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'The Treason Trial became a landmark in the history of the
Id. vo lwl
Iggy Joseph. In the next, Nelson Mandela's tgwering , stands $ngvod3
60\text{H}; out. He is a dignified head higher than his colleagues next to .
him. Two rows behind Mandela one immediately notices the then
$NNQKSecretary-General of the ANC, Duma Nokwe. Joe Slovo, Ruth First,
Gert Sibande, the so-called iLion of the North', and Walter
jfaces ... .like the person standing behind Sisulu's
yuNtU backroom figures amongst the 156 whose achievements have become
Lve :3ng mews; :3) \cdot /SF
Introduction
In December 1956, 156 leaders of the Congress Alliance were
arrested in dawn swoops throughout South Africa and flown to
Pretoria in military aircraft to face charges of treason.
liberation struggle in South Africa. It draqqed on for more than
four years, generating considerable excitement at home and
abroad. The basis of the state's charge was that the ANC and
its allies, via poticies enunciated in the newly adopted
Freedom Charter, were part of a communist-inspired conspiracy to
W in South Africa. Pointing out
parallels with the Nazi-orchestrated Reichstag fire trial of the
19305, the ANC in turn used the trial to attack the government's
apartheid policies and to articulate an alternative vision for a
FCMQ-vt V
non-racial, democratic South Africa. All those charged were
eventually found not guilty and acquitted.
The marathon trial had the dual effect of both immobilising South
Afxica's resistance leaders and, bringi them together in 'kind
of people's parliament - the segyeeiig&- itreason caqe' a e_
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speCLaliy constructed wire mesh enclosure Wthh served'Z'ia'sL/the
dock in a makeshift courtroom set up in the Johannesburg Drill
Hall. The accused wexe seated on irow after row of chairs, as if
they were delegates at a conference'. (1) Eli Weinberg's famous
photograph of the 1 trialists shows the rich mix of
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personality and politital leadership aSsembled by the state. Near
the .bacE is athg' ichifg!_ Albert Lutul%%%'Nobel laureate and ?:ZyTijz
Presxdent of the ANC his hand resting o ighghoulder in front AL {\tt V}
of him. In the centre of the first :0 , the President of the
Congress of Democrats, Piet Beyleveld (later to turn state
witness against his former comrades at the famous Rivoniat and
other trials) is sittii on the ground. Directly behind him sits
v M .. v. . .
Moses Kotane, aiuggm- 5n1the history of the liberation struggle. 4oucv?/
Among those seated in the same row are Ahmed Kathrad ($39 Helen Flare
Sisululxare bunched together one back and to the left.
truly a who's who of politics. There are also the F: ,
shoulder: accused No.83, Lionel Forman. Forman is one of those
blurred by time. His face is one that would not be instantly
recognised-by the current generation of activists. Yet the story
of this man, five from the right in row seven, 'his thumb up in
the gigjka salute, is one of the most remarkable of the whole
-turbulent decade of the fifties.
Lionel Forman confronted three big adversaries in his lifetime -
apartheid, capitalism and illness. Dogqed since childhood by a
serious heart disease, resulting from a bout_of rheumatic fever
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at the age of five, he grew up with a grossly enlarged heart
caused by 1 aking valves and regular, almost weekly, attacks of
auricular ibrillation - vibrations which sent his pulse rate
soaring. To arrest these, the medical experts presc: ibed massive
daily doses of quinidine and lesser ones of digitalis. By the
time Lionel was 21, his doctor expected the worst: 1The outlook
for this young man is distinctly gloomy \dots I do not doubt that
within a year or two he will have become more or less disabled.'
A year later, he warned that iThe immediate prognosis for
survival is extremely low.' (2)
a his doctors recommended that Forman go to
London E
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ntly devised' heart surgery. The Harley St reet
1 er, concluded that his condition was too serious
for the sur; to be effecti IE and that he did not have long to
live. l.thouq he had disregarded his illness as much as he
could, FarmanL? acknowledged tlat the quacks know their /( (ntu )
business ... Every heaztbeat is increasina my little leakage and
the time must come when the floodgates break'.
But Lionel Formah did not sit back and await the inevitable. He
had too much to do. With stoic disregard for body-breaking
disability and a pressing sense of urgency, he threw himself into
the struggle against the aparthei d system proceeding llike a
fireworks disglay corzuscating in all directions' to achieve
prominence as a mt dent leader, ewspaper editor, lawyer,
political activ; st, historian and Mar xist tt eoretician.
Then, in 1353, he was offered the chance of new heart-lung bypass
surgery devised by the then little-known surgeon, Dr. Christiaan
Barnard. Barnard was an iold-Eriend ... They had been at
together and Lionel trusted him to do a Good job'. "e did not //2 ?qudx
hesitate and had the operation on the morning of Monday October
19.Barnald reba ired three faulty valves. The operation seemed
to be going well. But, Barnar d regs: ted tgumi T51 assistant had
clampedA an arterv and torn it - there as nofM hence for the
blood to flow back into his body when the machine wasll
disconnected. At 4.3 pm Lionel Forman died . (3)
Sadie Forman had given birth to their daughter Sara five days
earlier and was still i. the nursing home. Anxious about the
pending ober-ticr she had been unable to sleep since the birth.
' t 1.15 pul; i?thld by her doctor that the operation had been a
successC) she went to sleep. A few hours later, she was woken by
Dr Barnard with a group of friends. AG
The tributes streamed in by the hundreds. Chief Lutuli said,
iHis courageous stand in the freedbm struggle will always inspire
us'. The writer, Lionel Abrahams, wrote that, 'If any great.
number of men lived such lives the world's needed revolutions
would be automatically accomplished'.
In his last waking moments, as the pre- operative drugs began to
.pull him towaz ds sleep, Lionel wrote E&:&n&i$a
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"If this doesn't come off you're not to mourn\_for'meu I'm qoing without the slightest fear of death and if I die it will not hurt me at all, except in the thought that it will hurt you  $\dots$  If there is any meeting of friends, what I want said there clearly and unequivocally is iAll his adult life he tried to be a good communist... Now I am legally safe as houses, I want it trumpeted from the housetops, Lionel Forman belieVed in communism for South Africa with a burning passion till the day he died, and in all his adult years that passion never once diminished  $\dots$  'No, I'm sorry, I can't fight this confounded druo. I didnit want it, because I am as calm as can be but they insisted. My love to all. Tell the - reason trial we'll achieve freedom in the lifetime of Karl and Frank and Sara - and you Sadie - whether they like it or not. Forward to the total abolition of the colour bar - forward to communism in South Africa... don't mourn and don't let the children mourn. Tell them they must have love for their fellowmen, they must exorcise all race prejudice and understand why it is abominable ... (IE anything is written they must say), ihe tried to be a good communist. Often he failed but he tried and his life was to brine...' - no, it isn't the dope thats getting me, but they've come for me. All my love my loves. Lionel". 300 people attended the memdrial service for Forman. Desoite the lf5f4;iiih presence of the Special Branch, those in attendance stood and (wdk CL"CL5sang the Integggtiggalg in public/A for the first time since the F&t Achl Communist Party's ban ing in 1950. - \$he-aassaee-gsem-erman's i 1 I. . L' 2 z t 2- g- H -1. .' q -Lionel Forman was born in Johannesburg on Christmas Day, 1927. He was the second child of David and Sarah Forman. David was an immigrant from Lithuania. Like many other Jews who had fled the pogroms, poverty and anti\_semitism of Eastern Europe, he went first to Aldgate in London's East End where he stayed for two years. Sarah Shribnick had been born in Bethnal Green, London of poor parents who in the early 19205 decided to go to South Africa. Lionel's parents met on the boat taking them to the country whose streets they had been told iwere paved with gold'. But the reality was very different. Lionel grew up in Rosettenville, a white working-class area. His parents rented a small shop and worked long hours - ifrom six o'clock in the morning to ten at night'. The family lived in two rooms attached to the shop. Many of the white democrats who supported the .6;& Communist Party and Congress movement in the 19505 shared a similar background. A large proportion were\_R&Pwish with a . it&sgamily-history of persecution, and 3052 stronquxahti-fascist sad (dtaa owat

