

Pathologists clash over Timol

Police evidence queried

THE medical assessor in the Timol inquest yesterday told the forensic pathologist assisting the Police, Professor H. Koch, that his evidence was self-contradictory.

Mr. S. A. Cilliers, for the police, had earlier told the court that he had consulted Professor Koch as parts of the evidence of Dr. N. J. Schepers, senior State pathologist in Johannesburg, were detrimental to the police case.

Prof. Simson, the assessor, told Prof. Koch that his evidence was self-contradictory during 45 minutes of intensive questioning in the Johannesburg Regional Court yesterday.

Prof. Koch had just given evidence — in conflict with that of the other two pathologists — that the five pre-death abrasions on Mr. Timol's body were at least nine to 12 days old.

Prof. Simson, professor of pathology at Pretoria University, is assisting the magistrate, Mr. J. J. L. de Villiers, in the inquest into the death of the 30-year-old schoolteacher, Mr. Ahmed Timol, who fell 10 floors to his death from John Vorster Square last year.

Prof. Koch was quizzed by the assessor before the legal representatives had an opportunity for cross-examination.

Prof. Koch had found that the abrasions were eight to ten days old on the basis of some indications (used by the other doctors) but from other factors he had found that the wounds were nine to 12 days old, or more.

Feature

Prof. Simson pointed out that a particular skin feature — one of the factors mentioned by Prof. Koch as establishing the nine to 12-day age — had not been found by the other doctors.

Prof. Simson put to Prof. Koch that the scabs found on the wounds would not have been there if they were 12 days old. Rather, they pointed to a five-day age on the authorities Prof. Koch was using.

"If you are going to be consistent, where scab is still present, you must refer to a five- to 12-day period," Prof. Simson said.

In later cross-examination by Mr. I. Maisels, QC, for the Timol family, Prof. Koch maintained that in his opinion the abrasions were nine to 12 days old, or more.

This was in spite of the fact that both the State pathologist, Dr. N. J. Schepers, and the independent pathologist, Dr. J. Gluckman, who had attended the post-mortem examination on behalf of the Timol family, had put the abrasions in a four- to eight-day category in every case but one, where the age was put at four to 12 days.

The significance of the age differences, as the court has been told, is that injuries in the four- to eight-day group could have been incurred during Mr. Timol's four-and-a-half-day period of detention before his death.

Disagreement

The table shows the disagreement between pathologists' evidence.

Under cross-examination by Mr. Maisels, Prof. Koch said the fact that he had seen a skin condition (hyperplasia) which the other pathologists had not, could possibly be explained by different usage of terminology.

Mr. Maisels asked Prof. Koch to quote the authorities on which he relied to establish age of wounds from hyperplasia.

Earlier yesterday, Dr. Gluckman said that the bruises on Mr. Timol's arms could have been caused by the fingers of a hand, though he had not found thumb-marks which he would have expected.

However, there was one mark lower down on the left arm which could have been caused by a thumb, he said.

Dr. Gluckman said he did not believe that the wounds could have been self-inflicted, as Dr. Schepers had suggested was possible.

Before the court rose the magistrate subpoenaed a Rand Daily Mail reporter to give evidence today regarding a statement reported to have been made by CID chief, Major-General C. A. Buys, shortly after Mr. Timol's death.

The hearing continues today.

HOW THEY DIFFER

ABRASIONS	DR. SCHEPERS (State)	DR. GLUCKMAN (Independent)	PROF. KOCH (Police)
Right shoulder	4-8 days	4-8 days	9-12 days or more
Right thigh	4-8 days	4-8 days	9-12 days or more
Right elbow	4/5-8 days	4-8 days	9-12 days or more
Right shoulder-blade	4-12 days	4-12 days	9-12 days or more
Left forearm	4-8 days	4-8 days	9-12 days or more