

CHIEF ALBERT LUTULI

NOBEL PRIZE WINNER 1960

It was perhaps inevitable that, sooner or later in our time, the Nobel Prize should be awarded to a man of Africa. This is the age of Africa's regeneration, an age which throws up the men of heroic stature, great thinkers, great statesmen, great peacemakers.

Of them all, except in his own country, Albert John Lutuli is the least publicised and the least known.

Partly the reasons for this lie in the social system of South Africa — in the fact that the Nationalist government has kept Lutuli confined to the rural reserve of Grootvlei, off the main beat of press reporters, broadcasters and television cameramen; in the imposition of arbitrary bans on Lutuli's right to address public gatherings which have been imposed under the Suppression of Communism Act. Partly the reasons lie in the iron-clad traditions of the South African press—English and Afrikaans—that the doings and thinkings of Africans are not news, and that pictures of Africans are not fit for printing in the 'white-man's press.'

But partly, the reasons for Lutuli's comparative obscurity outside his own country is to be found in the character of the man himself.

Amongst the leading men of contemporary Africa, 'Chief' is in many ways unique. Unlike many of them, he commands no golden-tongued oratory which can sway thousands by its skill and passion. He has no flair for the dramatic gesture which sets the press and newsreel cameras clicking, and becomes part of the folk-lore of a national movement. In speech, dress and mannerism, he has none of the flamboyance or extravagance of the popular figurehead. It is typical of his personality that he does not draw to himself the extravagant titles of other leaders in Africa — 'redeemer', 'father of the people'. In South Africa, a land of many chiefs, he is simply 'Chief'. The title itself has a unique history.

Defiance

From 1936 to 1952, Lutuli was chief of the Umvoti Reserve. Unlike most lesser and greater South African chiefs, his title derived neither from birth into a ruling dynasty, nor from government patronage. He was elected by his tribespeople, and held office until removed by the Nationalist government.

Sixteen years spent in dealing with and seeking to solve the affairs of his people, drew Lutuli steadily out of the confines of the tribal system, with all the limitations and restrictions placed upon it by white authority, drew him steadily into the forefront of the arena of South African national political life.

From 1936 onwards, he exercised the collective vote of his five thousand peo-

ple in the elections of members of the Native Representative Council, and in the election of white Senators to represent Africans in Parliament.

From 1945 to 1948, he himself served on the Native Representative Council; in 1945 he joined the African National Congress, and was almost immediately elected to its Natal Provincial Executive; he helped draft the 1949 Programme of Action, which transformed the policy of the African National Congress from an ineffectual concentration on parliamentary methods to a modern and mass-supported movement based mainly on extra-parliamentary struggle and agitation; in 1952 he became Natal President of the ANC, helped to plan the Defiance of Unjust Laws Campaign, and by 1952 was in the forefront of the organising drive to recruit "Defiance Volunteers" to break unjust laws and go to prison by way of protest.

In November 1952, the Nationalist government delivered its ultimatum; resign from the Congress and the Defiance Campaign, or from the chieftainship.

It was not an easy decision. Lutuli had been raised in a Christian tradition of respect for authority, of rendering unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's. A lesser man might have wavered. On the one side lay personal advantage, economic security, a measure of personal power, a title; on the other, looming persecution. Lutuli chose the path of conscience and of principle, and was summarily dismissed from the chieftainship.

"Who will deny" he wrote at that time, "that thirty years of my life have been spent knocking in vain, patiently, moderately and modestly at a closed and barred door? Has there been any reciprocal tolerance or moderation from the government, be it Nationalist or United Party? No! On the contrary, the past thirty years have seen the greatest number of laws restricting our rights and progress, until today we have reached a stage where we have almost no rights at all"

"It is with this background and with a full sense of responsibility that I have joined my people . . . in the spirit that revolts openly and boldly against injustice and expresses itself in a determined and non-violent manner."



A month later, at the annual national conference of the African National Congress, Lutuli was elected to the position of President-General. A tribal chief had disappeared, and the new national figure, 'Chief', had arrived.

These were not easy times for the ANC or its leaders.

The Defiance Campaign, which had flared up fiercely across the country, had been extinguished by two of South Africa's newest and most vicious pieces of legislation, the Public Safety Act and the Criminal Laws Amendment Act. The one empowered the government to proclaim States of Emergency, suspend all established law and rule by decree; the other created a new crime — "an offence by way of imprisonment" — with long-term imprisonment and savage whippings as the penalty.

