

S.A. SOCIETY FOR PEACE AND FRIENDSHIP WITH THE
SOVIET UNION

SECTION A: Allegations against SPFSU (From Outline of prosecution case 2021.12.56)

SECTION B: Character and History of Society

A. ALLEGATIONS AGAINST SPFSU

1. In his outline of 20/21.12.56 Mr. van Niekerk referred to the the SAPFSU as one of the "certain associations" including the ANC, SAIC, SACOD, SACPO and SACTU, "which are commonly called the national liberation movement". He said that the case arises out of certain activities" of these associations.
2. "At the conference of the People's Congress at Kliptown on 25th and 26.6.55 the SASPFSU distributed the pamphlet "South Africans in the Soviet Union" edited by Ruth First. (Outline page 48).
3. "This Society is responsible for the distribution of literature giving the contemporary line of communist policy, stressing the peace-loving nature of the Soviet Union, stressing the war-mongering policy of American and British imperialism, fighting all forms of colonialism and colonial oppression, exalting the positions in the Soviet Union and the satellite countries." (page 48).
4. "The various^U members (of the society) supported the COP and the Freedom Charter, or supported the national liberation movement in advocating changes and the methods under which these are to be obtained" (Page 48)
5. "A message from the Transvaal Peace Council to the S.A. Society for Peace and Friendship is cited "We welcome particular participation of the youth in the struggle for peace. We sympathise with the oppressed people in British Guiana". The outline goes on quoting material which has obviously no connection with the SPFSU (Pages 48 and 49).
6. The outline refers to speeches at a meeting held by the SPFSU on 7.11.56. The speeches refer to conditions in Russia, Soviet foreign policy, Soviet-Hungarian relations etc. (Pages 49 and 50).

B. CHARACTER AND HISTORY OF THE SASPFSU.

1. The Society formerly known as "The Friends of the Soviet Union" (FSU) which subsequently changed its name to the SPFSU, was formed in 1931 or 1932 at a meeting convened in the Johannesburg Trades Hall. Similar societies had been founded at about the time or earlier in a number of western countries. Those forming such societies, including the FSU, were by no means all communists. Nor was their object to advocate the system prevailing in the USSR, and still less to propose that similar systems be established abroad. But it was felt that the Russian people had a right to decide their own way of life, and it was feared (not without reason) that efforts were being planned to initiate warlike intervention against Russia. Conservative and reactionary governments in the west feared lest the Russian example might subvert their own working classes. Organs of public information such as the press and the radio presented violently distorted versions of Soviet life and policy with the object, it was feared, of building up war hysteria. In these conditions the objects of the society were to obtain and present accurate and factual information about the Soviet Union, and to work for the establishment of normal diplomatic, cultural and commercial ties between the Soviet Union and the outside world.

2. These objects of the Society were reiterated time and again throughout the course of the Society's existence. They are contained in the Society's Constitution (Exhibit not available). They are expressed in the resolution of May, 1948, taken by the annual general meeting which changed the Society's name. The resolution expresses the view that "friendship with the U.S.S.R. is the key to the maintenance of world peace" and

"calls for a concerted effort by all democrats and friends of peace to see that normal diplomatic and trade relationships are established without further delay between S.A. and the U.S.S.R."

On 17.6.50 the Society issued a statement signed by its Chairman, Rev. Thompson, "emphatically denying" a Statement made in the House of Assembly by Swart, "to the effect that our Society is a "subsidiary of the Communist Party". The statement continued:

"Our Society, as its name indicates, exists solely for the purpose of promoting understanding and better relations between our own country and the Soviet Union. The Society is controlled by its own members and their democratically elected officers; and by no one else.

"Membership of the Society is not confined to persons of any particular outlook; it includes South Africans of all shades of political opinion whose common aim is that of world peace and amity among the nations. Among our patrons are eminent men

and women of varied political beliefs. Members of Parliament, including Labour, United Party and Independent representatives, and eminent clergymen and professional persons.

"I therefore declare Mr. Swart's statement to be completely unfounded.

In August 1954, Rev. Thompson wrote to Mr. Swart (in the course of a correspondence protesting against a police raid on a public meeting on 8.2.54)

"Our Society is a completely non-partisan and non-party political organisation which has for many years devoted itself to perfectly legal activities in favour of peaceful diplomatic, commercial and cultural relations with the Soviet Union".

- "For Peace and Friendship" August 1954.

In January 1955, protesting against the banning of the Society's secretary, Mrs. Molly Fischer, the Society stated that her

"sole crime has been to advocate, as Secretary of the Society, its policy of better cultural, commercial and diplomatic relations between South Africa and the Soviet Union".

- "For Peace and Friendship" Jan/Feb 1955.