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' Forman' was politicised at an early ace. He was st ill a child 77Mu4kee when he witnessed an assault on a black worker in the shop next door and became aware of the injustice of racial discrimination. In He was ilfluenced intellectually by the left-wing Jewish youth /;&e%i Hashome: Hatzai: (HH), which he joined as a teenager. There was 0 much discussion of the works of Marx and Lening? in HE, and this made an impac st on Lionel; However, he.soon became disillusioned wit the organisation because of its 'Israeli- i3 oriented ethicc. By the ace of 15 he had switched to the Young ,  $\ensuremath{\text{m}}$ Communist League (YCLE. Forman read -avidly the/marxist classics,i/thgfb played an active Dar t in the YCL debating society and became member of the YCL national committee. He started tog, a long A 9 friendship with Ruth Fir st, his :o-delegate to the first national YCL conference. On one occasion she saved him from possible expulsion from the YCL after he had made a naiwestu; s;4ticaL.fkwoaatbt speech from a Party platform. 1% La went es the University of Cape Town at the age of tted into the Communist Party, even though he had .d 1:: :e:ui:ed ace :5 18. He described himself as a proudest ard-holder in the Party' He gained A up most of his time. In lusive mayor al reception organising instead a nus 3. 7 .47. ). He was ted when he threatened -: apology. As secretary AIUL'MCA amnai .ned against. both/dML amp",-'ty administration which TaJy'st J on camous. I When Forms m 13H rrou L'frr (D D' V'TD 1'1; Orr: C :1 thUI mam Hamma-01004:! HHS 111HrrthOchUn-Ch (b:-Cl.m :1 (II 2 C 1 ' 'ZHU) n .0 U sth L) I r!" 1. I t 0 Η :Ifh 01