In the courts, the top-level leaders of the ANC stood indicted on charges of "Communism" for their leadership of the Defiance Campaign.

Inside the ANC itself, things were no easier. The former President General had been tested by the Defiance Campaign and found wanting, his defection had shaken confidence amongst the rank and file. The Defiance Campaign had brought thousands of new ANC members flocking to the ranks, outnumbering the 'old' members; but would their convictions and their understanding prove adequate for the testing times ahead? The younger members of the ANC, alive with a new militant national

awareness, fretted against the restraining hand of what they conceived to be the 'old guard', itched for action, moved leftwards towards the ideology of Communism.

At the same time, the old, the tried and tempered heads of Congress were being lopped off by government bans imposed in terms of the Suppression of Communism Act.

This was one of the critical moments in ANC history. The Defiance Campaign had inspired an atmosphere of fear and panic in government circles; it had inspired a new national pride and consciousness amongst the African people. Perhaps for the first time in South Africa's history the real contending giants of white supremacy and African liberation stood starkly revealed.

It was not easy to come new to the helm in a situation like this. There were many conflicting ideas of how Chief would manage. There were those who thought that, with his experience predominantly amongst the rural peoples, he would be out of his depth in the ANC, predominantly an organisation of the towns and of the town workers and the town 'white-collars'. There were others who imagined he would become an unimportant figurehead, cut off in the reserves of Lower Tugela when the headquarters of Congress lay in Johannesburg and its main strength on the Reef and in the Eastern Cape. How wrong they proved to be!

Golden Years

Chief presided over the ANC through its most difficult years — the years of vicious personal persecution of its leaders under the Suppression of Communism Act, the years of the trial of its leaders on charges of high treason, the years of the decline in civil liberties leading to and culminating in the final outlawing of the ANC in March of 1960.

But these were also the ANC's golden years, the years when it set its impress firmly on the page of South Africa's history — the years of the Congress of the People and of the formulating of the Freedom Charter, of the Alexandra Bus Boycott and the Potato Boicott, of the great demonstrations outside the treason trial Drill Hall, of the June 26th general strike of 1957, of the national protest strike over Sharpeville and the great pass-burning campaign and the 1960 Emergency.

The ANC grew, in this period, from a minority sect to the main opposition — the majority opposition — to white supremacist South Africa.

Chief's part in that growth is tremendous; his personality and his policy have left their mark on the whole period. But equally, Chief has grown in that period with the ANC and as part of the ANC growth. He entered the ANC a country chief, but grew with it to the stature of national leader and the country's foremost statesman.

FIGHTING TALK, NOVEMBER, 1961.

In portraying him as "the man of moderation", as an Uncle-Tom figure of conservatism, caution and respectability, the press have tried to reduce him from his real stature to a pygmy.

In truth, Chief fits none of these formal categories.

In South Africa, the conservatives — those who could not move and grow and develop with the changing situation about them — have long since been swept aside by history, along with the cautious and the seekers after respectability.

The last ten years, especially in the liberation movement, have been years of growth and rapid change, of radically expanding horizons; they have called for boldness and courage, for the sacrifice of respectability and comfort. Chief Lutuli has come through these times because the motives that impel him are far stronger and grander than the shabby timidity and conservatism with which he is now being branded.

He believes, passionately, in a way simple faiths; in the brotherhood of men, regardless of their colour; in the right of men to live in freedom; in the possibility of the kingdom of righteousness being created here on earth, even here in South Africa, in our own lifetime. With these beliefs as his guide, he makes up his mind — slowly, careful to consider the other side — but nonetheless firmly. Once his mind is made up, then his course is clear. Chief pursues the right course as he sees it, regardless of the consequences for himself.

No Fear of Change

To speak of such a man as a "conservative" is an injustice. Conservatives resist change, fear change. But Chief's whole life shows that he is not afraid of change. He comes to new ideas, new policies slowly, carefully, without recklessness. To this extent his has been a sobering influence on what might otherwise have been excessive recklessness on the part of the younger men of Congress. But having once come to see the justification for something new, Chief's acceptance and support comes forth boldly and fully. His ability to change, to move with the times, has dismayed many of his former followers.

The Africanists, hide-bound in their national chauvinism, abused Chief for his developing multi-racial horizons which crystallised finally in the Freedom Charter. His one-time colleague, Jordan Ngubane, poured bitter vituperation on him, when he moved forward to support the quasi-socialist ideas of nationalisation of some major industries, which is contained in the Freedom Charter.

