

CRIMINAL COURT

THE HON. MR. JUSTICE LAWRENCE QUINTANO

Sitting of the 24 th November, 2011

Number 5/2010

The Republic of Malta

Vs

Daniel Alexander Holmes

The Court,

Having seen the bill of indictment no. 5/2010 against the accused Daniel Alexander Holmes wherein he was charged with:

 After the Attorney General premised in the First Count of the Bill of Indictment that on the nineteenth (19th) June of the year two thousand and six (2006) and during the preceding six months, with several acts committed at different times, however violating the same provisions of the Law, and in pursuance of the

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same design, Daniel Alexander Holmes planned to start illegally importing, cultivating, dealing, offering, and

supplying drugs, namely cannabis, into the Maltese Islands.

That in fact the accused Daniel Alexander Holmes, as well as on the basis of an admission by the accused himself, in order to carry out his plan to

import illegally into the Maltese Islands, in the previous months prior to the nineteenth (19th) of June of the year two thousand and six (2006), acquired a quantity of cannabis seeds in England and wilfully and knowingly, travelled and brought them over to Malta, illegally, when he came over to stay in the Maltese Islands.

The accused was not in possession of any license or authorisation issued under the Dangerous Drugs Ordinance (Chapter 101 of the Laws of Malta), which authorised or permitted in any way the importation of the dangerous drug concerned by the accused.

Cannabis is a dangerous drug specified and controlled under the provisions of Part I of the First Schedule of the Dangerous Drugs Ordinance. Daniel Alexander Holmes was not in possession of any valid and subsisting import authorisation granted in pursuance of the said law.

By committing the above mentioned acts with criminal intent, the accused Daniel Alexander Holmes rendered himself guilty of intending to bring or causing to be brought into Malta in any manner whatsoever a dangerous drug (cannabis), being a drug specified and controlled under the provisions of Part I of the First Schedule of the Dangerous Drugs

Ordinance (Chapter 101 of the Laws of Malta), when he was not in possession of any valid and subsisting import authorisation granted in pursuance of the said law. Wherefore, the Attorney General, in his capacity, accused Daniel Alexander Holmes of having on the nineteenth (19th) June of the year two thousand and six (2006) and in the preceding six months by several acts even though committed at different times but constituting a violation of the same provisions of law and committed in pursuance of the same design,

guilty of meaning to bring or causing to be brought into Malta in any manner whatsoever a dangerous drug (cannabis), being a drug specified

and controlled under the provisions of Part I of the First Schedule, of the Dangerous Drugs Ordinance (Chapter 101 of the Laws of Malta), when he was not in possession of any valid and subsisting import authorisation granted in pursuance of the said law; demanded that the accused be

proceeded against according to law, and that he be sentenced to the punishment of imprisonment for life and to a fine of not less than two thousand three hundred and thirty Euro ($\leq 2,330$) and not more than one hundred and sixteen thousand and five hundred Euro ($\leq 116,500$) and to the forfeiture in favour of the Government of Malta of the entire immovable

and movable property in which the offence took place as described in the bill of indictment, as is stipulated and laid down in sections 2, 7, 8(a)(d), 9, 10(1). 14. 15, 12. 15(A)(1), 20, 22(1)(a)(1B)(2)(a)(i)(3)(3A)(a)(b)(c)(d), and 26 of the Dangerous Drugs Ordinance and regulation 4 and 9 of the 1939 Regulations for the Internal Control of Dangerous Drugs (Legal Notice 292/39), and in sections 17, 18, 20, 22, 23 and 533 of the Criminal or to any other punishment applicable Code according to law to the declaration of guilty of the accused.

2) After the Attorney General premised in the Second Count of the Bill of Indictment that having illegally imported in the previous six months of the nineteenth (19th) June of the year two thousand and six (2006) into Malta, and acquired in

the Maltese Islands, the dangerous drug cannabis, as described under the First Count of this Bill of Indictment, Daniel Alexander Holmes decided to start cultivating the plant cannabis. The accused acquired cannabis seeds and planted them in pots in his residence at Sydney Flat 2, Gudja Road, Ghajnsielem Gozo. Daniel Alexander Holmes used to water and tend to these plants and he was very organised in this illegal operation, so much so, that the operation was organised in his residence by making use of certain rooms, providing the appropriate lighting, electrical equipment and means for them to grow artificially. The cannabis plants were found in various stages of growth. Fortunately, thanks to the investigations and interception carried out by the Police this illegal cultivation was discovered by the Police. The amount of cannabis that was cultivated was in the large amount of 1,063.1 grams, with a street value of over € 13,802.10 (previously Lm 5,923.64).

