

Treason Trial Profile

THE ACCUSED

AMONG the 153 men and women of all races who are now being arraigned in the Drill Hall of Johannesburg, in the long-drawn-out preliminary hearings of the "Treason Trials," there is one large, dark fifty-eight-year-old man who stands as the central figure of the African opposition in South Africa. He is Chief Albert John Luthuli, President-General of the African National Congress.

The oddly assorted 153 include Christians, Communists and Muslims, African Nationalists, Indian Gandhi-ists, an English Methodist priest and the Principal of the only African college in South Africa. The accused have reached the dock from very different directions. A few are extremists: but the majority are very ordinary middle-class people who have found themselves sucked into the whirlpool of political conflict in their country. It is these people whom Chief Luthuli represents.



Chief Luthuli

IN appearance and manner, Luthuli might seem to be the ideal kind of simple, old-fashioned courteous Zulu chief about whom white South Africans feel so warmly, in contrast to the slick, cocky young Africans in towns. He looks every inch a chief, with a square, rugged face, a broad smile, a stately walk. He talks slowly and ponderously, in uncertain English, gesturing with his large hands. In his background, too, he is a picture of the "Good African."

He lives—when he is not on trial in Johannesburg—in a rather ramshackle house in the African mission village of Groutville in Natal. He acts sometimes as village postmaster, has a share in a local shop, and sits on village and church committees. He can be seen writing his speeches with a Zulu-English dictionary beside him. Above his desk is a coloured reproduction of a Madonna. He has two sons, one of whom has been working as laboratory assistant at a white boys' school ("clearing up the mess left by the schoolboys—you whites are too spoilt, you know," Luthuli says laughing). He has a brother who is a policeman.

HIS career illustrates very clearly the dilemma of the moderate African in South Africa. His background is pure missionary: his father was a Congregational missionary interpreter, belonging to a kind of synthetic Zulu tribe called the *A m a k h o l w a* ("believers"). Young Albert went to the Groutville mission school, and then to Adams College, the American mission school.

Unlike many Africans, he did not turn against his mission teachers: after graduating, he came back to Adams two years later as a teacher. He spent his spare time in mission work, choir-training and sport.

When in 1936 the Groutville reserve had fallen on bad days, a deputation of elders asked Luthuli to become their chief (it is one of the few chieftainships to be democratically elected). He was advised to turn it down—it meant much less money, the label of "Government stooge" and tedious litigation. But Luthuli, immensely

proud of his Zulu traditions, took the job with enthusiasm.

He became a lay member of the South African Christian Council: in 1938 he went to South India, to represent South Africa at the World Council of Churches. Ten years later he toured America.

Soon after he became chief, he went into politics by joining the African National Congress—at that time a staid body of professional men, with an undercurrent of militant youth. Luthuli, one of the few chiefs in Congress, was regarded by many as a "mission-boy."

He joined, with other leading Africans, the "Natives Representative Council," which had been set up in 1936 as a consolation for removing Africans from the Common roll. The NRC turned out to be a "toy telephone," and Luthuli began to lose faith in white men's promises. After the war, when General Smuts's promises of African rights were hastily forgotten, the disillusion was strengthened: in 1948, with the arrival of Dr. Malan, it was complete.

IN May, 1951, while the pace of African politics was quickening, Luthuli was elected President of the Natal Congress. A year later the Defiance Campaign, organised by Congress, broke on South Africa, and 8,000 Africans and Indians went to jail. In November, Luthuli was summoned to Pretoria by Dr. Eiselen, the Secretary for Native Affairs, and asked to resign either from his chieftainship, or from Congress. Luthuli chose Congress and lost his title and salary. It has not, of course, stopped him being called chief.

Late in 1952, when new penalties had been introduced to crush the Defiance Campaign, Luthuli was elected as President-General of Congress, in place of Dr. Moroka, who had shown waning enthusiasm for his job. After his election, Luthuli summed up his political life:—

"Who will deny that thirty years of my life have been spent knocking in vain, patiently, moderately and modestly, at a closed and barred door? . . ."

Since Luthuli's election, Congress, faced with bannings, drastic penalties and internal troubles, has lain low. It is said that Luthuli, after the Defiance Campaign, wished himself to

defy the new laws, at the risk of three years in jail: but that his executive dissuaded him. Congress, in any case, was not ready for martyrdom.

Luthuli presided over Congress meetings with a massive dignity, making long speeches from dingy platforms. He was never anti-white, and summed up his aims as "never to resort to force; to invite more Europeans to volunteer; to allow nothing to stand in the way of my people's freedom."

