

LFEP/017/0125/11

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Wednesday 22nd Jan. '92

Dear Ralph,

Herewith the Jack Simons tribute and the photo of Lionel, a Norwegian (?) delegate to the Unity Meeting in Bucharest whose name ³I cannot recall and Ahmed Kathrada who was working in Budapest at WFDY (World Fed. of Dem. Youyth). Thought this pic could go on the Frontispiece.

When you send the goods to Andre, please ask him to make sure that Ray Simons gets the photographs. She can get hold of Mildred Lesiah to check out the names of the Trade Unionists (?) Mildred will be able to pin-point the occasion as well as the names.

Also - maybe Andre can put off the launches (multiple) as they are) to May when it will be more certain that the Book could be ready. Ask him!

See ya,

MEMORIAL MEETING for LIONEL FORMAN - October 1959

Address by JACK SIMONS

Brothers, Sisters! We have come together to mourn Lionel's death, but we rejoice in his life. His life was like a shining sword pointed at the heart of injustice and oppression. Many here will live much longer than it was given to Lionel to do, but all of us would be glad if our lives could show as much achieved as he had accomplished. The tributes that have poured in from men and women of different races, political beliefs and organisations, throughout the country, testify to the grand scale of his achievements.

We think here of the qualities of courage and devotion that were needed to overcome the physical handicaps under which he laboured. Few of us, living ordinary, untrammelled lives, would find them easy to endure. He not only bore them with fortitude, but carried out important and exacting work in spite of his weakness and suffering. He found the strength for his efforts in his communism. For, as his last message proudly declared, he died as he had lived: a communist.

His message proclaimed a faith not only in the struggle against injustice and reaction, but in the positive vision of a future for all mankind, based on a society in which men would eliminate injustice and rivalries between races, colours and creeds. His vision was that of a society in which class privileges would be unknown, in which the threat of war would cease to harass people's minds, consume their resources, and breed suspicion and hatred.

Lionel was not only a communist, he was also a devoted South African. He felt deeply an urge to apply his principles to our own situation, and work out in terms of his basic philosophies an answer to the problems that have up to now held back our people from achieving the good and harmonious society to which all here assembled aspire. He thought of a South Africa that would be free of racial strife, and in which the hearts and minds of our peoples would join together in a common enterprise for the good of all.

I want to tell you something about these ideas, for they are going to capture the imagination of many South Africans in time to come. As you have been told, Lionel was working on a book before he died. It was to have been his major work. He had not got very far, but he did enough to enable him to see the outlines of the landscape on which he was engaged.

It was to have been a book about the origin and growth of the liberation movement in our country with special emphasis on African political movements. He hoped to penetrate into our traditions and history in order to trace the origins of the divisions among our people, throw light on obscure trends in the past, and by so doing bring clarity where now is much confusion and dissension.

He began with the period when Africans started on the long road from tribalism to a modern industrialised society. He set out to discover the growth of modern ideas of democracy in the African population, the people who gave expression to those ideas, who founded the first African newspapers and formed the first political organisations. What was the content of the ideas and beliefs that guided their actions?

As he worked over his material he became more and more convinced

that a great deal of strength lay in the African's tribal past, and that it constituted even today a rich source of inspiration from which present and future generations would draw comfort and guidance for their work in building a new society. He held the view that the main tribal division - the Xhosa, Zulu, Sotho, Tswana, Venda, Tsonga - would yet develop into separate nations,, each with its own traditions, language and culture. Therefore, he contended, the liberation movement would gain enormously if it were to recognise this traditional origin of the African people, and inculcate in them loyalty towards and pride in their language, literature and customs.

Lionel was not, however, a tribalist or nationalist. His belief in the value of the tribal past strengthened his vision of a single, united and free South South Africa embracing Black, Brown and White peoples in a great fraternity. He was an internationalist who believed that unity would come out of diversity. He believed in the brotherhood of man, that ideal which the best of the human race has embraced throughout the ages. To him it was not only an ideal, but a political weapon of the greatest importance for resisting and defeating reaction.

We are not likely to underestimate the strength of reaction. The presence of members of the Special Branch on this solemn occasion symbolises its character. It is typical of the strategy that the Government has consistently employed. But the presence of the police and the kind of repression used to intimidate people are not the most serious threats that the progressive movement has to endure. The greater danger comes from the attempt to impose on us an acceptance of the official doctrine - against which Lionel contended with all his power - that South Africans belong to different human species and are eternally doomed to live apart and in fear of one another.

All of us, men and women of different colour groups here assembled, and representing in our varieties the many hundreds of thousands of people outside who belong to distinct communities - we have to recognise that the great danger to our peoples and our country comes from the efforts of the State to divide us, to condition us to the notion that Black, Brown and White must not meet in halls, mix in our homes, associate on an equal plane as free people. Lionel delivered his main blows against this evil repudiation of the eternal truth that all men and women are brothers and sisters. He sought to resist by demonstrating his conviction that out of diversity comes unity.

He has left enough to make us realise the greatness of the contribution that he would have given if he had been able to live the full span. He had gone beyond the stage of merely reproducing general principles and proclaiming universal truths.

He was trying to apply his principles to the specific conditions of our society. In doing this, he gave the principles new forms and contents. The work that he has done puts us greatly in his debt. He has defined problems, but their solution will have to be achieved by those who follow him. There could be no greater tribute to him and his cause than that the younger generation should take up the work where he left off and pursue it with the same vigour, enthusiasm and optimism that he displayed.

His spirit will live in those who come after and continue.