

## ALBERT LUTHULI

He received the Nobel Peace Prize for 1960 and was congratulated by dr Edgar Brooks of the History department at the University of Natal, Dr Jan Steytler, Leader of the Progressive Party in Parliament, Alan Paton of Durban and dr GM Naicker president of the South African Indian Congress.

Albert Luthuli was born some 62 years ago in the former Rhodesia as a member of the Abesemakolwini tribe, a branch of the Zulu nation. These people were introduced to Christianity by the Congregationist mission and in 1906 the family moved to Natal, according to the reports in the Star dated October 24, 1961.

According to the Rand Daily Mail of the same date, Luthuli was someone who stood for non-violence in spite of the unmerciful SA race laws. He has never wavered from advocating a course of non-violence for his people. He is a man of natural dignity and great compassion. He lacks all bitterness; he even understands the attitude of the white supremacists.

The New York Times said Mr Dag Hammarskjold would have been proud to have his name joined with Albert Luthuli, a leader of the Zulu people in SA, who received the postponed prize for 1960.

The American delegate at the UN, according to the Star newspaper of the same date, said he wanted to state in unmistakable terms that the USA abhors and actively opposes apartheid. This statement by a delegate of the USA dashed the silent support Mr Eric Louw hoped for.

The question was raised whether Albert Luthuli will be allowed to travel to Oslo to receive this award. According to a newspaper clipping of the Rand Daily Mail dated 4 November 1961, Mr Luthuli has been granted a passport to go to Oslo, but was refused to go to Tanganyika. Mr Luthuli was to discuss Africa and freedom in his Nobel Prize lecture.

Luthuli said according to the Star of 27 October, that the most patriotic act dr Verwoerd could do at this stage was to meet non-white leaders for man-to-man discussion on the problems of the country. Mr Luthuli was confined to the Stanger district in terms of the Suppression of Communism Act.

Luthuli was a passionate and vehement champion of his people who insisted that Africans must have their full and equal share in the running and the enjoyment of South Africa, according to our correspondent of African Affairs, Benjamin Pogrand. The Star of October 31, 1961, regard moderate Black leaders as puppets of the white man and that Black people are now moving towards extremism in the townships, and that Luthuli's star is waning. The young educated people are looking at Robert Sebukwe, banned leader of the PAC.

Luthuli was regarded as the man who could easily take the place of John Kennedy, said Canon John Collins of the Church of England at Westminster, reported the Star of the same date. This was because of his power, understanding and dignity.

According to the Rand Daily Mail of November 14, 1961, it was reported that Parliament enacted a formidable range of legislation to stifle the expression of views of African people. Laws like the Unlawful Organisations Act, the Public Safety Act, the Riotous assembly act, Suppression of Communism Act, Prohibition of Interdicts Act, Criminal Law Amendment Act, Native Administrative Act and the Urban Areas Act.

While in Oslo, Luthuli received a message from John Kennedy saying that the world hailed his efforts. He called for sanctions against SA while at the UN. Members of Luthuli's party were there like, Louisa Hooper, who were deported during the treason trial, Oliver Tambo, former vice-president of the ANC, Raymond Kunene, member of the Youth League and Robert Resha a journalist.

In the Rand Daily Mail of 12.12.61, Luthuli said he did not initiate the struggle to extend the area of human freedom in SA. Other African men did so before me. He said, he also as a Christian and patriot, could not look on while systematic attempts were made, almost in every department of life, to de-base the God-factor in man or to set a limit beyond which the human being in his black form might not strive to serve his Creator to the best of his ability.

At one stage, Luthuli was in the running for the Rectorship of the University of Glasgow in Scotland. This story was carried by the Rand Daily Mail of 3.10.62. Other contenders were, amongst others Mr Edward Heath who then was a member of the Conservatives at the university. The difficulty was that Luthuli was from Natal, which made it difficult for him to except, because of the distance.

The mere fact of Luthuli's popularity lead to the fact that he was chosen as honorary president of the National Union of SA Students for 1962-63. NUSAS pledged that students will work harder and with more dedication for the new SA that has to come.

The Sunday Times of 2 April 1967 reported that Mr Luthuli has been in hospital for an eye that was not well, and he may be going blind as a result of that.

On the 21<sup>st</sup> July 1967 Luthuli died in hospital as he was knocked down by a train while walking along the railway line across the Umvoti bridge near Stanger, 30 miles from Durban. The Luthuli's were married for 40 years and had two sons and three daughters.

The British Minister of Transport, Ms Barbara Castle, spoke to SAPA saying that the British people will never be party to the creation of another South Africa in South Rhodesia. She was addressing a memorial meeting called by the ANC in honour of the late Albert Luthuli.