White liberals saw in his Christian lay-preacher background the hope of a new crusader against the left-wing in the African liberation movement; their hopes have been dashed. Chief has stood steadfastly, often against the wind, for the right of Communists to belong to Congress, and of Congress to promote them to leading positions.

Foreign diplomats saw in his American-orientated education, a hope of a powerful recruit to their cold-war diplomacy; their hopes have been dashed. Chief has spoken out for peace, regardless of whose diplomatic interests get hurt, against colonialism as a source of war, and against the colonial adventures of all the imperial powers.

Chief has always moved forward with the times, forward with his people. This is part of his greatness.

To the outside world, he has become a symbol. Few abroad have seen him, heard him speak, read his writings.

For them he is a symbol of the forward thrusting forces in South Africa — of the building of African nationhood in place of tribalism; of non-white unity against white domination; of multi-racial co-operation for a democratic future. Perhaps it is as much to the symbol as to the man that the world has paid homage in the award of the Nobel Peace Prize for 1960.

But to South Africans, Chief is more than a symbol. He is a leader, a crusader, a builder. Inside the ANC, he has held left and right-wings together in a close, co-operative unity. He has led the campaign for Congress unity, for multi-racial co-operation. When the need was there — as it was in March, 1960 — he was the first to burn his pass, and thus give a lead to the country. Since then, for over a year, the ANC has been outlawed. But Chief, its leader, has continued to grow in stature, till today his giant shadow dominates the whole future of South Africa.

Gathering Forces

We are moving into new times. The old days of legal ANC organisation and campaigns have gone; the prospects of peaceful mass pressure exerting its will on the government have been whittled down by the growing weight of military preparations which the government assembles against it. The menace of violence hangs heavy in the air.

Chief has worked for peaceful solutions, fought for them and suffered for them. So have his Congress followers. If they fail to maintain the peace, it will be because the government desire for peace is not as strong as theirs.

But it could be that the very imminence of violence in South Africa, the very obvious gathering of forces for violent clash, will serve to cut the Gordian knot that all the non-violent crusading of Congress has failed to cut.

No one has striven more earnestly to avert a violent clash than Chief and his followers. But peaceful solutions become impossible where one of the contending giants resorts continually to brutal violence. Chief will move with his people and the times. Significantly, it is now, when the conclusion is inescapable that the future of South African peace hangs in the balance, that the Nobel Prize Committee has made its award to South Africa's greatest son, Albert John Lutuli.

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is the solemn responsibility of the — not only the Progressive Party but South Africa — to avoid that violence, pairing of a peaceful solution. I have ce the European electorate will change ities are put to them and the real The tragedy of the present position is opposition, the United Party, speaking r of voters did not put the real alter- onalist Party policy to the electorate, Party's equivocation tends to justify onalist Party has been doing in South thirteen years.

this difficulty. When a basic, cardinal of the Government is carried beyond oth in terms of political tactics and , there can be reached a point of no d it is at least likely in the next five ernment will pass the point of no return What would your response be to that?

response to that would be: it is difficult far the Government can still go in out serious trouble. But we in the must and will do our utmost to get as sible to join our Party as a demon- n-Whites in South Africa, and also to that all the people in South Africa do Nationalist Party policies despite its As I said before, very many people woerd as an easy escape from facing th Africa. When once they see that policies cannot be translated into at will become obvious during the hen there will be a great swing to the

el that Rhodesia may help to point a /?

most decidedly. What has happened y has had a most profound influence Whites in South Africa. Rhodesian ortionately larger numbers of non- to come to terms. Rhodesian Whites same people as South African Whites. same prejudices, they have possibly they now see clearly that there is no g co-operation than by the sharing of privileges and rights.

**The Gell Memorial Address by
A. J. Lutuli**

**Speech
of a
Nobel Prize-Winner**

I am deeply grateful to the members of the Christopher Gell Memorial Award Committee for giving me this unique opportunity to participate so prominently in the remembrance of his memory. Let me at the outset thank the Committee from the bottom of my heart for the high honour bestowed on me by making me the recipient of the Christopher Gell Award. Your Committee deserves the congratulations of all our people for the idea and the active steps you have taken to perpetuate the memory of this great man.

He was a man we were sad to lose. Although afflicted by an almost insurmountable physical handicap — for years he lived and laboured in an iron lung — he yet devoted all his remaining strength and courage to the fight against race discrimination and championed unflinchingly the cause of democratic rights for all in South Africa regardless of race, colour or creed. Because of the physical infirmities he laboured under, he could not appear in public platforms or travel the length and breadth of the country vocally espousing his ideals, but his incisive written words could not be held in check.