The accused was not in possession of any license or authorisation issued under the Dangerous Drugs Ordinance (Chapter 101 of the Laws of Malta), which authorised or permitted in any way the cultivation of the dangerous drug cannabis by the accused.

By committing the abovementioned acts with criminal intent, the accused Daniel Alexander Holmes rendered himself guilty of cultivating the plant cannabis being a drug specified and controlled under the provisions of the Dangerous Drugs Ordinance (Chapter 101 of the Laws of Malta), when he was not in possession of any valid and subsisting authorisation granted in pursuance of the said law.

Wherefore, the Attorney General, in his capacity, accused Daniel Alexander Holmes of having on the nineteenths (19th) June of the year two thousand and six (2006) and in the preceding six months by

several acts even though committed at different times but constituting a violation of the same provisions of law and committed in pursuance of the same design, guilty of cultivating the plant Cannabis being a drug specified and controlled under the provisions of the Dangerous Drugs Ordinance (Chapter 101 of the Laws of Malta), demanded that the accused be proceeded against according to law, and that he be sentenced to the

punishment of imprisonment for life and to a fine of not less than two thousand three hundred and thirty Euro (€2,330) and not more than one

hundred sixteen thousand and five hundred Euro (€116,500) and to the forfeiture in favour of the Government of Malta of the entire immovable and movable property in which the offence took place as described in the bill of indictment. as is stipulated and laid down in sections 2, 8(c), 9, 10(1). 12, 14, 15(A), 20, 22(1)(a)(1B)(2)(a)(i)(3)(3A)(a)(b)(c)(d), and 26 of the Dangerous Drugs Ordinance and regulation 4 and 9 of the 1939 **Regulations for the** Internal control of Dangerous Drugs (Legal Notice

292/39), and in sections 17, 18, 20, 22, 23 and 533 of the Criminal Code or to any other punishment applicable according to law to the declaration of guilty of the accused.

After the Attorney General premised in the Third 3) Count of the Bill of Indictment that having illegally cultivated cannabis on the nineteenth (19th) June of the year two thousand and six (2006) in the Maltese Islands. the dangerous drua cannabis, as described under the previous Count of this Bill of Indictment. Daniel Alexander Holmes, decided to sell or otherwise deal or supply in the whole of any portion of the plant cannabis illegally.

In fact in execution of his plan, Daniel Alexander Holmes cultivated a large amount of cannabis plants in an empty room in his apartment and assisted their growth by watering them, providing shelter and lighting to assist their cultivation. By his own

admission, on more than one occasion, Daniel Alexander Holmes would intentionally deal in cannabis and supply another person, Barry Charles Lee, amongst others, with cannabis.

The amount of cannabis that was cultivated by Daniel Alexander Holmes was in the large amount of 1,063.1 grams, with a street value of \in 13,802.10 (previously Lm 5,923.64) which amount in itself is indicative of the fact that it was not solely for his personal use and was intended to be sold or otherwise dealt with in whole or in portion.

Cannabis is a dangerous drug specified and controlled under the provisions of Part I of the First Schedule of the Dangerous Drugs Ordinance. Daniel Alexander Holmes was not in possession of any valid and subsisting import authorisation granted in pursuance of the said law.

By committing the abovementioned acts with criminal intent, the accused Daniel Alexander Holmes rendered himself guilty of possession of a dangerous drug (cannabis), being a drug specified and controlled under the provisions of Part I of the First Schedule, of the Dangerous Drugs Ordinance (Chapter 101 of the Laws of Malta) when not in possession of any valid and subsisting

import or possession authorization granted in pursuance of the said law, and with intent to supply in that such possession was not for the exclusive use of the offender.