In November 1955, the Report to the annual general meeting of the society stated, inter alia:

"The S.A. Society for Peace and Friendship with the Soviet Union is specifically limited to those objectives which are clearly defined in its name".

3. ACTIVITIES:

The activities of the Society have invariably been of an open and public nature, in furtherance of its oft-publicised aims. They have consisted in the main of public meetings and lectures, concerts of Soviet music, showing of Soviet films, and the publication and/or distribution of books pamphlets and leaflets printed in this country or abroad which support the general viewpoint of the Society, or which contain information about Soviet life, developments in the U.S.S.R. or matters of Soviet policy which are of general interest.

During the war years, and specially after the German aggression against the USSR on June 22, 1941, when the Russians became major allies in the war against the Axis, the Society's activities expanded greatly. The rapid collapse of the Red Army, freely predicted by inveterately anti-Soviet politicians and journalists in the West (and vigorously denied by the Society) did not take place. Instead the Soviet Union demonstrated an extraordinary capacity for resistance. This was followed by an unprecedented public demand for information about Russia, which the Society did its utmost to satisfy. Meetings,

film-shows, concerts, lectures were constantly being held throughout the country. The Society launched a Fund for Medical Aid to Russia which met with a warm and ready response from the public. A big "Southern Africa-Soviet Friendship Congress" initiated by the Society, was held at the Witwatersrand University in July 1944. It was opened by the Minister of Finance, Mr. J.H. Hofmeyr, and attended by "members of the Diplomatic Corps, representatives of the Church, the Army, education, the trade unions and other aspects of public life." (The Star: 7.7.44) The Prime Minister, General Smuts, sent an important message to the Congress which is worth citing extensively, since it well expresses the attitude of the authorities to the Society and its work, at that time:

"I am glad to have returned from overseas in time to send a message of encouragement and good wishes for the success of the Southern Africa-Soviet Friendship Congress. I welcome this meeting to promote the spirit of friendship and co-operation between the peoples of Southern Africa and the Soviet peoples.

We are rapidly approaching the time when the difficulties and dangers of war will be superseded by immense problems of making peace and reconstructing and rehabilitating stricken Europe. In war, the Russian colossus has played a mighty part in achieving victory, in peace the influence of the Soviet Union will be immense.

It is vitally important for humanity and civilisation that there should be co-operation, good will and understanding among the Allies as they approach the common task of building up, amid the ruins of the old world, a new international community, which while preserving those things in our heritage that are worthwhile, tried and trusted, will also accept and develop new ideas for the permanent benefit of the human race."

NEW IDEALS

Soviet Russia in the past generation has been a fountain of new ideas and new principles - not all of them readily acceptable to everybody, but many of it progressive and of real value to State-craft in every part of the world. We can learn much from Soviet Russia in the pursuits of peace and progress, just as we have found unsuspected strength in Soviet Russia at war.

Ignorance and prejudice are the enemies of tolerance, friendship and co-operation and nothing but good can come from the continuous exchange of information, helping, as it must, the establishment of a common understanding on which we can hope to build a happier, broader and more enlightened civilisation".

Apart from the Congress (which was addressed, inter alia, by the Deputy Mayor (Mr. Immink), Mrs. P.M. Anderson, the Bishop of

Pretoria, Mr. A.J. Downes (then president of the Trades and Labour Council) Mr. H.R. Raikes, (Principal of the University) and other well known personalities, the activities of the Society were sponsored by many leading figures in all walks of South African life at that time. Among them were:

Dr. C.S. Steyn, Minister of Justice
 Sir Godfrey Huggins
 Judge Feetham
 Bishop Lavis
 the late H.R. Henderson, M.P.
 the late Walter Madely (then
 Minister of Labour)
 M.J. v.d. Bergh, M.P. (now Nat.,
 then Labour)
 M. Kentridge, M.P.

Many more names could be added to this list which in fact included principal figures in music, literature, art, religion, and all the political parties of South Africa with the exception of the Nationalist Party.

In addition to the above-mentioned activities the Society launched a nation-wide campaign for an exchange of diplomatic representatives between the two countries. Tremendous support was received for this campaign, but though it in the end it received a Soviet Consul the Union Government never reciprocated by sending a representative to Moscow. In 1956 the Nationalist Government closed the Soviet Consulates in Johannesburg and Cape Town.

