

“...it should be borne in mind that even people involved in the same event remember the details differently, and amnesia is no friend of accuracy.” -Ahmed Kathrada¹

Preface

In South Africa's first ten years of liberation and democracy, many of those who fought to create the new country have written autobiographies (Kathrada, Mandela², Meer³, Slovo⁴) so as to chronicle their and others' roles in the struggle. Likewise, many biographies have been written (Sampson/Mandela⁵, Sisulu/Sisulu⁶, Pogrund/Sobukwe⁷, Clingman/Fischer⁸, Callinicos/Tambo⁹) so as to acknowledge the seminal role of 'founding fathers' in the formation of 'a new example to the world' who perhaps died before their memoirs could be written and/or published. Sadly, there has been no biography written of Chief Albert Luthuli.¹⁰ Chief Albert Luthuli, leader of the African National Congress (ANC) from 1952 until his death in 1967, steered the freedom movement through many of the most dramatic chapters of the struggle for South Africa's liberation that include Defiance Campaign (1952), the Treason Trial (1956-1961), and Sharpsville (1960). Owing to its clandestine nature, one chapter of the ANC's history that received little news coverage at the time tells the story of three all night meetings that initiated the formation of an organization that would, in time, depart from over fifty years of non-violent resistance. This three part study investigates that fateful chapter and Chief Albert Luthuli's nebulous role in it.

¹ Kathrada, Ahmed. *Memoirs*, (Zebra Press, Cape Town, 2004), p. 142.

Here, Kathrada refers specifically to discrepancies that occur in accounts of *Umkhonto we Sizwe's* role in the Struggle.

² Mandela, Nelson. *Long Walk to Freedom*, (Little, Brown & Company, Toronto, 1994, 1995), pp. 1-638.

³ Meer, Ismail. *Ismail Meer: A Fortunate Man*, (Zebra Press, Cape Town, 2002), pp. 1-287.

Nelson Mandela wrote the forward, dated September, 2001.

⁴ Slovo, Joseph. *Slovo: An Unfinished Autobiography*, (Ravan Press, Randburg, 1995), pp. 1-253.

Slovo's biography, though dated 1995, was obviously written before his death on January 06, 1995.

Therefore, I consider him a pre-1995 source. However, interestingly, Mandela wrote the forward to the book on September 18, 1995 (that is, after he wrote his autobiography *Long Walk to Freedom*). It seems that the autobiography of Slovo was respected despite the fact that Mandela's text (1995) does not agree with Slovo's as it regards Luthuli's knowledge of and involvement in the formation of *Umkhonto we Sizwe*.

⁵ Sampson, Anthony. *Mandela: The Authorized Biography*, (Jonathan Ball Publishers, Jeppesstown), 1999. pp. 1-678.

⁶ Sisulu, Elinor. *Walter and Albertina Sisulu: In Our Lifetime*, (David Philip Publishers, Claremont, 2002), pp. 1-448.

Nelson Mandela wrote the forward for this book.

⁷ Pogrund, Benjamin. *How a man Can Die Better: The Life of Robert Sobukwe*, (Jonathan Ball Publishers, Johannesburg, 1990, 1997), pp. 1-406.

⁸ Clingman, Stephen. *Bram Fischer: Afrikaner Revolutionary*, (David Philip Publishers, Cape Town, 1998), pp. 1-500.

⁹ Callinicos, Luli. *Oliver Tambo: Beyond the Engeli Mountains*, (David Philip Publishers, 2004), pp. 1-672.

¹⁰ This is stated despite my knowledge of Mary Benson's book written in 1963, seven years before Luthuli's death. Hence, I do not consider it a biography in the fullest retrospective sense.

Benson, Mary. *Chief Albert Luthuli of South Africa*, (Oxford University Press, London, 1963).