Wherefore, the Attorney General, in his capacity, accused Daniel Alexander Holmes of having on nineteenth (19th) June of the year two thousand and six (2006) in Malta and in the preceding six months, by several acts even though committed at different times but constituting a violation of the same provisions of law and committed in pursuance of the

same design, guilty of possession of a dangerous drug (cannabis), being a drug specified

and controlled under the provisions of Part I of the First Schedule of the Dangerous Drugs Ordinance (Chapter 101 of the Laws of Malta), when not in possession of any valid and subsisting import or

possession authorization granted in pursuance of the said law, and with intent to supply the same in that such possession was not for the exclusive use of the offender; demanded that the accused be against according to law, and that he proceeded be sentenced to the punishment of imprisonment for life and to a fine of not less than two thousand hundred and thirty Euro (€2,330) and not three more than one hundred sixteen thousand and five hundred Euro (€116,500) and to the forfeiture in favour of the Government of Malta of the entire immovable and movable property in which the offence took place as described in the bill of indictment, as is stipulated and laid down in sections 2, 8(b)(e), 9, 10(1), 12, 14, 15(A), 20, 22(1)(a)(1B)(2)(a)(i)(3)(3A)(a)(b)(c)(d) and 26 of

the Dangerous Drugs Ordinance and regulation 4 and 9 of the 1939 Regulations for the Internal control of Dangerous Drugs (Legal Notice 292/39), and in sections 17, 18, 20, 22, 23 and 533 of the Criminal Code or to any other punishment

applicable according to law to the declaration of guilty of the accused.

4) After the Attorney General premised in the Fourth Count of the Bill of Indictment that owing to the nature of the circumstances which took place

on the nineteenth (19th) June of the year two thousand and six (2006) and during the preceding six months, as indicated in the previous Counts of

this Bill of Indictment, as well as on the basis of an admission by the accused himself, it transpired that the accused Daniel Alexander Holmes,

wilfully and knowingly, had possession of a large number of the whole or any portion of the plant cannabis in his residence in Gozo.

That after the Police investigated the accused Daniel Alexander Holmes at his residence at Sydney Flat 2, Gudja Road, Ghajnsielem Gozo where he was a tenant, the Police after conducting a search of the premises found an empty room full of pots, some of which had cannabis plants at different stages of growth. The room was fully equipped with the necessary lighting and other equipment used for the artificial growth of cannabis plants.

The amount of the cannabis plant involved was a large amount of 1,063.1 grams, with a street value of \in 13,802.10 (previously Lm 5,923.64) which itself indicates from such high amount that the drug was found in circumstances denoting that it was not for his personal use.

Cannabis is a dangerous drug specified and controlled under the provisions of Part I of the First Schedule of the Dangerous Drugs Ordinance (Chapter 101 of the Laws of Malta). Daniel Alexander Holmes was not in possession of any valid and subsisting import or possession authorization granted in pursuance of the Dangerous Drugs Ordinance (Chapter 101 of the Laws of Malta).

By committing the abovementioned acts with criminal intent, Daniel Alexander Holmes rendered himself guilty of the offence of possession of a dangerous drug (cannabis) into Malta, under such circumstances that such possession was not for the exclusive use of the offender.

Wherefore, the Attorney General, in his capacity, accused Daniel Alexander Holmes of having on the nineteenth (19th) June of the year two thousand and six (2006) and in the preceding six months, by several acts even though committed at different times but constituting a violation of the same provisions of law and committed in pursuance of the same design,

guilty of possession of a dangerous drug (cannabis grass), being a drug specified and

controlled under the provisions of Part I of the First

Schedule, of the Dangerous Drugs Ordinance (Chapter 101 of the Laws of Malta), when not in possession of any valid and subsisting import or

possession authorization granted in pursuance of the said law, and with intent to supply the same in that such possession was not for the exclusive use of the offender; demanded that the accused be proceeded against according to law, and that he be sentenced to the punishment of imprisonment for life and to fine of not less than two thousand three

hundred and thirty Euro (€2,330) and not more than one hundred and sixteen thousand and five hundred Euro (€116,500) and to the forfeiture in

favour of the Government of Malta of the entire property immovable and movable in which the offence took place as described in the bill of indictment, as is stipulated and laid down in 21. sections 2, 8(d), 9, 10(1), 12, 20. 22(1)(a)(2)(a)(i)(3)(3A)(a)(b)(c)(d) and 26 of the Dangerous Drugs Ordinance and regulation 4(a), 8 and 9 of the 1939 Regulations for the Internal control of Dangerous Drugs (Legal Notice 292/39), and in sections 17, 18, 20, 22, 23 and 533 of the Criminal Code or to any other punishment applicable according to law to the declaration of guilty of the accused.

