

## Editorial:

# TRIBUTE TO CHIEF LUTULI

"I believe that our vision of democracy in South Africa will be realised, because there is a growing number of people who are coming to accept the fact that in South Africa we are a multi-racial community . . . I am not prepared to concern myself with such questions as 'Where have you come from?' or 'Did you come from Europe?' It is not important. What is important for our situation is that we are all here. That we cannot change. We are all here, and no one desires to change it or should desire to change it. And since we are all here, we must seek a way whereby we can realise democracy, so that we can live in peace and harmony in this land of ours."

— Chief A. J. Lutuli.

**O**NE is struck, not for the first time, by the difference in stature, between the big man who has been silenced and the little men who have silenced him.

Ever since, at the end of 1952, Chief Alebrt John Lutuli assumed the Presidency-General of Congress, the country has steadily been made aware of the emergence of a statesman of the highest calibre at the head of the African people. Previously, he had been leader of the Amakolwa community of the Lower Tugela, in which the Chieftainship is not hereditary but elective. He had been a member of the ill-fated Natives' Representative Council. He had been Natal President of Congress, and had won the highest reputation in A.N.C. circles. But the country as a whole knew little of the man who was to head Congress through one of the most crucial periods of its existence.

This was the period of the Congress of the People and the Freedom Charter, when the African-Indian Pact, signed by Xuma, Dadoo and Naicker and sealed in joint sacrifice during the Defiance Campaign, was to receive powerful new reinforcements from new organisations of Coloured and European freedom-fighters, and of anti-apartheid trade unions. It was the period when this new alliance, matching the dramatic march to freedom elsewhere in Africa, was to advance the only alternative to apartheid and, in view of the cowardly desertion by the United Party of its duty, the only genuine opposition to the Nationalists. And it was the period when the autocratic Government struck savagely back in reprisals, in repeated acts of banning, proscription from organisation, deportation and victimisation against Congressmen and trade unionists. The time of the Treason Trial.

## TESTING TIME

It was the most severe testing time Congress has ever had to face, and — let there be no mistake — the newly-elected President was no baseline General; from his inauguration he was made to feel personally the edge of nationalist spite and persecution. He was, in flagrant denial of tradition and democratic procedure, deprived of his office — though free South Africa still affectionately refers to him as "the Chief", and always will. Hardly recovered from a serious illness, which endangered his life, he was subjected to the first of the banning orders from Swart, confining him to his home. He was, with the rest of the original 156 Treason Trialists, arrested at dawn, flown to Johannesburg, flung into the Fort, forced to undergo the long-drawn-out ordeal of the Drill Hall. And throughout these trials he was beset by a pack of yapping dogs at his heels, the Africanists and others, who found no insinuation too mean, no slander too scurrilous to hurl at him.

There may have been, at first, those who uneasily wondered whether, deterred or discouraged by these harsh experiences, the Chief might not retire from the hurly-burly of public affairs and — as others have done before him — devote himself to his own business. Or whether he might not become soured and embittered, or timidly over-cautious. Those who thought that way little understood what sort of man they had to deal with. Poor steel is broken in the furnace, but true steel is hardened and tempered. Each fresh trial has discovered in him new depths of character, integrity and steadfastness.

Yet it is not only of the fortitude of the Chief that we wish to speak here, for courage has become the hallmark of every Congressman. We wish, above all, to pay tribute to the qualities of leadership and statesmanship which he has given to a country which, more perhaps than any other, stands sorely in need of them. Albert Lutuli is a simple, straightforward man, a countryman, with none of the tricks and affectations of the vote-catching politician. When fascists attempted to break up a meeting of Whites in Pretoria which he was to address, made an onslaught on the platform, and violently assaulted him, he waited until the uproar had been quelled, brushed the dust from his clothes, and continued quietly with the address he had come to deliver. It was an appeal for better relations between Black and White.

Lutuli's manner of speech is always the same, whether his audience consists of fellow-Africans or not. He studiously avoids the inflated ranting, or the unnecessary use of long words to display one's vocabulary, which unfortunately characterise some of our orators. He speaks in a manly, direct manner, which leaves no doubt in any mind of his utter sincerity and integrity.

No one but a fool would mistake Lutuli's modesty and humility for meekness or submission. He does not need any trappings or titles to emphasise his dignity and bigness: it is there, within the man. Similarly, those editorialists in the English dailies who have written, recently, praising the Chief's "moderation", but regretting his association with "ultra-leftists" and "extremists", may be well-meaning, but they have mistaken their



CHIEF A. J. LUTULI

man. President Lutuli, it is true, is not the sort of narrow Nationalist of the Verwoerd type, seeking privileges only for his own community, and filled with hatred for all others. Yet his outward calm and studied reasonableness should not blind them to the passionate African patriotism that will never rest satisfied with less than complete equality of rights and opportunities for all who live in South Africa.