Writings that warmed Hearts

His writings warmed the hearts of all freedom lovers and his wielding the cudgels on behalf of the wronged and underprivileged — even though it may have earned him the wrath and enmity of some race conscious and superiority complexed folk — nevertheless and in the main created a wide and strong bond of friendship and admiration, especially among our non-White communities.

He flayed the havoc brought by the Group Areas Act and its application, and his work in this field — to expose inhumanity, greed and injustice — equalled the efforts of some of our greatest men. My Indian friends, in particular, are deeply grateful to him, and his passing has certainly caused a deep breach in the wall of resistance against the ruinous flood of the Group Areas Act and its apartheid menace.

On an occasion such as this, it is not inappropriate that I dwell briefly on the social and political climate in

which the late Gell lived in South Africa. This will help us to better appreciate the attitude he adopted and the work he did.

The Malady of Exclusiveness

Gell did not live to see the birth of the Republic of South Africa but he lived a sufficient time in this country even then governed by the architects of the present new born Republic, to appreciate and hate the practices of the rulers of this country. His South Africa had no less the taste of the evil that White rule in general and Nationalist Party governments in particular, had engendered in this land. Exclusiveness, an essential of apartheid is a political malady of our country that is making South Africa so diseased a country that it is now as repulsive as a plague to most nations and people throughout the world, who are striving for true democracy and everlasting peace among all humanity regardless of race, colour or creed.

Here I would like to applaud the late Mr. Gell and those like him who have unreservedly dedicated themselves to the struggle for freedom. But there are still far too many who do not take the struggle seriously or appreciate the catastrophe to which the country is heading under the unbridled, insane policy of oppression against all their opponents in general and non-Whites in particular, which the present Nationalist Party Government is pursuing.

Fiercest in Africa

Victory can only come when we outmatch the determination of the Oppressor. The indications are that the freedom struggle in our land is likely to be the fiercest in Africa. The Government has shown in recent years and months — during the State of Emergency last year and the Twilight Emergency during May this year, and through Ministerial pronouncements — that it is arming itself to the teeth against an unarmed people who throughout their struggle have indicated by word and action their desire for a peaceful accommodation of their aspirations by those presently in power.

In a sense we should be encouraged by the show of strength, for it is a product of fear and not courage, that possesses White South Africa. It is a measure of South Africa's vulnerability. We who believe in freedom, however, regret this wasteful and needless fear, for we stand foursquare for peace and friendship on a basis of equality. How can anyone who acknowledges the dignity and brotherhood of man not join us in our stand?

Snuffing out Democracy

The birth of the South African Republic in an atmosphere of tension ushers in an area of harder times for all and strained race relations continue to plague our country. Democracy instead of being advanced and broadened is being summarily snuffed out, and hollow apartheid institutions and plans — Bantu Authorities, Asiatic and Coloured Affairs Boards and the like — are being imposed and foisted on us in its place.

All this should deceive no one but the naive and the few among us with vested interests in slavery or who see in apartheid prospects of acquiring affluence as privileged slaves — a terrible price to pay for selling one's soul and one's people! It is encouraging to know that there are, however, many in all communities who will remain true and loyal champions of democracy for all — who steadfastly cherish the noble human values which the late Mr. Gell supremely lived up to. They and their growing number is the true memory that should live to remind South Africa of this great son of our land.

For my part I am deeply touched by the conferring of this award. Would I were able to be present in person to receive it. Unfortunately, as is well known I am a prisoner in my own land. I am confined to my rural home at Groutville, Lower Tugela, Natal, and I have not been allowed to travel to you by the authorities that be, lest I contaminate you with my presence. However, my thoughts are with you, and I have tried to pen my feelings on this occasion.

Challenge of Gell's Life

I thank you for the honour you have conferred on me — which personally I feel I least deserve. I want to assure you that whilst I may not have done much for our cause of liberation, I hope sincerely that this award will prompt me to greater efforts and that not only I, but all the oppressed people and their freedom loving friends will be encouraged and steeled to make greater contributions to the cause of justice and freedom in this land.

We can only show our deep appreciation for the efforts of men like the late Christopher Gell, by supporting unflinchingly with all our strength the cause he so arduously espoused. His life and efforts should challenge all of us to greater and nobler striving in the cause of freedom to which he had committed his life. This is the challenge — an inescapable challenge of the life of Christopher Gell. This award will have fulfilled the objectives of its founders if it inspires many in our land to follow his footsteps.