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The headquarters of the C
19405 and Forman was
electioneering, writ1 .1
newspaper, and speaking regularlly at publ 1: meetings on the
Parade. His writings tell us much about resistance politics at
the time of the National Party's coming to power. Participating
in the campaigns of the anti-segreqationist Train Apartheid
Resistance Committee, he learned an important political lesson:
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italk and theory were useles without the courage to face the 4
enemy'. He was struck by \operatorname{tt} .e fact that although members of the \operatorname{jli}
Non-European Unity Movement inv01ved in the campaign were, 5high-//
calibre intellectuals \dots they showed themselves to be 3
lacking in guti' and shied away from direct action. (4) Fofhan
was by then convinced that the best way for South African
socialis ts to make progress was for them to locate themselves in
the broader national democratic struggle.
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Party were in Cape Town in the
organising. pamphleteering,
G ardi_h, the Party's unofficial
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I'D rr
At the end of 1949 Forman returned to Johannesburg to study law
at the University of the Witwatersrand. In Johannesburg he felt
somewhat rebuffed by the local Party leadership and put this down
to the tensions that existed between the Johannesburg and \ensuremath{\mathsf{Cape}}
Town branches ii the late 19403, as well as to his strong
opposition t3 the Party's decision to dissolve i self as a pre-
emptive moVe in the face of the Suppression of Communism; Act.
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chGhoy searched every inch of the Karl whom, he feared, mioht never cat to know his Eather. 'Four months later an SOS arrived from South Africa: Brian Bunting, editor of Advance (successor to the now banned Guardian), wanted to travel ovezseas and would Lionel return to South Africa to edit the newspaner in his absence? Agxaggg was the most vociferous anti-aoartheid newsoaoer in South Africa and the main mouthpiece of the Congress Alliance- Bunting had been invited to visit the Soviet Union and needed to do so before his oassport expired, atte: which be knew he would be prevented from travellino abroad acaih. .4. Forman accented enthusiaticsllv. But tirst he wanted to f n his book. Workino to a tightz3ut-s;zsasgg)schedule, Forman completed the book by mid-December, havino written in only thr months a 73,000 word volume. Though written in the third pezso which Forman referred to himself Fozman shared w. In addition he wrot Comrad J-lge 2.1; ΙI (D 01 m m n. :f r 52 m U! 01 :3 Lu 5 ('1' 0 U r-0 :1 Η W U ? :1 m :1 rr ,I ,i In Ι :1 ΙI (I ZJix' u. .1.