## A SOUTH AFRICAN LEADER

For Chief Lutuli is a militant and uncompromising fighter for freedom; that is what has made him the chosen and worthy leader of the African people in this time of storm and tribulation. And yet he has become more than an African leader. Showing a flexibility of mind that might be envied by many half his age, he has grown in each year of his Presidency in loftiness of vision and understanding. He has come more and more to win acceptance by democratic and forwardlooking people among all sections of our population as a truly South African leader, speaking for and seeking the wellbeing of all in this gloriously diverse South Africa of ours: polyglot, varicoloured as flowers in a garden, drawn hither from many lands, a microcosm of mankind.

He is a big man, and that is why the little men have banned him. That is why they have banned Oliver Tambo, and Duma Nokwe, and many another good man and true; why yesterday they banned Walter Sisulu and Moses Kotane and Yusuf Dadoo and Bram Fischer . . . but the list could go on for pages. All condemned, without even knowing, much less answering, who had accused them, or of what, with a stroke of the pen by Ministers Charles Robberts Swart.

## THE LITTLE MEN

The petty politicians who have banned the Chief, and so many of his companions and colleagues, the Verwoerds and the Swarts, have nothing of this quality. You never hear anything elevated or inspiring from them. They lack even Smuts's knack of playing the world-philosopher from time to time. Their only "philosopher" is Verwoerd, whose major contribution is the thesis that if the Government appoints an African official to implement its own policy in the Reserves it has thereby conferred "self-government" and "self development" upon the "Bantu".

In a couple of well-chosen words, recently, President Lutuli reduced the whole of this mountain of Verwoerdian talk to the rubbish it is:

"I do not know of any people who really have 'developed along their own lines' . . . . In practice it turns out not to be development along your own lines at all, but development along the lines designed by the Government through the Native Affairs Department."

That is true and it is unanswerable: Verwoerd proves it when he gags the Chief.

The Nationalist leaders are men who have shown themselves constitutionally and by training incapable of speaking, like Chief Lutuli and the

others whom they have banned, as South Africans, speaking for, loving, bringing out the best in all our peoples. They cannot comprehend the wealth that lies in our very diversity, nor the underlying humanity and South Africanism that binds us all. Their aim is to disunite us; their very battle-cry is "apartness"; they cannot conceive of a relation between our peoples other than that of hostile, forever warring, groups, fighting over the soil of this South Africa and the fulness thereof, like dogs over a bone. Their calling, their profession, their life, is the spreading of the spirit of Afrikaner exclusiveness, and hostility and contempt towards all others. And when they try to don the mantle of statesmen, of Ministers and leaders of the country, not merely of a cheapjack political party, they succeed only in making themselves ridiculous, like pigmies strutting in giants' robes.

### THE TURNING POINT?

It may well be that the action of the Nationalists in banning Lutuli and other top Congress officials — at the very time they were voting to expel the Africans' handful of Representatives from Parliament — will prove the most ill-advised thing they have ever done. True, they have banned many a leader in the past, and there have been no revolutions. But history moves onward; times change. You may keep on adding flames beneath the cauldron of the people's anger and bitterness, but at last the cauldron will boil and overflow.

There has never been such widespread protest at the banning of any Congress leader before. Not only from the Congresses and the Liberals, but even the English daily press and some United Party M.P.'s. Not Graaff of course — how far is that man from being a Nat. himself? — but quite a few others. When B.A.D.-man de Wet Nel said in Parliament that Lutuli was "a hireling of the Indians" (What a coward! First silence a man, then use Parliament to fling the gutter-slanders of the Africanists against him!) there was at least one U.P. member with the courage to give him the lie.

These public protests have been, so far, but a surface ripple to indicate the deep and powerful currents of anger that the new bannings have aroused, and especially among the African people. It was, we believe, more than a coincidence that outbreaks of violence occurred over the Durban beer-hall within a week of the silencing of the country's most effective advocate of non-violence. It was, of course, unplanned, spontaneous: nevertheless a sign of profound tension and unrest.

Let Dr. Verwoerd not think that the people are going to forget Lutuli for the next five years while he vanishes into obscurity in the region of the Lower Tugela. Silent, invisible, his image will be standing by the side of every Government spokesman, when he tells the Africans they are enjoying self-government, when he tells the world we have freedom and democracy in South Africa, when they lie about farm labour.

South Africa needs Lutuli. He is not going to be this country's forgotten man. We are confident that, gathering volume with every week and month of his banishment, until even Nationalist Ministers deaf as posts will have to heart it, in every corner of the land the cry will ring forth: "LET LUTULI SPEAK!"