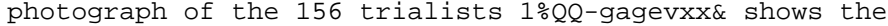


DTP qughb mg X3)

5 I N T R O D U C T I O N

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.

The South African Treason Trial became a landmark in the history of the liberation struggle in South Africa. It dragged 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 policies enunciated in the newly adopted Freedom Charter, were part of a communist-inspired conspiracy to bring about violent change in South Africa. Pointing out parallels with the Nazi-orchestrated Reichstag fire trial of 1930, the ANC in turn used the trial to attack the government's apartheid policies and to articulate an alternative vision for a 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 Africa's resistance leaders and bringing them together in a kind of people's parliament - the so-called "treason cage", a specially constructed wire mesh enclosure which served as the dock in the makeshift courtroom set up in the Johannesburg Drill Hall. The accused were seated on "row after row of chairs, as if they were delegates at a conference". (1) The most superficial look at Eli Weinberg's famous photograph of the 156 trialists  shows the

lo
rich mix of personality and political leadership i'
assembled by the state. Near the back, almost
inauspicious, is the "Chief" - AAlbert Lutuli, Nobel
laureate and president of the ANC - awithi his #atherly
hand resting on a shoulder Vin front of him. In the
centre of the first row the ;&esident of the Congress of
Democrats, Piet Beyleveld, (later to turn state witness
pgx4\$bge:&4against his former comradegeat the famous Rivoniatjiial)/
quMMCFg Q/is sitting on the ground. Directly behind him, seemingly
_eee&giedtbytsomethingxin_the.wingg, sits Moses Kotane, a
giant in the history of the liberation struggle. Among
those seated in the same row are Ahmed. Kathrada and
Helen Joseph. In the next, Nelson Mandela's towering
figure stands out. He is a dignified head higher than
his colleagues next to him. Two rows behind Mandela one
immediately notices the then fearetaryfgeneral of the
ANC, Duma Nokwe. Joe Slovo, Ruth First ,(Ehe "Lion of
the Northj, Gert Siband/gL andvazsefieus looking Walter
Sisulu are bunched together one back and to the left.
This is truly a whofs. who of politics. There are also
the more anonymous faces ... like the personxstanding
behind Sisulu's right shoulder: accused No.83, Lionel
Forman; Forman is one of those backroom figures amongst
the 156 whose achievements have become 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 "Afrika" salute, is one of the most remarkable of
the whole turbulent decade of the fifties.
Lionel Forman confronted three big adversaries in his
/ rM/w/L
cuai/
\$%L&(g
lifetime - apartheid, capitalism and (:jV illness.
Dogged since fgildhood by a serious heart disease,
155 VH1 #T'V CQJV of rheumatic fever at the age of
6 years, he grew up with a grossly enlarged heart,
(EJLSLd 4:) leaking valves and regular, almost weekly, attacks of
jjl/ auricular fibrillatiofn - vibrations which sent his
pulse rate soaring. To arrest these, the medical experts
W9

prescribed massive daily doses of quinidine and lesser
xQ// ones of digitalis. Jaurt' By the time Lionel was 21 his
doctor expected the worst: "The outlook for this young
man is distinctly gloomy ... I do not doubt that within a
year or two he will have become more or less disabled". "
19 WW mmrwthatwperiodu had/elaps-edm mmehis- Afearsr
M (MW ?!dwarnng- that "The immediate prognosis for survival is
extremely low". (2)
6L
ALE? / AS/gilast resort, athe) doctors recommended that Forman go to
London for "recently devised" heart surgery. The
Harley Street specialists however, decided that ...LLW -d
9 Operatewrjust them. Lt: waSVV-eni-y-sa
.Amf) .WOP-"time? ,i lthough he had disfigured his
0 . , I I
; (JMW illness/(mtfe :13:ng Walleye to acknowledg\$ that.
Pt 17/ /the Win61 their ' XbiisihessK,#V/(Every heartbeat
W , '&, N N
is increasing my little' leakage and the time must come
L&MdJ/
when the floodgates break"; Fi/vtK i\$
But Lionel Forman 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
apartheid system proceeding "like a fireworks display
coruscating in all directions" to achieve prominence as
a student leader, newspaper editor, lawyer, political
activist, historian and Marxist theoretician.
J T en, _ in 1959, -he was offered the chance of new m/Aeafff"/un9
" 1 L K, a / . b
N" A L \$2,?ng 131(3an the M littleknown header surgery 61/0035
i Dr. Christiaan Barnard. Barnard was an "'61d-friencr' - VC/
(lo head fyCHd "(They had been at UCT together and Lionel trusted him to
m_gof m3 WM 5 do a good job'/. He did not hesitate.
He was wheeled into the operating theatre on the #(G'Wd-ffj
x
tfy()HMA/MJ WM 19 October. Barnard repaired three faulty
J valves. The operation seemed to be going well. But,
W .5.
II
II 1/
i7lhu\$tjwci X MK... jifevassistant/g had clamped an artery and torn
U I a K a- QR
X (

it - there was ngzcgheichance for the blood to flow
back into his body when the machine was disconnected. At
4.31 Lionel Forman died/. (3)

) .
gutgjidef
Sadie cEegman, had given birth to their darEEa' five days
. i3. , W, "Cir R
earlierjltgheiwas still in the nurSing home, haVing gone
_(z 1 _
i7y;&j without sleep since the birth. At 1.15cskefwas told the
(47' M, I ' ' l
operation had been a successr jpnf went to sleepd ETEEEa-//ZXLZ7
5&mr was woken by a group 70f friends euke- :&://MUC\$A
Barnard. ' wag

The tributes streamed in by the hundreds. Chief Lutuli
said, "His courageous stand in the freedom struggle will
always inspire us. yiA&/' The writer, 'Lionel Abrahams,
wrote that, "If any great number of men lived such lives
the world's needed revolutions would be automatically
accomplished".,yir

In his last waking moments, as the pre-operative drugs
began to pull him towards Ehe_final sleep, and he had to
drag, spider-like, the pen that had alwa s, written with
such fluency, Lionel Forman wrote rtestaman

(..IV
If this doesn't come off you're not to mourn for me.
I'm going 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 ... If there is any
meeting of friends, what I want said there clearly
and unequivocally is" All 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 ... No, I'm sorry, I can't fight this
confounded drug. I didn't want it, because I am as
calm as can be but they insisted. My love to all.
Tell the treason 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 ...
(If anything is written they must say). He tried to

