to go through all the members? Okay, I will try to. You had Eusi Kwayana, myself, Moses Bhagwan, Dr. Clive Thomas, Morris Odle, at some point, Sister Andaiye and Rupert Roopnarine, Walter ... because Andaiye, Roopnarine and Walter, they joined as individuals after the WPA was formed. So we had the groups and we had a category of individuals that came in, including Walter, Roopnarine and Andaiye.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Now, could you just indicate what was the sole purpose or the agenda for the WPA in 1979 as a political party?

## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Okay, the WPA became a political party ... let me answer it. The WPA became a political party and the purpose was to give ourselves political legitimacy as a legitimate political force contesting with other political parties for power in the political space.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Did the aim and the purpose of the WPA as a political party change after 1979?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** After 1979? No, it changed eventually in the 1980's, but not immediately after 1979.

**Ms. Rahamat:** When it changed in the 1980's, what did they change to?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** It changed to a more electoral party after Walter's death and so, but I think there are a lot of things that we should discuss before we reach there.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Alright. Prior to the death of Walter Rodney was it ever the WPA's aim or purpose to overthrow the Government of the day?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Yes but I have to say a few things. We have to go back to the civil rebellion.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Yes.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** After ...

**Ms. Rahamat:** What led ... you can now go in stages and as clearly as possible just indicate to us, what led up to that being the position of the WPA.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Well, I will have to fast track. After the Office of the General Secretary and the Ministry of National Development was burnt down, the very next day, Burnham points his finger in the direction of the WPA and Walter Rodney, Rupert Roopnarine, Omawale and other comrades were arrested, eventually, Walter Rodney, Rupert and Omawale were charged with arson.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** I know we have it already.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Yes.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** But just for the continuity ...

## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

**Mr. Ogunseye:** I ...

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** ... of public record, can we get the date? You can suggest a date to him...

**Ms. Rahamat:** Alright.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** ... of this burning down.

**Ms. Rahamat:** In paragraph 11 of your statement on page 3, you indicated in the early morning of 11<sup>th</sup> July, 1978, that would be the correct date when the Ministry of National Development was burnt down?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Yes.

**Ms. Rahamat:** You are indicating that the morning after the fire, several members of the WPA were arrested?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Were arrested.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Could you name the members of the WPA who were arrested?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** The major ones that came clear to me, Roopnarine, Walter Rodney, Omawale was arrested and there were some other persons that were arrested, I cannot remember all the names, but eventually the three who were charged was Walter, Rupert Roopnarine and Omawale.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Alright. As being part of the collective Executive of the WPA, I am going to ask you a direct question. Was the WPA involved in the burning, to your knowledge, of the Ministry of National Development?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** No, the WPA was not.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Do you recall the date ... well, I am, not asking you the specific date but the day when Walter Rodney, Omawale and Mr. Roopnarine were charged, do you remember the events of that day?

## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Not the charge, but when they appeared in Court. I think they appeared in Court on a Saturday morning.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Correct.

**Mr. Jairam:** Mr. Ogunseye, we have had some evidence about the burning of the General Secretary's Office at the Ministry of National Development.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Yes.

**Mr. Jairam:** Was it arson? Arson being a deliberately set fire or was it accidental? Whatever your answer is was there any sort of scientific testing to tell us whether or not it was arson or it was an accidental fire?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** I think from the evidence or what we were told publicly, it appeared to be arson. There were three theories, well, one accusation and two theories being floated around. I do not know if you are interested in them.

**Mr. Jairam:** In a few words, could you tell us? We want to know.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Okay, you had the official accusation by the Government and Burnham that the WPA was guilty of burning the place. Then you had elements of the PNC were saying that it was Hamilton Greene who organised the burning down to get Rodney and the WPA to fight each other; it was a rumor. The next rumor was that it was nobody in the WPA; it was somebody outside the WPA and outside the WPA that did it. So there were those ... the official accusation and the two rumors.

**Mr. Chairman:** I did not understand what you mentioned about Hammie Greene. What would he be doing that for according to the theory?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Well according to the rumor ...

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes?

## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

**Mr. Ogunseye:** ... that Greene had a vested interest in seeing Walter and Burnham fight or the WPA and the PNC fight, so he wanted to worsen the relationship; that was rumor, I do not know if it was true. That was how the rumor went.

**Mr. Jairam:** In your witness statement in paragraph 11, you said it was burnt down by ... the last line on page 3 ... “by an armed group pretending to be Guyana Defence Force (GDF) soldiers”.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** That was in the public domain that was what the State said in the newspapers and so. So I am just repeating what was said.

**Mr. Jairam:** When you say the State, what do you mean? The media controlled by the State?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Yes, the State media.

**Mr. Jairam:** So, these persons were seen wearing military uniform?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Yes, I think that the guard who was evicted from the place probably gave testimony to who did it.

**Mr. Jairam:** As far as you know, was there a prohibition from importing military uniforms by non-military personnel at the time? You know, in most of these countries, unless you belong to the military, you cannot wear camouflage and so on.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Yes, it is the same thing in Guyana, you really cannot use a military uniform like that, it would be illegal to dress in GDF uniform.

**Mr. Jairam:** Okay, of course some bandits may have them.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Yes, some bandits may have access to it.

**Mr. Jairam:** Thank you.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** The point that I want to make is that if Burnham did not point his hands to the WPA, there would have been no civil rebellion at the time that it occurred. If Burnham in his political astuteness had said, “Okay, I believe it is them, but I am not walking down that road, I will ignore it and if he did not point his hands, there would be no”, but once he pointed his

## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

hands, the masses of the country rose in defence of the WPA and Rodney to denounce the regime, and we saw it as an ample political moment to make mileage out of it, and we were astute enough to use it to our advantage.

**Ms. Rahamat:** In the same paragraph 11 of your statement, you said that, “these arrests ushered in a three month period of civil rebellion”. Could you explain to us what form this civil rebellion actually took?

*10.49hrs*

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Well, the civil rebellion was a very intense period of political confrontation between the WPA, the masses, and the State. It was... I am probably going too fast...

**Mr. Jairam:** No. Go ahead.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Okay, it was almost literally daily street activities for an intense period of three months; mainly in Georgetown, and in lower parts of the East Coast. Georgetown was under siege. People would come to rallies in thousands. It was a daily something or the other – protest, rally. It was an intense period. That period was eventually described as the “civil rebellion”.

**Ms. Rahamat:** The rallies, and what other forms of civil rebellion?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Public meetings, marches, picketing. Some of the meetings were with permission, some were without permission because the police had a practice; we would apply for ten meetings at once, the police office would grant permission and then when we went to hold the meetings a section of the police would come up and say ‘*You aint got permission*’. We knew we had permission. We said ‘*We meeting have to go on*’. You would have had that kind of confrontation, constantly.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Could you describe what, if any, response was taken by the State at the time in relation to these forms of civil rebellion?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** The PNC recognised that they were in a dangerous political situation. When the PNC probably realised the mistake that they made by pointing their hands to the WPA the



## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

situation had already gone out of control. They decided that they would have to probably engage in repression to wipe this political potential situation...

**Mr. Williams:** Mr. Chairman, is Mr. Ogunseye arrogating to himself to decide what was in the mind of the PNC?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Well, I am making a political judgement as a political activist in the period.

**Mr. Chairman:** His judgement only. He is entitled to express his judgement, and he is very much within the period of consideration.

**Mr. Williams:** No, I understand but is he going to get into the mind of the PNC? He could express himself otherwise, but he is suggesting what the thinking of the PNC was.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, but political [*Inaudible*] to do that every day.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** Before the Witness continues, may I make a suggestion? It may appease everyone. Perhaps what the Witness could speak to is the actions taken and then after that he could, perhaps, make the inferences or explain why he has come to those conclusions.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Mr. Ogunseye, the question I asked you was what the reaction was to the civil rebellion in this form, the meetings, the pickets, the marches; those are the things that you said happened in these three months and they formed part of the action during the civil rebellion. Now, I am asking you what the reaction was to these forms of civil rebellion. What was actually done?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Okay, let me start with the public meetings. As citizens of Guyana we have the right, constitutionally, to hold public meetings. The Law says that you have to ask permission to use a noisy instrument. All you had to do was inform the police of your intention, but you did not need the Police's permission to hold the meeting. You needed permission to use a noisy instrument. We would have gone through the routine and got permission from the respective police office and suddenly a section of the police would have turned up and said "no permission was granted". Now that could only happen if that section of the Police was sent to disrupt the meetings because we had the legal permission – written permission. I am saying that that was a

## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

direct involvement of the Government and the PNC. The next thing that they did, obviously, was they began to break up meetings by attacking the meetings violently using a combination of PNC activists and House of Israel's people.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Again, how did you know they were PNC people and people from the House of Israel?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** As I said before, we were political activists, we have our Parties, but we had reached a point where we had organised ourselves so that we could get intelligence. Okay? We had groups who used to look at Congress Places, look at the PNC's Office in Durban Street, because we eventually realised that there used to be a remobilisation in those places. They used to go through the routine so we had our people placed at different points and eventually, over time and watching the House of Israel, we knew where the people were coming from, over time. Some of them we even knew personally because we were all political people in political space.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Was there any other forms of reaction by the ruler at the time or the leading Parties?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** There were massive searches on the WPA premises and persons who they felt was associated to the WPA, one way or another. There were constant arrests of WPA activists and supporters.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Were you ever arrested, Mr. Ogunseye?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** I slept in every lock-up in Georgetown and across the lower East Coast, but I was only charged one or two times. I think the PNC used to use arrest as a political tool. People said they wanted too much of details, but arrest was a part of their mode of intimidating WPA and having us stressing their resources in Courts all over the country and so on. I am trying not to give you what you might consider not important.

**Mr. Jairam:** How do you link the actions of the police to that of the ruling Party at time?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** The ruling Party had announced the doctrine of paramountcy of the Party. All the State agencies were subjected to paramountcy. I think the Police had great difficulties of how

## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

to answer the constitutional responsibility because the Constitution had no place for paramountcy. Many Police Officers were divided on how to deal with the Law on the one hand and the political instructions on the other.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** I am sorry, Counsel, with your permission, Chairman, you said that there were massive searches of WPA premises, were you ever present when any of these searches were conducted?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** They searched my home more than once.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** About how many times?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** At least about three times.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** Were you ever charged or anyone on the premises charged arising out of these searches?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** I was never charged with anything in connection between 1979 or 1975 and 1980, but I was subsequently charged in 1982.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** Okay, I was just going up to 1980. Secondly, in relation to various arrests that you were subjected to, do you have any idea, would you be able to tell us, say between 1979 to 1980, how many times you were taken into police custody? I know it is a long time and it is probably unpleasant.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** It could be as much as 20 times. I do not even try to remember them...

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** On these occasions...

**Mr. Ogunseye:** ...because I was arrested for simple things – sharing *Dayclean* in some parts of the country. You were legally carrying out the announcements of public meetings, they would drive up, arrest you, all kinds of things.

**Mr.: Jairam:** On average, how long were you kept in there?

## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Normally we were released very soon, if there was legal intervention. I think they tried to avoid keeping us longer than the 72 hours period so most times we were released within that period as a result of interventions by Counsel.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** You were telling us though the different occasions or the different activities that you say would have occasioned these arrests. You said when carrying out announcements for public meetings?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Yes.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** Was there any other occasion? I think I missed what...

**Mr. Ogunseye:** When you were sharing party literature, whether it was paper... When you were putting up posters... normal political work of stick up posters. If the wrong set of Police drove up, you could have been arrested and taken to the station.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** Were you given reasons when the Police took you into custody for your...

**Mr. Ogunseye:** They would say generally that you were engaging in subversive activities.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** Thank you.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Were you ever kept for more than 72 hours in custody?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Yes.

**Ms. Rahamat:** How many occasions were you kept in excess of 72 hours?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** I think as much as seven occasions.

**Mr. Chairman:** Seven or several?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Seven. I think it was seven.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Seven, Sir. On those occasions that you were kept for in excess of the 72 hours, what was the reason given to you by the police for keeping you beyond 72 hours?

## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

**Mr. Ogunseye:** The Police did not offer reasons. They detained you under some accusations and held you probably until, I would say, they got appropriate instructions. I think you have to understand what the PNC and Burnham was doing. Faced with the rebellion, I think they worked out one of the ways to put WPA under pressure was to force them to deal with all these arrests and legal problems so that the Lawyers have to be here and there they had to spend money here and there, so they did not have enough time to do party work. I think it was a deliberate policy of harassment with a clear political intent.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** Are you saying that these acts – I have numbered four which you have identified, related withdrawal of permission to hold meetings, violent attacks on meetings, searches of WPA premises, arrest of WPA members carrying out political activities – only started after the arson accusation and trial or before that?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** There were times before but they really accelerated in that period.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** Thank you. Was this in 1979?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Yes.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** Elections were due when?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** In 1980, something like that. Then I think they had a referendum to postpone elections.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** Thank you.

