

The Immortal Talent of Martin Luther King

We present below an excerpt from the remarks made by Lyndon LaRouche on January 19, at the annual Martin Luther King Prayer Breakfast hosted by the Talladega County Chapter of the Alabama Democratic Conference, at the Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center. The full text of Mr. LaRouche's remarks is available on the Schiller Institute website at www.schillerinstitute.org.

I want to indicate . . . what the significance of Martin is, today. We had no replacement for Martin, lesson number one. Martin was a unique personality. He was not a talented person who happened to stumble into leadership, and could be easily replaced, by other leaders who would learn the job and take over afterward. We had no replacement. No one in the position to replace him. Many wished to be—they didn't have it.

What did Martin have? What was the essence of Martin, that made him something special? Let's compare three cases, to get at this. One, Martin himself. The other, the case of France's famous heroine, Jeanne d'Arc, and I'm rather familiar with the details of the actual history of the Jeanne d'Arc case, which is comparable, in a sense, a very special way, to the case of Martin. And then, also, a fictitious case, but which points to the problem we face: The case of Shakespeare's Hamlet, especially the Hamlet of the Third Act soliloquy.

Now, what was the issue? Martin was truly a man of God. Truly. In a way that very few people are actually able to realize in their lifetime. It wasn't just that he was a man of God: It's that he rose to the fuller

appreciation of what that meant. Obviously, the image for him was Christ and the Passion and Crucifixion of Jesus Christ. That was his source of strength. He lived that. He had gone to the mountaintop, at a point that he knew his life was threatened by powerful forces in the United States. And he said, "I will not shrink from this mission, even if they kill me." Just as Christ said, and I'm sure that was in Martin's mind, at that point. The Passion and Crucifixion of Christ, is the image which is the essence of Christianity. It's an image, for example, in Germany, or elsewhere, where the Bach *St. Matthew Passion* is performed. It's a two-hour

performance, approximately. In those two hours, the audience, the congregation, the singers, the musicians, re-live, in a powerful way, the

Passion and Crucifixion of Christ. And this has always been important: To re-live that. To capture the essence of what Christ means, for all Christians. And Martin showed that.

The difference is this—and I'll come back to Jeanne d'Arc (or call it Joan of Arc, in English). The difference is, most people tend to believe, "Yes, I wish to go to Heaven," or something like that. Or, don't. Don't care. But, they are looking for answers within the bounds of their mortal life. They're thinking of the satisfactions of the flesh. The security they will enjoy, between the bounds of birth and death. Whereas, the great leader, like Martin, rises to a higher level. They think of their life, as the Gospel presents it, as a "talent." That is, life is a talent, given to you. You're born, and you die. That is your talent, what you have in that period. The question is, you're going to spend it anyway. *How* are you going to spend it? What are you going to spend it to secure, for all eternity? What are you going to do, as a mission, that will earn you the place you want to occupy in eternity?

Martin had a clear sense of that. That mountaintop

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address, for me, struck me years ago—*clear*. It was just a clear understanding, of exactly what he was saying; what he was saying to others. Life is a talent. It is not what you get out of life. It's what you put into it, that counts.

Martin had that. That's why he was a leader. And I've known many of the other leaders with him, in that period. *They didn't quite have the same spark*. They may have accepted the idea. They may have believed in it. *But, it didn't grip them*, the same way it did Martin. And it came to grip him, more and more, I'm sure, as he took on more and more responsibilities. As a leader, you feel this. You see your people. You see the things you have to cope with, the suffering; you see the danger. And you have to find within yourself the strength, not to flinch. Not to compromise.

The Case of Jeanne d'Arc

Take the case of Jeanne d'Arc, to the comparison—Joan of Arc, as she's called. This is the real history. She was such a significant figure, in the Fifteenth century, that her history was thoroughly documented at the time, and cross-checked, and so forth. She was a figure in all Christianity. She was a key figure in the history of France.

Here she is, a young woman, coming from a farming background, who is inspired to believe that France must be freed from the terrible occupation of the Norman chivalry. That France must become a true nation. And that it must be risen out of its condition, to become a nation, to take care of these problems. That God wished this to happen. So, she went, through a series of events, to a Prince, who was the heir, nominally, to the throne of France. And she said to this Prince, having gotten in there, with various credentials, "God wants you to become King." And he looked at her, and he said, "What do you want from me?" She said, "I don't want anything from you. God wants you to become a King."

And so, because of her power, of her personality and her mission, the King gave her the command of some troops. And a very serious battle at that time, under the assumption that she would be killed, as the leader of these troops, and that would settle the whole problem. She wasn't killed. She won the battle! Personally leading the battle.

And, France was mobilized for the idea of its independence, to a large degree, as a result.

Then the time came, that the Prince was crowned

'I've been to the mountaintop'

Well, I don't know what will happen now. We've got some difficult days ahead. But it really doesn't matter with me now. Because I've been to the mountaintop. Like anybody, I would like to live a long life. Longevity has its place. But I'm not concerned about that now. I just want to do God's will. And He's allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I've looked over. And I've seen the Promised Land. And I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight that we as a people will get to the Promised Land. So I'm happy tonight. I'm not worried about anything. I'm not fearing any man. Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord.

—Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
April 3, 1968

King. But then the King betrayed her, to the enemies of France, to the British, the Normans. And she was put on trial by the Inquisition, which is a *horrible* thing. This is the worst kind of injustice you can imagine. And in the course of the trial, she was offered bait: "If you will back off a little bit, girl, we won't burn you at the stake, alive." And, what they did, she said, "No." She flinched—"Maybe, I should compromise." She had priests in there, trying to get her to compromise. She said, "I won't compromise. I can not betray my mission."

She had gone to the mountaintop. "I will not betray my mission. I will stay my course."

So, they took her. They tied her to a stake. They piled the wood on the stake. They set fire to the pile, while she was alive. They cooked her to death. Then, they opened the pile of wood, to see if she was alive or not; they found she was dead. And they continued the process, restarted the fire, and burned her into ashes.

But, out of that, two things happened. Out of that, France revived and got its independence. And later, got the first modern nation-state, of Louis XI of France. And the significance of that, is this for us

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mending it to Julius Caesar. This was the real passion of the Roman governor Cicero.

Shakespeare's historical intuition was much more accurate, as Lyndon LaRouche shows incisively in his "Shakespeare As a Scholar" published in this issue of *Fidelio* [SEE page 4, this issue]. In *Julius Caesar*, the playwright builds a paradox around the doomed, "Romantic" conspiracy of Brutus *et al.* The conspirators all wish to know "what Cicero says"; they wish to have

Cicero's name and reputation for their coup; later, Brutus and Cassius are shaken to learn the triumvirs are executing Senators—"Cicero one!" (here is Shakespeare's "doom of Rome" that LaRouche points to). Yet, the tragic Brutus, Cicero's long-time friend, refuses to approach him. "He will never follow any thing that other men begin," Brutus warns: Cicero is guided by other axioms than the "noble Roman."

Shakespeare gives the metaphorical

sign pointing to the solution to this paradox of Cicero's powerful offstage presence, in the famous remark of the brutish Roman oligarch Casca, upon the speech of Cicero which Brutus and Cassius are demanding to be briefed on: "It was Greek to me." Shakespeare thus draws for the audience in a dramatic instant, an image of the ruinous alienation of Rome's "noblest" from the Greek Classical legacy, which was Cicero's life's passion.

—Paul Gallagher

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today: Because of that victory, because of what happened with Louis XI of France, we had the first European state, in which the government was responsible for the general welfare of all of the people. The general welfare means exactly what it means in 1 Corinthians 13, when Paul writes of *agapē*, sometimes called "love," or "charity." It's that quality. It is not the law, it is not the rule-book, that counts. It's your love of humanity, that counts. That you must always live for your love of humanity. And therefore, government is not legitimate, except as government is efficiently committed to the general welfare, of not only *all* of the people, but also the improvement of the condition of life of their posterity.

And, for the first time, in France, with that state, the principle of constitutional law, that government can not treat some of the people as human cattle— It is not legitimate, it is not a nation, if it treats some of its people as human cattle; it must think of the general welfare of *all* of the people. It must be *captured* by a sense of responsibility to all of the people, *and* to their posterity.

Because we're all mortal. And to arouse in us the passions, while we're alive, which will impel us to do good, we have to have a sense that our life,

and the consuming of our life, the spending of our talent, is going to mean something for coming generations. The best people look for things, like Moses, that are going to happen, when he will no longer be around to enjoy them. It's this sense of immortality. It's why parents, in the best degree, sacrifice for their children. It's why children sacrifice for education, for *their* children, for opportunities for their children. You go through the pangs of suffering and shortage, but you have the sense that you're going someplace, that your life is going to mean something. That you can die with a smile on your face. You've conquered death. You've spent your talent wisely. Why life will mean something better for generations to come.

That was the principle! That principle inspired the man who became King Henry VII of England, to do the same thing against the evil Richard III, and establish England, at that time, as the second modern nation-state.

In a sense, that's what Martin was doing, the same kind of process.

The Hamlet Case

But, now, let's take the other side of the thing. Let's take the case of Hamlet. Hamlet says, that we have the opportunity to fight, to free ourselves from horrible conditions—but! But, what hap-

pens after we die? What happens beyond death? And, it is the *fear* of what happens beyond death, which makes people cowards!

And, that is our problem, in the United States, today! . . .

Martin was one of the rare people, in his time, who had a deep sense of what it is to be a human being. Who had a deep sense, of the lesson of the Passion and Crucifixion of Christ. He was able to bring to politics—which he didn't go into to get in as politics, as such—he was a natural leader. The natural leader is one who comes not from the political process as such, but from the people. Martin *never* achieved political office. Yet, he was probably as important a figure of the United States as any modern President. He achieved that. His authority, as a leader, came from the people. He fought against the people, and with the people, to free them. He was a leader, in a true sense. His power as a political force, in the nation and in the world, came from his relationship to the people. . . .

And, that's the lesson, I believe, that has to be taught, has to be understood, if we're going to save this nation. We need to tap into that power. And, as I say, of all the images of recent political leaders of the United States, Martin, both as a national leader, and as a world leader—which he also was, in terms of his influence—is the best example of the kind of personality, who we must have, and must develop, to get us out of the horrible, frightening mess that threatens us, today.