Introduction

In this paper, I conduct a threefold investigation. First, is Mandela the primary, if not, only, source, for post-1995 secondary source testimony on Luthuli's stance on violence at the time *Umkhonto we Sizwe* was formed in August/September, 1961? If so, are inaccuracies contrary to pre-1995 testimonies being multiplied exponentially as subsequent biographies and autobiographies that heavily reference Mandela are published? After cross-referencing most secondary evidence for Luthuli's presence and support for the formation of *Umkhonto we Sizwe*, I argue that Mandela's account as it regards the presence and acquiescence of Luthuli at the August/September leadership meetings to the majority's decision to form a new organization is essentially accurate, and therefore, so is much of the post-1995 secondary evidence. Pre-1995 secondary source testimony denying Luthuli's involvement and participation (Benson/Mandela¹¹, Slovo, and Bunting/Kotane¹²) are likely inaccurate.

Second, what was Luthuli's actual stance on violence during the time in question ('60-'62)? Luthuli did repeatedly warn the South African public that time was "running out." Luthuli did plead with the Nationalist government to act in such a manner that did not undermine his advocacy of non-violence. One can sense in Luthuli's thought that violence was inevitable. Luthuli did state on various occasion that he was *not* a pacifist. However, after a substantive study of Luthuli's consistent stance advocating only non-violent methods of resistance, I argue that Luthuli's initial acquiescence to form *Umkhonto we Sizwe* in August/September, 1961 was existentially overturned and superseded (and followed by consistent appeals to only utilize non-violent methods) following the news announced in October, 1961 that the movement, through him, had received the Nobel Peace Prize.

Third, if Luthuli was present at the August/September meetings and was not suffering from memory loss due to senility, what is the rationale for Luthuli's apparent contradictory stance emanating from Mandela's "disconcerting" last meeting with Luthuli following the initial December 16, 1961 bombings? I hypothesize that Luthuli was not distraught over the initial decision to form *Umkhonto we Sizwe*, but was rather distraught by the *following through* of the decision to *initiate* violence, and thus a failure to reassess the environment in light of the reception of the Nobel Peace Prize that breathed new life into the efficacy of non-violent methods. In other words, Mandela's "disconcerting conversation" with Luthuli following the December bombings was the result of Luthuli's objection to *Umkhonto we Sizwe's* failure to consult and inform him of the plans to implement and exceed the previous decision taken in August/September, 1961, to which he acquiesced, and the subsequent embarrassing and imprudent timing of its actualization. I conclude that, in Luthuli's mind, Mandela's implementation of violence was, at best, considered premature, at worst, insubordinate. Luthuli and the ANC's policy is shown to be consistently and unwavering non-violent. However, in August/September in a moment of democratic 'weakness' and strategic hopelessness a decision was made, accurately remembered by Mandela, with Luthuli's approval and

¹¹ Benson, Mary. *Nelson Mandela: The Man and the Movement*, (Penguin Books, London, 1986 and 1995).

¹² Bunting, Brian. *Moses Kotane: South African Revolutionary*, (Inkululeko Publications, London, 1975), pp. 1-299.

sanction, to form a new organization that would plan for violent methods. However, some weeks later in October, the Nobel Peace Prize was announced and new hope was given to non-violent methods. Luthuli, as the leader of the ANC, publicly broadcasted a revocation, or at least postponement, of the August/September decision and its non-implementation. Luthuli, having in Oslo placed his reputation and that of the ANC's on non-violence, was then angered by Mandela's inability to re-evaluate the changed situation. In Luthuli's mind, Mandela exceeded his mandate to only form an organization, failed to consult with him about the move from forming to activating, and demonstrated poor tactical wisdom in the inappropriate timing of the initial attacks.