IT was said by many that he was a mere figurehead, like his predecessor, for the wilder policies of the Indian Communists who gave money to Congress, or the Nationalist Youth League who put him in. There have been times certainly, when Luthuli's speeches on foreign affairs have sounded very similar to the Kremlin view.

But Luthuli himself has never been much worried about Communism. "Extreme nationalism is a greater danger than Communism, and a more real one," he has said. Many observers of Congress are inclined to agree with this: Congress, like Nkrumah's party before they came into power in the Gold Coast, is at a stage when it is difficult to disentangle Communist trappings from anti-colonialism. Luthuli regards himself as a Socialist of the British variety; he admires (and in some ways resembles) Lord Attlee. But he is quite prepared to accept help from anyone at hand, and the Communists (and usually no one else) are ready to stand by him.

Towards Europeans in general he maintains a very polite scepticism. He is not inclined, from his past experiences, to believe their political promises. He is not waiting to be led by white liberals, but genuinely wants the help of Europeans in Congress. He retains, to a remarkable extent, a capacity to separate white individuals from white government. "The white detectives who follow me around," he complained once, "seem to think I am criticising them personally. . . . I remember there was one very nice Afrikaner detective, who appreciated the Zulu language. I always said to myself: 'When I am arrested, I would like him to arrest me.'"

NOT long after his election as President, Luthuli was served with orders confining him to his home district. He directed Congress affairs, as far as he could, from Groutville, sending out messages and speeches in his slow, careful handwriting.

He was arrested in December, with 152 others, in a dramatic, para-military operation, and charged with treason. For three years before, there had been much talk of treason—the usual pretext for detectives to break into meetings.

But Luthuli takes the treason trials very seriously. He believes they are primarily a political stunt, to "paint Congress red," and to show that the Government can be bold, in good time for next year's elections. But he also sees the trials as a challenge to Africans, and to European liberals, to declare themselves for a democratic South Africa, whatever the personal cost. "I think," he says, "that a good number of people will meet this challenge honourably."—Copyright.

Yemen Looking to West First

Aid Without Strings Sought

From COLIN LEGUM

TAIZ, The Yemen, February 2

THE unrest which is sweeping over the Middle East has penetrated even this sealed mountain kingdom in south-west Arabia with some similarity in pattern.

Like President Nasser, the Imam, ruler of the Yemen, has embarked on a policy of playing the West against the East to get the best deal he can for his 4,500,000 impoverished people, who for the greater part still lead a life that makes one feel this is part of Biblical Palestine.

Yet Government spokesmen have made it plain that they would prefer a British alliance to any other and that they would welcome co-operation with the United States.

In place of the Suez Canal exploited by Egypt, the Yemen is making a *cause célèbre* out of the neighbouring territory of Aden, which is under British protection. Whatever may be thought of the justice of the Yemen's claims to reunification with Aden after more than a century of division, the nasty truth to be faced is that for all its Lilliputian qualities the Yemen is capable of, and is now actively engaged in, promoting a dangerous situation for Britain in this corner of the world.

Sheikh Propagandists

With very little expenditure of money and effort it can create a problem with much in common with the old North-Western Frontier of India. The difference this time is that the United Nations can be used to inflate this border quarrel while the Soviet Union and several Arab countries have indicated their willingness to supply the arms needed to keep the frontier in uproar. It could produce an insurgent problem increasingly difficult to control.

Wherever our party of Western journalists went in Yemen in the past week we had produced for our inspection sheikhs and sultans from Aden who have thrown in their lot with the Imam's cause. They are invaluable allies and propagandists.

Modern Russian rifles (admittedly only a few) were used for the first time last Sunday in the pathetic battle at Qataba. Militarily Aden and British forces had complete supremacy over the battle terrain.

It was not difficult to discover what put heart into this rattle-tattle army—apart from their natural love of fighting. They felt they had behind them the full weight of the Russians and Egyptians. Sharing a trench with these soldiers outside Qataba I was repeatedly asked if I was Russian. They expressed surprise to find I was not. Delegations from the Communist countries have recently visited the Yemen, and it is highly probable that there is a delegation here now.

A New Trend

The admission of the first unselected party of journalists ever to be admitted to the Yemen reflects a new trend in the country. We have been allowed to write what we liked within our own discretion and to see whom we wished. This is a strange departure for the Yemen under the iron rule of the Imam, who is religious leader, King and Prime Minister rolled into one.