L/
 ///
 UI
 #
 ' be a good communist. Often he failed but he tried
 and his life was to bring - no, it isn't the dope
 thats getting me, but the 'Ve come for me. All my
 love my loves. Lionel. 54%)
 Three hundred people attended the memorial service for
 Lionel m Despite the presence of the Special
 Branch, those in attendance stood and sang the
 Internatipnale W, Whed- fists: wheid
 M for the first time since the Communist Party was
 banned in 1950.
 E I
 4Li/ Y U13: l; \$111.3 ,3 L VA V3341 21' j" Hf): V
 2 2 I t v rim Xx%2m
 W4 3:24.4qu LL UVLMAML WA , 7 f 2
 ' (j J; , 2 k ?QSL/ \$2. 42%: W34 '
 .Vl'ltWTWJ W Q... r28), w AL/V y X ' (J ha / 4/4
 w h A r! J C 7AN l: 1, TI;LA-5_.r/ (V(A'Vva; if 4 e 2-
 ,.H' e idea: IVV ?,Qy w Vill,
 daily (\$lth 1 LL :9 I I 15 ! :2 (I W j v; wxqul Z. Murxgdt
 Cf'iw'v'f'b) L: Ms
 M; H :-
 41 .49.. F MLVLVF (-,.1'/:Avi : (,LL, M 552(Ofw W
 42/5 at WM) WA ,2 Fifty ' :5 p:-
 . 4 I
 MAD % (QWX ?(th r; 2 t MHQJ
 M . Phi!) ? k w 3; M1; l (Q d 4
 CL Min M1. ML. (1': 9. '. 2. i f, 5JC&(N .Q, OL/Lu? J", .344 L,
 . J 2 L: ,9 . 21, 2. i P c. 2 (
 m-.1__m.,_.L.C.L. Aw Mf'v , J17 , 2 z :2 W. :2 ?(Ww 1
 X V' l, //du/ z: IVA MM FAQ'QV. X3 A .L
 l 5V 62 5 s
 II
 Lionel Forman was born in Johannesburg on Christmas Day
 in 1927. He was the second chilld of David and Sarah
 Forman. faims csmunigrarxt/e from A - ' ' KLLt/ZIW

19//I(is parents met on the boat taking them to South Africa. They had been told that Xthe streets were paved with gold/, but the reality was very different. Lionel grew up in Rosettenville, a white workin%;class area. His parents rented a small shop and worked long hours, /from six o'clock in the morning to ten a night'. The family lived in two rooms attached to the shop. Many of the white democrats who supported the Communist Party and the burgeoning Congress movement in the 1950s shared a similar background. A large proportion were Jewish, / with persecution, stronglyi-ekt'anti-M fascist .idsas'an a knowledge of revolutionary Marxism. Forman was politicised at an early age. He was still a child when he witnessed an assault on a worker in the shop next door and became aware of the injustice of racial discrimination. He was also influenced intellectually by the left-wing Jewish youth club, Hashomer Hatzair, which he joined as a teenager. There was #fnuch discussion of the works of Marx and Lenin# in HE, MashomewHat-z-airtawasmea-lied'rxand this made an / impact on Lioneltmwmugxf. However, he soon became disillusioned with Hashomer Hatzair because of Xthe limit placed on any dialectical development in that movement by its inherent Israeli-oriented ethic'f. By the age of 15 he had graduated to the Young Communist League (YCL). Forman - read avidly - XCapital. Anti-Duhring, Feuerbach, Hegel, Nietschey and other Marxist classics - played an active part in the YCL debating society (see pp xx) and became a member of the YCL National Committee. During those school days he started too a long friendship with Ruth First, his co-delegate to the first national YCL conference;/ on one occasion she saved him from pwosLsible; egaELlsQi/on from the YCL after he had made a%v overlay gmanzhusiastie: speech from a Party platforxngleeapaxxxh

When Forman went to the University of Cape Town at the age of seventeen he was admitted into the Communist Party; even though he had not yet reached the Lfi ' _ required age of 18. He described
_, V' s
himself as;
"the youngest and proudest card-holder in the Party". ggift He gained a Masters degree in Sociali4,35c,sid Science at UCT, but politics took up most of his time. In 1947, his second year, he led a boycott of a racially exclusive mayoral reception during the NUSAS national conference, organising a successful .fho colour-bar 3,. #_ \$?'Vn
dancehi instead.?\$k, He was expelled from NUSAS iQr-Q%gr%&wLyxih'v
-/ ts,_ 'm-
Qi t;ee5::?7wggttbelatedly re-admitted when he threatened to take legal action unless he received a public \$%f7 apology.x.em9dgk As secretary of ihe Students' S cialist :7 /
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, Qdmmiaax . v . ,
Party, he washinvplvedwin S&le, t against both ignag/ji
x
I
(i L 7%: .gaxzqganui/UnitedaPaxtXbEhppoorters igukxnh-ex-servicemen),
. U h" i
dewr as well as the conservative university establishment , n which refused to allow free olitical expression 1
amp p
Barzyeaffiiiatiansson campus.
The headquarters of the Communist Party were in Cape Town in the 19405 and theegpu\$h\$ulvFormanxbeeametggg oaeiizzhfag\$fiiai;z' gluiggaif organising,npamphleteering, electioneering,t rt; atimgiLixmi/&I ggg inx,marchest(writing for The Guardian, the party's ()x unofficial newspaper, and speaking regularly at public meetings on the Parade. His writiggi tell us much about resistance politics at the time the National Party Czdupfi Qhame to power6andkinauguxatedxits mueei\$niignad.apartheid 1? E9\$igiesl ijiyebsehaptewexxx. Participating in the campaigns_ of the anti-segregationist Train-Apartheid i x Resistance Committee (TARC), he learned aig'bigi political /W79"KIV lesson: M:Htalk and theory were useless without the courage to Eace the enemy%:1 He was struck by the fact that although sthe Unity Movement members involved in the campaign wereithighecalibre intellectuals ... they showed themselves to be (lug lacking in gutgr and shied away from direct action.- He was also by then convinced that the best way for South African socialists tevinam
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faruardathewstruggle for socialism was for them to locate themselves in the broader national democratic struggle.

At the end of 1949 Forman returned to Johannesburg to study law at Wits. He felt himself somewhat rebuffed by the Party leadership in Johannesburg and put this down to the tensions that existed between the Johannesburg and Cape Town branches in the late forties, as well as his strong opposition to the dissolution of the Communist Party at the time. The National Party was preparing to ban the Party under the notorious Suppression of Communism Act so it took pre-emptive action and dissolved itself in June 1950. A

\$470M 4441111 ' 419mm: W the editorship of the Wits student, rapidly transforming it from a bland Akmxshee%;%zQZ%gW ZiVKCg into a lively newspaper. He was elected-teeaonto the as j2%66A? national executive of NUSAsf With his friends Ruth First No ./

and Harold Wolpe, he was prominent in the left lobby at \$9kh\$ Wits. They tackled issUes like creeping apartheid at the university and the inferior position of black campuses in NUSAS . W

In the Cold War climate of the early 1950s student politics was characterised by a fierce battle between liberals and the left over NUSAS's affiliation to the Prague-based International Union of Students (IUS). ft y;kt&t Forman was in the forefront of the stmglewagamst 4:3 growing calls for disaffiliation. While abroad for treatment for his heart condition he represented NUSAS at the IUS annual conference in Warsaw in August 1951.