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With the manuscript sewn
arrived back in South Af
Town Castle. They were welcomed home by
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i: lugoace (but not the ba 4 s
mattreSSE). All their book: an a weddino present of an engraved
Czech book were confiscated. The thiniste: of Justice had warned
in 1949, tWe are not goins to staid for any nonsense from the
Communists in South Africa'. The Hrogi qevaar' boqev was still
very much an issue. '5 Fozdan needed f;:th:r oioof, he was
oificially tlisttd' und:7 the Suoareszion of Communism Act
within months of his ret;:n.
Foruan Got straight back inte the oolitical frav. The Buntings
sailed out on the Cape Torn Castle's :etazn iournev and the
next day Lionel Egartegadgea; on AdvanCe. Editorially he
consistently attackeo t EJLHClDLent E'scism o: the South African
state and promoted the objectives of the bzoad Congress movement
as wel; as the socialist, anti-colonialist and ant'-imperialist
aims of the Communist Party which had been secret y reconstituted
in 1953. :awing on his own recent experiences abroad, Forman
launched a weeklv tCommentator' . column on international
affairs, an innovation which became a permanent feature in t.e
newspaper. When Bunting resumed the editorship, he took over
writing the column under the byline iSpectator'.
Forman also seized the opportunity of his editorship to launch a
debate on a topic about which he had been thinking for some time
- the national question. In an editorial - tDon't Spread Malan's
Lie' - Forman arqued that the Congress ovement should abandon
use of the word trace' in favour of tnat'onal groups'. By using
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the Ifalse word race to categorise oeocle, the liberation movement was helaing to spread ithe shilsscohv iof the ruling classesl which keeps us in slavery'. Moreover, the\_importance of language and culture needed greater recognition. The dependence of the urban-based liberation movement on the English language, Forman suggested, confined the struggie to a relatively small section of South Africans. It had to be taken iinto every kraal, hessian shack and pondokkie in terms the people can understand'. The best way to ensure this, he argued, was to encourage the many national groups in South Africa to develoo fully their own languages and culture.

dances and the Presaged Y? of the 19805: in vibrant cultu n were the toviito t c c

Cu: Zulu aoets must sins sazas of liberat; 3. in their mother ton tie peoale must roc? With lauchte: at Sacha satires On the Nata. Let our very folk dances exemolify a kick in the pants for Maian and our music the drumbeats of freedom.

He concluded by succesting that the liberation movement needea te Istudy and understand Eully the Enrces cf arcazessive.dation 1;sh and utilise t:EJ in the stzugule for freedom' or it would Istumble and feltez'. In Forman's vie', seosle's nationalism w s a healthy Dienomenon. comoletely d;55erent from the exaloitative ZlCh man's nationalism of the iapaztheiders'.

The editorial evoked a consideraile respoQ:%. While some, like Joe Matthews of the ANC Youth League wrote welcoming it, a senior SACP f icial, Dr. Dadoo, critiziSed Fcrman to: using an editorial to raise issues f Itheoretical controveIS! He suggested they should take the form of tseparate articles'. So in the issue of 22 April 1954 Forman developed his ideas into a full-scale article entitled iDiscussion of South Africa's National Question'. In it he examined definitions of the term Ination' and Iwhy it matters' but then went on to stress that it was also important that Ithe class struggle must not be blurred' which he felt was a danger if the emohasis was put on irace'. Joke Wham OMB mi

In response to this a:ticle,A13m South Afzica Club, j? left discussion ctouskin Cate Town. conv-ned a soecial debate on the issue. Forman Garticivated tocethe: with Kenny Jordaan of the Non-European Unity Movement, the ANC's Thomas Ngwenya and the noted lecturer and marxist, Jack Simons. In terms of the debate within the Conq:e35 movement. the main lines of Histinction were between Simons and Formen.

Reflecting the dominant\_position in t.e ANC and the SACP, Simons argued that, civen the history of divide-anderulerthrough the vehicle of secregation and apartheid in South Africa,s the. liberation movement had to stress the unity and oneness of South Africa's people. Pointing out that South Africa Was not a multi-national country but rather a nation in the making, Simons strongly attacked what he claimed was Forman's view that different national cultures in South Africa. should enjoy the