During the post-war period the work of the Society has encountered increasingly grave obstacles, arising out of (a) the so-called "cold war" period, and (b) the open hostility of the Nationalist Government. The well known sponsors withdrew their support. The columns of the daily press were closed to the Society's statements. Public Halls were refused to the Society. The special branch of the police were seldom absent from the Society's functions. Many of the members, influenced perhaps by the new wave of anti-Soviet propaganda or intimidated by the Government, fell away. Nevertheless a section of the Society's members, not forgetting the debit of gratitude the world owed to the Soviet Union's part in the defeat of Hitlerism, and feeling that in the new situation the Society's efforts were not less but more needed than ever, continues obstinately with the work of spreading the message of the SPFSU. The Society had to cease publication of its magazine "Soviet Russia". It had to dispense one by one with the services of its full-time employees. It had even to close its office. Meetings became fewer. The branches in Cape Town, Durban, the East Rand and elsewhere ceased to function. But at no time did the Society cease operating, and its work in the most recent period will be dealt with separately.

SECTION C: THE SOCIETY AND THE NATIONALIST
PARTY.

1. The Society has no special attitude towards the Nationalist Party or towards any other political party. But the Nationalist Party has consistently adopted an attitude of considerable hostility towards the SPFSU. During the war period, the Nationalist opposition which was sympathetic to Nazi Germany attacked the Government on the ground that its Ministers were favouring the Society and in particular the S.A. Soviet Friendship Congress (see para above). The present Prime Minister asked a question in the House saying that the DRC disapproved of Communism and what did they mean by it. The Prime Minister replied as follows: (Star 9.3.45)

The Prime Minister said his attention had been directed to a letter dated March 1, 1945, and a memorandum sent out by the Southern Africa-Soviet Friendship Congress announcing that the organisation proposed to launch a country-wide campaign demanding that the Union Government establish full diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union. He was aware that the memorandum asserted that the Union Government was not complying with international practice in its failure to establish a legation in Moscow and that this constituted "gross rudeness".

He had extended his patronage to a Southern Africa-Soviet Friendship Congress held in Johannesburg in June last year, and other Ministers had undoubtedly done the same. Whatever might be the attitude of the three representative Dutch Reformed Churches and other institutions towards Communism, he considered it in the interests of South Africa that the bonds of friendship with the Soviet Union should be maintained and strengthened where possible. If certain "judges, administrators and highly-placed officials in the Government Service" were of the opinion that the continuance of their patronage would promote friendship between the Union of South Africa and the Soviet Union, he had no objection to their continuing to be patrons of the Southern Africa-Soviet Friendship Congress.

2. Since its accession to office the Nationalist Party has pursued this vendetta against the Society. It has falsely accused it of being a subsidiary of the former CPSA (see above) raided its offices, its Chairman (Rev. Thompson) and its Secretary (Mr. Barsel). Its meetings have been invaded by the

C.I.D., its literature impounded by the Customs, some of its executive members (e.g. ex-Secretary Molly Fischer) banned, and attempts made to intimidate its members.

3. The present inclusion of its leading officials among the accused is a continuation of this vendetta, and throws grave doubt on the whole proceedings at the Drill Hall.

The SAPFSU has never by any stretch of the imagination been a part of the "national liberation movement". It did not participate in the Congress of the people. It is not a Communist organisation. It has never done anything which is not a matter of public record - a legitimate and legal expression of its declared aims which no one - not even the present Government - could possibly brand as subversive.

SECTION D: THE ALLEGATIONS IN THE
"OUTLINE".

1. Page 33 Lines 8 - 13.

Starts 'The Congress' and ends 'Johannesburg'

The deduction on the political line of the Friends of the Soviet Union makes very queer reading. Obviously it does not emanate from "The Friends of the Soviet Union" as an organisation. The Friends of the Soviet Union changed their name to The S.A. Society for Peace and Friendship with the Soviet Union in May, 1948.

2. Page 47. Lines 25 - 29

It is possible that when they refer to the S.A. Peace Council they mean the Society for Peace and Friendship with the Soviet Union.

3. Page 48. Lines 10 - 16

Deals with the type of literature handled by us and stresses that it gives the Communist line and stresses the war-mongering policy of the Imperialist countries. Hereunder is a list of some of the literature handled by the Society (except local publications which are dealt with separately. Any of these publications can be submitted immediately if required.

PUBLICATIONS: -

"Bees" - a book dealing with the Biology of the Bee colony and achievements in Bee Science.

Selected Short Stories by Maxim Gorky. These were released by the Customs as "not objectionable".

Tales from M. Saltykov Schedrin - written before 1917.

Marriage and the Family in the U.S.S.R.

My Animal Friends - A Children's Book

Essays on the Patho Physiology of the Higher Nervous Activity - Medical

Pavlov Selected Works - Medical

Sport and Physical Culture in the U.S.S.R.

Painless Childbirth

The Hermitage Museum - A Short Guide

Ukrainian Folk Tales - a Children's Book

The Russian Museum - a Short Guide

The Tretyakov State Gallery

Soviet Health Services

A.P. Chekov by Vladimir Yermilov, the famous literary critics
Ulanova - illustrated with scenes from Ballets.