Western delegates argued for withdrawal from the IUS, but Forman helped persuade them to remain. He successfull

WOWI a (Guity "mmt /MWj

following year to thrash out differences gecuseESELSEE\$ESL wQL expulsion of the Yugoslav students' union after Tito' 5 break with Moscow. Forman was delegated by NUSAS to tstay on in Prague to work in the press section

headquarters andihelp organise the unity conierence. The US/OMQOA%;7

Wits studentxmsgapeasggdescribed his Mas
"unparalleled in NUSAS international relations". (2:242
Forman stayed for nearly two years in W
. Praguex. or him this was a very s ecial period in_h-is -
. iwm WUQL M EEQ'S 01% H n,
engrience
Larf-eTW
m; life in a W society. Li/ing with /,, ' (
students from all over the world, he was able to W /(Ma
' ' ' . (One of his cm incw/ V 43"
Prague was the controversial in'ensth1 lawyefr JacCgue/s q 1', ",5 ,
Verges) , For at; 41-98-de3?th iasbbieis section and (hem I f
co
pl.lt...al..i;!:jifeK .gealjg.Vi unityMe'e ,, 1
he had initiated. Held in Bucharest in August 1952, the
meeting however failed to preserve international student
unity in the face of steadily deteriorating East- West
relations. The western student unions left the Ips and
grouped themselves into a separate union, COSEC.l//f Lionel
joined Prague by m
kfgg/ W'% M EEEEE v _ married in Prague' 5)
AW Stara Mesty/(TownKHall in June 1952. Eleven
(61/1 months later wwwtomaaisgn, MKarl r(7M
Marx, a blessin e ad neat expected Flee use Wi/(f
6704 mm Wthe pessimistic fb'y his South/foa
Airings? 3.1%? ngBrlt : Rogztfors, ,his health improved
.Ji/I X'iazechW doctors weaned hi3 off the high dosage of
1 W a day, W 3. He credited them with
extending his life.
After the expiry of Lionel' 5 term at the IUS,
Forman' 5 headed back to England and/ (hired a cottage at theWWYV
Seaford on the Sussex coast. Forman enrolled for a
Wrojgwriting course at a correspondence cgilege andW
i ,i w-r-ite-an autobiographical book for _' o, hPe/L
i feared, might never get to know his father. WW1,
WW SOS arrived from South
Africa: Brian Bunting, editor of Advance (successor to
the now banned Guardian), wanted to travel oVerseas,
(IVA would Lionel return to South Africa to edit the newspaper

agggpqqacikye/in his absence? Advance was the most vociferous anti-apartheid newspaper in South Africa and the main. mo th iece of the Con ress Alliance. '

WW 9 WWMZEO

Bunting it the Soviet .Union&;before his

aa

WQM

passport expired preven ed by the state from

Hbagut(jAul/travelling abroad again. Forman accepted. But first he

i Axwanted to finish thggiaggzgi'hand. Within three months

J60 he had completed a 70 000 word autobiography, written in

the third person, with himself as the main actor called

David. In the autobiography Forman shared with his son

his feelings about life and politics. There were 48

chapters. In addition to topics such as "first love",

"mating", marriage and religion, he wrote about

racialism, nationalism, YCL and student days, "Comrade

Bill IAndrewsJ", the 1948 election, the Guardian A

newspaper, the resistance against train apartheid in Cape

Town, and his experiences in Europe, including a visit

to Auschwitz.

With the manuscript sewn into the mattress of baby Karl

for safety reasons, the Forman's arrived back in South

EQZ'jamygkt Africacln Januar\$ff954 on the-xxxxxxx Castle iiaer after StdI?7

S Ahan-Leag absence4 They were welcomed home by excited

customs officials who searched zlgvery inch'w of their

lugga e (bpt not the baby's mattressl). All their books

\$\$\$yjq&wz jgahdci ' fig%gg;;2pnsseseicns-twere confiscated. The

Q%gjua%g4M National Party's Minister of Justice had warned in 1949,

"We are not going to stand for any nonsense front the

Communists in South Africa". Five years on the

"rooigevaar" bogey was still very much an issue. If

Forman needed further proof, he was officially "listed"

under the Suppression of Communism Act within months of

his return. md34s

Forman got straight back into the political fray. The

Buntings sailed out of Cape Town on the boat the

Forman's had arrived on, and the next day Lionel started

editing Advance. In keeping with the newspaper's

strongly pro-ANC and Communist Party policy - the Party had been secretly reconstituted as the underground SACP \$MD ,6/ in 1953 - theQ%;__leg;:luL_1 ' editor routinely attacked what he regarded as a fascist inclined state, exhorted people to support and build the Congress movement, and promoted the socialist, anti-colonialist and anti-imperialist aims of the Party. Drawing on his own recent experiences abroad, Forman launched a weekly

\$ (BwvnQWE gLSpeetaterl column on international affairs, an innovation which became a permanent feature in the newspaper) gain cm bfgbt'arziwe479 yugu,/g:jj:fr 4343; \$// / Ei\$hmaw.lolkyl :Sl:xlal VQELCLf%QB1JL:x%;; an editorial on the national question in South Africa. Drawing on Marxist theory, he suggested that it would be better to talk about "national groups" rather than "races" in South Africa. By using the "false word trace'" to categorise people the liberation movement was helping to spread "the philosophy of the ruling (classes which keeps us in slavery", he wrote. Moreover, the importance of language and culture in struggle needed greater recognition. The dependence of the urban-based liberation movement on English confined the struggle to a relatively small section of South Africans. It had to be taken "into every kraal, hessian shack and pondokkie in terms the people can understand". He said that the best way to ensure this was to encourage the many national groups in South Africa to develop fully their own languages and culture. Presaged in Forman's Vision were the toyi toyi: dances and the vibrant cultural expression seen in the struggles of the 1980s:

Our Zulu poets must sing sagas of liberation in their' mother tongue - the people must rock with suhrq laughter at Sotho sazt\$es on the Nets. Let our very folk dances exemplify a kick in the pants for Malan and our music the drumbgats of freedom. ##L%

The liberation movement needed to "study and understand fully the forces of progressive nationalism and utilise them in the struggle for freedom" or it would "stumble and falter". people's nationalism was a healthy phenomenon, completely different from the exploitative 'drich man's nationalism' of the "apartheiders". X cuamfafwc.

Forman subsequently-xtxied--to-eiabomeMm-uhis views -by-MWLQQchMQTSiHQsdefim/Lon what constituted a nation, as weilii i/ theorising on the relationship between --ra'Ce and class" n04 (div and suggesting ways in which the national question could be tackled in South Africa. As a direct result of his M / editorial, the South Africaif Club, a left discussion group in Cape Town, convened a special debate on the issue. Forman participated together with Kenny Jordaan of the Non-Etiropean Unity Movemeht, the ANC's Thomas / , , L I L

(p; Ngwenya and his raomnisthaEt-y) colleague, Dr Jack "a 11%? ,Simons. The upshot of the debate was that the South"/'r:!/X'/'/:jl;;z sgj'l/ Africa Club and a sister group, the Forum Club, decided WM '1 x '/' to set up a liaison committee "with the specific purpose jtx/cflid H L .3 of organising a nation-wide discussion on the national (??%;fo a3 VV:4(5(WW question".-..35,3However, WWW this (g-4L'I'L'Lg.l (1/ NF? '3: initiatiye. aw; Was not 7QW'IWV "W aigg-fofv: #5 \$414M, I X (_ LX294 Q5 Lny OVJU-JQGWL 4.0 (X!) 130. . I I y, , ! (k vth The national question debate became . LM' 2 , r M W As Ray Alexander has ommented, "the more he studied and wrote, the more onvinced he became that the way to freedom lay thr gh a recognition and glad acceptance of multi-national x

composition. (authors pare esis) (16). Forman's ideas x a COMMKQt/ghderived fronKthe standard ar;ist texts on the subject by WLi'x-(i cai- L Lenin and Stalin.A (17/1/Heijielleve in the applicability11/:QLLCJV Amid Mg of their thesesfol/South Africa, and also of the Soviet J 1 OSNWWLMGIXQ model which pryiged for a socialist federation in which 0950i ationa IO ,5 had the right to self determination: ther with most South African communists since / s believed that under communist rule the Soviet; (and later also China) had solved its nationalities