5) After the Attorney General premised in the Fifth Indictment that owing to the Count of the Bill of nature of the circumstances which took place on the nineteenth (19th) June of the year two thousand and six (2006) and during the preceding six months, as indicated in the previous Counts of this Bill of Indictment, as well as on the basis of an admission by the accused himself, it transpired that the accused, wilfully and knowingly, had

possession of cannabis resin in his residence in Gozo.

That after the Police investigated the accused Daniel Alexander Holmes at his residence at

Sydney Flat 2, Gudja Road, Ghajnsielem, Gozo where he was a tenant, the Police after conducting a search of the premises found an empty room where cannabis resin was found in his possession.

Cannabis is a dangerous drug specified and controlled under the provisions of Part I of the First Schedule of the Dangerous Drugs Ordinance (Chapter 101 of the Laws of Malta). Daniel Alexander Holmes was not in possession of any valid and subsisting import or possession authorization granted in pursuance of the Dangerous Drugs Ordinance (Chapter 101 of the Laws of Malta).

By committing the abovementioned acts with criminal intent, Daniel Alexander Holmes rendered himself guilty of the offence of possession of a dangerous drug (cannabis resin) into Malta.

Wherefore, the Attorney General, in his capacity, accused Daniel Alexander Holmes of having on the nineteenth (19th) June of the year two thousand and six (2006) and in the preceding six months, by several acts even though committed at different times but constituting a violation of the same provisions of law and committed in pursuance of the same design,

guilty of possession of a dangerous drug (cannabis resin), being a drug specified and controlled under the provisions of Part I of the First

Schedule, of the Dangerous Drugs Ordinance (Chapter 101 of the Laws of Malta), when not in possession of any valid and subsisting import or

possession authorization granted in pursuance of the said law, demanded that the accused be proceeded against according to law, and that he be

sentenced to the punishment of imprisonment for life and to fine of not less than two thousand three hundred and thirty Euro ($\leq 2,330$) and not more than one hundred sixteen thousand and five hundred Euro ($\leq 116,500$) and to the forfeiture in favour of the Government of Malta of the entire immovable and movable property in which the offence took place

as described in the bill of indictment, as is stipulated and laid down in sections 2, 8(a), 9, 10(1), 12, 14, 20, 21, 22(1)(a)(2)(a)(i)(3)(3A)(a)(b)(c)(d) and 26 of the Dangerous Drugs Ordinance and regulation 4(a), 8 and 9 of the 1939 Regulations for the Internal control of Dangerous Drugs (Legal Notice 292/39), and in sections 17, 18, 20, 22, 23 and 533 of the Criminal Code or to any other punishment applicable according to law to the declaration of guilty of the accused.

Having seen all the records of the case, including those of the compilation of evidence before the Court of Magistrates (Malta) as a Court of Criminal Inquiry;

Having seen that in the sitting of the 21st November, 2011 the accused, in reply to the question as to whether he was guilty or not guilty of the charges preferred against him under the three counts of the Bill of Indictment, stated that he was pleading guilty thereto;

Having seen that this Court then warned the accused in the most solemn manner of the legal consequences of such statement and allowed him a short time to retract it, according to Section 453 (Chap. 9);

Having seen that the accused being granted such a time, persisted in his statement of admission of guilt;

Now therefore declares Daniel Alexander Holmes guilty of all five counts in the Bill of Indictment, namely :-

1. on the 19th June, 2006, and during the preceding six months, by several acts even though committed at different times but constituting a violation of the same provisions of law and committed in pursuance of the same design, guilty of meaning to bring or causing to be brought into Malta in any manner whatsoever a dangerous drug (cannabis), being a drug specified and controlled under the

provisions of Part I of the First Schedule, of the Dangerous Drugs Ordinance (Chapter 101 of the Laws of Malta), when he was not in possession of any valid and subsisting import authorisation granted in pursuance of the said law, and this according to the First Count of the Bill of Indictment;

2. on the 19th June, 2006, and in the preceding six months by several acts even though committed at different times but constituting a violation of the

same provisions of law and committed in pursuance of the same design, guilty of cultivating the plant Cannabis being a drug specified and controlled under the provisions of the Dangerous Drugs Ordinance (Chapter 101 of the Laws of Malta), and this according to the Second Count of the Bill of Indictment;