A Historical Controversy

The overall purpose of my studies is biographical. I aim to research "the extent to which Congregational polity, missiology, and education inspired Chief Albert Luthuli's fundamental guiding principles and engendered in 1961 an existential theological and strategic crisis regarding the dilemma whether to support armed resistance."¹³ To accomplish this, among other investigations, one must determine Luthuli's stance on violence. This is not an easy task for the subject has always been controversial. Jabulani Sitole, arguably the most knowledgeable scholar of Luthuli states:

*Controversy over the role that Luthuli played in the formulation of the decision to set up the ANC's and SACP's armed wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe...in 1961 had been going on for more than five years at the time of Luthuli's death.*¹⁴

And it continues today. The predominant understanding by current and recently deceased 'political elite' is that Luthuli supported the ANC's decision to form *Umkhonto we Sizwe*, thus initiating the armed struggle as one means of achieving liberation. Asmal, Zuma, Mandela, Nair, and the ANC are the most prominent examples of those who understand Luthuli to have decided upon and supported the decision to initiate the armed struggle. I suspect that those that advocate Luthuli's support of violence as a tactic are motivated by nationalism and its resultant inclination to mold a cohesive, homogenous, and, for lack of a better term, 'clean,' natal history of a country celebrating its first ten years of liberation and democracy. This position is supported by those who serve or have served in positions of high political significance and therefore have a vested interest in molding a given historical memory.¹⁵

The less pronounced perception is one that understands Luthuli to have never supported the decision to initiate violent tactics in the struggle against

¹³ Excerpt from the title of my Ph.D. proposal, submitted to the Committee on Higher Degrees, Department of Historical Studies, Faculty of Human Sciences, University of kwaZulu-Natal, 2005.

¹⁴ Sithole, Jabulani and Sibongiseni Mkhize. "Truth or Lies? Selective Memories, Imagings, and Representations of Chief Albert John Luthuli in Recent Political Discourses," p. 9, (footnote 19). The above article, published, can be found in *History and Theory*, Theme Issue 39, (December, 2000).

¹⁵ The Communist Party of South Africa initially (until Kotane/Bunting's biography) understood that Luthuli was a member of the ANC leadership that unanimously decided that armed resistance was to be prosecuted with other more traditional methods of struggle.

"Chief Albert Luthuli: A Tribute," in *South African Communists Speak*, date unknown, p. 360.

Apartheid. Within this understanding are those that state that not only did Luthuli not support the decision, but he was not privy to its making due to his presumed opposition to it (Bunting/Kotane, Benson/Mandela, Slovo). The understanding continues that due to his own banning, the lack of efficacious alternative strategies, his obedience to decisions borne of a consensus-making polity that was the ANC's, and his unwillingness to legally jeopardize colleagues Luthuli refrained from speaking-out against the very policy adopted by the same (illegal) organization he led as General-President. This perspective is voiced by Luthuli's son (Christian Boyi Luthuli), Ronald Harrison, Z.K. Matthews, and G.J. Pillay. Pillay offers the most accurate articulation of my own resolution of the controversy in his text "Voices of Liberation":

*There appears to be two approaches in ANC history. The dominant and the older tradition of non-violence was part of its initial political philosophy in 1912, reached its best manifestation in the life and approach of Luthuli, and continued after his death. The other approach of armed struggle was a development after 1960 and was continued by the military wing during the exile of the ANC. Luthuli was among those who maintained the non-violent approach even when the armed struggle began.*¹⁶

Mandela as a Historiographic Ancestor

To discern a historically accurate description of Chief Albert Luthuli's stance on violence when the organization he led considered embarking upon it, secondary sources ought to be investigated. In investigating secondary source information, it initially appears that there exist many harmonious 'independent' sources of information related to Luthuli's stance on the ANC's decision to form *Umkhonto we Sizwe*. On cursory examination, it appears that there are many independent verifications of Luthuli's resignation to, if not support of, the option to resort to armed violence. I suspect that many incorrect, current, and popular portrayals of Luthuli's supposed support of violence are being reinforced by the false perception that they are under-girded by many individual testimonies. However, upon closer study and reflection, I hypothesize that there is, primary, only one source, Nelson Mandela's autobiography *Long Walk to Freedom* (1995), that advocates Luthuli's participation and support of the resort to violent tactics from which other sources accept, comply, or otherwise cite. I base such a hypothesis on two observations. The first observation is a general perception that texts written previous to Mandela's account (Karis and Carter/1977, Benson/1986, Bunting/1975, Buthelezi/1986, Slovo/1995) provide much doubt as to whether Luthuli was aware of the decision and/or whether he supported the decision to resort to violence and those texts written following Mandela's book provide accounts that indicate Luthuli was aware and supported the decision to resort to violence (Meer/2005, Kathrada/2004, Sisulu/2005, Callinicos/2004, Sampson/1999). The second observation is a general perception that texts written after Mandela's autobiography cite *Long Walk to Freedom* extensively and/or can be cross-referenced with his text so as to identify it as an original source. For example, Ismail Meer's text does not cite Mandela's autobiography, however