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(141' 69%5 M, NNU mm M!
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k%beM problem; he for example, have shared Ruth First's
impressions .after a visit to China in 1954 that the
previously antagonistic nationalities there were now
"members of one free and friendly multi-racial
family". (18) ?Ehe dominant position in the ANC and the
SACP nevertheless was that Stalin's thesis could not be
mechanistically transposed onto South Africa. l:gn fact,
the feeling was that while the call for national self-
determination had been correct in the context of
emerging nation states in multi-national central and
eastern Europe, in South Africa and other colonial
countries subjected lx) imperialist domination jntfs2?3ed
the cause of reaction. Joe Slovo has recently summarised
'-k

this position in grcontemporary context:
National self-determination correctly' remains hpart
of the holy grail of RBrXist learning. But, for
most parts of Africa, the invocation of this right
for regional .and ethnic entities (either for
.secessionary' purposes or for creating ethnically-
defined political groupings) usually serves to
undermine rather than to advance the right to
national self-determination. And nowhere is this
prgth more so than in the context of the South African
kme/JE5\$5? Mlw struggle. (19)

am 03: H

,h;xfi) Given the history of divide-and-rule through the vehicle
;3Ll1 11 of segregation and apartheid in South Africa, the
%L 1:2lwlliberation movement increasingly stressed the unity and
Jj oneness of South Africa's people. A general consensus
emerged that South Africa was not a multi-national
country, but rather a nation in the making. (20) Jack
Simons made more or less the same points at the South
xi? ,/ Africa Club debate, where he strongly attacked Forman's
/1

(
. .Lhesie: unlike Europe, the demand here was for equality
fb5dl&w
within a common society and "it would be wrong to
disturb or deflect this development by stressing tribal,
racial or cultural differences". (21) He and others
accused Forman of advocating a neo-apartheid position.
But Forman stood by his argument, drawing on Marxist
theory to sustain it. He said,

"Superficially guaranteeing a people their own territory makes superficial thinkers jump because they are correctly conditioned to fight every idea that seems to divide the people. But of course that guarantee of national autonomy in a peoples democracy bears not the slightest resemblance to apartheid". (22)

Forman remained convinced that the best way to a single united South African nation (and eventually a single world culture) was to create conditions by which "the different national cultures in South Africa may first flower, and then merge". He acknowledged that it was not yet time to press for self-determination, but "the time will surely come when it will be a correct and popular demand". (23)

Forman's ideas on the national question were never accepted as policy by the Party or the Congress Movement. But they did highlight the differing, often contradictory positions within the movement, and the need for theoretical clarification. Did South Africa consist of many nations, four nations (white, coloured, Indian and African), two nations (black and white.? oppressor and oppressed) or one nation? Over the years there has been some confusion on the issue Raymond Suttner has pointed out, for example, that the word national is used in two ways in the Freedom Charter, which. was adopted in the ?Neesgaamr#&

/ same year that the ghggg-neatioaed debatei occurred. In 5 the important clause, "All national groups shall have equal rights!", the Charter appears to be referring to distinct racial groups - Africans, Whites, Coloureds and Indians. V Elsewhere in the Charter the word. national refers to all South Africans. (24) 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. (25)

Suttner, the current political head of the x ANC, however, contends that this four-nation theory never was Congress policy and that it survives "not in the Charter itself or amongst its supporters but mainly in polemical writings against it and the democratic movement as a whole". (26) Egg raw material in the chapters on 3mL the national question debate in this book should provide dg5aAQS fertile ground for activists and academics concerned with./:f:Mgblf:% the so-called "four nations" debate of the 19503. 9&3lL yELCJ;

But, back to Lionel Forman's unfolding career: when Brian Bunting returned from his overseas trip in April 1954 to take over again as editor of Advance, Forman went to Johannesburg to complete his Wits law studies which had been interrupted by 43m? sojourn abroad. After completing his degree he returned to Cape Town in November 1954. KBeQause of his'pgiiticalicommitment-there wash no/Ashortagex 0t gases for thei newly qualified Edkooate. He was soon defending trade unionists and /hot a week went by other victims of apartheid until when one of other of the political cases Lionel defended was not reported in the pressyf According to a former colleague he was brilliant in court and "extremely valuable to the movement" because he was one of only a few advocates at the time who would readily represent it in the Supreme Court. (27) But 'tearning a living was hard goingii because Forman made ii: a principle not to charge his clients in these political cases. When Albie Sachs returned to South Africa in 1990 after three decades in exile, acclaimed as a writer, thinker and internationally recognised legal expert, he acknowledged the influence Forman had had on him as a young lawyer in the fifties; from Lionel Forman he learned that it was the responsibility of the progressive lawyer to put himself at the disposal of the oppressed without expecting payment, Sachs told a welcoming audience in a poignant first speech after his return. Right up to a fortnight before his death, when he was banned. while

defending Ronald Segal (editor of the Africa South journal) in a highly publicised trial, Forman used the courts at every opportunity to fight apartheid. (28) However, Forman did not confine himself to law after qualifying as a advocate. (EgriE-EEEEQbecame more well known for his activities in journalism and politics. Ever since entering the political fray, he had been involved as an occasional reporter and photographer. on party journals, helping with political education, propaganda, publicity and sales. As Ben Turok has recalled, "You ... joined the The Guardian when you joined the movement ... you joined the The Guardian and its circle." (29) This was certainly the case with Forman. After his four-month stint as editor of the newspaper (now called Advance) in 1954, he continued to be intimately involved with it. When Advance was banned in October of the same year, he wrote a letter to the Rand Daily Mail slamming the establishment press for its half-hearted defence of press freedom, and announcing the imminent appearance of a successor to Advance called yew Age. (30) Arriving back in Cape Town the following month after completing his law studies, he became one of the core group running New Age. There are a number of reference(in the next few years to Forman being editor of the newspaper. But this did not mean that he was solely in charge. New Age was eifscS\$vggy run as a collective. We remain a moment with the newspaper which was in many respects unique. Started in 1937 as The Guardian, it appeared weekly. for 25 years, becoming the longest running left-wing newspaper in the country. In a recent article, Don Pinnock describes this as something of a political and financial miracle:

From week to week it teetered on the brink of closure, with pennies in the bank and policeman at the door. it was banned outright five times, sued, fire bombed, spied on and had its presses sealed. It was banned from news stands and constantly raided

by the police. Several Commission of Enquiries investigated its activities. Its editors received personal banning orders, most of the staff were arrested and charged at one time or another, its street sellers were harassed and beaten up, and eight staff members went on trial for high treason. (31)

When it was banned for the first time it became the first paper to be closed for political reasons "since Lord Charles Somerset halted the Commercial Advertiser in 1824". It kept bouncing back, changing its name after every banning: from the Guardian to 'the Clarion, the People's World, Advance, New Age and finally Sgark.

The paper was important for a number of reasons.

Firstly, it provided the Communist Party with an effective mouthpiece. Party members denied that it was an official party organ, but this public stance was tactical. It was controlled and run by Party members, it consistently reflected party policy and its position on international matters was virtually indistinguishable from the foreign policy of the Soviet Union. tx

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Secondly, the newspaper played an important role in building the Congress movement in the 1950s and laying the basis for the present formal ANC/SACP alliance which was cemented in the 1960s. The dissolution of the CPUSA in 1950, and the rapid growths of the ANC into a mass movement at the same time, encouraged communists to work much more closely with the national movement than they had in earlier decades. They started ggieeitiam; the national struggle and threw their energies into it.