3. on the 19th June, 2006, and in the preceding six months, by several acts even though committed at different times but constituting a violation of the same provisions of law and committed in pursuance of the same design, guilty of possession of a dangerous drug (cannabis), being a drug specified and controlled under the provisions of Part I of the First

Schedule of the Dangerous Drugs Ordinance (Chapter 101 of the Laws of Malta), when not in possession of any valid and subsisting import or possession authorization granted in pursuance of the said law, and with intent to supply the same in that such possession was not for the exclusive use of the offender, and this according to the Third Count of the Bill of Indictment;

4. on the 19th June, 2006, and in the preceding six months, by several acts even though committed at different times but constituting a violation of the

same provisions of law and committed in pursuance of the same design, guilty of possession of a dangerous drug (cannabis grass), being a drug specified and controlled under the provisions of Part I of the First Schedule, of the Dangerous Drugs Ordinance (Chapter 101 of the Laws of Malta), when not in possession of any valid and subsisting import or possession authorization granted in pursuance of the said law, and with intent to supply the same in that such possession was not for the exclusive use of the offender, and this according to the Fourth Count of the Bill of Indictment;

on the 19th June, 2006 and in the preceding 5. six months, by several acts even though committed at different times but constituting a violation of the same provisions of law and committed in pursuance of the same design, guilty of possession of a dangerous drug (cannabis resin), being a drug specified and controlled under the provisions of Part I of the First Schedule, of the Dangerous Drugs Ordinance (Chapter 101 of the Laws of Malta), when not in possession of any valid and subsisting import or possession authorization granted in pursuance of the said lawand this according to the Fifth Count of the Bill of Indictment.

Having considered local and foreign case law regarding a reduction in the punishment when the accused registers an early guilty plea, thereby avoiding useless work and expenses for the administration of justice (Vide "Ir-Repubblika ta' Malta vs. Nicholas Azzopardi", Criminal Court, [24.2.1997]; "Il-Pulizija vs. Emmanuel Testa", Court of Criminal Appeal, [7.7.2002] and BLACKSTONE'S CRIMINAL PRACTICE, (Blackstone Press Limited – 2001 edit.);

As was held by the Court of Criminal Appeal in its judgement in the case

"Ir-Repubblika ta' Malta vs. Mario Camilleri" [5.7.2002], an early guilty plea does not always necessarily and as of right entitle the offender to a reduction in the punishment.

The general rules which should guide the Courts in cases of early guilty pleas were outlined by the Court of Criminal Appeal in its preliminary judgement in the case : "Ir-Repubblika ta' Malta vs. Nicholas Azzopardi", [24.2.1997]; and by the Court of Criminal Appeal in its judgement "II-Pulizija vs. Emmanuel Testa", [17.7.2002]. In the latter judgement that Court had quoted from

BLACKSTONE'S CRIMINAL PRACTICE , (Blackstone Press Limited – 2001 edit. ecc.) :-

"Although this principle [that the length of a prison sentence is normally reduced in the light of a plea of guilty] is very well established , the extent of the appropriate "discount" has never been fixed. In Buffery ([1992] 14 Cr. App. R. (S) 511) Lord Taylor CJ indicated that "something in the order of one-third would very often be an appropriate discount", but much depends on the facts of the case and the timeliness of the plea. In determining the extent of the discount the court may have regard to the strength of the case against the offender . An offender who voluntarily surrenders himself to the police and admits a crime which could not otherwise be proved may be entitled to more than the usual discount. (Hoult (1990) 12 Cr. App. R. (S) 180; Claydon (1993) 15 Cr. App. R. (S) 526) and so may an offender who , as well as pleading guilty himself, has given evidence against a co-accused (Wood [1997] 1 Cr. App. R. (S) 347) and/or given significant help to the authorities (Guy [1992] 2 Cr. App. R. (S) 24). Where an offender has been caught red handed and a guilty plea is inevitable, any discount may be reduced or lost (Morris [1998] 10 Cr. App. R. (S) 216; Landy [1995] 16 Cr. App. R. (S) 908). Occasionally the discount may be refused or reduced for other reasons , such as where the accused has delayed his plea in an attempt to secure a tactical advantage (Hollington [1985] 85 Cr. App. R. 281; Okee [1998] 2 Cr. App. R. (S) 199.) Similarly, some or all of the discount may be lost where the offender pleads guilty but adduces a version of the facts at odds with that put forward by the prosecution, requiring the court to conduct an inquiry into the facts (Williams [1990] 12 Cr. App. R. (S) 415.) The leading case in this area is Costen [1989] 11 Cr. App. R. (S) 182, where the Court of Appeal confirmed that the discount may be lost in any of the following circumstances : (i) where the protection of the public made it necessary that a long sentence, possibly the maximum sentence, be