**Mr. Chairman:** Just tell me, Sir, on these many occasions when you were held in the cell, were you put before the court?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** On most occasions, I was not. There were few occasions; I would say about five different ones. We normally won the case. I do not think they were interested in the prosecution. I think they were interested in tying up the prosecution at the Party. Normally, we would have won those cases.

**Mr. Chairman:** You have gone on to winning cases. I was concerned with whether you were put before the Court.

## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

**Mr. Ogunseye:** I was put before the Court at least five times.

**Mr. Chairman:** For what?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** I was put before the Court for the meeting at Middle Street where they said I caused public terror. I remember we were doing some activities up the East Coast sharing paper and I was charged with something about subversive literature. I think they considered *Dayclean* as a subversive literature and we were charged. I remember over the river; we had to go to court for months over on the West Coast, charged for something. At least of five different times, not only myself, but a number of WPA persons.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, what happened to those charges before the Court?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Except for the one that I was convicted, I think we won all the others, as far as I could remember.

**Mr. Chairman:** Were the Magistrates or Judges telling the prosecutors, those who brought the charges, anything? I mean, “why are you bringing people before so on these baseless charges?”

**Mr. Ogunseye:** I think the attitude of most judicial persons, because they understood the political context, they go through the motion, you present your case – “I am not convinced” – and you let the people go. They did not have to go on record as...

**Mr. Chairman:** What I am trying to get at is to see whether even judicial officers had fallen victim to paramountcy.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Some of them; but there were a few who were fighting back.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** I am sorry, Chairman, five months travelling across the river did eat in to your time to conduct your political activities.

*10.49hrs*

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Yes.

## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

**Ms. Rahamat:** Other than the forms of reactions listed by the State and you named the Police Force, in particular, and the House of Israel, was there any other form at this time you wish to mention that was used as a reaction a to the civil rebellion?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** When Burnham addressed the Third Biannual Conference, his speech was made nationwide, and in that speech, he threatened WPA people and Leaders by telling us we must make our wills. He said his steel is sharper than ever and so forth, and I think that was an important turning point in the WPA's approach to politics in the country, and it also fueled what took place in the civil rebellion. We interpret that as Burnham publicly announced his intention to use physical liquidation of Party Leaders to achieve his political agenda, and we did not take that lightly. We felt that he had crossed the line.

**Ms. Rahamat:** When you said that you did not take it lightly, what do you mean?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** We took it as a serious political threat to the lives and limbs of WPA Leaders and members.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Did the WPA do anything as a result of feeling that this was a direct threat?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Well the Executive discussed the matter and it was the first time that we officially decided to have a sub-committee of the Executive constitute itself as the party security committee with a mandate to address the security defense of the party, and it was a three-man committee; three members in the Executive.

**Mr. Chairman:** I think we should put the details of paragraph 13 to him so that he could actually use the words used...

**Ms. Rahamat:** Yes, Sir.

**Mr. Chairman:** ...by Burnham.

**Ms. Rahamat:** In paragraph 13 you indicated that Burnham, in an address to his Party's Third Biannual Congress in 1977, which was broadcast nationwide, threatened the WPA...

**Mr. Ogunseye:** It should be 1979, sorry.

## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

**Ms. Rahamat:** It is 1979 which was broadcast nationwide threatened the WPA and Rodney declaring, “Let them make their wills” and “our steel is sharper now”. He also called the WPA “the worse possible alternative”; you mentioned that in your statement.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Yes.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Mr. Kwayana.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** I am not Kwayana.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Sorry, Mr. Ogunseye...

**Mr. Williams:** She is saying that because Mr. Kwayana has given that evidence already

**Ms. Rahamat:** Thank you, Mr. Williams. Before we go on, I wish to bring to your attention paragraph 12. You indicated that the repression was directed against WPA and two of its members called Ohene Koama and Edward Dublin, do you recall putting that in your statement?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Yes, but are we not going to deal with this small...

**Ms. Rahamat:** We will. We will just deal with this, the reaction and the actions directed towards Mr. Kwayana and Mr. Dublin. What exactly happened to these two individuals? We will deal with Mr. Ohene Koama first.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Ohene Koama was a party worker. He was in Roxanne Burnham Gardens surrounded by elements of the Death Squad and he was shot and killed, and they claimed that he had in his possession, in the trunk of his car, a number of high powered rifles and that he came out the car and attempted to open fire at them, so they shot and killed him.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Now you spoke of a Death Squad. Who are you referring to when you say the “Death Squad”?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** That was one of the special units in the Guyana Police Force which the people quite appropriately named the “Death Squad” because they had committed a number of extrajudicial killings of what you call the “lumping elements” or people in the depressed areas; a number... I do not really want to... but if anyone is to ask the Guyana Human Rights



## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

Association, the Guyana Police Force's extrajudicial killings had reached extraordinary proportions under the PNC's regime. "It got worse now" but they reached extraordinary proportions.

**Mr. Jairam:** What is that last comment you made?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** I said that extrajudicial killing had extraordinary proportions under the PNC regime. We came out of the Colonial Period with a fairly well conducted Police. Its repressive character was always there, but when in the Colonial days, if a Policeman fired a revolver at a criminal or citizen, he had to go on his knees, aim the revolver and made sure he fired and hit the person below the hip, and he had to write a lot of statements to explain how he used Her Majesty's round and weapon, and most Policemen did not want to go down that road because if you missed and hit people in the upper part of the body, the State would prosecute you. It was clear that under the PNC, all of that was relaxed and the Police were shooting people willy-nilly, to chest, the stomach.

**Mr. Williams:** I do not think you answered the question posed by Commissioner Jairam, he was asking what was that you said?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** What was that...?

**Mr. Williams:** You said, and what you said was "it is worse now".

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Yes.

**Mr. Williams:** That is what he wanted to hear.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** No, I said extrajudicial killing started under the PNC and its gets worse under the present regime.

**Mr. Chairman:** You call them "expedition" or "extrajudicial".

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Extrajudicial killing.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Was anyone ever charged with the killing of the Ohene Koama?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** No, not as far as I am aware. I think there was an inquest which was aborted.

## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

**Ms. Rahamat:** You also spoke about repression directed against Mr. Edward Dublin. Could you give some details as to what would have occurred?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Well, I have to tax my memory because Edward Dublin was a WPA Member in the Linden community. That is many miles out of Georgetown whilst Ohene Koama was in the Party Office and if my recollection of the story holds, I think that the Police in Linden shot him because he was known to be a party person. He came out of the lumping background and they threw his body at a construction site and I think the official words were, “he was shot whilst trying to steal cement”. As far as I recall, that was the official story, but I do not think that anybody was ever charged. There was never any inquest on his killing.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Now, as being a member of the Executive of the WPA, how did the WPA view these two party members being killed?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** As a clear expression of PNC Government using the Police Force to liquidate elements of the WPA in order, in our view, to drive fear in the Party and as well as to drive fear in the community that association with WPA meant death.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Mr. Ogunseye, you also noted in paragraph 13 or your statement that after you have given thought to the prevailing situation, a decision was taken for the Party to begin organising for itself defense.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** Counsel, is there any reason why you went from paragraph 12 to paragraph 13 without dealing with the other matters in paragraph 12?

**Ms. Rahamat:** Yes, please you.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** Will you come back to that later?

**Ms. Rahamat:** Yes, Madame. Mr. Ogunseye, dealing with a decision was taken for the Party to begin organising for its self-defense; you indicated earlier that a security community was formed?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Yes.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Was this part of the decision for the self-defense?

## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Yes, the mandate of that committee was to take necessary steps to build up a potential defense of the party and I think this is the real nitty-gritty of my evidence. Okay, the members of that committee... It was a three-man committee, Walter, Roopnarine and myself. We were all also members of the party Executives.

**Mr. Scotland:** Mr. Chairman, could he repeat? That is an important piece of evidence. He is eating up the three members. Have him repeat it, please, the members?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** The security committee comprised Dr. Rupert Roopnarine, Dr. Walter Rodney and myself, and our mandate was to work to development of the Party. I hope you would bear with me now because I am going to give you a kind of, re-live what took place in the committee, how we came to our positions.

The first question we had to decide as a committee is how we are going to operate among ourselves to carry out this mandate, and we decided that given all known best practices in the world in these matters that we have to operate on a need-to-know basis, both among ourselves and both, in relation to the Executive and other organs of the Party; that was the first tenet in our deliberations and how we will work. The next question... Am I going too fast?

**Mr. Chairman:** I have heard this expression “on a need-to-know basis” used in a diverse contexts. I sometimes do not know what people mean by that. What do you mean when you say “we had to operate on a need-to-know basis”? “Among ourselves and in relation to...”

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Well because we were dealing with security matters and we were dealing with a situation of life and death, we felt the best way to secure ourselves and secure the Party is not everything that the Party is engaged in should be known to everybody, and that you had protect not only the Party, but you also had to protect the persons who are active and putting their lives on the line and the best way to do that is to, whether you like it or not... If for example the Police was to catch me and beat the living stock out of me, if I squeal, I was only able to compromise the Party and the security committee up to a point. If you beat the life out of me and I squeal, everybody must not go down in one walk.

## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

**Mr. Chairman:** I do not understand that illustration. If you are badly beaten, you should not squeal?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** I am saying that as practitioners, we knew it was very possible that Police can detain anyone of us and carry us through interrogation and in Guyana... In Eve Leary, they have developed, among the Police Officers... They had a big baton which you call "Positive Reasons". This was used on the lumping elements. They beat you with "Positive Reason" and if you survive that, they bring out a bigger one, "For the Man must say Something", and they beat you with that and if you survive that, there were other practices. We knew that was the repressive nature of the Police. We knew in these matters you always had to always calculate the Police excesses.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** Let me see if I can assist. The WPA had an Executive and were there different department or committees of the WPA apart from their Executive?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Yes, they had. Different Parties had different mobilisation...

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** No, I just wanted you to clear that and different activities would be carried by different committees of the Party?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Yes.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** And this need-to-know basis principles, did it mean that one committee would not necessarily have the details of what the other committee was doing?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** No, not in the general political work.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** Well explain to us what "the need-to-know" extended to. We need to understand the theory, not the reason why it was embraced; to understand the theory.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** The need to know was directly related to the work of the security committee and we felt that we needed to have that principle among ourselves and we needed to convince the Executive that the principle has to also apply to our relationship with the Executive and to the rest of the party. Now I must say to you...

*11.04hrs*

## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** Sorry, before you go on. Does that mean that what the security committee was doing would not be communicated to the Executive except to the extent that the security committee considered that the Executive needed to know?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Yes and to the extent that the Executive insist that they need a report from the security committee and so forth and so forth.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** Thank you. Now this need-to-know basis, was it also internal to the members of the security committee? In other words, you as a member would not necessarily know everything that Mr. Roopnarine was doing and vice versa?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Vice versa.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** And it would also apply to Walter Rodney?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Yes.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** The committee adopted that need-to-know policy. Thank you.

**Mr. Chairman:** Looking back now, you have 34 years and more looking back, did that help anybody?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Did that?

**Mr. Chairman:** Did that help WPA, this need to know policy?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** I think we would have suffered much more casualties if we did not apply that principle in that period. I think the principle... but it also had problems with the political Executive and ourselves which would come out at some time. Because even though the Executive agree in principle, how it operate in practice is very problematic, politically. I would say looking back, if we did not operate on that basis, I think we would have suffered much more losses physical, in other words.

## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** In other words, it limited when you were forced by violence to speak about the activities of the WPA, it limited the amount of information you could convey.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Yes.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** Because you, yourself had limited information. But did it give the members of the security committee or others the right to go outside of the policies and principles and rules of the WPA?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** No. We had to work within the mandate that was given and the Executives had, of course, the last saying on important decisions. I think we will get to some of that in the evidence I hope.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** Thank you.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Okay, could I continue?

**Mr. Chairman:** Certainly.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Yes.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Okay, so having dealt with that the next issue we had to address is a conception of how we conceive the security of the party and we came to the position that there could be no military security of the party. That at no time the WPA will have the military capacity to protect itself against what we were up against. So there could be no military defense to the party. That was the important doctrine of the committee.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Before you move on, what exactly did the security committee see itself up against and being unable to compete militarily?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** The PNC state apparatus and all the repressive arms of the State that was under the control of the PNC, the private armies.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Alright let us not rush it. The repressive arms of the State would be? List them.

## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

**Mr. Ogunseye:** The police, Guyana Defence Force, you had National Service, you had the People's Militia, you had the Young Socialist Movement (YSM) had a military arm section that used to carry weapons, you had House of Israel in possession of weapons, so all of that in our view was lined up against us and our view we really could never believe that there could be a really military defense against that. So the third doctrine was the defense of the Party had to be a political defense rather than a military defense.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** I am sorry to be interrupting as it had been called so often, but I am trying to remember a word which is deep in my memory, you may have decided that you could not confront the regime directly, but there is another way of clandestine military operations, but I am trying to remember the name, where you do not have a direct military organisation confronting, but you plan acts of sabotage.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** I think we will get to all of that.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** Guerrilla warfare.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** I am assuming we will get to all of those.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** But I want to know now, did the security committee's mandate include some kind of guerrilla warfare.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** No this is what I am trying to...

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** No you have answered. Thank you.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** I am trying to do what I am doing now so that other things would fall into place. So the next guiding principle was the defense of the party had to be a political defense. By that we mean that we have to have the people in constant states of political mobilisation and we had to rely on the...we had a special committee headed by Sister Andaiye, Bonita Harris and the Sisters who were dealing with external communications and propaganda and so forth and they

## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

did excellent work and we felt that their work would have to be intensified. So if anything happen, the whole world and the region would know to mobilize international solidarity. Locally and internationally we felt that the political security would guarantee us security. The next tenet of the security committee was the question of arms. What role arms would play in the equation? We felt that the WPA would have to acquire some amount of arms for self-defense purposes and we took steps to deal with that. Then we asked ourselves what role arms would play in regime change? We did it like this, we started some hypothetical's, we start by saying look the WPA has no significant funds to buy any large quantity of arms in the arms market, and we had no such contact, so we rule out any possibility of the WPA acquiring large quantities of arms, that would have been ruled out. We also said that the WPA is not supported by any State so we could not get any large scale arms from the State so that again ruled out the possibility of arms in the Party. Am I going too fast?

**Mr. Chairman:** No.

**Ms. Rahamat:** No, continue please, Mr. Ogunseye.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** We say, "Ok, hypothetically, let us assume that by some fluke of imagination if we were to put our hands on some large quantity of arms, the question is how do you get it into the country"? We ruled out the Atlantic and it leaves us to examine the borders. When we look at the western border, the Venezuelan border, it was very highly militarised because of the border conflicts with Guyana and Suriname and the GDF was very positioned along that border. We ruled that out. Even if you get arms you cannot pass it through the border and even if by chance you risk it and Burnham find you, you will get treason. He will say you collaborate with the Venezuelans and he would have locked us up very quickly. It would give Burnham the best trump card against us so we ruled out any possibility of thinking about bring any arms through



## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

the Venezuelan border even if we had the ability to do that. We looked at Suriname and the Surinamese had a Coup, not too long ago they had the Coup. They had problems with Holland, the Netherlands and the Americans and our judgment was that even if we try to bring anything through Suriname and the Suriname people intercept it, they would likely co-operate with Burnham and hand you over, so we ruled out Suriname. When we looked at the Southern border, Brazil, Guyana Government had cultivated a very close relationship with Brazil to use as a counter to use against Venezuela in the border dispute and the GDF and the Brazilian militaries had very close co-operation. We felt if we were to try to bring anything through Brazil, the Brazilians will blow you. So objectively, we were forced to rule out both by money and both by the objective problems any involvement of large scale arms. Now, this bring us to the question, now of regime change. We had to debate regime change. We developed what was an important tenet to the security committee was that there could be no security with the party until we achieve regime change. So regime change became critical to the security thinking of the committee that ultimately the WPA as a political party would not have any real security unless we achieve regime change. Those were some...Now; we are at the question of regime change now.

**Attorney for Dr. Patricia Rodney, Asha Rodney, Shaka Rodney and Kanini Rodney [Mr. Andrew Pilgrim]:** Mr. Chair, I do not know if it is a convenient time...It seems that is a significant step we are going to take going now to regime change. I wonder if now is a good time to take the break or if we want to press on?

**Mr. Chairman:** I take your comment to mean that you are requesting the break and there might be good personal reasons for all of that so we can break now.

**Mr. Pilgrim:** Grateful to you, Chair.

## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

**Mr. Chairman:** We are coming back at 20 minutes to, effectively a half of an hour break. We are in break time now.

**Hearing Suspended at 11.14hrs**

**Hearing Resumed at 11.55hrs**

**Mr. Chairman:** We are back in session.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Mr., Ogunseye before we took the break...

**Mr. Ogunseye:** I have to retake the oath, I guess?

**Ms. Rahamat:** No, you are still under oath, Mr. Ogunseye.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** ...affirmation.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Affirmation.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Before we took the break, you were going through the different aims and goals upon which this security committee operated. You had just dealt with the contemplation of getting arms and different routes which were considered and some routes were eliminated. Before you go on to speak about the regime...

**Mr. Ogunseye:** The regime change.

**Ms. Rahamat:** ...regime change, I would just like to know given all the possibilities that were eliminated by the security committee, what option was adopted?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** I think we are going to get to that eventually. I want to finish, I think we will get there if you would just bear with me?

**Ms. Rahamat:** In that case, Mr. Ogunseye, continue please with your list.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Okay, the next question that we had to deal with was a question of regime change. You had to develop a conception of what was really possible in the context of Guyana given the geopolitical realities of the country. The United States (US) and then British were always important players in what happened in Guyana. We had to be cognisant of that because we

## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

were of the left. WPA was a left party, Marxism, Leninism and so forth, so we had to try and make an assessment of what form of regime change is likely to find acceptability in the hemisphere and bearing in mind the mood at the time in the world, where the US lost to Iran, they lost to Grenada and we felt that they must have been developing an attitude and policy towards Guyana so we had to situate a conception of a regime change that took that into consideration, and we decided that the form of regime change that is really possible in Guyana had to be open insurrection where the people or openly rebelling. The mobilisation had to be opened so that everybody could see it like what happened in Iran and what happened recently in the Middle East. The Executive was really concerned that the WPA must not attempt regime change as WPA; that we had to build a broad-based coalition of a very open rebellion and that is the form of regime change we adopted. It solved the important question of arms first. We had to concentrate now to win the military over to decide the people of the WPA in the rebellion, so the winning over of the military because we felt that once the military takes the people's and the WPA's side then WPA would not have to deal with large-scale weapons and we thought that the Americans would find it acceptable, so our judgement was no coup, no WPA as WPA assaulting the State, open popular rebellion that everybody can witness and see how it unfolds and hopefully, regime change would have come out of that. We felt it stood the best chance of acceptability and was a guided principle and doctrine of the security committee. It was embraced by the Executive. All the tenants that I have mentioned that we had adopted in the security committee had the approval of the Executive. The Executive had the last say whether we attempted to execute regime change. Well we have not reached there as yet. I want to... Am I going to fast?

**Mr. Chairman:** No.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** I want to know go back to the civil rebellion.

**Mr. Chairman:** Go back to?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** The civil rebellion.

**Mr. Chairman:** Civil rebellion.

## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

**Mr. Ogunseye:** The Civil rebellion put tremendous pressure on the WPA resource wise. By October we were heading into dangerous political situation both for the Party and...

**Ms. Rahamat:** October of what year?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** 1979.

**Ms. Rahamat:** 1979, yes.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** The rebellion was a three-month period.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Correct.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** By mid-October the WPA executive and the security committee had discussed and evaluate the situation in the country and the effects the civil rebellion was having our own resources, our own preparation, because, as I told you, we did not start the civil rebellion, but once we got the pulps of the people we try to build up on it and the rapidity of the rebellion was so great that it created a very dangerous situation for the Party and the people and we felt we had to make a tactical retreat to end the civil rebellion, but we did it without announcing that we were ending the civil rebellion and any student of the period that studied would realise that by mid-October Georgetown began to achieve a set amount of normalcy because we retreat with the civil rebellion and we did it in a way that the Burnham regime would not realise that were retreating and bringing an end to the civil rebellion. For us many people who were observing the process felt that civil rebellion would have overthrown the Government, but in our sober political judgement, we knew the civil rebellion would not have bring down the Government; it was not intended to bring down the Government. It was intended to give legitimacy, first to put regime change on the political agenda. We used the civil rebellion to put regime change on the political agenda because after Burnham was holding the charges against WPA Leaders with long-term imprisonment, we felt the best way to counter that was to put the question of regime change on the agenda and we use the civil rebellion to get the people to endorse regime change and they endorsed it in their thousands; also we used it to give legitimacy to WPA pursued regime change, but the civil rebellion was never intended to bring about regime change, but observers who watching the phenomena recognised that they had the potential to achieve that. In our sober

## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

political judgement, we knew and we were not using the civil rebellion to bring about political change. The civil rebellion was like, to use the biblical example, it was John the Baptist; it announced the coming of the Messiah. The civil rebellion announced the coming of regime change. It was not itself to be regime change. I think I want that to be very clear so when we ended the civil rebellion we actually started a new phase.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** Before you move to the new phase, when you said, “We decided on a civil rebellion”, if I may, Chairman, I am sorry, Counsel, where did this originate from, the idea of the civil rebellion in the first place, the executive or the security committee?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** No. It did not originate from either side. The name “civil rebellion” was given to the phenomena after the fact. Historians and persons writing about the period, WPA writing about the period, found a of way to describe what was happen at that historical moment and they call it “the civil rebellion”.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** Okay, but when you say this tactical decision made it to retreat, who initiated this decision?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** There was a discussion between the political bureau and the Executive examining the political situation in the country, the party preparedness because...

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** It was the political, the Executive of the Party, not the security committee?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Both because we were also members of the Executive, but the decision of the rebellion was an Executive decision.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** Was Walter Rodney a part of the meeting or the discussions that concluded on this?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Yes.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** Thank you. Sorry, Counsel.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** As I said we end it, made sure that we maintain our aggressive position and we start a new phase to prepare the country and the Party for regime change. The second change, in

## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

our view, was now the preparation of the Party and a country with regime change and that process started after October and it went onto the death of Walter Rodney. We never reached a point where we reach to execute regime change. The period from October to the death of Walter Rodney, in our view was...

**Mr. Chairman:** October, 1979?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Yes, October, 1979.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Yes, 1979 to the death of Walter Rodney was a period in which we engage in activities to build Party, build the alliances in the country, do the diplomatic work and so forth for regime change. Regime change would have been the third phase of this struggle.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Third phase.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** We never actually got to regime change because Burnham killed Rodney in a pre-emptive strike and that put the process... We never reached the third process.

**Mr. Chairman:** "Civil rebellion" was an *ex post facto* classification by others of that phase of activity? 'Civil rebellion' was the name, the categorisation, given to the *ex post facto* by historians?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Yes, to our party writers and so on.

**Mr. Chairman:** Good. Preparation of the Party and the country for regime change was that classification, the party's classification of that phase?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Yes, that was the security committee...

**Mr. Chairman:** Or was that given by the Historians *ex post*...

**Mr. Ogunseye:** No, that was the security committee, the executive, we were committed now because the people were mobilise for change and so...

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** He was going very fast. He was telling us what the constituents were for the preparations of this regime change. Could he just itemise them again for me please?

## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

**Ms. Rahamat:** Yes, Madam Chairman. Mr. Ogunseye, could you itemise the constituents or the systematic way that this preparation of the country of regime change and preparing the party for regime change...?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** One, we had to build up the Party structures because if you notice the Party became a party in 1979. It was just a matter of a few months in the whole heap of the struggle so we realise that the Party... We had to give attention to build the Party in a way that it could execute regime change. We realise we had to build alliances in the country for regime change so we had to talk to other people, other forces, we had to do diplomatic work.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Yes, Mr. Ogunseye, please continue.

**Mr. Chairman:** You are really talking in generalisation. What does that mean “building up the party structure”? What does that mean in practical terms?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** In practical terms what it meant is that we had to build up the Party capacity for both overt and covert actions. We had to strengthen the overt structures of the Party, which are the normal political structures, and we had to develop a capacity for the Party to execute operations that were clandestine and were important to regime change.

*12.07hrs*

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** We do not know what the normal political structures were. You will have to help us. Party groups of the country...