This position was reflected in the pages of Advance, New Age. By the mid-1950s it had become the semi-official mouthpiece of the ANC, the "weekly heartbeat" of the liberation movement. According to Pinnock, the ANC relied heavily on the skills, finances and media of the Party and its members as it transformed itself from a "disparate organisation (geographically compartmentalised and without funds or a newspaper)"

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it had become by the
The newspaper served as a key
mobilising and organisational tool for the ANC.
According to Brian Bunting "The
exercised an unusual
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anti-apartheid struggle, in
regional editor for the
Eastern Cape, M.P. Nalcker who ran the Durban office and
Ruth First Michael Harmel and Ivan Schermbrucker based
in Johannesburg. ' '
itself".(33) The importance of Adv
ance/New Age therefore
went far beyond the outward signs of a struggling
newspaper, battling to stay alive. And
number
, though few in
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its journalists was great. It
members
unleashed a fresh burst of energy from Forman,
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smuggled a defiant letter out of prison for publication

in New Age. Refusing to use his ill-health as an excuse for any kind of exemption from the rigours of prison or the trial, he later started covering the proceedings for New Age from the "treason cage". His weekly reports were provocative, levelling fun and political contempt at the state and its agents. (See Part Two). In March 1957 he accepted an invitation from the veteran trade unionist Sollie Sachs to co-author a book on the trial, ignoring warnings that this might lay him open to further charges. An ex/Communist Party member and secretary of the Garment Workers Union for 25 years, Sachs was then living in England, having been forced out of South Africa by state harassment. They agreed that Sachs 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 common programme, the Freedom Charter ..." (34) Their book, *The South African Treason Trial*, was banned in South Africa, but it generated considerable publicity abroad. In a review Fenner Brockway was moved to write, "This is courage not to be measured". "Has a prisoner under a death charge ever before written and published the story of his trial whilst it was still going on - written it challengingly, glorifying in his crime, pouring scorn on the prosecution, exposing to the world the depraved principles of the Government which holds him"? (35) As "Accused Number 83" wrote the story of the trial, he started delving back into history to look at the lessons of previous treason trials and to unravel the background and development of the Congress Alliance whose leaders were now facing charges. Soon he was completely engrossed with his historical work, doing research whenever he got a respite from a busy court routine. He buried himself in the early newspapers and within months he'd decided to write a "people's history" of

the liberation struggle in South Africa. One unintended consequence of the landmark treason trial, therefore, was that it produced one of the most industrious historians of the fifties.

Not surprisingly, Forman's first "historical" article was on "Treason trials in South Africa". It appeared in the Congress journal, Fighting Talk, in February 1957. He then tackled the task of writing a 20 000 word overview of nearly three hundred years of South African history. He hoped to include this historical overview in the book with Solly Sachs, but it was left out, probably because of space constraints. Nevertheless, his historical research and writing now became his overriding interest. He started taking the task so seriously that he registered a Ph.D on "The history of African political organisations, 1870-1948" at the University of Cape Town in 1958. (36) By this time he was also writing regular historical articles for New Age. In July 1958, the newspaper published his first substantial writings in the form of five virtually full-page weekly instalments on the "History of the liberatory movement". (37) The articles were subsequently published - in revised form, and with two episodes added - as a booklet by New Age in 1959. Its title was "Chapters in the history of the march to freedom". The first episode started by giving the background to the current struggles. According to Forman, the basic conflict in a largely agrarian South African society up to 1870 was the conflict of "national entities" over land. However in the 1870s South Africa entered the "entirely new epoch" of capitalism following the diamond discoveries and the ensuing industrial revolution. The class struggle of "the working class (irrespective of nationality) against the bosses (irrespective of nationality)" started. alongside the national struggle between "white" and "non-white". The liberation movement, whose leaders are today charged with treason,

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is a fusion of Ethesel two streams into a nugthy river", he wrote. (38) J&mnrrjhe went on to deal with early working class organisation, the first black : political organisation% and the formation of the modern k day ANC in 1912.

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Clearly Forman's history aimed at helping_ provide a "useable" past for the ANC (and the .&Adi\$mn. SACP). Having grown rapidly into a mass movement of 100 000 people during the 19503 and posing a serious challenge to white minority rule for the first time after forty years of existence, the ANC had a keen appreciation of the importance of history. In fact it needed a history to emphasise its legitimacy and historical role. Congress leaders regularly evoked history and Congress publications often carried historical features. During the Treason Trial, for example, the Rev. J.C. Calata compiled a short history of the ANC. Joe Mathews, Tennyson Makiwane, Michael Harmel, Brian Bunting, Fatima Meer and R.V. Selothe Thema were among those who did historical pieces. ANC president Chief Lutuli, Z.K. Mathews and Selothe Thema also wrote autobiographical memoirs, but these remained unpublished in the 19505. A scholar writing 30 years later thas 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 situatiom/and problems". (39) Nowhere was this more true than in the case of Lionel Forman. His articles .were topical and related directly to current events. On May Day 1958, for example, he wrote,en'the way that day of international working-class solidarity had been celebrated in the past in South Africa. During the women's anti-pass struggles in late 1958 he recalled the earliest campaign in the Orange Free State 45 years before. That week happened to be the seventy-fifth anniversary of the first independent African newspaper, WWQW

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the Imvo Zabantsundu, so he discussed it's history as well, Around "Dingaan's day", the holiest of Afrikaner nationalist holidays, celebrating the victory of the Voertrekkers over the Zulu, he explained why Dingane killed the Voortrekker leader Retief. Launching straight into his ruling-class holy cow, he said, "On December 16 there will be the usual spate of nauseating claptrap from pulpits and platforms and press about how, at Blood River ... the forces of civilisation and of light, the messengers of God himself, destroyed the power of barbarism and darkness in the form of Dingane's Zulu. It may be a good idea to arm ourselves in advance against being submerged in the wave of emotion by taking a look at the facts". Having done so, he listed eight sources ranging from contemporary diaries to works by both "respectable" (McMillan) and radical (Mnguni) histories in an understandable act of caution. A few months later on Van Riebeeck day, another important white holiday commemorating the arrival of the first European colonists, Forman denigrated the "founding father" of white South Africa in an article headed, "Van Riebeeck was a robber". (40)

Forman's New Age writing was history with a difference in the 1950s. It challenged, even if indirectly, the focus of an academic history establishment embedded firmly within the system of white domination, its interpretations and, in fact, the whole process of historical production in the universities at the time. (41)7

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As already noted, Forman's history, was popular and useable, with no vague pretensions to some vague academic "Objectivity". Secondly, his interpretations challenged and deviated sharply from those of academic historians in important respects. His writing departed from the ethnocentric orthodoxy of the time. AH! elevated the history of black South Africans rather than the ruling

