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FIVE YEARS AGO Albert Lutuli was struck down and killed by a train on a narrow railway bridge near his home. A few days ago three thousand people gathered in the church at Groutville to attend a memorial service and to see Mrs Nokukhanya Lutuli unveil the memorial stone which has been erected on his grave.

It was a church service which included prayers, worship, singing, speeches, even jokes. All white and Indian people had to obtain permits, because although the church stands on mission land, the short road to it runs through African reserve. These permits enjoined them to behave themselves with dignity, and to refrain from criticism of the Administration, the Government, or any of its officials.

These conditions were well obeyed. No one wanted particularly to criticise the Government and its officials. But from first to last there was a complete rejection, implicit and explicit, of apartheid, separate development, race discrimination of any kind whatever, and a complete condemnation of the injustices which are inseparable from these things. The permits were obeyed in the letter and totally ignored in the spirit.

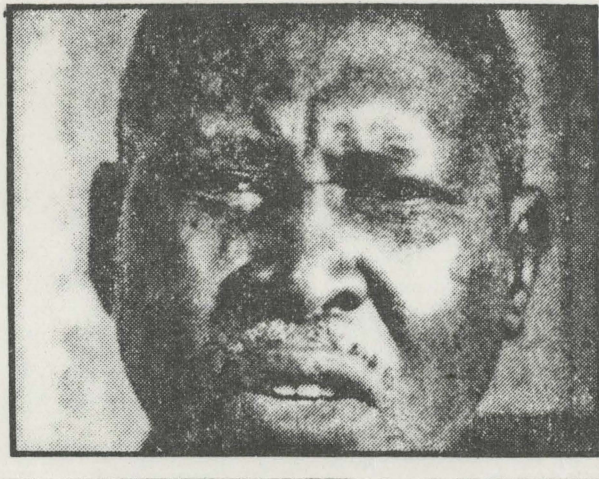
There was a complete absence of fear or hostility. The majority of the congregation was African, but there was a representative number of Coloured, Indian, and white people. Lutuli, and the memory of Lutuli, meant something to every person present. There was naturally not the same depth of emotion as there had been five years earlier. The congregation was quieter, but their beliefs and hopes were obviously the same as ever. It is true that the powers-that-be lash out just as viciously as they did five years ago, but there was no sign whatever that this inhibited the speakers or those who applauded them.

Mrs Lutuli sat in the front row, where she had sat five years earlier, flanked by members of her family, including Dr Albertina Ngakane from London. Mrs Thulani Ngcabashe from the United States, was not present, nor her husband, nor Dr Pascal Ngakane. Both sons-in-law had been refused visas to enter South Africa. As usual, Mrs Lutuli was quiet and composed, serious for the most part, but smiling when there was a good story. Her face is that of one who has suffered and endured and never capitulated.

In 1967 the security police had sat conspicuously in the front of the church. In 1972 they were not immediately visible, certainly not from the platform. Their presence was not so palpably felt as it had been at the funeral. Why should that be? Were they behaving more considerately? Or were they more sure of themselves?

Cry the beloved leader

Five years after the death of Albert Lutuli **ALAN PATON** attends his memorial service, and considers the relevance of his vision to today's South Africa.



Were they trying to behave less provocatively? Did they think that a memorial service was less dangerous than a funeral service?

Several men, who quite obviously had been loyal adherents of Lutuli and therefore of the banned African National Congress, were dressed in a uniform of khaki shirt and long trousers, with beret, and carried a flag of green and black. They entered the church with stirring shouts of "Afrika," "Mayi buye," and singing the song "We shall follow Lutuli." Since the Congress was banned, it has been illegal to display symbols, uniforms, flags, even photographs, which relate to it. Were these men breaking the law? Their uniforms and their flags were not identical with the uniforms and flag of the ANC but there could hardly have been a person in the hall who did not understand that they were supposed to resemble the originals. These men were repeating actions taken at the funeral service in 1967, and so far as I know no action was taken then.

One speaker seemed clearly to break the law. This was Mr Sonny Leon, the leader of the Coloured Labour Party, who played portions of Lutuli's Nobel Peace Prize speech to the audience. According to Professor Tony Mathews, in his recent book *Law, Order, and Liberty in South Africa*, not even the death of a restricted person lifts the ban on the publication of any of his utterances.

The meeting under the presidency of the Rev. B. M. B.

Ngidi, began with prayer, reading, and a sermon by the Rev. Mr Hendrikse. The opening key speech was given by Chief Gatsha Buthelezi. I quote from his speech, because it was of the same character as all that followed. He said of Lutuli:

"He kindled a spark in men's hearts, he gave them the knowledge that God did not create second or third-class human beings, and by doing so Chief Lutuli struck fear in the hearts of all those who dehumanise and degrade other human beings for no earthly reason except that they were born with a pigmentation of skin different from their own.

"For daring to stand for this he suffered the modern South African version of crucifixion."

That is what I mean when I say that speakers did not waste their time on the Administration and its officials. But they condemned utterly the system that the Administration and its officials were trying to administer.

Chief Gatsha received a warm welcome and much applause. It is true that he is the chief executive of the new country of Kwa Zulu, it is true that he is involved in a white-conceived machinery, yet he has made it crystal clear (except to those who will not hear) that he does not believe in it, but believes it is his duty to act thus for his people. People who choose the lesser of two evils do not commend themselves to the adherents of the all-or-nothing school. In honesty we must return to this topic later.

Eighty-six-year-old Selby Msimang, a veteran of the ANC, one-time colleague of Lutuli, Matthews, Xuma, Mosaka, and others on the ill-fated Natives' Representative Council, one-time office-bearer in the outlawed Liberal Party, said of white South Africa: "She has no peace. She is in perpetual fear. . . . Every white man and woman has to undergo intensive military training for an imaginary war."

An unexpected speaker was Mrs Helen Suzman, who had come specially from Johannesburg. The Rev. B. M. D. Ngidi, the presiding minister, asked the congregation to stand to honour her, and it did so willingly.

I have written that the grave and sombre note was sounded several times. Lutuli's dream was of one South Africa, a society open to all. Is the dream being made unrealisable by present events? Has white South Africa in its passion to preserve itself already destroyed itself, and by its cruel laws alienated black South Africa for ever? And must there therefore be war to the death? Nobody knows the answer to these questions.

I wrote earlier that I must in honesty refer to the conflict between the pragmatists and the all-or-nothing diehards. One thing was noticeable. The new militant black body, the South African Students Organisation, was not represented. Why should they come, to stand on the same platform as Gatsha Buthelezi who is helping the white Government "to give some kind of authenticity to their lie?" Or Sonny Leon, who uses the machinery of the Coloured Representative Council? Or Edgar Brookes, or myself, white liberals who blunt the edge of revolution?

Will this attitude become more and more prevalent? The answer I think is Yes. Will it become predominant? The answer is I don't know. Judging by two things alone, the welcome to Buthelezi, and the applause for Helen Suzman, the congregation at Groutville still upheld Lutuli's dream of one South Africa, a society open to all.

What hope there is for relatively peaceful change, who knows? I tried to end my own address — otherwise grave — on the note of hope. I used as my theme one of Lutuli's own themes, the lifetime of knocking on a door that would not open.

Lutuli was a Christian, and one of the best-known sayings of Jesus is "Knock and it shall be opened up to you." Yet how, and when, not one of us knows. But of one thing we may be certain, that time is coming.

So came to an end a great day, worthy of the man whose memory we honoured. Nkosi sikelele iAfrika