

Ex-Chief Lutuli

By OWEN WILLIAMS

JUST before he became president-general of the now-banned African National Congress in 1952, Albert John Lutuli answered an ultimatum from the Government to resign *from Congress or be dismissed from his chieftainship* in these words:

"Who will deny that 30 years of my life have been spent knocking in vain — patiently, moderately and modestly, at a closed and barred door? What have been the fruits of moderation?"

"The past 30 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 a full sense of responsibility that, under the auspices of the African National Congress, I have joined my people in the new spirit that moves them today, the spirit that revolts openly and boldly against injustice and expresses itself in a determined and non-violent manner."

In these words "Chief," as he is affectionately known to his followers, explained why he had to lead an organisation which at that time was dedicated to open, but passive, defiance of the law.

Passive Resistance

When he was dismissed from his chieftainship Mr. Lutuli issued another statement that was remarkable for its clarity and courage.

"With a full sense of responsibility and a clear conviction I have decided to remain in the struggle for extending democratic rights and responsibilities to all members of the South African community," he said. "I have embraced the non-violent passive resistance technique in fighting for freedom because I am convinced it is the only non-revolutionary, legitimate and humane way that could be used by people denied, as we are, effective and constitutional means to further our aspirations. The wisdom or foolishness of this decision I place in the hands of the Almighty."



Mr. and Mrs. Albert Lutuli

—*Courtesy Natal Mercury*

"What the future has in store for me I do not know. It might be ridicule, imprisonment, concentration camp, flogging, banishment and even death. I only pray . . . that none of these grim possibilities may deter me from striving, for the sake of the good name of our beloved country, the Union of South Africa, to make it a true democracy and a true union, in form and spirit, of all the communities in the land."

Mr. Lutuli did not imagine that the future held a Nobel Peace Prize in store for him. But some of the hardships he foresaw did come to him. He was arrested in December, 1956, on a charge of high treason and confined for a short time in the Johannesburg Fort. In 1960 he burnt his pass and was imprisoned under the emergency regulations.

When, nearly a year later, on the instructions of the Attorney-General, he was released, he said: "It is with mixed feelings that I received the news of my release; the truth is that I would be happier to see the whole thing through with my comrades."

At 63, Albert John Lutuli is a comparatively elderly man. He is said to suffer from dangerously high blood pressure. Of middle height, with

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grizzled hair, he is earnest, dignified, eloquent and possesses great personal charm.

His ban expired in 1959. For a short time before it was reimposed, he made a great impact on many white people when he addressed public meetings in Johannesburg and Cape Town. Many who went through curiosity to see this strange creature, a man who by his position was the leading "black agitator" in South Africa, were won over by his manifest sincerity and clear reasoning.

White audiences were impressed by his insistence on the rights of the white man, his un-failing pleas for justice for *all* racial groups, and his subsequent opposition to the more radical Pan-African Congress.

A Signal Honour

THE Black Sash National Conference congratulated ex-Chief Lutuli on the award of the Nobel Peace Prize — "a signal honour given for the first time to a South African." The statement issued said:

"We are delighted that the Government have granted him a passport to receive the award in person. However, we deprecate the belittling remarks made by Radio South Africa and by the Hon. Mr. De Klerk in announcing the Government's decision; remarks not only about Mr. Lutuli, but also about those who made the award.

"The Black Sash remembers with gratitude his efforts through the years to find a solution to our problems by non-violent methods and through co-operation between the races. He is truly a man of peace."

In a letter to the *Cape Argus* applauding the award to Mr. Lutuli, Mrs. E. Stott said:

"We are constantly aware of how tragic it is that his banning largely prevents his own people benefiting from his wise and moderate leadership and makes it impossible for White South Africans to know him and understand the reasonableness of his cause."

A brief sketch of his life, spent in patient obscurity until 1952, reveals his uncompromising character.

He was educated in the mission station in the Grootville reserve, governed by Christian tradition and the hierarchical Zulu society. He went from the mission school to Adams College, the American mission high school, where he remained to teach, his particular interest being Zulu history and literature. In this period he worked for the advancement of the African teacher.

While at Adams College he was approached by the elders of his tribe to become their chief. It took him two years to decide to leave the larger and financially more remunerative life of the teacher to revert to the hierarchy, the squabbles and the difficulties which would be implicit in the chieftainship.

Eventually he decided that his duty lay in accepting the chieftainship, and for 17 years he was absorbed in the parochial affairs of Grootville. During this period he became the adviser and right-hand man of the Zulu Paramount Chief, Mshiyeni.

The Cape African vote disappeared in 1935. In 1946, with reservations, Mr. Lutuli joined the Natives' Representative Council. Shortly afterwards he left, being in agreement with the view of Prof. Z. K. Matthews that it was simply a "toy telephone." In the same year he joined the African National Congress.

He visited India as a delegate to the World Council of Churches, and the United States, where he travelled through the country as guest lecturer of the American Mission Board.

In 1952, determined that its action should be non-violent, he supported the defiance campaign. In that same year, defying the ultimatum from the Government, he was dismissed from his post as Chief.

Those were the series of events that have led a man who now describes himself as a peasant farmer to the Great Hall of the University of Oslo, from his place of banishment and the Johannesburg Gaol to the royal banquet of King Olav of Norway.

Mankind which is always in rebellion against the prophets, nevertheless ends by applauding them heartily.—George N. Shuster.