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minority; if referred to the indigenous people by the names they had themselves used ('Khoi Khoi') instead of derogatory descriptions ('Hottentot') adopted by the white rulers; ,Zf stressed the negative not the positive, or so-called "civilisinggggr effects of European colonialism; in fact, the colonialists were robbers who had taken the land of the indigenous people from them by force. Forman also rejected the notion that South African history was essentially about the clash between black and white as the established colonial, Afrikaner nationalist and liberal historians tended to emphasis. For him race and class went hand in hand. The advent of the industrial revolution was the central event in South African history, not the long succession of dates which marked South Africa's constitutional development. Today, the revisionist and historical materialist ideas enjoy wide currency in South Africa, but at the time they were unusual, if not original. Forman was really only developing a basic (still little known) Marxist analysis of South African history pioneered by activist intellectuals like Eddie Roux, Hosea Jaffe, Dora Taylor and Kenny Jordaan who were linked mainly to the Communist Party-and the Non-European Unity Movement. (42) x Finally, Forman emphasised a collective, "bottom up" approach to history writing. His focus and the process he followed. bears striking resemblance to current experiments in "people's history" in South Africa. He sought "widescale participation in the preparation of the history". Readers of New Age were "not merely invited, but urged "to send in their comments and criticisms, and to help locate material. He wanted this to be "an experiment in collective participation in history writing". Ordinary people's experiences needed to be recorded "to fill gaps and make corrections". Moreover, material about "less well-known men and women" needed to be collected too. (43) Forman's colleagues on New Age collaborated closely, offering criticism and

helping with editing. Many of his political colleagues were drawn in to help as well. For example, in 1957, on a trip to Durban with Joe Slovo and two other friends during a recess in the treason trial, Forman got permission from the veteran ICU and ANC leader, A.W.G. i Champion, to take his substantial collection of papers to Cape Town. They were later deposited at UCT, becoming an important source for scholars. Colleagues in the Communist Party and the Natal Indian Congress such as Jacqueline Arenstein and M.P. Naicker collected material and did research for him. Even activists in London were roped in. S.R. "Mac Maharaj, now on the National Executive Committee of the ANC, wrote to say he had tried without success to trace copies of the early ANC newspaper, Abantu Batho, in the British Museum and the 3 British Public Library in London. Party veterans were consulted regarding facts and interpretations. Under the heading of "Queries" he wrote in his notebook, "Ask e.g. Moses iKotanel, Rebecca IBunting), J.B. (Marksl, Jimmy La Guma, Ray Harmel, Louis Joffe". Forman was particularly keen to correct what he regarded as the "distortions" created by Eddie Roux whose books, S.P. Bunting and especially the classic Time Longer Than R_og3_ were the most important (and then still virtually the only) full-length works on political resistance in South Africa. Roux's ex Party colleagues regarded his work as "biased and malicious". Even worse, one of them wrote, his indiscretions border on informing and have in fact been used against us (in the Kahn-Carneson select committee and elsewhere). (44)

A pile of correspondence on Forman's March to Freedom booklet helps shed some light on the internal processes and debates which occurred within the Communist Party

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Wwablj booklet for publication.AThey included Brian Bunting and Fred Carneson in Cape Town and Michael Harmel and Ruth

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First in Johannesburg. Forman's colleagues made a number of suggestions, "all of which ... arose out of collective discussion". This was in keeping with the collective and politically disciplined approach of the Party and the people working on New Age. Because special care was taken with the preparation of publications the process of debate, criticism and co-operation was rigorous. Harmel even opposed the re-publication of Forman's articles in the form of a booklet. He felt Forman was perhaps acting too individualistically and that the booklet was unbalanced. He complained that it "gives the impression that the author considers the small and relatively insignificant socialist movement of the time to be of more importance than the national liberation movements ...". He said this was not only a "construction weakness": the extra articles "... throw the whole thing off balance and give it a twist, a wrong slant which we shall have to answer politically if not in any other way ... all sorts of things are going to be read in it ..." (45) These criticisms not only delayed its publication, but also led to certain personal and political tensions. Forman spoke about "uncomradely" behaviour and "zeal to prevent the publication of ideas that may prove to be wrong", Harmel in turn lectured him back)

on the importance of collective action (see pp .i). The matter was eventually settled amicably, with Forman accepting amendments which he agreed improved the work and Harmel acknowledging that his "first comments were rather bad tempered and destructive" (46)

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The background to the above exchange was the somewhat maverick reputation which Forman was acquiring within the Communist Party. This was linked to an intellectual precociousness and sense of urgency, a strong-minded, fearless nature and what he regarded as an unhealthy dearth of socialist debate in the years after the CP had been dissolved itself in 1950. Already known for his opposition to the dissolution of AWL,
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N inf the Party,
he consistently called for the discussion of
theoretical issues despite the draconian
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iy\$gh restrictions imposed by the Suppression of
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(but not total)
question". (47) Hilda Bernstein apologised to Fbrman
/ for the "long delay" in deciding whether or not to
publish and said she could not agree with "this
withholding of any comment, bu , to date that is our
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Board's majority decision". (48)/7
Despite his ill-health,
demanding routine. For iii two

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international/observers such as the British M. P. Barbara
 NH Castle and the space the trial provided for writing and
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 :7 / Now permanently back in Cape Town, he returned to his
 legal work and continued to busy himselfV/with his history
 writing and his responsibilities at New Age. __,He
 generally worked into the early hours of the ymorfning,
 ,1 if, (I complaining to a correspondent at one stagew/Jthalt he was
 half buried under hundreds of pages of manuscripts. In
 addition to all this, Forman jumped at "the chance to re-
 enter the debate on the national/ question when the long
 awaited opportunity presented itself again in 1958-9.

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 Nixiy/Vyiioner 3 interest in the national question was rekindled early
 in 1958 by a book on South Africa in Russian, which
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 r was the doyen of Soviet Africanists, Prof. I. I. Potekhin
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of the USSR Academy of Sciences, who later became the
 first director of the Africa Institute in Moscow. (50)
 The 3:26:51; dealt with "The formation of the South African
 Bantu into a national community". SACP members in South
 Africa translated parts of it and when Forman read the
 translations, he contacted Potekhin via intermediaries in
 London, starting a regular exchange of letters. (51) In
 October 1958 Potekhin, who wrote approvingly of Forman's
 historical work and invited him to attend an
 International Congress of Orientalists in Moscow,
 published another piece on "The making of nations in
 Africa". It appeared in Marxism Toda , the theoretical
 journal of the British Communist Party, setting in motion
 a lengthy debate in the journal. Potekhin's article was
 also reprinted in the Congress discussion journal,
 Liberation. (52) Forman took the opportunity to mhaa-rd
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VV' viewf. He wrote two pieces on the "development of
 nations " in South Africa for Marxism Today. One was
 republished in Liberation in a slightly revised form.

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J; A ', ii (53) /He followed these with a third unpublished article
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Africa", vvhich he regarded as perhaps the most important of/ali his writings;"/

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Potekhin, following Stalin, defined a nation as having four main characteristics - a common territory, a common language, a icommon culture and a common economy or national market. He then tried to show how these concepts could be applied to Africa. Ebrman tried to elaborate on the above definitions and to measure their applicability to South Africa. In doing so he drew heavily on historical insights acquired froh his recent researcheis. For instance, he sought the roots of an "African nation" in South .Africa in the first cross-tribal, proto-nationalist organisations such as the Imbumba Yama Afrika (or Nyama) formed in the early 18805. Their emergence followed the mineral discoveries which "transformed South Africa from a collection of primitive pastoral and agricultural communities into a single economic unit, and smashed the tribal system and sped on the process of the unification of the Africans". According to him there were "still no nations in South Africa" - it was more correct to talk of the various ethnio and language communities as "pre-nations" (or na;adnosts, a definition he borrowed from Potekhin). Adhering to his anyiytical departure point that South Africa was a multi-national country, Forman suggested that a political answer for the country lay in "some form of multi-national federation" comparable with that of the Soviet Union, India, Switzerland or China. (55) He also envisaged that the Afrikaners (eventually incorporating the "Coloureds") would one day "obtain the opportunity" to develop into a nation, "being given the essential territorial basis for such development, as has happened in the USSR and China". (56)