¹⁶ Pillay, Gerald J. *Voices of Liberation, Volume I, Albert Luthuli*, (HSRC Publishers, Pretoria, 1993), p. 30.

the forward is written by Mandela and it is logical to assume that Meer's version collaborates with Mandela's. And it does. Likewise, Sampson's book on Mandela, prominently entitled, *Mandela: The Authorized Biography* will unlikely deviate from Mandela's autobiography, thus attaining its "authorized" status. And it does not.

How to structure this first examination of the degree to which Mandela dominates all subsequent historical narrative regarding Luthuli and his role in the decision to form *Umkhonto we Sizwe* also presents a difficulty. Mandela's text is seminal, for that is what is being compared and must be cited in full. Second, there are many texts that must be compared with Mandela's primary text.¹⁷ The exercise of comparison alone and any proposed method to articulate the comparisons are tedious, to say the least. Therefore, I have elected to utilize an editor's software tools (normally used for redacting) to actually demonstrate Mandela as The Source. The post and pre-Mandela texts are compared with primary text by my insertion of 'comments.' Thus, it is demonstrated that those texts that predate Mandela's autobiography provide a different historical memory than those that proceed from Mandela's text. Again, this examination aims only to be an argument that questions the reliability of secondary sources that derive primarily from a single source as it regards the question of Luthuli's involvement and possible support of the ANC's decision to incorporate violent methods in its struggle for liberation. Below is an excerpt from Mandela's autobiography relating Luthuli's role in the decision to form *Umkhonto we Sizwe* and his subsequent disconcerting conversation with Luthuli.

On the second day of the stay-at-home, after consulting with my colleagues, I

called it off. I met that morning [May 29, 1961] in a safe flat in a white suburb with

various members of the local and foreign press, and I once again called the stay-at-home

a "tremendous success." But I did not mask the fact that I believed a new day was

dawning. I said, "If the government reaction is to crush by naked force our nonviolent

struggle, we will have to reconsider our tactics. In my mind we are closing a chapter on

¹⁷ For the sake of my sanity, as well as the reader's, I have only selected the most prominent (i.e. read and referenced by the 'public') of biographies and autobiographies to compare and to contrast with Mandela's.

this question of a nonviolent policy.” It was a grave declaration, and I knew it. I was

criticized by our [E]xecutive for making the remark before it was discussed by the

organization, but sometimes one must go public with an idea to push a reluctant

organization in the direction you want it to go.

The debate on the use of violence had been going on among us since early 1960.

I had first discussed the armed struggle as far back as 1952 with Walter [Sisulu]. Now, I

again conferred with him and we agreed that the organization had to set out on a new

course. The Communist Party had secretly reconstituted itself underground and was now

considering forming its own military wing. We decided that I should raise the issue of

the armed struggle within the Working Committee, and I did so in a meeting in June of

1961.

Comment [SEC1]:
Kathrada (Kathrada, A.): “But it was Mandela, during a press interview while he was underground, who gave the first public voice to the previously private views of a considerable number of ANC leaders who were contemplating a move away from the traditional policy of non-violence” (p. 141). *Uncited.*

Comment [SEC2]:
SADET: From “...that morning in a safe flat” to “It was a grave declaration, and I knew it” is quoted verbatim (p. 80). *Mandela cited*
South African Democracy Education Trust. “The Road to Democracy in South Africa Volume I (1960-1970), (Zebra Press, Cape Town, 2004), pp. 1-756.