**Mr. Ogunseye:** There were political groups. The WPA had a number of political groups all over the country. In Georgetown, we had at least 12 political groups, which is a convention of party structures, but then we had to build up the underground or the cells and we did actually build up a number of those.

**Mr. Chairman:** You regard a cell as different from a constituency or a party group?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Yes, it was different. It was.

**Mr. Chairman:** Now, tell us the difference between a cell and a party group.

## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Okay. First, the cell was a specialised group which carried out operations with deniability, clandestinely.

**Mr. Chairman:** Clandestinely?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Yes.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** With deniability.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** With deniability too because there are things we may need to do that we do not want to do in the name of the Party, so in our conception of what the role of those cells will play ... That is our view. We developed at least about 25 such cells and each...

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** So, what were these activities that were going to be deniable or needed to be deniable or that were clandestine? Help us.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Okay. As I said before, most of those cells were developed based upon perceptions of tasks that we believed would be necessary in the future. For example, as I said earlier, we had developed groups that used to spy on the House of Israel and the PNC so that we could get information before time. We had cells...

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** Groups to spy on the PNC, is that what you are saying?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Yes, the House of Israel. We developed cells that had the responsibility of mapping out the city and developing areas of retreat.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Did you mean mapping out?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Yes, to study the city and their task was to map out routes of the city so if there was a confrontation with us and the police and so forth... how we could move people around the place. We had cells committed to providing safe havens, homes for the WPA and the WPA people in case of a crackdown.

**Mr. Chairman:** So that was really to determine escape routes...

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Yes.



## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

**Mr. Chairman:** ...in the event of a confrontation.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Yes.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** Thank you.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Yes, we had cells committed to finding homes for WPA people if we needed to hide party members. We had cells specialised in that; that was their business.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** I understand.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** We had cells...

**Mr. Chairman:** I think we did have some earlier evidence though that some of the cells were involved in violent activities.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** In violence? Okay, I could answer that very quickly. There is no accusation even by the State, up to this day, to implicate the WPA with any violent act in that period, none whatsoever, except the burning down of the building, which they point to us for. There is no newspaper clipping, no police record, nothing that could point that the WPA was engaged in violent activity.

**Mr. Chairman:** No, I think that the evidence, I speak subject to correction here... Those cells were involved in violent activities without any direction from the central body.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** No.

**Mr. Chairman:** You are not aware of that?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** I think I know where you are going and I think we will get there but I do not want us to mix up periods and terms. We will eventually get there. Just bear with me a little.

**Mr. Williams:** Well, it appears that the witness expects to use up the rest of the time...

**Mr. Ogunseye:** I assume this is the nitty-gritty of what the Commission wants to hear.

**Mr. Williams:** ...of this session.

## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

**Mr. Chairman:** I was told earlier that he had waited for 34 years to testify, so after 34 years of waiting, I do not think we will be able to control him within today... *[Laughter]* ... but we will try to. *[Laughter]*

**Ms. Rahamat:** You spoke about these...

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Yes, we are the point of cells...

**Ms. Rahamat:** Cells.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** I do not know if the Commission has enough evidence of that kind of thing. The cells were never oriented to engage in any physical attacks on security forces because in our conception, we wanted the security forces and police to be the allies of the revolution. We were very clear; we are not getting into attacking the security forces or the police and we were very clear that Burnham was setting traps and he wanted us to attack party members in these groups so that he could wipe us out. We were very clear. None of our groups were oriented to make that kind of mistake to give Burnham the advantage that we think he wanted to bring about. Our cells were there to develop areas of capacity which we believed would be helpful in regime change, outside of violence.

**Ms. Rahamat:** In your attempt to gain the support of the army, in particular, what sort of directives did you give to these cells in order to obtain that particular objective or to do that particular operation?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** No, the question of the Army and the relationship between Army work, myself and Walter were responsible for covert and overt activities in Georgetown, party activities. Walter, given his position in the equation found himself dealing with a lot of the military people, because military people would not meet with a market man. I am a market man. They would not want to deal with a market man. They would not want to deal with Roopnarine because he is an Indian Guyanese. You have to understand the racial realities of the country so in terms of the African military, whether Walter liked it or not, he ended up having to be the interface with military people more than anyone else. I do not think he wanted it that way but that is the way it evolved, given the reality of... Military people do not want to deal with what you call the

## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

underlings and I hear Mr. Williams say, “people too junior to deal with certain things” and I think that is the culture. A lot of the relationship with the Army and Army people was handled mainly by Walter. Our cells played a little or no role in that.

**Ms. Rahamat:** On average in one of these cells, how many members would a particular cell have at one time?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Three, the maximum five. In most cases we operated with three but the maximum was five. Not more than five.

**Ms. Rahamat:** How were these cells differentiated from each other?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** From each other? Well, it was deferential in the sense that they were tasked with different responsibilities and they did not know the existence of each other.

**Ms. Rahamat:** They did not know the existence of each other? How many of these cells doing covert activities did you personally control?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** We had developed 25 cells as far as my recollection and we had 12 party groups. The party groups were the official party groups that all parties will have, but the cells... We had 25 cells in Georgetown. We probably had others in other parts of the country, but I could speak about Georgetown, where I had a responsibility to deal and to supervise their development.

**Ms. Rahamat:** So these 25 cells in Georgetown, you were the one that dealt with their formation?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Helped with their formation and their supervision.

**Ms. Rahamat:** ...and the supervision?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Yes.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Was Dr. Rodney involved in any way with these 25 cells that were formed in Georgetown?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Not directly because he had greater responsibility to deal with. He had bigger responsibilities.

## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

**Ms. Rahamat:** What sort of greater responsibilities did Mr. Rodney have?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** As I said, he was probably the major liaison person with the military types, people in big business who may want to support the Party so he was really dealing with those matters. The supervision and development of the party cells fell to me and my supervision.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Was there communication... Yes, Sir.

**Mr. Chairman:** You did mention Rodney having the number one liaison role with the Army. Was it only with the Army or was it with the security forces?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Well, the security forces generally, but mainly the Army, as far as I know. I think he did invest a lot of his personal time, with great risk trying to cultivate a good relationship with the Army.

**Mr. Chairman:** We have had evidence from more than one witness that the WPA had infiltrated the police as well.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Well it is very possible.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, well I take it the security forces generally.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Yes, generally.

**Ms. Rahamat:** In terms of the actions of the security committee and the cells that were formed, was there any, according to your knowledge, motivation or operation which dealt with the obtaining of explosives by the WPA?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Not as far as I am aware of. No.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** I had omitted to ask this. I did ask if Dr. Rodney was part of the meetings or discussions that decided on this new path, the preparation for regime change and you said yes, but did he vote against it or did he support it?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** No, he was fully in support. I think both of us in the security committee and the executive was one, that we were into a very dangerous situation and we had to find a way out. We needed time.

## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** In relation to the decision which was taken in relation to the discussions “Re: acquisition of arms” and eventually the rejection of that for reasons which you have given, was he supportive of that decision?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Yes, very supportive.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** Thank you.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Mr. Ogunseye, the members of the cells which were formed, were they all party members?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** No, they were party and non-party members. There was some overlapping but they were party members and party supporters, let us put it that way.

**Ms. Rahamat:** I understand from what you testified to earlier that the security committee operated with the executive also and internally on a need to know basis...

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Yes.

**Ms. Rahamat:** ...but did you personally have knowledge of what operations Dr. Rodney was involved in during that particular time?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Not detailed knowledge. Rupert was responsible for some rural mobilization and building up rural capacity and when he comes into the box you could talk to him about that. Walter, as I told you, had a more general and all kinds of responsibilities, both political and otherwise, but I cannot testify for everything that Walter was doing because I did not need to know, I did not want to know but in our discussions on strategies and tactics, we shared common perceptions and we tried to influence and develop processes.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Did Mr. Rodney ever indicate to you that he was involved in any operations to obtain communication devices?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Okay, the Police in the process of their various raids on the WPA’s homes and offices had ceased a number of our walkie-talkies. People from abroad used to send in walkie-talkies from the diaspora and we did acquire a number of walkie-talkies. Then it came a point where we recognised that if we used the walkie-talkies, as we had the rest in our possession, we

## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

have no way of knowing whether the other side is listening to us and we wanted to have a walkie-talkie designed that will work on a frequency that is not any of the frequencies of the walkie-talkies that we assumed was in the possession of the security forces will be using. We had an electronic section/cell who was working on it but they were encountering problems. I raised the matter with Walter...

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** Could you just pause a little?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Sorry.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Just pause a little.

**Mr. Chairman:** Go ahead.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Go ahead, Mr. Ogunseye.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Yes, I was saying that we had our electronic unit that was working on it trying to design a walkie-talkie that could operate on different frequencies and they had difficulties. I remember discussing with Walter, you know- we discussed this problem- and he did say that at some point, he was in contact with somebody who had electronic capabilities, and he would ask them to help in that particular process.

*12.22hrs*

**Mr. Ogunseye:** He never named the person, I never asked. I knew, and I handed over to Walter remnants of whatever walkie-talkie we had. Whatever he requested and I could have put my hands on, so I knew Walter was working with someone to develop this capacity.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Would you be able to pin point the exact time frame that you would have handed over the remnants of walkie-talkies that you had in your possession?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** I am not very good at these dates, I am getting old now. I did say that there were occasions where Walter wanted a walkie-talkie, a model of a walkie-talkie; probably to show the person and say, "Look, this is what we have". I remember clearly giving Walter one of the remnants we had, so I knew he was involved in getting this person to design the circuitry. Once we got the circuitry, we were manufacturing it. What it was housed in is neither here, nor there,

## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

we wanted the technology of the circuitry. He did undertake to get the person whom he was in contact with to design the thing for us. I remember on at least three occasions, over time; I asked Walter when we would get the circuitry because the other comrades in the unit were waiting to get it to work. I remember Walter saying he had not delivered it yet. On the third occasion, I sensed Walter getting disgusted with the person. I think he was reaching a point where if he had not delivered, we will have to find another way around. The last time we spoke, I sensed that Walter had reached a point that he would have given up on whoever was doing that thing for him.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Mr. Ogunseye, I wish to pin a time line to this. Perhaps, if we use for reference the date of Dr. Rodney's death, the 13<sup>th</sup> June, 1980; how long before that date did he first request you to hand over the remnants of the walkie-talkie that you had?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** I do not want to pin the exact date. It could be about four months, or so, before his death. I do not want to commit on a specific thing. I think four months period would be a reasonable recollection.

**Ms. Rahamat:** This was after the civil rebellion?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** I think that occurred after ending the civil rebellion.

**Ms. Rahamat:** After ending the civil rebellion. In relation to the last occasion you made a request, asking him when we are going to get the circuitry; how long before the death of Walter Rodney did you have that particular conversation?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** It might have been a month or so before Walter's death.

**Ms. Rahamat:** A month or so before.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** Before you go on, you are saying that you sensed a sense of frustration? Was it that word you used?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Yes, the last time myself and Walter spoke about this thing, he kept pressing this chap that he needed the circuitry, and time was, you know... it was a long time, nearly three months or so.

## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** What did Walter say or do to make you sense this frustration? That is what I want – the evidence.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** It was more a reading of his mannerism. I got the sense that he was saying, “Look, this is my last worry with this matter, with this particular person; we would probably have to find another way around”. That was the sense I got. It reached a point of intolerance with the thing. That is my own judgement.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** Thank you.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Between that last occasion up until the date of the death of Dr. Rodney, you did not have any other conversations with him about walkie-talkie circuitry?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** No.

**Ms. Rahamat:** You had indicated that there was a particular cell that dealing with electronics before you asked Dr. Rodney to intervene. Do you at this time remember any of the names of the individuals who made up that particular cell?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** No. I want to be honest; I really do not want to get into name calling of the WPA people who were in cells. I have been in the political climate and I know that politics could get dangerous overnight. I do not think it is fair for me to call people’s names. People will come here subsequently who may reveal themselves, I do not know. I really do not want to get into the name calling business.

**Ms. Rahamat:** I understand.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** I risked myself, and I offer it, but I do not want to be fingering other people.

**Ms. Rahamat:** But at this point in time, I am not asking you to name them. I am asking you if you can recall their names.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** No.

*[Laughter]*

**Ms. Rahamat:** *[Laughter]* He cannot recall their names.



## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

**Mr. Williams:** I would like to inquire, Mr. Chairman, from your Counsel what the difference is.

**Mr. Chairman:** I think the Witness saw it as a distinction and found a difference. I just wanted to inquire how many cells there were in the WPA. They had this electronic cell that was one.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** I knew of one operating in Georgetown.

