

Essop  
says: 'I  
would  
join  
Progs'

#### Pretoria Bureau

GIVING evidence in his own defence, Mr M. S. Essop said that the Pro-gressive Party was active in establishing a dialogue between White and non-White. This was being done at national and inter-national level and he favoured this, Mr Essop said.

Mr Mohamid Salim Essop (22), Mr Younis Hassan Essack (21), Mr Indhrasen Moodley (27) and Mrs Amina Desai, all Indians, have pleaded not guilty to a charge under the Terrorism Act and alternative charges under the Terrorism and Suppression of Communism Acts. They are appearing in the Old Synagogue, Pretoria, before Mr Justice Snyman.

Questioned by counsel for his defence, Mr J. Browde, SC, Mr Essop said he had told the dead detainee, Mr Ahmed Timol, that he did not like communism.

Mr Essop described fully to the court his attitude to the various political philosophies.

#### RECALLED

Before opening his case, Mr Browde, SC, leading counsel for Mr Essop, asked that the witness, Mr D. Naik and his cousin, Mr T. Naik, be recalled. Both had earlier given evidence for the State.

Mr D. Naik said Mr Essop and Mr Timol, the dead detainee, had approached him about getting a contact at the Department of Bantu Affairs.

Mr Browde: Mr Essop will say that he never heard Mr Timol ask you to get a contact. Mr Naik: They did.

Mr Browde: Mr Essop will also deny that he ever asked you to get politically inclined Africans to talk to.

Mr Naik: He did. Mr Browde told Mr Naik that another accused, Mr Essack, would deny being asked by Mr Timol to do him a favour by getting reference books.

When Mr T. Naik was called, Mr Browde told him that Mr Essop would say that he had delivered a talk on art at the

# Evidence by Essop

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home of another accused, Mrs Amina Desai. He would deny, though, that he had said that placards or correspondence played a part in art.

Mr Naik said he did not remember.

The first defence witness called by Mr Browde was Mr Essop, one of the accused. He told the court of his education at the Roodepoort Indian School.

At high school, Mr Timol was his commerce teacher. "We found him a stimulating teacher," Mr Essop said.

At the end of 1965, Mr Timol told his classes he was going to study further in England and Mr Essop did not see him again until 1970.

At university, Mr Essop's interests included the University Students' Bursary Committee, which provided funds for Black students anywhere in the world.

The committee had more than R20 000 and, at the time of his arrest, Mr Essop was chairman.

His interest in photography had developed at school, where he had bought a book entitled "Photography for Boys and Girls."

In the meantime he matriculated and studied medicine at the University of the Witwatersrand.

In 1970, Mr Essop and his sisters went to a Fordsburg cinema. At the interval he went out for refreshments and bumped into Mr Timol who said he had returned from London and was again teaching at the Roodepoort Indian School.

Mr Essop used to commute to university by train and his route from his parents' house to the station led past Mr Timol's flat. They used to meet in the street.

Although he "loved studying medicine very much," he found it narrowing.

His discussions with Mr Timol at that time ranged over campus affairs and art. They did not discuss politics.

Mr Essop, Mr Timol and Mrs Desai once went to see the Janet Suzman show and, during his holidays of December 1970 and January 1971, he and Mr Timol used to go to cinemas and pubs. Both liked drinking beer.

After Mr Timol returned from a holiday in Durban, they began to discuss politics.

#### EQUALITY

"What we discussed was petty apartheid," said Mr Essop. Mr Timol spoke about his time in London and about his freedom of movement there.

"This led to criticism of the setup in South Africa, because in South Africa I was not free to go where I wanted to," Mr Essop said.

Describing the political discussions he had with Mr Timol, Mr Essop said that Mr Timol wanted equality in all aspects

of life and did not like apartheid at all.

Mr Timol did not favour capitalism either. He said it was a system of exploitation with too much emphasis on material things. In such a system, men lost their human values.

Mr Essop said that Mr Timol talked of communism in Russia and pointed out that there had been great technological and industrial progress there.

Mr Timol never advocated communism for South Africa, Mr Essop said.

Mr Essop said that he told Mr Timol that he found capitalism, with all its excesses, abhorrent. "What I liked was the socialist pattern of living."

In such a society there was democracy and government was by debate and discussion. In a welfare state, the emphasis was on the welfare of the people, with institutions such as compulsory free education.

Mr Essop said he did not like communism. "I told Timol that there was no democracy. It was a one-party system with government by decree and a regimentation of society. There was a destruction of the family institution. Personal liberty was crushed."

Mr Essop said he was particularly interested in the freedom of the individual. "In a communist country the individual was ironed out and made to conform and made to fit into a social unit."

Mr Timol had agreed with some of these criticisms but was more interested in industrial and technological progress.

Mr Timol did not give the impression that he was politically active and had never advocated change by violent means.

Mr Essop said he abhorred any form of violence and felt there was an alternative for change. In South Africa there was room for dialogue between the races and this was what the Progressive Party was doing, nationally and internationally.

"If I were allowed to become a member of the Progressive Party, I would do so," said Mr Essop.

He would have disassociated himself from Mr Timol if he thought that Mr Timol was striving for change through illegal means.

Mr Essop explained how he had obtained an abridged version of Karl Marx's "Das Kapital."

He said he had noticed it while browsing through a Hill-brow bookshop near the medical school and had bought it because he thought that it would add to his knowledge. He had never read further than the introduction by the book's editor, who was critical of Marx.

Mr Essop said that Mr Timol had no right to assume that he was a likely recruit for the Communist Party.

(Proceedings)