Comment [SEC3]:
Sisulu (Sisulu, E): “Walter and Nelson decided that Mandela should propose the idea of an armed struggle at a Working Committee meeting in June, 1961” (p. 146). *Uncited.*

Mandela (Sampson): “A month after Republic Day, Mandela put forward to the ANC working committee his historic proposal: that the ANC must abandon non-violence and form its own military wing” (p. 150). *Uncited.*

I had barely commenced my proposal when Moses Kotane, the secretary of the Communist Part and one of the most powerful figures in the ANC executive, staged a counterassault, accusing me of not having thought out the proposal carefully enough. He said that I had been outmaneuvered and paralyzed by the government's actions, and now in desperation I was resorting to revolutionary language. "There is still room," he stressed, "for the old methods if we are imaginative and determined enough. If we embark on the course Mandela is suggesting, we will be exposing innocent people to massacres by the enemy."

Moses spoke persuasively and I could see that he had defeated my proposal.

Even Walter did not speak up on my behalf, and I backed down. Afterward I spoke with Walter and voiced my frustration, chiding him for not coming to my aid. He laughed and said it would have been as foolish as attempting to fight a pride of angry lions. Walter is

Comment [SEC4]:
Mandela (Sampson): "To his surprise he was opposed by Moses Kotane, the veteran black communist who was close to Luthuli. Kotane still saw scope for non-violent methods..." (p. 150). *Uncited.*

Kotane's opposition to Mandela is interesting here. For the Communists, and Kotane was Secretary, were themselves discussing resorting to violence. Perhaps, this contradiction can be explained with Rusty Bernstein's comment that "arguments crossed party lines and many communist leaders were concerned to restrain black militancy. (Sampson, p. 150, footnote 64).

SADET: The entire text, from "I had barely commenced..." to "in a house in the township" below is quoted verbatim, p. 88. *Mandela cited.*

Comment [SEC5]:
Sisulu (Sisulu, E.): "Moses Kotane shot down Mandela's proposal, arguing that an armed struggle would expose innocent people to enemy fire" (p. 146). *Uncited.*

Meer (Meer, I.): "By turning to violence would we not be giving the regime the excuse to come down on us even more heavily" (p. 224)? *Uncited.*

Mandela (Sampson): "...and warned that violence would provoke massacres" (p. 150). *Uncited.*

Comment [SEC6]:
Sisulu (Sisulu, E.): "Mandela backed down and afterwards upbraided Walter for remaining silent instead of supporting his argument. 'He [Walter] laughed and said it would have been as foolish as attempting to fight a pride of angry lions'" (p. 146). *Mandela cited.*

Mandela (Sampson): "Sisulu privately agreed with Mandela that there was no alternative to violence, but kept quiet..." (p. 150). *Uncited.*

a diplomat and extremely resourceful. “Let me arrange for Moses to come and see you

privately,” he said, “and you can make your case that way.” I was underground, but

Walter managed to put the two of us together in a house in the township and we spent the

whole day talking.

I was candid and I explained why I believed we had no choice but to turn to

violence. I used an old African expression: *Sebatana ha se bokwe ka ditala* (The attacks

of the wild beast cannot be averted with only bare hands). Moses was an old-line

Communist, and I told him that his position was like the Communist Party in Cuba under

Batista. The party had insisted that the appropriate conditions had not yet arrived, and

waited because they were simply following the textbook definitions of Lenin and Stalin.

Castro did not wait, he acted – and he triumphed. If you wait for textbook conditions,

they will never occur. I told Moses point-blank that his mind was stuck in the old mold

Comment [SEC7]:
Sisulu (Sisulu, E.): “Walter cannily arranged Mandela and Kotane to meet privately to thrash out the matter...” (p. 146). *Uncited.*

Mandela (Sampson): “...and later arranged for Mandela to talk privately with Kotane...” (p. 150.) *Uncited.*

Comment [SEC8]:
Mandela (Sampson): “He argued persuasively quoting the African proverb, ‘The attacks of the wild beast cannot be averted with only bare hands’” (p. 150). *Uncited.*

However, Sampson understands this proverb was spoken at the earlier Working Committee meeting.