passed; (ii) cases of 'tactical plea', where the offender delayed his plea until the final moment in a case where he could not hope to put up much of a defence, and (iii) where the offender has been caught red-handed and a plea of guilty was practically certain"

Having considered that, for purposes of punishment, the crimes falling under the first. the second, and the fifth counts of the Bill of Indictment should be absorbed in the offence of unlawful possession of drugs under circumstances which indicate that said drugs were not intended for the exclusive use of the offender, contemplated in the third Count and the fourth count of the Bill of Indictment, as they served as a means to an end for the commission of the offence under the said third Count and fourth counts of the Bill of Indictment in terms of Section 17 (h) of the Criminal Code (Chap.9);

Having seen Sections 2, 7, 8(a)(b)(c)(d)(e), 9, 10(1), 12, 14, 15, 15(A)(1), 20, 21, 22(1)(a)(1B)(2)(a)(i)(3)(3A)(a)(b)(c)(d) and 26 of the Dangerous Drugs Ordinance (Chap.101); Regulations 4, 4(a), 8 and 9 of the 1939 Regulations for the Internal Control of Dangerous Drugs (L.N. 292/1939) and Sections 17, 18, 20, 22, 23 and 533 of the Criminal Code ;

Having seen the submissions made by the Defence and by the Prosecution which were briefly the following:

(a) The Defence submitted that the defendant had lived to smoke cannabis and had even lost his job. Now he has a three month old daughter, has managed to kick the habit and is settling down. At one moment he was on the point of dying. The defence added that nobody was hurt in the process and that the defendant was only trying to satisfy his addiction. The defendant had wasted his life as a junkie and this was

a case where the principle 'the quality of mercy is not strained' should apply.

(b) The Prosecution submitted that the defendant had planted the cannabis plant with intent to share the produce. The amount involved (1063 grammes) was the dry weight of the product. Some plants were a metre high and this means that they had been sown about four months before. There were also packets ready for distribution. The defendant had been paying a substantial sum of money for the rent of the premises and this at time when he was not working. The Prosecution was also skeptical about the extent (if any) of the defendant's drug addiction.

The Court considered many other cases where a guilty plea was filed or where no guilty plea was filed, and where the amount of cannabis involved was substantial. But cases may be similar but not necessarily identical. The amount of drugs indicated in particular bills of indictment may be very close but from then on each case has its own story.

The Court. after having considered all the the defence submissions made by and the prosecution and after conducting the exercise mentioned in the preceding paragraph, now therefore condemns the said Daniel Alexander Holmes to a term of imprisonment of ten years and six months (10) years and 6 months), and to the payment of a fine (multa) of twenty three thousand €23,000 Euros, which fine (multa) shall be converted into a further term of imprisonment of one year according to Law, in default of payment ;

Furthermore condemns him to pay the sum of one thousand, seven hundred and thirty seven Euros and seventy four Euro cents (€1737.74) being the sum total of the expenses incurred in the appointment of Court Experts in this case in terms of Section 533 of Chapter 9 of the Laws of Malta;

Furthermore, orders the forfeiture in favour of the Government of Malta of all the property involved in the said crimes of which he has been found guilty and other movable and immovable property belonging to the said Daniel Alexander Holmes

And finally orders the destruction of all the objects exhibited in Court, consisting of the dangerous drugs or objects related to the abuse of drugs, which destruction shall be carried out by the chemist Godwin Sammut, under the direct supervision of the Deputy Registrar of this Court, who shall be bound to report in writing to this Court when such destruction has been completed, unless the Attorney General files a note within fifteen days declaring that said drugs are required in evidence against third parties.

< Final Judgement >

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