**Mr. Chairman:** I am not talking about other electronic cells. How many cells dealing with different areas generally?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Oh, in Georgetown we had 25. I think I mentioned before.

**Mr. Chairman:** 25. Dealing with what? Not all dealing with electronic cells?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** No.

**Mr. Chairman:** What were the other activities that they dealt with?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** I think I mentioned before, but I will go over some of it, responsible for mapping out the cells responsible for safe areas. We had cells specialising in safe haven for the WPA Leadership. We had cells spying on the PNC and the House of Israel, and so forth. We had cells producing special propaganda materials directed to particular targets in society. We had cells specialised in clandestine postering in dangerous areas and so forth. All of them that I said before, none were oriented to any attacks. We were not interested in those kinds of things. We were just interested in building cells that have capacity to facilitate regime change in the areas we believed we would have to be very helpful. I must admit –because you have not asked me yet- we did arm at least half of those cells, because the arm-and I am being very frank. Early in the civil rebellion, when the PNC began to unleash its terror, the WPA had faced a situation where the party's youths were about to rebel –because they said, *'well, look, we getting beat up all the time, we in doing nothing, yall ga we hand tied, we want fight back'*. Walter had pains to plead with comrades not to fall prey to that because I felt that the PNC were setting us up for two things. I think they had wanted the meetings on the streets to become violent encounters between ourselves and them, so that people would not come out; and two, they also wanted us to get into a situation of personal violence which they had the superiority. Walter was a pain to tell comrade

## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

no. our comrades are too valuable, their people are disposable. We had quite a lot to contain in terms of rebellion in our own ranks. Then we worked out that we had to get some weapons which worked as a psychological boost for some comrade, to gain self-conscious -well look, things were happening, and if you had to do some dangerous operations you had some protection. We reached a point where we were at least able to provide one automatic weapon to at least 12 cell leaders. Weapons were only given to cell leaders. The whole goal was to actually have the 25 cells, with at least one weapon –we never reached that goal. At least, we had –as far as I could remember - in Georgetown, at least 12 cell leaders who had brought in automatic pistols.

**Ms. Rahamat:** How did the security committee come to gain possession of these 12 automatic pistols in order to give them to the 12 cell leaders?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** I really cannot answer that question.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Were you personally involved in the accusation of any of these 12?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** No, I was not.

**Ms. Rahamat:** How were you first made aware of the existence of these 12 automatic pistols?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** We have to re-live the situation. Walter Rodney and WPA, we could not have driven out the place with weapons. We had to develop structures. Even accusations –I am not concerned how it happened- occurred. There were methods in which accusations were delivered. I would arrange a cell leader whom I think could have acquired it. We had to be careful that we did not deal in a practical way with lots of weapons because we could have been arrested at any time. What had happened we ran a complicated mechanism that things could have been delivered; and things were delivered. Once it was delivered, I had to keep my eyes on it and make sure I knew who had what; and to make sure there was some order in the discipline arrangements. I never had an interest in source. I was more interested in delivery.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** Need-to-know.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Yes.

## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

**Ms. Rahamat:** When those weapons did come within the possession of the WPA, there was a fear on your part that the authorities might come in at any time?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Yes, we lived in that situation where we were subject to raids and searches at any time. That was the atmosphere in which we lived, and we had to work within that given reality.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Alright. You made mention to there being in existence a mechanism. The mechanism you referred to involved you personally handling the weapons and handing them over to cell leaders?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** In most cases, no. as I said, you also had to work on deniability. *[Laughter]* These are complicated matters. If I was told a weapon was available, I would have decided what cell leader I thought should have possession of that weapon. I would have instructed a method and asked him to appear at a certain place and collect. He could not have said I gave him anything. Those were the matters we dealt with; very delicate and serious matters.

**Mr. Williams:** You could say that if charged with conspiracy. *[Laughter]*

**Ms. Rahamat:** Before we leave the topic of the cells, and the activities of the security committee, I wish to ask you, Mr. Ogunseye whether you were ever part of any plot to blow up the Georgetown Prisons?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** No.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Were you aware of Dr. Rodney ever having any plans of that nature?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** No.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** Any plans to?

**Ms. Rahamat:** Blow up the Georgetown Prisons. Any such plan –if it had existed- would have fallen within the knowledge security committee?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Yes.

## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

**Ms. Rahamat:** Alright. Mr. Ogunseye, I wish to move on to paragraph 12 of your statement where you referred to a notorious recognition hand book. Could you first indicate what this recognition handbook is?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** It was a book produced by some section of the Government –I cannot say what section- and was given to police officers. It had detailed information of WPA activists and supporters, and people who they believed worked closely with the party. They had pictures, date of birth, where they worked, occupation, car numbers... it was a detailed profile. These books were given to various members of the security force for easy identification-I think they said- of WPA personnel.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Members of the security forces, you said? Which security force?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** The Police and I guess other sections of the security had it; but I know the Police had it for sure.

**Ms. Rahamat:** You personally saw a copy of this recognition manual?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** I had one in my possession for quite a while. We had obtained many copies in the Party.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** Before you go on, how does he know they were given to the Police?

**Ms. Rahamat:** How did you get this information that they were given to the Police?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** I personally never saw. Many WPA comrades reported that when they were arrested, officers would take out the book and spin the pages and say, “yeah, I got you here!” I never actually had the experience, but many persons had. This is how we knew the book, and we did take efforts to get copies of the book.

**Ms. Rahamat:** You would have obtained copies of the book after the security committee was formed?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Yes.

## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

**Ms. Rahamat:** Of course, if you were to see a copy of this book, would you be able to recognise it?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Yes.

**Ms. Rahamat:** My respectful application is to show to the witness at this time a copy of the recognition handbook for the WPA.

**Mr. Chairman:** Please proceed.

*[Court Marshall handed the book over to Witness]*

**Ms. Rahamat:** Grateful.

**Mr. Chairman:** Before... Yes, go ahead, Mr. Williams, sorry....

**Ms. Rahamat:** I believe copies were distributed.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, I did see it yesterday. I have a copy. Did the Witness say that it was produced by the PNC?

*12.37hrs*

**Mr. Ogunseye:** No, I said it was produced by some area of the State, I do not know exactly who produced it.

**Mr. Chairman:** A department of the State?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** I cannot really give you evidence where it was produced, but I could only assume that some department of the State, Government produced it and it was given officially to Police Officers.

**Mr. Chairman:** Alright. Did you feature in the recognition handbook or apparently you were so well known that they never check see whether you were there?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Well you see at worked at Kitty Market and the police station is very close to the station you have understand how the Police operate, they thought they could have always found me, it appeared, to my advantage too, but I think they did not spend a lot of resources on

## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

me in a certain way because they think they could have always picked me up, they could have always found me, and they did try picking me up, but they never catch me because I also worked out a way. When I saw them coming, I left the stall, my neighbors will close it up and I disappear.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** While the book is being showed to others, let me ask you; did it ever come to your attention, was there ever any similar publication in relation to any other opposition party?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** No at far as I know.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** Thank you.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Now from your recollection you said that it carried profiles of various members of the WPA?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Supporters, persons who they believe.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Could you now have a look at the document?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** It is a blow up of the original, the original was much smaller.

**Ms. Rahamat:** But you recognised that to be a copy of the recognition handbook. At this time, members of the Commission, my respectful application would to have the copy of the recognition handbook be tendered and marked as TO 2 as an exhibit. Mr. Chairman, the tag is approved by the Commission TO 2?

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** I understand later on we may get a clearer version of the book?

**Ms. Rahamat:** Yes.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** Because that would be useful.

**Mr. Jairam:** Page 26.

**Mr. Chairman:** Received and marked as TO 2.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Most grateful Sir.

## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

**Mr. Jairam:** Is that a photocopy of a photograph yourself?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** No, I am going to tell you where I am.

**Mr. Jairam:** Are you at page 24?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Yes, that was when I was probably younger, I am old now.

**Ms. Rahamat:** So that is a photocopy of a picture of yourself? Could you look at page 25?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Yes.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Those are your particulars?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Yes, at the time.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Including your descriptions, stocky build, and dark brown complexion.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Wearing dashiki and so forth.

**Ms. Rahamat:** In African shirt, dashiki and sandals and you thought karate at the time?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Yes, Kitty Market. Passport number, yes.

**Ms. Rahamat:** I wish for you to turn to page 5 of that booklet. Do you see there the name "Walter Anthony Rodney"?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Yes.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Date of birth, the 23<sup>rd</sup> March, 1942?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Yes.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Weight, 146 pounds?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Yes. Height then weight, yes.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Height five feet, nine inches?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Yes.

## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

**Ms. Rahamat:** Address, 186 South Ruimveldt Garden Georgetown?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Yes.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Description, medium built, dark brown complexion, wear black horn rims spectacle?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Yes.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Carries a beard and a thick afro hairstyle.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Yes.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Former lecturer of the University of Guyana?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Well, I think that part was wrong. He was never employed at the University of Guyana so he was not a former lecturer.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Do you see a number listed there as his passport number?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Yes.

**Ms. Rahamat:** You cannot recall his passport number?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** No, I never saw his passport.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Do you see recorded on the bottom of the page “Rodney with bodyguard Bunny Thomas”.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Yes, I know Bunny.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Now I wish to turn to page 6. The very next page. Now which do you see in this photograph, the photocopy of the photographs the three individuals there?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Yes.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Which of these three individuals do you recognise to be Walter Rodney?



## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Walter Rodney is not in there, no this is Omawale. He might be in the original; he is probably not in here.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Could you just look through the book and tell us if you see a picture of Walter Rodney inside of the book?

**Mr. Pilgrim:** Mr. Chairman, based on my understanding on how the book is structured, the picture would have appeared first, then behind that would usually be the description. So based on my perusal yesterday, there is no picture of Walter Rodney in this book. Here it has probably been removed in our copy. But the picture on page 6, I understood to be Omawale, and then again the picture on the next page along the description of Omawale is also Omawale. So by that, we do not have by the same token, I believe is Dr. Roopnarine and this is the description, so we do not have a picture of Walter Rodney in this book.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you Counsel. What was the Witness's understand of the purpose of...

**Mr. Ogunseye:** This was to give the Police Officers and whoever they handed it over to, to give easy recognition of the WPA personnel.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** Generally, or leadership or trouble makers?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Whoever they have listed here because there are some non-WPA members also in the book. So it has WPA members, it has some WPA supporters and it has some people who were not even associated in the party, but most of it was WPA people.

**Ms. Rahamat:** You are not seeing a photograph of...

**Mr. Ogunseye:** I think the original has Sister, Joslyn Dow, I do not know, I am not seeing here, I think in recollection she would have been in the original.

**Mr. Chairman:** There be any person in that book not a member, supporter also sympathiser?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** I do not know if this is the full book, but I did remember there were, well not sympathiser, if you stretch to sympathiser, I cannot answer because I guess all of them were probably sympathisers, but there were non-party people in the book.

## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

**Mr. Chairman:** You recognised all of them there as party members?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Most of them because some of them, the faces are not clear, but most of them, I think 95% of them that I see here are party members.

**Mr. Williams:** Mr. Chairman, the exhibit, certainly that I have here is all over the place so they do not match the pages that they are calling out to you and I can understand it that this might have been hurriedly put together.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hurriedly put together by the Secretariat.

**Mr. Williams:** Yes. Because I am seeing a picture here, but I am looking to see the name of the person, I am seeing Moses Bhagwan and this cannot be Moses Bhagwan.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** What page?

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** Before that though, the Witness had referred to not seeing the picture of Joslyn Dow, look at page 29, she is mentioned.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Yes, she is mentioned, but I do not see a picture of her.

**Mr. Chairman:** Counsel, I do not think that we need to spend too much time on this.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Yes Sir. But you see a profile page 29 for Ms. Joslyn Dow.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Yes, I can see that.

**Mr. Jairam:** Before you go on. I noticed many of the descriptions have a passport number, some do not. You yourself said that you do not know Dr. Rodney's passport number. Would that suggest that whoever may have compiled this publication would have had some kind of access to official documents?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Yes, I think so, it is an official product and it was produced by some section of the State.

## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

**Ms. Rahamat:** Before we move on from the recognition of the handbook, Mr. Ogunseye, in paragraph 12 of your statement, you noted in the last sentence that a journalist from the USA when shown the recognition handbook at a press conference described it as a “hit list”.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** The WPA held a press conference at a point and did produce the handbook to journalist and that was the remark that an overseas journalist had made when he saw it and he went through it, he called it a “hit list”.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Okay, when did this interview took place? Was it before the death of Walter Rodney or after?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** I really cannot say.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Did you hold the view that this... did you understand the recognition handbook to be a “hit list”? Were you of that view?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** I think it depends upon... my position was it could be used for whatever purpose they want to use it for.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** You survive thought Sir, you are with us still.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Mr. Ogunseye, in your statement at paragraph 14 you spoke of an incident where Walter Rodney was through to your operations to your network able to leave the country to visit Zimbabwe for its Independence Ceremony. Do you recall exactly what time this took place?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** I think Zimbabwe’s Independence Celebration was on the 18<sup>th</sup> April, 19... I cannot remember the date or 80. It might have been the 18<sup>th</sup> April, 1980, around that time.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Mr. Ogunseye, what was the significance of having Dr. Rodney leave the country to attend the Independence Celebration at Zimbabwe?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Okay, let me try to recapture that situation. Walter Rodney, because of the arson charge, he was prevented from leaving the country. He could not have gone broad to travel, he could not work and so, he could not travel. He was invited by the Zimbabwean Government to attend the anniversary.

## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

*12.52hrs*

**Mr. Ogunseye:** My understanding is that Burnham was also extended the same courtesy and Burnham was preparing to go and probably went. Walter did ask the security committee to approve his departure to go and attend the thing and we approved it and we had to carry the operations to get him out. That operation was assigned to the rural elements. Rupert might better be able to give you details of that because that fell in his theater, but eventually he was hustled through Suriname and, eventually, he reach into Africa. I subsequently learnt, because I reproduced much of what I put in my statement from a speech which I gave at the [inaudible] University many years ago so that made it easy, but I subsequently learnt that Walter did not actually reach Zimbabwe, at the time. He reached Africa, but he did not get into Zimbabwe at the time, but the significance of that was that it did create concern in the WPA Executive. Some members of the Executive felt that Walter was taking too great a risk; that given the nature of Burnham, Burnham will see it as an affront to him because in Africa Burnham was considered... Okay, he support the African Liberation Movement and it was felt that Burnham would want to be the only star there from Guyana and he would not want to see Rodney appearing to share the same platform. People felt that Walter was putting himself at a great risk and that Burnham may very well retaliate in an unpredictable way. There was some discussion in the executive on that.

**Ms. Rahamat:** In your statement at paragraph 14, this is on page 5, you indicated that “many observers inside and outside of Guyana felt that it was this act of defiance by Rodney which embarrassed and humiliated Burnham who saw himself as a major international political personality and a leading spokesperson for the Non-Aligned and CARICOM Movements that ultimately made him decide to get rid of Rodney, once and for all.”

## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

**Mr. Ogunseye:** What I am trying to communicate there was a number of persons who had discussions and who gave opinions upon it felt that Burnham must have learnt that Rodney had left the country, Burnham must have learnt that Rodney was in Africa and Burnham would see it as an affront to him and that probably might have been the thing that broke the camel back. Burnham would say, “you are going little too far”, but I mean that was just people’s own subjective analysis of what they believed might have triggered it. That was always a consideration.

**Mr. Jairam:** Just for the record, could you... I remember reading about it. In those days, just describe for us, if you can recall, the impetus of the Non-Aligned Movement and CARICOM as well, can you?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Impetus?

**Mr. Jairam:** The Non-Aligned Movement was there this grand occasion where they came at the world stage...?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Burnham was a major player or a star in the Non-Aligned Movement. Burnham was very active in foreign policy matters. He was very active. I probably did not clue that. Remember, he supported the African liberation and he did make a reputation for himself as Guyana sent soldier to fight along the Cubans in Angola so Burnham was known on the continent and Guyana used to give yearly donations to the African Liberation Movement so both in Africa and in the Non-Aligned Movement, Burnham was a star. In CARICOM of course he was also a star.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Mr. Ogunseye, do you recall the day that Dr. Walter Rodney died?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Yes.

## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

**Ms. Rahamat:** Could you now, at this time, just tell us what, if anything, you recall about that date and how you learnt of the incident?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Okay. Walter died on 13<sup>th</sup> June, 1980, it was a Friday evening. I learnt about his death the next morning, Saturday, while I was at my stall in the market. My understanding was that the WPA Leadership, having realised what happened, tried to mobilise all of into a meeting to discuss the situation. They tried to find me at my home. Unfortunately that night I did not sleep at home because it was a practice of us to sleep at different places. We never sleep at home in luxury. When we feel we need to be elsewhere... They could not find me. I was in the market because I gave up a lot of... I am self-employed, but Saturday is a busy market period and I try to keep as many Saturdays because I normally work up to half day and from half day give a lot fulltime to the political activity so that Saturday I was at my stall and a party supporter in the Kitty community came to me and said, *'Ogunseye, you ain't hear what happen to Walter?'* I said *'What happened?'* Then he related the story so I quickly locked up the stall and I went in search of the leadership. I eventually found them I think at Mr. Miles Fitzpatrick's office, but it was a lawyer's office somewhere in Georgetown. I think it was Fitzpatrick's office. Then they relayed the story and from then onwards it was all the discussions and deliberations about the situation.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Did you ever know Gregory Smith?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** No.

**Ms. Rahamat:** When did you first hear the name Gregory Smith?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** When it was reported in Donald's statement he mentioned this person Gregory Smith who gave him the walkie-talkie. That was the first time I became conscious of a person by the name of Gregory Smith, but right away, once I heard walkie-talkie, it synchronised with me that that was probably the person who Walter was working towards getting the walkie-talkie

## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

circuitry designed. When I read Gregory Smith's book, many years ago, he did mention that he was dealing with walkie-talkies for WPA. I did not doubt Donald's statement. I did not think Donald would have lied so from the time Donald said "Gregory Smith" and he said "walkie-talkie" I put them together and I was convinced, but then I read Smith's book and he confirm that yes he was dealing with walkie-talkies and the WPA.

**Ms. Rahamat:** You say you put together and you were convinced. You were convinced of what Mr. Ogunseye?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** I was convinced that the person who Walter had told me that he was in contact with to design the walkie-talkie circuitries for the WPA, was Gregory Smith.

**Ms. Rahamat:** In your statement at paragraph 19, you said, "I will now list what I believe provide compelling circumstantial evidence that the Burnham regime was responsible for Walter Rodney's assassination". Could you at this point in time seek to list for the Commission and the listening public what you believe as the...?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** If you allow me to just peep at the record because I cannot remember the order...

**Ms. Rahamat:** That is not a problem. It is page 6, paragraph 19.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** He can do more than peep. He is entitled to refresh himself from it.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Okay. The first point I made and as I said this is circumstantial evidence, I am taking the position that in the court of law, circumstantial evidence is an important tool in judicial process and not only direct evidence but circumstantial evidence and I am listing a number of circumstances which I believe is compelling evidence which the Commission should address itself to in trying to unravel what took place. The first one that I mentioned was the fact that in Donald's statement, he said one of the instructions that Gregory Smith gave to him was

## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

that Walter should come out of the car, walk past the prison fence, because he, Smith, wanted to see how the device, when activated, would respond in the presence of expansive metal.

**Ms. Rahamat:** You are allowed to read too if necessary.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Am I going too fast?

**Ms. Rahamat:** No. You are allowed to read too if necessary.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** I do not think I need to read details, but I am peeping, yes. Walter in his own judgment, and it was probably good that he did that, did not see the need for him to come out of the car and activate the device so he carried out the test with the device in his lap and of course the device blew up resulting in his death. I am saying that when you follow the plot, Gregory Smith wanted Walter to activate the device in the presence of the prison and he would have had the device probably close to his face and when it explode his face would have been disfigured and be unrecognizable. I am saying that you have to put that side by side to the fact that the very night that Walter was killed, leaflets were dropped in front of his home which claimed that he died trying to blow up the prison. There was even one who said... There were two dropped and one dropped later that said "unrecognised man" so I am saying even if you want to say Walter accidentally killed himself, if you want to argue that way, who dropped the leaflets saying that he died trying to blow himself up? I think the circumstantial evidence points that the plotters who orchestrated his death and who were hoping that he would have gotten killed outside the car, in front of the prison, had the leaflets well prepared and they dropped it just to realize that the plot did not go the way they had designed. I think the Commission should probe in that area.

**Mr. Chairman:** Do you know where the leaflets came from and when they appeared?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** We do not know. One set was dropped the very night of Walter's death, a set of them in front of his home.



## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

**Mr. Jairam:** I wanted to ask you...

**Mr. Chairman:** Only in front of his home?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Well, I know about that. I would have to give you my judgment. I think it was being provocative and an insult to Walter and his family.

**Mr. Jairam:** I think what you are trying to tell us is the rapidity with which it was produced...

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Yes.

**Mr. Jairam:** ...Walter having died that very night but what I want to ask you is: Did you see that leaflet?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Yes, I did. I used to have a lot of those things in my possession by in 1982 when I had the fire at my house and the firemen came and sprayed the water a lot of things were lost and so on.

**Mr. Chairman:** This notion that he had to walk in front of the prison or beside the prison in the presence of expanding metal. I have never heard that. Where did you get that from that he had to test it in the presences, the walkie-talkie in the presence of expanding metal?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** As far as I remember, it was one of the instructions that Gregory Smith gave to Donald and was recorded in Donald's statement. I guess Donald will be here and you will raise it with him but I think that is where it came from.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** Before we continue, this is a public inquiry as the Chairman has over and over reminded us so assuming those sheets, those leaflets, do exist and any member or ex member of the WPA or other persons would have copies, if they could make them available, it would be useful.

## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

**Mr. Ogunseye:** One of the problems we had was a lot of the party's materials was in the hands of the lawyer Doodnauth Singh who was also Attorney General under PPP's Government. He was dealing with the Rodney case and he died and we were never able to retrieve those files so the Party lost access to that. I am hopeful that Brother Nigel Westmaas who has been assigned – because he is a historian by profession – to deal with the party history and I am hopeful he may have in his possession one such of those things. I do not know.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Okay. The second point was the role played by Pamela Beharry. Now, when Donald named Gregory Smith, the army officially had denied the existence of Smith. Pamela Beharry, who was a resident in Charlestown, I think she lived in the same yard with Smith, came to the Party and confirmed that there was a Gregory Smith and he was her neighbor. I am saying that that fact exposed the lie that was being put out officially by the army that there was no Gregory Smith in existence and that Donald's thing was fictitious. The *Catholic Standard* subsequently published a photograph of Gregory Smith in full military uniform, the military school he attended, his military number and I think those two things blew, eventually, the Burnham/GDF denial that Smith did exist and was member of the GDF.

*13.07hrs*

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Okay, number three, we were told very early after Walter's death, the Party received information that Smith was transported by the Army by air and I think people said it was helicopter – whether it was helicopter or another aircraft, I am not going to fight over that – but the information was that the army flew him to Kwakwani where his father lived and our information was that persons saw Smith leaving the aircraft in the company of Army Officers so we got that information very early. I, many years ago, met a person who works in Kwakwani and he, independent of the WPA, said he did witness Smith... He said Smith's wife and him travelled from Linden to Kwakwani by bus and he said he did witness when Smith came off the helicopter

## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

or the plane in the presence of these Army Officers, so years after the second person confirmed. I tried to work with him for years to get him to testify whenever inquiries are being held, but the chap is very frightened. He said that he does not want anybody to kill him because he said he drinks his rum and get drunk all over the place and he does not want anybody kill him so he definitely is not coming forward. The point I am trying to make, years after WPA's knowledge, a worker in Kwakwani confirmed, "Yes, it did happen". People only knew that after the fact when *Catholic Standard* revealed it then people put together that the person who they were seeing coming off the plane was in fact Gregory Smith. When he was actually coming off they did not know who it was.

Okay, the next point, I think the Commissioners should bear in mind that Smith's wife – his reputed wife or wife, I really do not know the status – was an employee working in some government department. I cannot remember the exact place. When Smith was fingered, the press went the workplace to try to see her or to have an interview or so but they could not find her. She just disappeared. Years after, when we were able to track her down, she was working in the Guyana Consulate in Canada.

**Mr. Jairam:** How many years after?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** It could be five years.

**Mr. Jairam:** So this is around 1985. Okay.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** The fifth, point I also want to also raise...

**Mr. Williams:** Are you talking about Gregory Smith's wife?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Yes.

**Mr. Williams:** A lot of that stuff you are talking about, you do not have it in your statements so... *[inaudible]*

**Mr. Ogunseye:** I cannot remember his wife's name. I am just pointing to the fact that journalist tried to locate her at her place of employment.

## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

**Ms. Rahamat:** If I may direct Mr. Williams, I think it is number four, in paragraph 19. You can continue Mr. Ogunseye.

**Mr. Williams:** That is what I am saying, the name. I am not seeing any name.

**Ms. Samuels-Brown:** In addition to that Counsels and members may wish to refer to LJ/CID/GS 1, which is the exhibit put in by the Police Officer who gave evidence, page 64 a statement by one Joan Melvin, age 30 years of age, who says she was a diplomat employed at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and who testifies or states in her statement that she was the fiancé of one Gregory Smith. So that is LJ/CID/GS 1.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Yes, Mr. Ogunseye is there any other piece of circumstantial evidence?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** The fifth point, I think the Commissioners should ponder on is the regime never sought the assistance of Interpol or any international organisation to help in the apprehension of Smith. I think this is normal Police and State response. It is a significant that the Guyana State never as far as I know or we know never asked Interpol or any international organisation to help in the apprehension of Smith even after he was positively identified and it was only after Kwayana brought a private charge against Smith that this matter was ever placed even before the Court of Law in Guyana. I think those are significant circumstantial matters that should any person probing this matter should give some weightage to.

The sixth point is that if Burnham and his regime had nothing to do with the assassination of Rodney why did they not initiate action to apprehend Smith and, in so doing, compel his appearance in a Court-of-Law so that he, Smith, under oath, can tell his grand story. I think it would be in the interest of them to do that. The question is: why did they not take those measures. I want to say that since Rodney's assassination had implications of Burnham and his regime, Burnham's regime has been accused both internally and externally. Burnham's image was being destroyed by this action and I think it was in the best interest of Burnham to go to all ends of the world to clear his name. The fact that Burnham never did that, I think we ought to ask ourselves why and I think the logical reason, this is my personal belief, Burnham knew his and his regime and involvement and he know he could not walk down the road if he had arrested Gregory Smith and force him in the Court of Law, Smith would very well cracked and spill the

## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

beans, so Burnham, being a lawyer, had no interest going down that road. The last point of significance that I submit was that a WPA supporter/comrade named Mr. Rohit Kanhai did a lot of work over the years trying to track down this device and when...

**Mr. Chairman:** Track down?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** The device that killed Walter.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** When Smith published his book and produced a lot of circuitry he took the opportunity to really study the circuitry because he has the electronic background and he was able to establish that the device used, what he called a “porter phone”, was converted into a bomb. He did contact me when the inquiry was announced and asked me to deliver to the Inquiry on his behalf his research which I did deliver to the Inquiry. I think the Inquiry should take advantage of its expertise and... I do not know, but I think the fact he seems to be able to prove that it was a porter phone converted into a bomb may be of great interest.

I think that is so much for the circumstantial evidence. If you want me to continue or close it off. I do not know if you are closing off now. I want to read exactly what I have...

**Ms. Rahamat:** You can close off by reading your last paragraph.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** “I end my testimony by stating that after nearly 34 years I still remain convinced that Burnham and members of the Guyana Security Forces masterminded the assassination of Walter Rodney and Mr. Gregory Smith was their agent of choice who knowingly carried out his master’s heinous request. Throughout the WPA lead the revolt against the PNC dictatorship. It is important to note that the WPA never killed any member of security forces, that it never killed any leader of the PNC, that it never killed any supporter of the PNC and that it never killed anyone opposed to the WPA and its principles. In fact, it never killed anyone. This is unique in the history of struggle against oppressive regimes and it should put to rest the often erroneous arguments that the WPA was a violent revolutionary organisation.

## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

**Mr. Jairam:** I noticed when you read that statement you left out you said you never killed any ‘supporter’ but you have on your statement “member”. Did you modify that deliberately or you...

**Mr. Ogunseye:** No, it might be a slip...

**Mr. Jairam:** Look at the sixth line from the bottom of that paragraph.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** One, two, three, four, five six... “...the WPA never killed any member of the security forces...”?

**Mr. Jairam:** “...any member or supporter of the PNC...” When you read it you said ‘supporter’. You did not read ‘member’. I am asking you...

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Okay, that is a slip...

**Mr. Ram:** It is the fifth line from the bottom Commissioner.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** I could probably read it back.

**Mr. Jairam:** No. You did not intend to modify it?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** No, it is just a slip of the...

**Mr. Jairam:** Before Counsel continues, you might be one of the better placed persons, could you, for the record, describe in your words the man L.F.S. Burnham?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** I think Burnham was an outstanding Guyanese. He was a great Lawyer. He was a good orator but he was also a politician but he was also a politician that, in my judgement, once he got power he was prepared not to lose power, at all cost. My judgment of Burnham was that he was not a politician who accepts the principle “within my Party I can run for five years, there could be a change of leader, somebody else could run”. I do not think Burnham subscribed to that. Once he is the leader once he got power he wants to hold on to that power until he died. That is my judgment. I also want to say Burnham had a special characteristic which only two politicians I know in this country demonstrated – a person of vindictiveness. Burnham was one and Janet Jagan.

## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

**Mr. Jairam:** And whom?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Janet Jagan where their politics was very vindictive.

**Mr. Williams:** They had what?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Very vindictive. I am going to give some examples of what I mean. I and Janet worked for years in the struggle but a little before they came to power we were very active in a committee in a defence of Haiti. After they came to power in 1992 she had a discourse on democracy at the Catholic Standard Headquarters and I sat down there and here Janet speak about the return of democracy and she never mentioned the WPA one day, only the PPP fought for the return of democracy. The very next day I wrote a letter criticising her. Okay, the very first time now that we are reaching at this committee, normally when we reach we would go and say “Comrade” and so on; when I went approach her she turned her back on me and me and her, after then, ever had any cordial exchange. I understood what she was doing.

I would give you an example about Cheddi and show the difference. During the PCD negotiations – I would be very quick – Cheddi had told us that he had a meeting with some elements in the community who say that he should not be a presidential candidate. *‘He should get somebody to run because the Americans ain’t like he. The black people in the Army ain’t gone want deal with he. He is a communist’* and so and he said *‘Well, okay, I told them ‘what about Roger Luncheon’*, he is black and the persons responded by saying *‘Yes, but he ‘red’* which means that he is communist. That is what Cheddi told us some set of people told him. When the PPP broke up Cheddi was around the country saying that the WPA, in the negotiations, *‘Tell he the story. Tell he they object to Luncheon.’* I had to write a letter criticising Cheddi publicly. The next time me and Cheddi ‘reached’ he came and he gave me a tap on my belly and he laughed. He recognised he did an underhanded job but he understood that it is politics. I and Cheddi maintain cordial relationship but Janet is not that type. I think Burnham and Janet are two persons whose politics are very personal and very vindictive. I do not want to go to outside the 1980s because I would give you another example but I do want to bring in the 1980s experience but my judgement is that Burnham had his strong points. He was a nationalist. I think he had his progressive tendency but he also had this streak. His approach to power was *‘once I get power I*

## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

*have to die with this power and if you play with my power I gone hurt you*'. That is how I would summarise Burnham.

**Mr. Chairman:** Is it your judgement though that Burnham would have applied violence or caused it to be applied to his opponents?

*13.22hrs*

**Mr. Ogunseye:** If Burnham ...

**Mr. Chairman:** Would have supported the application of violence to his political opponents?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Well, I will tell you something, I was hoping that it would come up when the learned Counsel Mr. Williams was cross-examining me because I heard him raise some issues about it. Burnham played a role in 1979 when we were fighting him. He played a role in bringing about a regime change in elections in Grenada because the Grenadian comrades who overthrew Morris Bishop, was trained by Guyana Defense Force. So, Burnham cannot come and tell us that he could create a regime change in Grenada and we who have legitimate concerns about him, cannot engage in regime change in Guyana.

**Mr. Williams:** So you are saying that he assisted in the regime change in Grenada?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** I am saying that he did not assist in the regime change in Guyana and I am saying, that members of the GDF did train some of Morris Bishop's comrades who eventually overthrew [*inaudible*] the outside of the electoral thing. So I am saying that Burnham cannot tell me or the PNC can tell me about the rights to regime change. They engaged in regime change.

**Mr. Chairman:** But your answer is founded on an illustration far away, in Grenada. What about here in Guyana? You gave me an answer related to Grenada, but what about here in Guyana?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Sorry, repose the question then.

**Mr. Chairman:** I asked you whether it was your judgement that Burnham would have supported the application forced violence to his political opponents.



## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

**Mr. Ogunseye:** No, I think as I said before that Burnham was very clear. I have power and anyone who tried to dislodge me; I was prepared to use force to maintain my power. I do not know if I will have to say it, Burnham's power was acquired through rigged elections which was being challenged by half of the country – the Indian community and Dr. Jagan and the civil rebellion where we got significant African Guyanese people to express their opposition. A rigged election in 1973, he had no legitimacy. But he had power and he used power. I am clear that Burnham was prepared to do anything to maintain that power.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** Was there an election in 1980, or some voting?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** 1980 was the Referendum, I think.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** Did you participate in....

**Mr. Ogunseye:** No, I boycotted. As the opposition, I boycotted the Referendum.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** You boycotted it.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** We were against the Referendum.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** Why did you boycott it since it is an electoral process?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Because the Referendum was ...

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** It is a democratic processing. It is voting, not electoral.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** It was designed to bring into being a constitution which would give Burnham even more powers than he had. And it was being done after he engaged in a massive electoral fraud in the 1973 Elections. So we could not have supported that.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** Did the 1973 Elections, and what you referred to as “massive fraud”, in any way influenced the manner in which the WPA proceeded up to 1980, the time of Walter's death?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Yes, we took all of that into consideration. I think the WPA, even long before Walter came back, I recognised the limitations of bringing about political change, electorally, but as a party, we felt that we had some more important things to do like to break down the racial

## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

polarisation. And the early WPA spent a lot of time to work to break down the racial political polarisation.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** Thank you.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** But I think long before then we were very clear that we are not going to remove Burnham electorally.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** You mentioned the paramountcy of the party and what was the direct response, if any, by the WPA to this principle authority?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** The WPA rejected ... paramountcy was not a constitutional arrangement in the present constitution and we felt that Burnham was using his power to impose upon the country a political formula in which the party becomes more important than even the State. The party had more importance than the equation of the State. And we felt that that was totally unacceptable and we were definitely opposed to that arrangement.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** Well let me ask you, did the WPA consider itself Marxist?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Yes, we officially did declare ourselves as a Marxist then

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** And it did not consider that paramountcy of the party was part of the Marxist ideology or theory?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** We were not Conventional Marxist. We were very creative Caribbean, local divine Marxist.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** I see.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Very clearly, anti-Stalinist and so forth and so forth.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** You were not anti-Stalinist?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** No, no...

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** Okay.

## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

**Mr. Ogunseye:** We see Marxism as tool to explain social society and so forth and we felt it was a useful tool and many of us associated with Marxism/Leninism.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** Do you have any reason to believe that this tight-hold that you described by the then Prime Minister and President Burnham having on the country, the concept and principle of paramountcy to the party, do you have any reason to believe that it led Walter Rodney to extremist action, for example, securing a bomb and attempting to test it?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** No, I do not accept the premise that Walter Rodney secured a bomb or was intending to secure a bomb, and was testing any bomb. I do not accept that premise. I do not accept it.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** Do you think that the need-to-know basis on which you operated would have allowed him to do that without your knowing?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Theoretically, it is possible, but it does not make sense because I do not think that we needed Smith to bring bomb expertise to the party. I do not think so. I think we needed Smith for his electronic capacity.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** Thank you.

**Mr. Jairam:** Following up from my colleague, you were very close to Walter. Would you say he had violent tendencies?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** As I told you, Walter went out of his way to restrain WPA young people who were prepared to deal with the “thuggery” at the meetings. Walter definitely believed that violence should not be used willy-nilly and that is why I am saying, I do not even have to defend it, I am saying that the records will show, even the PNC has never accused us of shooting at a Police or Soldier. I do not even have to defend that, I think the historical records are there. Walter Rodney and the WPA never saw violence in that way. We found it unacceptable, we found it to be a degeneration of the political culture because once you introduce personal violence to politics, then you have no way of where it would end, but we accept that regime change may have probably involved violence but I do not think that nobody could believe that

## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

you could predict a regime change. Whatever form you may perceive, that may not have some violent outcome but violence for the sake of violence, no.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** So, the penetration of the Guyana Defence Force by Walter Rodney from the security committee's point of view, what was its purpose? To get arms? To neutralise the Army?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** No.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** To get trained persons available to fight for you? What was the purpose?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** No. I think what Walter was doing was to build up a kind of loyal section of the Army that would have been influential in a popular uprising, that will refuse orders to shoot. Our view is that once the people ... if ever we had reached that stage, the big issue would have been whether the Army would have carried out orders or not to shoot the Guyanese people down, and Walter was working to make sure that we had enough influence in the Army, that those orders would not be carried out and in so doing he was putting himself at great risk.