Comment [SEC9]:
Mandela (Meredith, M.): “The armed struggle, they [Mandela and others] believed, would receive massive support from the oppressed African population and soon bring the apartheid regime to an end. They cited the example of Cuba where Castro’s revolution had shown how a small group of revolutionaries could gain mass support to win power” (p. 124). *Uncited.*

of the ANC's being a legal organization. People were already forming military units on

their own, and the only organization that had the muscle to lead them was the ANC. We

have always maintained that the people were ahead of us, and now they were.

We talked the entire day, and at the end, Moses said to me, "Nelson, I will not

promise you anything, but raise the issue again in committee, and we will see what

happens." A meeting was scheduled in a week's time, and once again I raised the issue.

This time, Moses was silent, and the general consensus of the meeting was that I should

make the proposal to the National Executive Committee in Durban. Walter simply

smiled.

The [National] [E]xecutive meeting in Durban, like all ANC meetings at the time,

was held in secret and at night in order to avoid the police. I suspected I would encounter

difficulties because Chief Luthuli was to be in attendance and I knew of his moral

Comment [SEC10]:
Meer (Meer, I): "On the other hand, if we did not shift to violent means, would we not be failing our people by not harnessing their rising militancy and providing them with the leadership needed" (p. 224)? *Uncited.*

Comment [SEC11]:
Sisulu (Sisulu, E.): "...after which Kotane suggested that Mandela raise the matter at the next Working Committee meeting" (p. 146). *Uncited.*

SADET: "When they parted, Kotane promised nothing, but Mandela had won the day" (p. 88). *Mandela cited.*

Comment [SEC12]:
Sisulu (Sisulu, E.): "'This time, Moses was silent and the general consensus was that I should make the proposal to the National Executive in Durban. Walter simply smiled'" (p. 146). *Mandela cited.*

Comment [SEC13]:
Meer (Meer, I): "Around August/September 1961, the [N]ational [E]xecutive of the banned ANC met secretly on a farm in Groutville, Natal, under the Chairmanship of Chief Albert Luthuli" (p. 223). *Uncited.*

Meer states that the National Executive meeting (held one night previous to the Joint Executives of the Congresses) was in Groutville while Mandela and Sisulu state the meeting was in Durban. However, this need not be considered a contradiction as "Durban" is the largest metropolitan in the region and thus can be considered a euphemism for "Groutville."

Sampson has them is Stanger, also close to Groutville.

commitment to non-violence. I was also wary because of the timing: I was raising the issue of non-violence so soon after the Treason Trial, where we had contended that for the ANC nonviolence was an inviolate principle, not a tactic to be changed as conditions warranted. I myself believed precisely the opposite: that nonviolence was a tactic that should be abandoned when it no longer worked.

At the meeting I argued that the state had given us no alternative to violence. I said it was wrong and immoral to subject our people to armed attacks by the state without offering them some kind of alternative. I mentioned again that people on their own had taken up arms. Violence would begin whether we initiated it or not. Would it not be better to guide this violence ourselves, according to principals where we save lives by attacking symbols of oppression, and not people? If we did not take the lead now, I said, we would soon be latecomers and followers to a movement we did not control. The

Comment [SEC14]:
Sisulu (Sisulu, E.): "At the NEC meeting in Durban, Mandela argued that violence was inevitable, whether the ANC wanted it or not, the ANC should take the initiative in setting principles of attacking symbols of oppression, not people" (p. 146). *Uncited.*

Comment [SEC15]:
SADET: From "...it was wrong and immoral..." above to "...a movement we did not control" is quoted verbatim (p. 88). *Mandela cited.*

[C]hief initially resisted my arguments. For him, nonviolence was not simply a tactic.