While Forman's views accorded closely with those of Potekhin his colleagues in South Africa were once again strongly critical. Fellow New Age staffer, Fred Carneson, writing

under the pseudonym of John McGrath, fired a broadside at Forman's novel but "quite erroneous" conclusions and accused him of at some stages "deserting reality": He discusses (self-determination) in the abstract, as if we already had a single, socialist soviet state in South Africa. He forgets that the struggle has not yet been won, and that the course of the struggle might take a very different path to that he has mapped out. (57)

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\$RK1/ Clearly relishing the debate, Forman offered a rejoinder to I Carneson and other critics and settled down to write his next piece. It was an article /started as a letter to Potekhin and completed in ten solid days of 3/ / work which traced the relationship of the CPUSA to the national movement from its inception in 1921 to its dissolution in 1950. He concluded that the (white) pioneers of South African communism had "stumbled often, did not always point out the best route and sometimes even had to retrace their footsteps down alleys which they had not perceived to be dead-ends". CL(xESL/LA Serious mistakes had been made because of a "shallow" understanding of Marxism-Leninism. The article underlined once again the fact that while Forman was committed as a Marxist to class analysis and class struggle he believed that national rather than class slogans and the "development of a healthy peoples' nationalism" - cutting across class lines and, especially, drawing in the rural masses - was the key to the advancement of the South African struggle. flff55 549#t%/\$lcb(410(vlua, XE/Al&t Md SQMV KALMM Lionel was now getting distracted from other priorities. He wrote to M.P. Naicker that he'd got himself sidetracked on the national question, but "Now I am going back to history. I wish the buggers would put me back in jail again so that I can spend all my time on it, without all these diversions". ?%h) But his time had run out. He was to write no more.

III

"A trumpet from the housetops"

of Lionel Forman's

, and to make accessible to present-day scholars and activists hitherto gegggiy unknown or inaccessible material. onS%ha-stii4gz3;ef;ieia\$%yeaaderstoe-politics of that decade. The vicious repression, bannings and censorship '

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After Lionel Forman's death his

carefully preserved his papers

material for publication in New Age and elsewhere. She

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 "(1 : cements wand- typing nearly everything he wrote. 1 61?ij
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W Sadie-e editedk-pw-r of Lionel' s writings Rand.
 usually appeare around the anniver f his birthday MHLQAQJ

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continued to help prepare the material.// But times were
 getting difficult. In the early 1960s the ANC was banned
 and open protest became impossible. Slivers of the
 lengthening shadows that loomed over individuals and the

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democratic movement as a whole at the time Wenquuth
 First's correspondence with Sadie. "PS Do keep copies
 of articles just in case ..., she wrote in one
 letter. (61) And, in another, "Well - here we go.

Arrests started this a.m. All fine so far:/(62) Not long ' X
 afterwards, Ruth became a Mom victim of the 90 day
 detention without trial legislation. (63) And within two
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forced to close ldown. JTime and space were frunnlng out,
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 W's colleagues were either banned,- jailed or in
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W booklet, "Why did Dingane kill/Re'tief. ' writh the help X

W of some UCT students, she me was banned W in
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ww# Forman anniversary fbgoklet" entitled - "Black and White
 9 in South African history", is an example of the work by
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\$952., .3 19605. Brou t out by New Age ln 1960, it provides a 7k
 QMFQfA historical Afackground, dealing with South Africa's pre-
 ?1 colonial/and colonial past to the beginnings of "the
 6" struggle within a common society" in the late 19th
 vMarch to Freedom; therefore, forms ,(

to ireedom" started .
 centu/y. This is whc7e Forman' 5 earlier booklet "March ,1

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a.lochaL Qhagterd J/4t describes the beginnings of the class ahahhatichai ruggles in South Africa up to 1914. Fkh',f56hapter 3 details how a revolutionary socialist movement emerged in the country during the First World War, at the same time that a wave of revolutionary fervour was affecting Russia and Europe. The two New Age booklets comprising chapters 1 and 2 reflect Forman' 5 approach in 7H a /WH his popular newspaper articles. Chapter 3/(gives the yd w3_i reader an insight into the more substantial people' 5 history of the liberation movement he planned to write. It is a densely empirical piece, based mainly on research in the International, the newspaper of the early i International Socialist League. Here is EH1 example of the hundreds of pages of rough work which can be found in manuscript in Forman's papers. They indicate the seriousness with which he was tackling his research. (Incidentally, the most polished of Forman's published historical articles was the "digest" of the opening section of his Ph.D. which appeared in the Africa South journal under the title,i "The birth of African nationalism", ear&yu jay ngGI, but it has not been included here because it verlaps with the booklets). Chapter 4 consists of the previously unpublished "background: to 'the national question in South. Africa", It attempts to analyse critically the policy of the Communist Party towards the national question in its early legal phase from 1921 to 1950. This background piece helps contextualise unfolding Party policy and the later formal alliance between the ANC and the SACP. Although it appears in the historical section, it should also be read together with his theoretical writings on . . 3 the national question (see p.xx below). _____- "mtttc"__--_7 W4? noi ; FMQ_ mer-

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art One, thus,ghelps show how Forman and a
/ his comrades in the 19503 ' :
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In Part Two (chaptersggg%) Forman'sgfirst-hand account
of the famous South African treason trial is reproduced,
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' mat! amok: . . _
nma-beaemini_the-itberattea-mouement;_ It is one of the i
few contemporary accounts of an import
political history of South Africa.
from Th
Mal
. Forman and Solly SachS4Planned a follow up,
but Forman.had died before the,lnng-;una&ag trial ended.
The
ant event in the
The excerpts here are
e South African Treason Trial.7 Whe
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Part Three of 'A Trumpet from the Housetops" (chapters
(17-233 con3lsts of reports and theoretical and anecdotal
known perspectives, debates
liberation. movement in the
interests and involvement.
and activities within the
19503, via Forman's
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In chapter 7) surviving fragments from the 70 000 word autobiographical manuscript Forman. wrote in England at the age of 26 help recreate the ambiance of youth and grassroots politics when he entered the political arena in the period between the Second World War and the advent of institutionalised apartheid in 1948. He wrote about the whole range of his experiences and attempted a serious assessment of the Party and its history, but unfortunately the bulk of this material was lost despite the precautions that had been taken. Fearing that it would fall into the hands of the police after Lionel's arrest for treason, his father burnt the manuscript which had been so carefully smuggled into the country. A copy of the manuscript was kept in London. -Henry Pollitt of the Communist Party of Great Britain, but it too has disappeared.

Chapter 18 reflects the perspectives of Forman and the South African left on world politics at the height of the Cold War in the early fifties. Drawn from Forman's pieces in *Advance* in the weeks after his return from Czechoslovakia and Britain, this chapter underlines his uncompromising belief in Marxism and anti-imperialism and brings into sharp relief the high passions that existed in South Africa during the post-war conflict between the USA and the USSR. When local liberals and communists adopted almost without refinement the language of the super power adversaries. Forman's departure point was that the international capitalist system's need for expansion lay at the bottom of the nuclear arms race, American "war-mongering" and the West's domination of the colonial world. Socialism provided the only answer. But the Soviet Union was the standard bearer of socialism. Many of Forman's analyses; for example the articles on national liberation movements in Africa, Asia and Latin America; have stood the test of time. Others have been proved dismally wrong. See, for example, his prediction of the imminent collapse of the United States and world capitalist economies (pp. xx).