**Mr. Chairman:** How successful in that infiltration of the Army he was?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** I really cannot make an objective ...

**Mr. Chairman:** Do you know?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** ... assessment of that.

**Mr. Chairman:** You mentioned at paragraph 19 of your statement, Rohit Kanhai did work on tracking down the device used in making the bomb and it was established that the device was a porter phone converted into a bomb, do you anything about this porter phones?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** No.

**Mr. Chairman:** That is in your statement on information received.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Yes and he had asked me to deliver his research to this Commission, which I did deliver.

## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

**Mr. Chairman:** You never asked about it yourself?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Huh?

**Mr. Chairman:** You never asked Kanhai anything about it?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** No.

**Mr. Chairman:** But you did say that he told you that a porter phone was only available after being specially cleared, so it was normally only available to Governments and high security and after high security cleared it.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Yes, he did mention it.

**Mr. Chairman:** You mentioned that six years after Rodney's death that Smith's wife was located and identified as working in the High Commission's Office in Canada, what inference do you draw from that? Six years after?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Well, I think that ...

**Mr. Chairman:** Such as would be part of the strands of circumstantial evidence pointing to the Government involvement in Walter's death?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Okay, this is how I see it. The Commission should probe how soon after Walter's assassination and Smith was fingered, how she was quickly hussled out of the country and her place of employment and when she did eventually turn up, she turned up working in the Guyana Consulate.

I think that people should probe, I do not know ...

**Mr. Chairman:** The hussling of Smith and the departure of his wife, immediately after I think is of importance and certain inferences may be drawn from that depending on all the circumstances surrounding it but that she is seen working six years later in the Governments' office High Commission in Canada, I do not know how much you can draw from that.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** I thought the Commission would probe to see whether she was working there two weeks after she left the country, I do not know, but that is a time when we were able to, as I

## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

remember, find out where she was working. She may have been working there a month after she left the country and the Commission should prove it.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** Just give us a minute here please.

*[Commissioners were in discussion]*

**Mr. Chairman:** I think this exchange has caused me to be provided with a statement from a Joan Melville, who was either the wife or the reputed wife of Gregory Smith and apparently as early as 6<sup>th</sup> July ...

**Mr. Jairam:** 3<sup>rd</sup> July.

**Mr. Chairman:** This is the 6<sup>th</sup> July, 1980 she was leaving for an appointment with a position with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs abroad, that is, abroad.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** Of course, this is the Caribbean, so I do not know if it is the same wife that you are speaking about or another one, but I just thought that I would advise.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** I am sorry, Ma'am, I did not hear you.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** It can pass.

**Mr. Chairman:** We do not have a Mrs. Gregory Smith, we have Joan Melville.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** Who describes herself as ...

**Mr. Williams:** As his reputed wife. I thought it was Gwendolyn Jones was his wife.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** She describes herself as ...

**Mr. Chairman:** Who describes herself in the body of the statement as fiancée of Gregory Smith.

**Mr. Williams:** What year is that, Sir?

**Mr. Chairman:** 1980.

**Mr. Pilgrim:** July.

## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** It is part of LJCIDGS 1

**Mr. Williams:** I think Gregory Smith has the name of his wife in this book.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** That is why I was careful to say, this being the Caribbean there may be more than one reputed wives.

**Mr. Williams:** It is a Jamaican thing, I understand. *[Laughter]*

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you, Sir.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Mr. Ogunseye, yesterday Mr. Allan Robert Gates testified and in his testimony on page 81 and it continues on 82 of the verbatim report for the 24<sup>th</sup> June, 2014, Mr. Gates stated that, “Yes, during the same period, in answer to the fourth line after you see your name appear, yes during the same period Dr. Roopnarine had confided in me that he and Walter Rodney were spearheading an operation to acquire arms, ammunition, and explosives, radio sets –very high frequency- in order to overthrow the Government of Guyana.”

*13.37hrs*

**Ms. Rahamat:** “Mr. Williams: Yes, and you said that was a confession made to you by Dr. Roopnarine. Mr. Gates: I would not say that was a confession. Mr. Williams: You said he confided in you. Mr. Gates: We had a discussion. Mr. Williams: He intimated that to you? Mr. Gates: Yes, Sir.” Mr. Williams continues reading and Mr. Gates answers “at one time, Dr. Roopnarine had discussed the logistics of the plan to overthrow; and we had discussed it would be to first cease Camp Ayangana, take control of all ports of entry and exits into the Country and then overrun the office of the President or the official residence, as the case may be.” Mr. Williams continues. Mr. Gates answers “to arrest President L. F. S Burnham simultaneously. The plan was also to cease control of radio stations.” Mr. Ogunseye, was this plan as Mr. Gates said Mr. Roopnarine communicated to him; a plan of the WPA executive and/or the security of the WPA?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** I have no knowledge of such a plan. I think Dr. Roopnarine would be in the box and you will take the opportunity to question him. I have a response to make; the WPA at a point

## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

recognised that we were being penetrated. We encouraged spies from both sides. We had them for what we call using them for information. Disinformation where WPA Leaders sold them a story and let them carry it back to the regime. I knew that was going on that it was part of our strategic or security policy. What we accepted the worse of informants. We said ok, we have to use them to our advantage, and we used them in disinformation. I would not be surprised if Dr. Roopnarine engaged in disinformation. It was a part of the tools that we used. I think they also were doing the same thing to us.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Did you know Allan Robert Gates, at that time?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** No.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Was he ever brought to your attention as one of the people who was considered to be an agent that false information was being given to?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** No. after he agreed to testify, many members of the WPA reminded me he was one time Rupert's body guard. I could remember him. I remember "Bunny", who was always with Walter, but I never could remember Gates. WPA persons confirmed –I think Mr. Roopnarine would understand- that he was at some point Rupert's body guard. That is the most I can say about that.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Mr. Ogunseye, you had stated both in your written statement that you read the book allegedly co-authored by Gregory Smith. You would have had a look at the appendix pages that had some pictures of alleged WPA operatives. Do you remember seeing that page?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Yes.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Could you please have a look at this and just indicate whether you recognise any of the pictures published there to be members of the WPA?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** None.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Are they supporters?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** None, as far as I am concerned.



## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

**Ms. Rahamat:** Thank you.

**Mr. Chairman:** Are you sure you looked, Sir? You seem very hastily dismissive...

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Because I know the book. I read it twice. I am very dismissive of it, but I do not want to....

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** You have never seen those pictures before?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** No, never seen.

**Mrs. Samuels-Brown:** No, I mean in the book. Have you read the book before?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** No, I cannot identify any of those pictures.

**Mr. Jairam:** No, I think what Commissioner Samuels-Brown is asking you, is whether you saw those pictures in the book before?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Yes, I read the book on two occasions, when it was first released. *[Laughter]*  
But I refuse to read it now.

*[Laughter]*

I mean there are WPA people who are specialists at the thing. There are men who would see it as their Bible and really dig into it.

**Ms. Rahamat:** Before I conclude with you, Mr. Ogunseye, you did mention in your written statement that at one point in time you wanted to ask Dr. Rodney to go underground...

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Okay...

**Ms. Rahamat:** ...and you felt that –and this is paragraph 16- “I did not raise the issue, and to this day I feel that my failure to urge this course of action was a political mistake on my part.” Do you care to explain why you feel this way?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Yes, I remember at least a week or two before Walter died, we were receiving a lot of information, whether it was disinformation or what I cannot... but there was that information that the Government was planning major crackdown on WPA Leaders and the party.

## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

We were discussing and trying to make sense of it. I had a gut feeling at that meeting that meeting that we should be precautionary and ask Walter to go at the ground for a period. That was my gut feelings. I never actually induced it in the discourse. After Walter died, I really felt guilty because if I had probably mentioned and fought for it, he might have gone underground. I do not know. I live with that knowledge and feel a bit guilty.

**Mr. Chairman:** But what sort of information were you receiving?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** We were receiving information that the regime was planning a crackdown on the WPA as a party and its leadership.

**Mr. Chairman:** And?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Party and the leadership.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, do not go too far away from the microphone.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** The information we were receiving -and I am saying we did not know if it was disinformation, or real information- but we could not ignore it. We had a discussion on that because it was becoming very... you know... and it also took place at a point and time when activities of the party was at a very low level. Our sense has always been that Burnham would strike at points of low political activities. We were trying to make sense out of it. As I said, my gut feeling was to say Walter should really go underground.

**Mr. Jairam:** I would like you to explain. As you said, whether it was information, genuine or disinformation -I do not want you to put an interpretation. You were receiving information that they were going to crack down on the WPA and its leadership? Is that your interpretation or was that the nature of the information?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** That was the nature of the information, but we had to make sense out of it. Both sides were engaged in disinformation, so we decide whether they were sending to confuse us. We had to make sense out of it. My gut feeling was that we should take precaution and probably treat it as something... you know...

## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, well often in that sort of environment, you do not know what information rather than disinformation until is after.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Yes.

**Mr. Chairman:** So you now know that that was not disinformation; but did the information/disinformation go as far as saying that he would be killed?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** As far as my recollection goes, was not that he was going to be killed. There will be a major crackdown imprisonment. The exact form of the crackdown was not known.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, I think the time has now come for cross examination. Who wants to start? Mr. Williams, you were playing opening bat for a long while...

**Mr. Williams:** Mr. Chairman, I agree that I opened the batting, but I think I had spoken on the principle that when it is a witness for the Lawyers for the WPA, I would come last.

**Mr. Chairman:** I was not meant to be taken too seriously on asking you...

**Mr. Williams:** Perhaps my colleagues could decide amongst them who open the batting.

**Mr. Chairman:** Mr. Pilgrim, you were watching the clock, man; but good batsmen go to the crease at any time, you know? *[Laughter]*

**Mr. Pilgrim:** I am keen to go, but, Commissioner, I do not know if there is anyone who would just have a few that might want to go until 14:00hrs.

**Mr. Chairman:** Mr. Ram, I think that you are perhaps the person I should have asked to go first.

**Attorney for the Working People's Alliance (WPA) [Mr. Christopher Ram]:** My own preference would have been to start because I would have liked to assess all evidence given today. If it is the wish of the Commission that I do begin today, I cannot promise that I will finish. In fact, I am fairly certain I would not be; but my preference would have been to start afresh, on a new day.

**Mr. Chairman:** Mr. Scotland, do you have anything, any questions that might take us to 14:00hrs, let us say?

## WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

**Mr. Scotland:** Mr. Chairman, it may take us to 14:00hrs, but I will not finish y 14:00hrs.

**Mr. Chairman:** Let us start.

**Mr. Scotland:** I get to open the batting. Let us go.

**Mr. Chairman:** I think we have a formula that you will find acceptable. It is clear that we cannot finish the cross examination with the witness today, at all. We are going to have to interpose as there is a witness for tomorrow, Mr. Gerry Gouveia. If we cannot get him tomorrow, we cannot be sure when we will get him. You all have an opportunity to go through the evidence-in-chief, and do the cross-examination maybe on Friday.

**Mr. Williams:** So, you are bringing Mr. Gouveia tomorrow?

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes. That was a formal commitment made, and we do not want to depart from it. So, we are going to adjourn at this time. We will have to let you know when –I think we can agree that it will be Friday? We hope that that is convenient for you, Sir?

**Mr. Ogunseye:** Yes, I am here every day, you know?

**Mr. Chairman:** Oh, you are here every day. I see.

**Mr. Williams:** I am happy that he mentioned it.

**Mr. Ogunseye:** I am here 34 years....

**Mr. Chairman:** It was suggested that only Mr. Gates used to be here every day.

**Mr. Williams:** That is correct, Sir...

**Mr. Chairman:** But you too are here.

**Mr. Williams:** All the WPA leaders are here every day.

**Mr. Chairman:** I see others may be testifying who have been here most days, if not every day; but I want to thank you for coming and we look forward to your further testimony on Friday. Have a good afternoon, gentlemen, and I look forward to seeing everyone tomorrow. We now stand adjourned.

**WALTER RODNEY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY**

**Adjourned Accordingly 13:50hrs.**