

## WORLD'S ACCLAIM PUZZLES MANY

# Does Luthuli deserve the Nobel Prize?

**I**S Albert Luthuli a worthy winner of the Nobel Peace Prize? There are some in South Africa who do not think so. Nationalists, the Afrikaans Press and the SABC have made clear their condemnation. Their views need not be seriously regarded as they spring from deep-rooted political prejudices. They do not even attempt to be objective.

But there are undoubtedly many White South Africans who are puzzled by the granting of the award to Mr. Luthuli—because his image in their minds is that of a leader of an outlawed organisation, a man on whom the Government has considered it necessary to impose several restrictive bans, and a man apparently dedicated to the overthrow of much that White South Africans want to preserve.

Can this really be a wise choice, they ask. Has Albert Luthuli made the significant contribution to man's peaceful progress which the bestowal of the Nobel Prize implies? What is the true picture of Albert Luthuli?

### Revealing

Perhaps the most revealing insight into his personality lies in a letter he wrote to the Secretary for Native Affairs nine years ago, almost to the day.

Chief of the small Amakholwa tribe in the Grootville Mission Reserve since 1935, Albert Luthuli had entered the African National Congress after the Second World War, when the shape of African aspirations was just emerging.

He rose rapidly to leadership and in 1952 was elected national president during the ANC's Defiance Campaign, in which thousands sought the repeal of discriminatory legislation by offering themselves for imprisonment. Summoned to Pretoria by the Government, Luthuli was given the choice of leaving the ANC or being deprived of his chieftainship. He returned home and answered in these terms:

"Who will deny that 30 years of my life have been spent knocking in vain, patiently, moderately and modestly at a

tough and outspoken critic of apartheid. He has condemned all Nationalist racial laws, and has rejected separate development schemes as "adulterated, pseudo forms of democracy." Not so long ago, he accused the Government of "jackbooting."

All this makes him a "revolutionary," because to bring about these aims, he must necessarily seek to alter the basic structure of South Africa. Need it be pointed out that, by the

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standards of 20th Century Western civilisation, he is merely seeking what is universally accepted and recognised as right?

As the leader of his people, the easiest way in which ex-Chief Luthuli could have set about fulfilling his aims would have been to appeal to emotional nationalism. This has already been used effectively by the Afrikaner Nationalist group in South Africa, and the potential of this appeal among Africans—particularly against the background of the upsurge of African nationalism in the rest of the continent—has been tremendous.

Yet ex-Chief Luthuli has thrown his full force against it, even to the point of seeing the break-away from his organisation of the militant Pan-Africanists, with their emphasis on Black nationalism and the almost inevitable overtones of racialism.

He has consistently declared that ours is a multi-racial society, to be shared by all. He has appealed to Whites to recognise this and to accept that they must give way.

### Dependent

In rallying his own people, he has equally consistently reminded them that Black and White need each other and depend on each

on meetings imposed on him by the Government.

There was some doubt as to whether he could legally attend church services. He was advised to seek the Minister of Justice's permission. He told me, during a conversation at the time, that he would not do this. "I shall not ask anyone's permission to go and worship," he said.

Believing that violence is morally wrong, he has also maintained that it would, in the long run, harm South Africa's interests because it would engender unending bitterness between Whites and non-Whites.

He is well aware of the White fear of domination by Blacks. His reaction is typical: "One cannot avoid the fact that Africans are in a majority. The only solution is to ensure that Africans become saturated with democracy."

He points out sadly that the Whites are doing anything but this.

All these views do not, in themselves, make Albert Luthuli exceptional. There are others who think the same way. He becomes a remarkable individual, however, when his dogged and unswerving adherence to his beliefs are matched against the nature of his personal experiences in South Africa.

### Many bans

One ban after the other has been imposed on him by the Government—the first was in 1953 and the latest batch, in 1959, for a five-year period, barring him from meetings and confining him to a 15-mile radius around his home. The organisation of which he was president, has been proscribed: White thugs set upon him when he addressed a meeting in Pretoria; he was arrested for high treason and discharged a year later.

He was arrested at the start of the State of Emergency last year and detained for five months. When released he was seriously ill from a heart ailment. He was fined R200 and given a suspended jail sentence last year for burning his reference book.

Even more important, perhaps, is the fact that he has been scorned, rejected and vilified by the Government of his country. Although he is the acknowledged leader of his people, no attention has ever been given to his voice and his views.

Yet Albert Luthuli is still today