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2 Chapter 9 includes discussion pieces on socialism geared
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It is a reminder of the internal debate in the Party. Forman
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; Q55 our theoretical publications do tend to be so
mourned the fact that in the years after the draconian
Suppression of Communist Act there was "very little
discussion" on socialism. While acknowledging
the heavy (but not total) restraints imposed by the
Act, he felt the Party itself was partly to blame.
Consequently he tried to stimulate the debate on the
national question and later attempted to encourage the
43...
South African Socialist Review. While a loyal Party
member, Forman was unafraid to express Views which did
not accord with the Party "line". For instance, he
raised the question of whether or not a new mass
socialist party should be started (65) and the alone,
with only reserved support from Albie Sachs',
criticised the 1956 Soviet invasion of Hungary at a Party
meeting in Cape Town called to discuss the issue. (66)
A letter by Forman to Ruth First at a time when some
colleagues were reluctant to go ahead with the
publication of his history booklet, reflects very well
his attitude towards discussion and debate within the
Party.
... I think it is possible to become over-careful in
/ one's zeal to prevent the publication of ideas which
might prove to be wrong. The only way that one could
achieve that safety is by publishing nothing at all
that isn't completely run-of-the-mill. I think that
cautious that they are sometimes not as interesting
and stimulating as they could be and this could have
a harmful effect on the level of advancement of
theory in our movement.
It seems to me that particularly in discussing the
early history of the movement there is room for
taking a little risk that something may be written
by someone else much better. Where a movement is
blessed with a Lenin it can expect to have its
writing correct first time. But where, as in South
Africa, we rely on ordinary folks, the process
should be something like this: A work is published
dealing with a worthwhile field of study. A major

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portion of it is directly useful and acceptable.

Portions of it arouse controversy, there is discussion on the controversial points. They are cleared up. A big step forward is made.

If for fear of controversy we refuse to print the work, the issues are never cleared up. No big step forward is made and we stagnate. (And although I lay myself open to attack for this remark, I'd say that the history of our liberation movement is a history of an immense field of theory that we South Africans never cleared 13) at any time, rising and blundering and falling and rising and blundering again, because of some malaise of ours).

If there is useful material here, and if the controversial parts (by golly, I've sweated to cut the parts that offend) seem honestly and soberly stated, the people who read it are capable of evaluating it themselves, and the critics will not be short of space to publish their warnings of the errors. (I would certainly never say that just because they're wrong such criticisms should not be allowed). ' South Africans are exposed to a great deal of dangerous stuff and certainly most Congressmen have a well developed critical faculty. Over-caution in exposing them to bad ideas may even border on contempt for them. (67)

This letter was really directed to Michael Harmel, and Harmel's long reply adds further light on the intra-Party debates of the time:

... This business of "zeal to prevent publication" sticks in my throat. we, the movement collectively, work very hard to establish, distribute and keep going publications which express and help our collective point of view: and therefore those whose extremely responsible task it is to write for these publications have a duty to express that collective point of view and not just ride our own individual hobby-horses.

But what, you may ask, about matters where new ground had to be broken, where there is no established view? t

Then, I. say; it is our ' duty' at least to consult other people before rushing in to print. You are saying in general that it is better to print something that is wrong than not to print anything at all about an obscure or controversial question. There may be something in that. But it is better still to print the right thing about it. None of us

Yet it is a proud
individuality.
, you'll see that I am
y and prin t
o be wrong" I'm emphasising
eve to be correct bec
been submitted
ourselves can recognise as valid:
discussion - where possible
not like lasf week's news,
for discussion) b
collecti ve
history is

although you may not realise it from the tone of his article we are very warm friends!). I asked him to send you a copy of his article ..." (69)

The debate on the national question and Forman's untimely death are the themes for the last four chapters of Part Three of the book. In chapter 15 the national question debate kicks off with Lionel's 5 early 1954 writings and the responses these elicited. In chapter 21 there is a W translated excerpt from Potekhin's 3 book on South Africa which galvanised Forman into writing on the national question again. It has been preferred to the article on alarm)?! the formation of nations in Africa, which sparked the debate in *Marxism Today*; and to which Forman related directly in his subsequent articles in that journal. The Potekhin piece published here deals more specifically with South Africa, revealing the analytical frameworks of Soviet scholars writing on South Africa in the 1950s. and their perspectives on the history of the ANC up to that time. As early as 1933, Potekhin had written a book (together with the South African Albert Nzula and a Russian colleague) on working class movements and forced labour in colonial Africa. It was recently translated and republished in English, enabling non-Russian speaking scholars to get insight into early Soviet analyses of South Africa. (70) Potekhin's article here opens the door on a later period, making possible a comparative historiographical investigation. Chapter 12; includes later published articles on the national question by Forman, critiques of Kherao and his correspondence with Potekhin. Here, perhaps more than anywhere else in the book, one sees Forman drawing on the Marxist theory which underpinned his writing and politics. This chapter should particularly interest activists and academics concerned with the debate about the so-called "four nations" thesis within the Congress movement in the 1950s. The "Moscow correspondence" in chapter 11 gives some insight into exchanges between the South

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African liberation movement and the Soviet Union in the period just before the advent of the exiled struggle when were 49

lyrm A thousands of South Africans (visits! the Soviet Union. WW w ,5,

'K ybbw Forman kept in contact With Potekhin Vla Solly Sachs and ill ,JM Communist Party colleague Vella Pillay who was based in 5 ,Qt . .

VMy) sgr London. He also correspond With Appollon DaVidson, who later took over Potekhin's mantle as the leading Soviet scholar on South Africa. (71)

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/ A trumpet from the housetops" ends (chapterfzg\$wwith j&p%J / Idonel Forman's moving last.\$es%ament. It stands as an enduring tribute to a remarkable yonng South vAfric\$.

There cannot have been many more poignantlggggggggts of freedom than this - the mortally wounded fighter letting off a last volley againgtogyganny, re-affirming his belief in humanity, looking Bsyggg himself, even as he is overtaken by unconsciousnessx'.aIaamutaaQKRUQQaaiA4aiaapa Forman was not one of the big political figures of the fifties, but as a leading journalist on Advance and new Age he played an influential role in the politics of that decade. His historical and theoretical writings help reflect the variety and political complexity of an era. They will remain useful to scholars for some time in the future. And, his courage, political commitment and intellectual robustness provide eloquent testimony to the role played by the South African Communist Party in the struggle for freedom in this country. An underground SACP document which paid tribute to Forman declared without any real exaggeration that, "Not a single important campaign or decision, either nationally, or in the main centres of resistance, has been taken by the democratic movement over the past decade without the active participation, and frequently the initiative, of our comrades". (72) Always in the front trenches ih the l cfight against a harsh enemy, communistsKHEIEeahgnidt'the

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J 'l " .ANGwin a non-raCial direction at an important juncture in hJ

its history, and they played a central role in its transformation from a ?Heaknr pressure group into the

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militant mass movement which is now challenging for state power in South Africa. IHHQ As the energetically anti-Stalinist left historian Krickler has noted, "... in the last analysis, this - not the shoddy, Moscow-induced politics in which they ,sometimes engaged - is their legacy." (73)

FOOTNOTES

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ESELECTED WRITINGS ' Edited by SAUIE FURMAN and ANDRE UDENUAAL
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