Russian Painting 1700 - 1917

Disarmament and Easing International Tension - statement by the
Soviet Government 17th November, 1956

Ropin - paintings

New Soviet Discoveries in the Arctic

Sounds we cannot Hear - Booklet on Science of inaudible sound

LIST OF REGULAR PUBLICATIONS HANDLED BY THE
SOCIETY.(Copies enclosed ~~if~~ available).VOKS - Bulletin of the Society for Cultural Relations with
Foreign Countries (Monthly)

Soviet Literature (Monthly)

NEWS A Soviet Review of World Events (Fortnightly)

LOCAL PUBLICATIONS (Copies enclosed)South Africans in the Soviet Union. Edited and published by Ruth
First - Distributed by the Society

Life is More Joyous by Brian Bunting

Special Information Bulletin on 20th Congress of the U.S.S.R.

The Stalin Cult - "What the Soviet Leaders Say"

U.S.S.R. & Hungary - advertised in the Star and New Age

U.S.S.R., Hungary and Poland. advertised in the Star and New Age

Other Bulletins: April 1953

Jan.Feb 1955 (includes a statement to
Minister of Justice on
banning of previous
Secretary)

March April, 1955

May June, 1955

Sept.Oct. 1955

November 1955

November 1956

4. PAGE 48. Lines 5 - 9

"South Africans in the Soviet Union" This pamphlet was edited and published by Ruth First. Our Society purchased a large quantity from her. We inserted a sticker on the inside cover which explains the aims and objects of the Society. About 1500 copies were sold at Congress of the People, and in addition it was advertised in "New Age" (A copy of the pamphlet is enclosed) We have always sold our literature where there is the biggest de-

and hence at C.O.P. because there was a large gathering and because of the multi racial appeal of the pamphlet.

5. Page 48. Lines 17 - 21

Referring to the fact that many members of our Society supported C.O.P. and the Freedom Charter, we do not know who these people are, but this is nevertheless conceivable, as we are a non political organisation and do not take part in the political affairs of this country, except where we as a Society are involved. Our members are not bound in any way to support any political ideology. That is their own affair. We have had members representing different political views, from supporters of the Nationalist Party to the extreme left.

6. Page 48. Lines 25 - 31 and Page 49. Lines 1 - 12

This seems to be a complete fabrication. No such message was received by us, nor is it clear on what occasion this message was supposed to have been sent. It is also inconceivable that the Peace Council would send us such a message.

7. Page 49. Lines 13 - 15

We do not know what message Sisulu was supposed to have sent us, nor what the occasion was.

Page 49. Lines 16 - 22

This refers to the Chairman's opening remarks at a meeting held at the Gandhi Hall, on November 7th to celebrate the 39th Anniversary of the Soviet Union. (SPEECH AVAILABLE)

8. Page 49. Line 22 to the end of the page. Page 50 Line 1-7

Refers to a speech made by Paul Joseph at the same meeting. Text of his speech is attached (not yet available)

9. Page 50. Lines 8 - 17

Speech by Duma Nokwe at the same meeting. Full speech in Special Bulletin "U.S.S.R. & Hungary" issued by the Society. Copy enclosed.

(11)

YOU MUST BE PRESENT

*AMK
70*

TO CELEBRATE THE
37TH ANNIVERSARY
OF THE

SOVIET UNION
BROADWAY CINEMA
(24 LOVERS' WALK - FORDSBURG
ON

SUNDAY 7TH NOVEMBER

AT 2 P.M.

THE SOVIET UNION IS A GREAT
FRIEND OF OUR FREEDOM

FACTS TO REMEMBER:

The Soviet Union consistently champions the cause of oppressed peoples at UNO and other international bodies.

Organisations in the Soviet Union invited Mr Sisulu and others as guests of honour when so-called "Western Democracies" refused them entry because they had no passports.

The Soviet Union has no colonies.

PLEASE TURN OVER.

*My Mother
Gekry by
Dair
27 March 1954*

(2)

The Soviet Union has consistently called for the banning of the atomic bomb and the Hydrogen bomb and other weapons of mass destruction.

The so-called "Western Democracies" have consistently "experimented" with these weapons on non-White peoples. E.G. Atomic and Hydrogen bombs on Japan - Napalm and Germ bombs on Korea.

YOU MUST BE THERE TO CELEBRATE
ON SUNDAY

ISSUED BY:-

- * YUSUF CACHALIA
- * ROBERT RESHA
- * A. M. KATHRADA
- * ELIAS MOTSOALEDI

Collection Number: AD1812

RECORDS RELATING TO THE 'TREASON TRIAL' (REGINA vs F. ADAMS AND OTHERS ON CHARGE OF HIGH TREASON, ETC.), 1956 1961

TREASON TRIAL, 1956 1961

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