But we worked on him the whole night; and I think that in his heart he realized that we

were right. He ultimately agreed that a military campaign was inevitable. When

someone later [during the Joint Executive meeting of the Congresses held the following

night] insinuated that perhaps the [C]hief was not prepared for such a course, he retorted,

“If anyone thinks I am a pacifist, let him try to take my chickens, and he will know how

wrong he is!”

The National Executive formally endorsed the preliminary decision of the

Working Committee. The [C]hief and others suggested that we should treat this new

resolution as if the ANC had not discussed it. He did not want to jeopardize the legality

of our un-banned allies. His idea was that a military movement should be a separate and

independent organ, linked to the ANC and under the overall control of the ANC, but

Comment [SEC16]:

Sisulu (Sisulu, E.): “Chief Luthuli hated the idea of violence and it took a whole night of discussion to get him to even consider it” (p. 146). *Uncited.*

Mandela (Sampson): “...who immediately made clear his Christian concerns about the move to violence” (p. 150). *Uncited.*

Comment [SEC17]:

Nobel Laureates (Asmal, K.): “I believe that he came to appreciate – under the pressure of events – that some measure of force was inevitable...” (p. 9-10). *Uncited.*

Mandela (Sampson): “He nevertheless reluctantly agreed that there should be a military campaign...” (p. 150). *Uncited.*

SADET: “Luthuli initially opposed Mandela’s argument and proposal, but eventually caved in...” (p. 88). *Mandela cited, although it is unclear exactly what was cited.*

Comment [SEC18]:

Nobel Laureates (Asmal, K.): “He [Luthuli] once observed that anyone who thought he was a pacifist should try to steal his chickens” (p. 9). *Uncited.*

Meer (Meer, I): “One of them, from the Indian Congress, accused Chief Luthuli of being a pacifist, to which the Chief responded sharply, ‘You steal my chickens in my yard and you will see whether I am a pacifist’” (p. 224)! *Uncited.*

Mandela (Sampson): “Mandela would always remember him saying at Stanger: ‘If anyone thinks I am a pacifist, let him go and take my chickens; he will know how wrong he is’” (p. 151). *Mandela cited.*

Comment [SEC19]:

Meer (Meer, I): “Would we not be sacrificing the legal space that the Indian Congress, SACTU and the CPC still enjoyed” (p. 224)? *Uncited.*

Meer (Meer, I): “Others felt strongly that we had to shift to organized violence, while seeking to preserve the little space left for open protest by virtue of the fact that the Indian Congresses were not banned” (p. 224). *Uncited.*

fundamentally autonomous. There would be two separate streams of the struggle. We

readily accepted the [C]hief's suggestion. The [C]hief and others warned against this

new phase becoming an excuse for neglecting the essential task of organization and the

traditional methods of struggle. That, too, would be self-defeating because the armed

struggle, at least in the beginning, would not be the centerpiece of the movement.

The following night a meeting of the [J]oint [E]xecutives was scheduled in

Durban. This would include the Indian Congress, the Coloured People's Congress, the

South African Congress of Trade Unions, and the Congress of Democrats. Although

these other groups customarily accepted ANC decisions, I knew that some of my Indian

colleagues would strenuously oppose the move toward violence.

The meeting had an inauspicious beginning. Chief Luthuli, who was presiding,

announced that even though the ANC had endorsed a decision on violence, "it is a matter

Comment [SEC20]:
Sisulu (Sisulu, E.): "Finally, the Chief suggested a compromise... Thus the ANC would not oppose such a military organization, although linked to the ANC and under ANC discipline and overall control, would be autonomous" (p. 146). *Mandela cited.*

Comment [SEC21]:
Meer (Meer, I): The issues before the meeting were stark. Were we contemplating a shift to violence as an easy way out of the hard task of mobilizing the people in the face of repression? Would resorting to violence lead to the neglect of the orthodox forms of mobilization" (p. 224)? *Uncited.*

Kathrada (Kathrada, A.): "Indeed, at the [J]oint [E]xecutives meeting where they agreed to form MK, it was explicitly spelt out that this should not be at the expense of our political work" (p. 142). *Uncited.*

Comment [SEC22]:
Meer (Meer, I): "The joint meeting took place at 8 pm at the beach house of the Bodasingsh, near Stanger" (p. 224). *Uncited.*

Meer states that the Joint Executive meeting was held "near Stanger" while Mandela states the meeting was in Durban. However, again, this need not be considered a contradiction as "Durban" is the largest metropolitan in the region and thus can be considered a euphemism for "Stanger."