Albert Luthuli stood for something bigger than just the rights of his own people, Ms Castle said. We honour him not because he was an African but because he stood for the individual value of every member of the human race.

At this time of nuclear development this stand is vital to the struggle for peace in a nuclear world where defence only has meaning in terms of mega deaths, the ultimate devolution of the human race.

If we are to avoid the catastrophe of a world holocaust we have got to stand with every means at our disposal for the principle which he typified-our belief in the individual value of every member of the human race.

Jonas Jonson the student, Secretary in the Swedish church mission wrote an article and reports the feelings round the funeral of the leader who honoured the principle of non-violence and who was awarded the Peace Prize for his high ideals.

He named the article The Death of a National Leader. The setting of Albert Luthuli's funeral was a singular one: a poor church built by American Missionaries with cracked windows and a rusty tin roof; green and black crinklepaper decorations and flowers, proudly attached to wooden sticks, made the church look even more singular. The church is situated on a hill in the countryside, a couple of miles north of Durban. The place is called Groutville and was unknown before Luthuli's farm became a shrine for people from all over the world. It is symbolically situated in the vicinity of the place where Mahatma Gandhi was born and grew up. Luthuli made Groutville the home of the creed of non-violence in surroundings formerly associated with brutality and violence.

Thousands of Africans attended the funeral from all over SA. While he was alive, nobody could see Luthuli without police permission-now everybody could come. Luthuli was a Zulu, but he became everybody's leader and everybody's chief. Even the wide gap between the Indians and Africans was overcome when hundreds of Indians turned up to pay their respects and show their friendship. Not many Europeans were present. A few white South Africans, Luthuli's friends and sympathisers who oppose the government were present with missionaries (mainly from the Swedish church), journalists and students. Six countries, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, USA, Canada and Italy were officially represented at the funeral of this national leader and Nobel Prize winner. His own government was not represented at all.

Luthuli's last years must have been filled with disappointment. He lived on his farm, isolated, forbidden to travel, to make speeches and to write. After intervention by the Christian Council of SA he was allowed to attend services in his own church during the last years but was not allowed to preach as he used to do or to lead the church choir. Most things he once fought for were broken down. The ANC was banned, his comrades were either in prison or were living abroad as political refugees. Neither Nelson Mandela, Oliver Tambo nor the others could come to the funeral of their leader and teacher. Luthuli's political programme was never put into practice in the countryside, and in the

cities more people despaired that the policy of non- violence would ever bring about a change.

During recent years Luthuli seemed to have lost the battle with the police and the white racist victors.

At the funeral, on this early spring day, one did not get that impression. Despite all prohibitions, the church was proudly decorated with the colours of the ANC. The young people were all dressed in green and black uniforms and all stood with half-clenched right hand fists- the sign of the ANC. For the first time in many years thousands of people were singing "Nkosi sekelel'I Afrika"-black Africa's national song. The ANC's cry Uhuru came from thousands of mouths and nobody could stop them on this day. A young man then gave air to everybody's feelings when he talked about how Luthuli was persecuted by the government. This he did loudly, rhythmically and poetically as the Zulus do. Then he said: " Africa is the strongest". For one moment one thought that the packed crowd would break out in an enormous violent demonstration when the shouts echoed over the church-yard, but all became quiet and the people returned to their reserves. Some certainly turned back home to tell the security police what they have said and why.

Alan Paton, the world famous author and founder of the Liberal Party, said: 'This country's foolish laws forbid me today to say what I want. I may not quote him, but he fought for everybody's right. Although his leadership was taken away, he still remained the leader of the people. His spiritual power nobody could take away. Although his freedom was restricted, he remained more free than any of those who opposed him. The great tragedy was that his gifts could not be used to the advantage of SA. As long as men like Luthuli are forced to keep quiet, we cannot achieve our goal. History will prove that it would have been to the advantage of all if Luthuli could have spoken openly. He will nevertheless speak again- he who was the mouthpiece of so many who could not speak.' Alan Paton also said that a man is great when he goes his own way, irrespective of what he might lose or win.

In SA and other parts of the world, people are increasingly regarding violence as the only solution. It may look as if an epoch in our history is over. A young student from the University of Durban spoke on behalf of students all over the world. She had been leader of the students but had been forced to give way to a more pro-government student. She was of the opinion that most students thought of Luthuli as " the father of the ideals they believe in". Although they never had the opportunity to know him, or to read his works, or to hear him speak as a free man, they honoured and loved him at a distance. By following his ideals we can show our respect for him and our faith that justice will triumph.

According to everybody in Zululand, Luthuli was a true Christian. He was serious in his opinion that everyone has a God. At his funeral few churches were represented and the only church leader present, other than Bishop Zulu who conducted the service, was Swedish Bishop Helge Fosseus.

For many years he has been almost a neighbour of Luthuli.