

## **JAMES LA GUMA**

[From *New Age*, Cape Town, August 3, 1961]

The death occurred last Saturday morning of Mr. Jimmy La Guma, former President of the S.A. Coloured People's Congress. He died at the Groote Schuur Hospital where he had been undergoing treatment for a heart ailment. He was 67.

Born in Bloemfontein in 1894, Mr. La Guma served his apprenticeship as a leather worker in Cape Town. At the age of 18 he went to South West Africa as a labour recruit and later organised a branch of the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union (ICU) in the territory, and led a strike of diamond field workers in Pomona. Thereafter Mr. La Guma was summoned to the head office of the ICU in Cape Town and later became administrative secretary.

Mr. La Guma joined the Communist Party of South Africa in 1924. In 1927 he was a delegate to the international conference of the League against Imperialism in the Palais D'Egmont, Brussels, and also went on a lecture tour of Europe and attended the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations of the Soviet Union in Moscow that same year.

During the depression Mr. La Guma assisted in the organisation of unemployed workers, and in 1933 helped to organise the garment workers of the Cape. He served a term of imprisonment arising out of a strike by these workers.

Mr. La Guma was one of the founders of the Non-European United Front in the thirties and in 1936 a foundation member of the National Liberation League which led the massive demonstration of the Coloured people against the Stuttaford Segregation Bill in 1939.

Shortly after the outbreak of World War II he joined the army and served with the Cape Corps in Abyssinia and Egypt. He was demobilised in 1947.

Mr. La Guma retained his interest and activity in politics to the end. When the Communist Party was dissolved in 1950, he was a member of its Central Committee.

When his son Alex was arrested in 1956 on a charge of high treason, Mr. La Guma came forward to take his place in the Congress movement. He was detained during the State of Emergency last year for four months, but was speaking again on a CPC platform from the City Hall only a few weeks before his death.

In him the progressive movement has lost a militant fighter, a staunch Congressite and a socialist. He is survived by his wife, daughter and son.

To his family and friends, *New Age* conveys its heartfelt condolences. Their loss is shared by all his former comrades.

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[Mr. La Guma was a member of the South African delegation to the International Congress against Imperialism in 1927, along with Mr. J. Gumede, President of the African National Congress, and Mr D. Colraine of the Trade Union Congress. The three delegates jointly proposed the following resolution on South Africa and it was adopted by the Congress:

We, the undersigned delegates from the Union of South Africa, respectfully submit to this first International Conference of Workers and Oppressed Peoples in all Imperialist Countries and Colonies the following resolution on behalf of all workers and oppressed people in South Africa, irrespective of race, colour or creed.

We demand:

1. The right of self-determination, by the complete overthrow of capitalist and imperialist domination.
2. The right of establishing full educational facilities for the development of all peoples.
3. The abolition of all oppressive taxation.
4. The abolition of all indentured labour.
5. The right of all classes of workers to organise themselves into trade union organisations for their economic and social emancipation.
6. Free speech and assembly to be the unfettered right of all workers and peoples irrespective of colour or creed, and further, that no embargo be placed against any leader or representative of workers and the people travelling the country in the interests of the rights demanded in the preceding clauses.

That in order to combat the present phase of world exploitation by capitalism and imperialism in colonies and semi-colonies and semi-colonial countries, which same is responsible for the lowering of the economic and social conditions of the workers in the home countries with their huge army of unemployed competing for an existence, we call upon all the workers of South Africa irrespective of colour to strive for closer unity and working class solidarity.

Realising that the unity of all workers irrespective of race, colour or creed is essential to the successful issue of the fight against exploitation and imperialism, this Congress calls upon the workers of South Africa, both white and black, to strive for that mutual

understanding that will bring about working class unity and solidarity in their own interests and those of all other workers and oppressed peoples of the world.

Long live the solidarity of the working class and oppressed peoples!

Down with exploitation and imperialism!

D. Colraine  
J.A. La Guma  
J.Gumede  
South African Delegates]