

Timol reluctant on lift-witness

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MR AHMED TIMOL, the dead teacher, seemed reluctant to have Mrs Amina Desai go with him on October 22 last year. Later that night he was arrested with hundreds of illegal pamphlets in the boot of the car he was driving.

Mrs Desai, one of the accused at the Pretoria terrorism trial, is the owner of the car which Mr Timol was driving when arrested.

She told the court today that when she heard that Mr Timol was going to Newclare in her car that night, she told him that it suited her because she wanted to see a dressmaker there.

Mrs Desai said that Mr Timol "appeared reluctant to have me along."
Mr Timol later died in police detention.

Mrs Desai (51), a Roo-depoort businesswoman, Mr Mohamed Salim Essop (22), a medical student at the University of Witwatersrand, Mr Yousof Hassan Essack (22), a clerk and Mr Indhrasen Moodley, a pharmacy lecturer at the University of Durban, Westville, have all pleaded not guilty to a main charge under the Terrorism Act and to alternative charges under the Terrorism Act and Suppression of Communism Act.

Mr Justice Snyman is presiding in the Old Synagogue, Pretoria.

Cross-examined by Mr K. von Lieres, for the State, Mrs Desai said that Mr Timol asked whether she could not go to the dressmaker the next night.

She had said that the next night would be a Saturday and that the dressmaker might not be there.

Mrs Desai said she only used her car about twice a week.

Mr von Lieres: Didn't his manner and his reluctance cause you to be suspicious?

Mrs Desai: I thought he

may be taking a girlfriend out. Mrs Desai said that in her community it was "never the done thing" to take girls out. A marriage was arranged by parents, she said.

Mr Timol had a set of keys for the car and used to drive her around sometimes, she said.

Mrs Desai had also arranged for her former driver to teach Mr Timol to drive her car.

Mr von Lieres: Why were you so keen for Mr Timol to learn to drive?

Mrs Desai: He asked me. I knew he could drive. I thought that since he was always around he would probably drive the car without my knowing if he wanted to. It was better that he got expert guidance.

Mr von Lieres: But he could not have driven the car if you did not provide him with the keys.

Mrs Desai: Well, no.

PAID COSTS

Mrs Desai said she paid all the running, maintenance and repair costs of the car. Mr Timol had once offered to help, but she had refused because she did not pay him for driving her around.

Mrs Desai said that she told Mr Timol not to have Mr Essop in her car. This was because she knew that Mr Essop's parents did not approve of their son's association with Mr Timol, and Mrs Desai feared that if they know their son was out with Mr Timol in her car, they would think she encouraged their relationship.

After Mr Essop had been "disrespectful" to her, she also asked Mr Timol not to bring him to her house again.

Mr von Lieres asked Mrs Desai what she understood by the term "freedom movement". She said it was a phrase used by many people.

Mr von Lieres: I want to put it to you that the freedom movement is very much alive (in South Africa).

Mrs Desai: It appears so, from the evidence before the court.

She said she received a copy of the "organ of the central committee of the South African Communist Party" Inkululeko, through the post. She was not wearing spectacles at the time.

She tore it and threw it away. Answering a question, she said she did not think that the authorities might be interested in receiving such a pamphlet.

Mr von Lieres asked Mrs Desai why she did not tear the pamphlet completely and showed her a court exhibit—a half-torn copy of Inkululeko. She said she may have had second thoughts and decided to read it after all. She could not be certain now.

Mr von Lieres referred to the bottles of chemicals found by police in Mrs Desai's home. Earlier she had told the court that once, while she was in the garage, a carton, belonging to her sister, collapsed.

She took bottles she found inside the carton and put them in her pantry.

Earlier evidence was that some of these chemicals could be used to decipher invisible writing.

Mr von Lieres said he found it strange that Mrs Desai should place chemicals, which could have been dangerous, among foods on the lower shelves of her pantry.