

## ROY JANKIELSOHN'S SPEECH

### TONY LEON'S BOOK LAUNCH

On the Contrary+

1st September 2008

Samuel Herman maternal grandfather to Tony Leon was born in Bradford in England and arrived in Cape Town in 1912. Barnet Leon arrived in Cape Town in 1869 from England even though the Leon 's had lived in Spain for several hundred years. These events in 1912 and 1869 are directly responsible for us being here this evening.

Early in his book Tony states: I do not make claim to being an African, not just by birth, but by choice+

Tony states further that: While I never entered public life to achieve executive office, I certainly would have relished the opportunity to converting principles and policies into laws and governance+

Tony's political life could be written by Shakespeare as the prince who was destined never to become king .

It is a tragedy for South Africa , that Tony was for some too principled and for others too white to enjoy the executive office that he richly deserves.

If Samuel Herman and Barnet Leon had remained in England or travelled to some other part of the world such as the USA, Australia or New Zealand, where almost a century later presidents and prime ministers would be elected mostly, I would not say always, for their principle, courage, intelligence and political stamina instead of their colour, then I am convinced that Tony would have experienced the transition from prince to king.

After working with Tony closely for the past eight years I am convinced and believe, and I mean this most sincerely, that had Tony been born anywhere else instead of South Africa , he would have enjoyed the executive office of Prime Minister or President. Reading On the Contrary only strengthens this belief.

The book On the contrary+is a great contribution to our contemporary history. Prof Ockie Geyser states in his review of the book in Volksblad and in Beeld today that: Maak jou daarvoor gereed dat dit veel meer as net 'n outobiografie is. Dis sonder enige noemenswaardige teenspraak die wetenskaplike, in-diepte-ontleding en daarmee gepaardgaande vertolking van die politieke geskiedenis van Suid-Afrika die afgelope bykans twee decades.+

He writes further: Ek plaas die boek in die klas van Sir Anthony Eden se Memoirs , Sir Alec Douglas Hume se The way the wind blows en Margaret Thatcher se The path to power, the Downing Street years . Vir my is dit een van die bestes. Indien nie die beste nie, wat die afgelope tyd in die genre in Suid-Afrika verskyn het. Ɔ Waardevolle toevoeging tot die Suid-Afrikaanse historiografie.+

On The Contrary takes us through the life of Tony Leon and his political career. It also gives us some insight into those who influenced his life. The book then takes us on a journey through a turbulent time in our most recent political development and history when the very concept of an opposition was under threat in our newly formed democracy.

The turbulence for the opposition in South Africa has not ended, but at least Tony has placed the opposition on a path that, if we continue on it, will take this country to a better destination than that which is envisioned for us by those individuals currently in the corridors of power.

As I read the book I was fascinated by Tony's own personal experiences and feelings during the storms that the DA faced during its short existence on the political stage in South Africa . I was Tony's parliamentary councillor in 2001 when we as the newly formed Democratic Alliance were almost destroyed from within. I can relate to Tony's anger and frustrations that are exposed in chapter 16: A Marriage made in Hell and chapter 17: Darkest before Dawn.

These chapters are particularly riveting and I hope that those of you who have not yet bought the book will buy it, and read how politics has changed little from the times of Machiavelli, when princes were poisoned by their own courtiers. A time when politics was about dark political motives driven by ambition and lust for power. In fact Shakespeare could write two new plays named MacMartinus and MacMarais based on these two chapters alone.

Recently, I was at a loss as to what to say to our SRC candidates during a braai arranged for them on the eve of the Kopsie SRC elections. Tony came to my rescue. On page 70 of his book he talks about his own experiences during SRC elections at Wits in 1979 and quotes a passage from a speech delivered by Theodore Roosevelt at the Sorbonne in the early 20 th century:

Tony quotes the following passage from this speech: It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better; the credit belongs to the man who is in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, and comes short again and again and again because there is no effort without error and shortcomings; but who does actually strive to do the deeds ˆ who spends himself in a worthy cause, who at best knows in the end the triumphs of achievement and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while

daring greatly; so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat.

As you read *On The Contrary* you will read about defeat and victory, but more importantly you will read about perseverance and courage, you will read about how a dream is realised, almost shattered, and then revived. You will read about the formation and development of the Democratic Alliance. A party that was once just a dream, but is now a reality and the only hope for the democratic future in South Africa.

In the last sentence of his book, Tony challenges those of us who are still in the arena amid the dust, sweat and blood with the closing sentence: "The future is imperfect, but it is ours to make."

Mandela's legacy was his long walk to freedom, a walk that took almost a lifetime.

Your legacy is the entrenchment of the freedom that we currently enjoy through the continuous role of the Democratic Alliance in the political arena.

Our legacy will be the protection of this freedom as we enter the imperfect future.

Tony: *On The Contrary* is not your swansong, the book is only the summary of your legacy. Your legacy will never be captured in a single swansong, no, your legacy is the symphony that the orchestra, the DA, continues to play in our political arena.