

UNVEILING OF THE ALBERT LUTULI TOMBSTONE

(One of the speeches made at Groutville on Sunday, July 23rd. 1972)

by Alan Paton

Mrs. Lutuli and those members of the family who are able to be present, I thank you for the honour of being asked to say a few words on this memorial occasion. I shall say a few words about the man whose memory we honour, and I am sure he would not mind that. But I should like to say a few words also about the work to which he gave so much of his life. I think he would like me to do that, because that work was close to his heart, and it is not yet finished. How much of it is done, no one of us knows. There are some people who think none of it is done, but that I do not believe. There are other people who think that the end of the work is near. That we do not know. We are not able to tell what the future will be. But there is one thing we are able to do, and that is to work for the future we desire.

There was a great writer in Europe called Franz Kafka. He wrote a famous book called THE TRIAL. There a man from the country comes to the city to look for justice. He goes to where justice should be, to the court of law. He knocks on the door, but the doorkeeper will not open for him. There he sits, day after day, month after month, year after year. And he goes on knocking on the door. But it is never opened for him.

For the greater part of his life Lutuli knocked patiently on a door. But it was never opened to him. Yet that was the work of his life, to knock on that door. And it has been, and is, and will be, the work of many of those who are here today.

ALL LITERATURE

I use this figure of knocking on a door because it is simple. Also because it is found in all the literature of the world. It does not mean just standing, with your hat in your hand, waiting hopelessly for someone to open. It means work, planning, organising. It means courage, resolution, devotion. It means patience, persistence, and a great strength of spirit. It means speaking, writing, persuading. It means trying to be the kind of person that Lutuli was. It means carrying on the work that Lutuli tried to do.

What is the use of spending most of your life knocking at a door that is never opened? Some people say it is of no use at all. I want to say to you today – and the Chief would wish me to say it – that this is not true. How you live your life is a thing of great importance. In a country such as ours how you live your life is a thing of great importance to many other people. If Lutuli had given it up, if he had stopped knocking on that door, we would not be here today to honour his memory.

There are two sides to this door. There is the outside on which Lutuli was knocking. There is the inside where sit the rulers, the men of power, who will not open. Sometimes we think that the ones who knock have no freedom. We think it is the ones inside who are free. What freedom is there to live in a house or room, and to be afraid to let anyone enter?

A MAN IS KNOCKING

Fourteen years ago I wrote some words for my white brother. I went to my brother and said, "Brother, a man is knocking at the door." My brother said, "Is he a friend or an enemy?" I said to my brother, "I have asked him and he says, you will not know, you cannot know, until you have opened the door." "There you are, my brother. You will never know if the man outside is a friend or an enemy until you open the door. But if you do not open the door, you can be sure what he will be".

There are already those who say that it is a waste of time to knock on the door. They say you must bring battering-rams and axes and break it down. That this will happen in the future, I cannot say. But that it may happen is nothing but the truth.

I am sorry to speak these grave words to you. But the longer they take to open the door, the harder they will find it to open. Meanwhile they have opened other doors, small doors, unimportant doors, that lead to small places, unimportant places, what one might call the servants' quarters. That isn't the door that Lutuli meant. He meant the door that would let him enter as a son of the house.

HE USED TO SAY . . .

He used to say – but of course the law says I cannot tell you what he used to say – although he has been gone from us these five years – so I shall tell you what he used to believe. He believed that this country – this country of South Africa – not Kwazulu or the Transkei or Vandaland – belonged to him, just as much as he believed that it belonged to you and me. Many of us remember that in 1959 when his restrictions were lifted, he went all over the country, and his leadership was accepted by many white people. So powerful was his voice, that he had to be silenced again. One thing is sure, that the day is coming when that voice will be heard again, and the voices of those who silenced him will be forgotten.

COMING TO AN END

I have one last thing to say. We are living in grave times. The rule of white supremacy is coming to its end. But it is often when the rule of rulers is coming to an end that they are most cruel to those they rule. We must be prepared for that. We all know that there are South Africans who have either left their country or intend to leave it. They want

the air of freedom, they want freedom for their children. Some of them have suffered, and they do not feel able to suffer any more. It is not for me to pass any judgement on them. But my closing words must be for those who cannot leave, who will not leave, who have duties to do here that they feel they must perform.

In our late Chief we have an example to follow. He was not allowed to use his great gifts in the service of his country. He was not allowed to use his great voice to speak the words of truth and honour. He was punished for his vision of a country that would be the one home of us all. Yet he persisted. And the way in which we can best honour his memory, is not to come here and make speeches and listen to speeches, but to carry on his work with the same courage and devotion.

Lutuli was a Christian, and one of the best-known sayings of Jesus is “knock and it shall be opened unto you.” How, when, not one of us knows. But of one thing we may be certain, that time is coming.

Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika.□

CALM, OBJECTIVE — AND UNNERVING

(A review of “Labour in the South African Gold Mines : 1911-1960”, by Francis Wilson, C.U. Press)

by Mike Murphy.

Dr. Wilson clearly outlines the purpose of his new book on the first page of the preface:

“In this book I have focused on *one* sector of a complex and fascinating economy in the hope that, from the depths of a detailed case study some useful insights may emerge which would enable us to *understand* this particular society a little better than before.” (Emphasis added.)

He goes on to add that

“... the development of the gold mines has probably done more than any other industry to shape the structure of the whole South African labour market into the form in which it exists today.”

and on page 13:

“Indeed, for their labour policy in all sectors of the economy, the Architects of Apartheid have taken the gold mining industry as their model.”

Dr. Wilson does not attempt in his book to make moral judgement on the economic facts which he has researched, collected and systematically organised. His intention is to present the facts as clearly and objectively as possible and allow the reader to judge the morals of the situation for himself. The tone of the book is consequently very “cool”. His reaction, for instance, to the tables and calculations which he presents to demonstrate that Black miners’ wages have probably *dropped* in real terms over the period 1911-1969, is not to denounce the Chamber of Mines but to enquire what the economic and sociological forces are that have brought about this situation.