

OBITUARY

Professor Leonard Schapiro

Over the last twenty years I came to know and love Leonard in three different roles, all of them suffused by the warmth of his personality, which rapidly turned a formal relationship into one of real friendship.

It was a professional association at the beginning. In the 1960s he began to encourage me in my work for those persecuted under the communist system for their religious beliefs. He insisted that this study was academically important for an understanding of the Soviet Union. In this, I soon came to appreciate Leonard as a man of utter integrity, moved by compassion as well as by the desire to be factual and accurate. With Sir John Lawrence and Peter Reddaway, the four of us became the founders of Keston College in 1969. I cannot count the number of times I listened to his advice over the next 14 years. Never once did I hear him offer a word of advice that was not measured, to the point and, in its quiet way, usually galvanising all of us into action. He himself often participated in that action, busy though his life always was. I look on it truly as a sign and seal from God upon our work in general and my relationship with Leonard in particular that one of his very last public acts was to deliver a deeply impressive speech on religious liberty at the annual meeting of Keston College of 15 October, just over two weeks before his death. He held an audience of two hundred spellbound — and we are privileged to have this preserved on tape. (See photo facing p. 105).

During this time I began to be aware that I was seeing Leonard also in a totally different context: at the performance of music. I put it this way because here the roles were just a little reversed. I sometimes used to see him in the audience of the Philharmonia concerts in which I was performing in the choir. When we did manage to exchange a few words in the interval or after a concert, I never saw him anything other than moved at the spiritual experience we had shared.

In the very last few years of Leonard's life, our relationship deepened in a way which meant more to me than I can easily express in these words. He began to talk to me of his faith. Although he never formally embraced the tenets of any organised religion, he left me in

no doubt whatsoever of his profound beliefs. This was much more than just respect for the Jewish and Christian traditions. It was a personal belief in the power of God and the certain knowledge that his own life was in God's hands. He did not wish to have a specifically Jewish or Christian funeral, but that a small group of us should come together to commend him into the hands of the God in whom he trusted was his precise request to me. To be able to carry out that request on 7 November, in sincerity and as he wished was a great personal privilege, both as regards my love for Leonard and in the way it drew me together with those nearest and dearest to him in his life.

MICHAEL BOURDEAUX

Contributors

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