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right to national selE-detez.ination. Unlike in Eurooe, Simons argued, the demand here was'for equality within a common society and ii: would be wronc to disturb or deElect this development by. stressing tribal. racial or cultural differences'. He accused Forman OE advocatinu a nes-aoartheid bosition. Angered by what he saw as a misinterpretation and denying that he had called for self-detezmination for national groups, Forman stood by his arqument. Accusing his critics of supezficial thinking, he denied that ithe quarantee of national autonomy in a people's democracy' bore the islightest resemblance to apartheid'. He was convinced that the best way to-a single united South African nation (and eventually a single world culture) was to create conditions by which ithe different national cultures in South Africa'may first fiower, and then merge'. He acknowledged that it was not yet time to press for selfthere were not yet anv determination because, he believed, nations in South Africa, Only prewnatisms, but ithe th wi-l surely come when it will be a cottect and socular demand'. (EaL,// Forman's ideas on the tat; onal :uesticn N65: nave: ac:e:tad as policy hv the Partv :: the Cenezess movement. But they did hiahlidht the diEEerint. often contradictet" :csitions within the movement. and the need for theoretical clar; fication. Did South Africa consist of many nations - Eon: nation: (white coloured, Indian and AfILCEn), a: two nations (black and white, 00912550: and coatessedi or one :ation? Over the tears there has heen some confasion on thc issue. Raymond :uttne: has aointed out, for example,, that the word inatishal' is used in two ways in the Freedom Chatter. In the imboztant clause iall national croubs shall have equal :iqhts', tie Cha:tez aapeazs to be refezzinc t: four distinct racial qtouhs while elsewhere in the Charter the word inational' refers to all South Africans. (6) Critics have declared that the former reference shows that the Congress movement envisages the creation of four nations in South Africa, or that it's struggle is based on the premise that there are four nations in South Africa. (7) Suttner, the current political education head of the ANC, however, contends that this four-nation theory never was Congress policy and that it survives inot in the Charter itself or amoncst its subborters but mainly in polemical writings against and the democratic movement as a 2b-.Ls. whole'. (8) The raw material in the chapters on the national question debate in this book should provide fertile ground' to: activ1sts and academics concerned with the so-called ifou: nations'iebate of the 19583. t th tim- the debate could not develoo for , even though 5' "is 5:6 5 ste b, decided a t ee \_ ci ic purpose of organisins a nationuwide discussioh on tla hati nal question', the SAC? stifled the debate when it took a Dolicy decision not to discuss the question at this point. Nonetheless, .the national question continued to be one oi Forman's main pre-occubations. As Ray Alexander has commented, ithe more he studied and wrote,