Nevertheless, reform is in the air. There are signs that an influential royal reform party, which has been working patiently to surround the Imam with its own members, is beginning to have some success. They are themselves members of the ruling class and are strongly conservative, though infected by the ideas of the young Arab nationalists. Their aim is to modernise the Yemen, and some steps have already been taken to break the power of the few monopolists who have blocked all effective economic and social reforms. Many of the old gang of politicians who pursued an unrelenting xenophobic policy have been removed from their posts.

Rising Tension Over African Bus Boycott

From George Clay

CAPE TOWN, February 2

A TENSE situation is building up in Johannesburg, where the Government is using drastic measures to break the bus boycott which more than 60,000 Africans have now succeeded in maintaining for four weeks.

The boycott arose over the increase in bus fares imposed by the public utility corporation which serves the main African residential areas on the Witwatersrand.

But because the African National Congress has been active among the boycotters the Government has announced that it regards the boycott as politically inspired.

In spite of the Government's call to "misguided people" not to assist the boycotters, their demonstration—many walk twenty miles to and from work every day—has aroused considerable sympathy among whites. Many motorists have been giving lifts to boycotters. Some employers arrange for the conveyance of their workers.

Motorists Stopped

This week, however, police traps along every main road leading out of Johannesburg to the African townships stopped motor-cars carrying Africans. Drivers were asked for their licences, registration discs were examined, and the passes of African passengers were demanded. The police said they were acting in the terms of the Motor Carrier Transportation Act, which forbids unlicensed persons from conveying passengers for reward.

Several arrests were made. Some people were taken to police stations for questioning. Many Africans were arrested for not having their passes in order, or for tax law offences.

The Government has made an urgent appeal to employers not to be lenient with boycotters who are late for work.—Copyright.

Council Start Talks

JOHANNESBURG, February 2.—Members of Johannesburg City Council have started direct negotiations with African leaders to end the boycott.

The *Rand Daily Mail*, criticising the police for stopping white motorists who gave lifts to the boycotters, said to-day: "Whoever ordered the hold-up of cars on the road to Alexandra township stripped the Government of its last shred of dignity. This was a stupid and a petty act."—Reuter.

U Nu Resuming Premiership

By O. M. Green

U NU will again become Premier when the Burmese Parliament reassembles on February 20, according to a decision of the Council of the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (the Government party).

He resigned last June, to campaign for the party in the country after the election shock administered by the near-Communist National United Front in increasing its seats from 33 to 43. U Nu's successor, U Ba Swe, may retire from political life.

There are two main reasons for the

More Freedom for French Colonies

From Martin Harrison

PARIS, February 2

AFTER five days of dogged debate the National Assembly will vote to-night on decrees bringing greater internal autonomy to the French African colonies. Algeria is not included.

The final compromise is still being hammered out between the Government and the Assembly's Territories Committee, but the outline of the reforms is broadly determined.

Each of the 12 territories of French West Africa and French Equatorial Africa and also Madagascar is to have a Territorial Assembly. Members will be elected on a common electoral roll of Europeans and Africans. For each Assembly there will be a "Council of Government" of between six and 12 members presided over by the Governor.

Paris Control

The competence of the Assemblies will be limited to matters affecting their own territories. The Central Government in Paris keeps control of foreign affairs, security, financial institutions, and justice. Each of the two main groups of territories will have a Grand Council under the French High Commissioner to co-ordinate the work of the Territorial Assemblies.

The major debate this week has been over the powers of the Councils of Government.

It is accepted that the members of the Councils will be known as Ministers. They will all be elected by the Assembly and one of them will become Vice-President of the Council. He will thereby take the courtesy title of "M. Le President." The way seems open for the evolution of this Vice-President into a shadow Prime Minister.

Full Autonomy

The latest concession wrung out of the Government is that the Ministers will be responsible in some degree to the Territorial Assembly. This poses the possibility that the Ministers would be able to resign in protest against the actions of the Governor and the compromise may lead to some awkward situations. On the other hand, should there be further progress towards independence the system could be adapted to full autonomy with little difficulty.

The decrees make the long-awaited revision of the Constitution even more urgent. At present it is impossible for the Government to hold out the hope of independence to the colonies because the Constitution says that the Republic is "one and indivisible."

Before long the Government will have to make up its mind what shape the French Union will take. It has abandoned the old idea of "assimilation" of the colonies, but it is quite undecided between a federal or a Commonwealth type solution. Both ideas are alien to French thought and tradition. But the debates this week made it clear that before long African leaders will be pressing for even wider reforms.—Copyright.

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