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Moxiinj/
the more convinced he became that the way to freedom lay through
a recoonition and olad acceptance of South Africa's mu ti-
national composition'.(9) Four years were to pass be Eore Forman
could again develoo his arquments in Drint. So let us return to
Forman's unfoldina career.
his overseas trip:?5 Annii lSS4/hhtg
When Brian Buntino returned from
to take over again as editor of Advance, Forhan went to
Johannesburg to comnlete his law studies at Wits which had been
interrvpted by his stav abr-a . After coleetino his decree, he
eturn d to Caoe Town in November 1954 and set uo in chambers in
Parliament treat as an advocate. He was soon defending trade
id until inot a week went
cases Lionel defended was
no to a former colleacue he
hie to the movement'
unionists and ether victims of auazth
by when one or other of the oolitica
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not reported in the oress'. Accordi
was brilliant in court and iextremel value
because he was one of only a few advocates at the time who would
readily represent it in the Supreme Court. (10)-
But earning a living was hard going because Forman-ma&e-i%-E7AZLK
ssiaeieiea not teicherqe his clients in ipolitical cases. When
Albie Sachs returned to south Afrisa in 1990 after more than two
decades in exile, acclaimed as a writer, thinker and internationally-zecosnisee legar exaezt, he acknowledged the
-inEiuenC' Form n had had on him as a young lawyer in th 1950s;
Formanl t 'M4 that it was the _essonsibility'of'the
Drooressive awyer to But himself at tie disposal of the
opnressed without ersectino :avmeht, Sachs told a welcoming
audience in a goinnaat first sseech after his return. Rioht us
to a Eorthight before his death. when he was banned while
defending Ronald Seoal .(editor of the At;i;a_$9gth_journal) in
a highiy publicised trial, Forman used the courts at every
oaportunity to fight asartheid. (11)
However, Forman did nrt :uniine himselE to his legal practice
after cualifying as an advocate. In fact he became better known
as a journalist and ooiitical activist. From t.e start of .is % \left( 1\right) =\left( 1\right) \left( 1\right) +\left( 1\right) \left( 1\right) \left( 1\right) +\left( 1\right) \left( 
Dolitical life he had been involved as an octasional reporter and
photographer on party journals. helpino with political education,
propaoanda, pUblicity and sales. As Ben Turok has recalled,.
iYou ... joined the The uardian -when you joined the
movement...^{\prime}(12) This was certainly the case with Forman. After
his stint as editor of Agygggg, he continued to be closely
involved with the paper. When it was banned in October of the
same year, he wrote a letter to the Rang gaily Maii(29.10.54)
slamming the establishment press for its h lE-hearted defence of
press freedom, and announcing the imminent appearance of a
successor called Sew Age.
He became one of the core group running New Age. There are a
number bf references in the next few years to Forman being editor
of the newspaper. But this did not mean that he was solely in
chatqe. New Age was effectively run as a collective. We remain
a moment with the newsaaoer which was in many respects unique.
Started in 1937 as The Guardian, it appeared weekly for 25 years.
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Ivan Schezmbrucke: based in Johannesbuza. Working as a tightly-
knit team, these few individuals larcely shamed the policy of the
paper. Their world view and oolitics to a large extent became
those of the liberation movement. What they wrote became ithe
way in which the liberation movement came to see itself'.(15)
The importance of Advaggeggew Age therefore went far beyond the
outward signs of a struggling newspaper, battling to stay alive.
' And, though few in number, the influence of its journalists was
x11 . It was here thatsgeene% Forman probably made his most
lasting impact.
o"M . . . 1/fi'
(n The state recognised this when they a:rested Emzaan on charges of// NI
treason; alone with seven other hey Age staff members, he was
among the 156 leaders of the Congress Alliance netted in
countrywide swoops in December 1956 and taken to Pretoria to
stand tzial. is arrest unleashed a fresh burst of energy from
Forman who relished the excitement, the ssotlight and the
opoortun-ties orovided by the trial. "ithin days he had smuqqled
a deiiant letter out of orison for Butlication in New Ageh
Refusinc t: use his ill-health as an excuse for any fkind of
exemctiar E:om the :icours of arisen er the trial, he soon
starte :sverin: the szoceedisc: Ear New Ace fram'the e/treason
cace). his weekly resorts were c:cvocat-ve, levelling fun and
Dolitical :ontemct at the state and its scents.
In March 1957 he accented an invitation from the veteran trade
unionist Soil; Sachs to co-author a book an the trial, ignoring
warnings that this might lav him open to Eurther charges. An ex-
Communist Party member and secretary oi the Garment Workers Union
for 25 years, Sachs zas then living in Encland after being forced
out of South Africa by state harassment. They agreed that iSachs
would work on the international dimensions of the trial and
contribute an analysis of the South African state. Forman would
provide the inside story from the Drill Hall and a brief outline
of the rise of the ANC and other Congresses culminating in their
i common programme, the Freedom Charter ...'(16) Their book. 1h;
aggth.aigigag_Treasgn Etial, was banned in South Africa, but it
generated considerable publicity abroad. In a review in
33%wov Tilhgne(20.12.s7a. Fenner Brockwav was moved to write, iThis is _
i Ha courage not to be measured. (Has a prisoner under a death charge
xnbuki ever before written and Dublished the t rv of his trial whilst
i ehcinqly, clarifying in
c tion, exoosing to the
e nment which holds him?'
As iAc used Sumter 33' w: t: the stcrv CE the trial. he started
delvinc back into history to lot? at the lessons' of previous
- treason trials and t: unzavtl the bachqrsund and development of
tie Congress Alliance w.ose leaders were now fating charges.
Soon he was engrossed with this histo:ical work, doing research
whenever he act a respite from a busy court routine. He buried
himself in newspaper archives and within months he'd decided .to.
write a ipeople's history' of the liberation struggle in South
Africa. One unintended consequence of th landmark treason
trial, therefore, was that it, producedf/gge of the most
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Not surprisingly. Forman's first -historv article was on 'Treason Trials "n South Africa.' It appeared in the Congress journal, Eightigg Talg, in February 1957. He then tackled the task of writino a 20,000 word overview of nearly 300 years of South African history. He had honed to iaggude this in the book with Sac s, but it was left out r lack of space. Q . . )A . .

NEverthelegs, istorical r 58a ch and writing now became hls overriding interest. He -532eia-eak4ae-the task.sot seriously L40 ethat rhe"registe(Eg7 for a Ph.D on iThe Histoty of African/4:Q \$M905 Political Organisations,' 1870-1948" at the University of Cape 'Town in 1958. (17) -

By this time he was also writing regular historical articles for \_ Egg Age, Between July and-5Eptember 1958, the newspaper published 9 his first substantial writings in the form of seven instalments on the iHistory of the Liberatorv Movement'. The articles were subsequently published – in revised form and with one chapter added – as a booklet by New Age in April 1959, and reprinted in October. Its title was Chaoters ' the History of the March to FEEEE-OYQ- (T ' -1- 2. , ... – ,

'Lhe basic conflict in a lazqely

agrarian Sou 1 African society up to 1370 was of inational entities' over land. In the 13705, however, South Africa entered an ientirely new epoch' of caoitalism following the diamond discoveries and the ensuino industrial revolution. The class struggle of ithe workina class (irrespective of nationality) against the bosses (irresaective of nationality)' started alongside the national strucqle between iwhite and nonwhite'. iThe liberation movement, whose leadersi are today charged withxtreason, is a fusion of Ithesel two streams into a mighty river', he wrote (3.7.53). He then went on to deal with early working-class organisation, the first black political organisations and the formation of the modern day ANC in 1912. His aim was to\_write a isystematic history of the liberatory , mbvement' as a iuseable' past for the ANC (an clandestine SACP). w Having grown rapidly during the 19505 tow; gar the first time 514. Wa challenge to white minority rule, ' the ANC had a - een'appreclation'of the importance of history. Congress leaders  $^{\prime}$  . regularly evoked history and Conqress publications carried historical features. Duzing the Treason Trial, for example, the Rev. J.C. Calata compiled a short history of the ANC. Joe Matthews, Tennyson Makiwane, Michael Harmel, Brian Bunting, Fatima Near -and R.V. Selope Thema were among others who wrote, historical pieces, while ANC President , Chief Lutuli, Z.K. Matthews and Selope Thema also wrote autobiographical memoirs which, however, remained unsublished in tuE 19505. A scholar, Luli Callinicos) wrltlnq 30 yeafs later has noted that 'Ultimately, popular history is located in the present ... it Starts from the need to understand and directly confront, not the past for it's own sake, but present day situations and problems'. (18) Nowhere was this more true than in the case of Lionel 12

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"f
Forman. His articles were topical and related directly to
current events. Ch ha: uav 1953, for e"amcle, he wrate on the
way that day 35 international workinc-claas solidazity had been
celebrated in the past lJ Seath Aftita (Sew A36 1.5.58). During
'the women's antl-tass stguqcles in late IQS? he recalled the
earliest campaign 2n the Oranoe Free State 45 years before. That
week haboened to be the 75th anniversary of the first indecendent
African news aeer. vao Zebantsundu, so he discussed it's
history as well. Azzznd 1Dincaan's Dav'(Decembe: 16), the
holiest OE AErikaner nationalist holidavs. celebratina th-
victory of the ?soztrekkezs eve: the Zulu he exclaimed why
Dingaae had killed the Voottzekke: leads: Ret'ef. Launchinf
straight into the rulinG-class holv cow, he wrote, 10h December
16 there will be the asual soate of nauseattna Clantzao froma
pulpits and platforms and press about how at Blood River ... the
forces of civi isation and of liaht, the messenaers of God
himself, destroyed the power of barbarism and darkness in the
form of Dinqane's Zulu. It may be a cood idea to arm ourselvet
-in advance against being_submerged in the wave of e.otion by
taking a look at the facts'(Ngy Age 11.12.58). Having done so, he
liste eight sources :anqlnq from contemporary dlariet to works
by both trespectable' (McMillan) and radical (anuni)
histories in an understandable act of caution.
A few months later on van RiebeeCk De. (A0711 6), another
impettant whitt holiday commemoratih: the arrival of the 51:5:
European colonists. Fozman denigrated the 1fdunding fathe"' GE
white South Afsica in an atticle headed, t an Rieheeck we: a
robber'(New Age 2.4.59).
New Age vritirc was histatv w:th a difference in the
Ittkthallenged, even if indirect v, the focus of an
histhty establishment mbedded firmly within the system
domination, its intezeretations and, in fact, the whole
process cfhiaturi'al sreauc"ian in the urlvers'ties at "me
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time. c 9)
rwbt -W M .
As already noted, Forman's histbry was nopular and useable. with
no pretensions to academic object;
Vlty. His interoretetions
challenged and deviated sharply from tn ^{\prime} ^{\prime}
.'in important zesoects. H13 writino .departed Erom the
He elevated the history of
ethnocentric orthodoxy of the time.
black South Africans rather than that Of t
referred to the indiaenous peoples
he ruling minority; he
by the names t e had
instead of W, ??J'H'
themselves used ('Khoi Khoin') .
descriptibns (Hottentot) adopted' by the white rulers; he
stressed the negative not the positive, or so-called
tcivilising', effects of Eurooean colonialism; in' fact, the
Cdlonialists were robbers who had taken the land of he
indigenous people from them by force.
Forman also rejected the notion that South African history wag
essentially about 1the clash between black and white as the
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established colonial, Aftikanez nationalist and liberal

' ' r him race and class went historians tended to emDha31se. F0

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X q'nvum accompanied, Lfo
hand in hand.
central event in
succession of dates which marked
i ' ' .ead/historical materialist
development. Today; the-efyeethystx
'n South AfriEe. but at the time they
c S/ow W W5
The advent of the industrial revolution was the
South African history, and not the long
South Africa's constitutional
tMQ/56A ideas enjoy wide currency 1
TQNiseA were unusual, if not original. Forman was in fact developing a
basic (still little known) Marxist analysis of South African
intellectuals like Eddie Roux,
history pioneered
Hosea Jaffe, Dora
to the Communist
Finally, Forman emDhasised
writing'.
ito fill gaps and make corr
by activist
Taylor and Kennv 30rd
Party or the Non-European Un
aan who were linked either
ity Movement.
tbottom uD' approach
a collective,
owed bears
His focus and the process he fell
to history writing.
striking resemblance to current experiments in ipeople's
history'. in South AErica. He soucht iwidescale participation
in the preparation of the history'. Readers of New Age(4.12.58)
-4 h e' comments
'not merely'invited. but zraed' to SEuu in tuEL-
t He wanted this to
and criticisms, and to helo locate material.
be tan experiment in collective participation in history
le's experiences needed to be recorded
Ordinary peop
' Forman's colleagues on a,;
actions .
pinq with
2X1 / ggg_ collaboratedae%aagaa offering criticism and hel
editing. Many of his political colleagues were drawn in to help
#on a tris to Durban duri.c_ a
recess in theg tre
Arenstein, Eataah get permission from t
These
for scholars.
Indian Congress such as
research for him.
tMac' Maharaj,
. helps shed s
as we i. For examp e, in
?%sith the help of Jacqueline
ason trial,
he veteran ICU and .ANC
A.W.G. Champion, to take his substantial collection of
' leaking shed) to Cape Town.
becoming an important source
New Aqg office and the Natal
collected material and did
activists in London were roped in. S.R.
executive of the ANC, wrote
to trace copies of the early
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were later deposited at UCT,
Colleagues in the
M.P. Naicker
Even
now on the national
to say he had tried without success
ANC newspaper Abantu Batho in the British Museum and the British
Public Library in Londoi. Party veterans were consulted
recarainq facts and interpretations. Under the heading of
Queries he wrote in his notebook, iAsk e.a. Moses IKotanel,
Rebecca IBuntinqi, J.B. (Marksf, Jimmy La Guma, Ray Harmel. Louis
1v keen to correct what he regarded
Joffe'. Forman was particular
as the idistortions' created by Eddie Roux whose books 533;
sic Time Lengez. Then. Roge. were the
Eghting_and especially the clas
virtually the only) fullelength
most important (and then still
1 resistance in South Africa. Roux's ex-Party
works on politica
.colleaques regarded his work as ibiased and malicious'. Even
worse, one of them wrote, t... his indiscretions border on
the Kahnm
been used against us (in
informing and have in fact
d elsewhere)'.(20)
Carneson select committee an
of correspondence oh Forman's Maggh ;Q_ E;_gggm booklet
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ome light on the internal processes and de
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