Comment [SEC23]:
Mandela (Sampson): "The second meeting, at which the ANC met with its Indian, white and Coloured allies, went on through the night. Mandela's plan for a military wing was opposed by many Indians..." (p. 150.) *Uncited.*

of such gravity, I would like my colleagues here tonight to consider the issue afresh.” It

was apparent that the [C]hief was not fully reconciled to our new course.

We began our session at 8 P.M. and it was tumultuous. I made the identical arguments that I had been making all along, and many people expressed reservations.

Yusuf Cachalia and Dr. Naicker pleaded with us not to embark on this course, arguing

the state would slaughter the whole liberation movement. J.N. Singh, an effective

debater, uttered words that night which still echo in my head. “Nonviolence has not

failed us,” he said, “we have failed nonviolence.” I countered by saying that in fact

nonviolence had failed us, for it had done nothing to stem the violence of the state nor

change the heart of the oppressors.

We argued the entire night, and in the early hours of the morning I began to feel

that we were making progress. Many of the Indian leaders were now speaking in a

Comment [SEC24]:
Sisulu (Sisulu, E.): “The next day, at the Joint Executive meeting of the Congress Alliance, instead of putting forward the agreement of the previous night, the Chief said the matter was such a serious one that it should be discussed afresh” (p. 146). *Mandela cited.*

Meer (Meer, I.): “Chief Luthuli, the [P]resident [G]eneral of the ANC presided. He opened the meeting by informing us that the Executive of the ANC had met and decided to allow the formation of an organization that would engage in violent forms of struggle. Despite this decision, he requested that members of the ANC [E]xecutive feel free to participate and express their own individual views in the debate” (p. 224). *Uncited.*

Comment [SEC25]:
Tambo (Callinicos): “Chief Luthuli had grave misgivings about the ANC’s shift from the policy of passive resistance to a strategy of violence, and wavered more than once in the discussion meetings” (p. 280). *Mandela cited.*

Sisulu (Sisulu, E.): “...Chief Luthuli was not entirely convinced” (p. 146). *Uncited.*

Comment [SEC26]:
Mandela (Sampson): “Other friends, including Monty Naicker and Yusuf Cachalia, prophetically warned that violent tactics would undermine the more pressing task of political organization” (p. 151). *Mandela cited.*

Comment [SEC27]:
Meer (Meer, I): “JN Singh put the matter crisply: ‘Non-violence has not failed us; we have failed non-violence’” (p. 224). *Uncited.*

Mandela (Sampson): “J.N. Singh, one of Mandela’s oldest friends, restated his belief that it was not non-violence that had failed them, but ‘we have failed non-violence’ (p. 151). *Mandela cited.*

Comment [SEC28]:
Sisulu (Sisulu, E.): “...and once again the debate raged all night” (p. 146). *Uncited.*

sorrowful tone about the end of nonviolence. But then suddenly M.D. Naidoo, a member of the South African Indian Congress, burst forth and said to his Indian colleagues, “Ah, you are afraid of going to jail, that is all!” His comment caused pandemonium in the meeting. When you question a man’s integrity, you can expect a fight. The entire debate went back to square one.

Comment [SEC29]:
Meer, (Meer, I): “Tempers frayed when those who expressed a commitment to non-violence were accused of being afraid to go to jail” (p. 224). *Uncited.*

Note: Meer remembers this occurrence taking place at the Indian Congresses meeting in Tongaat the previous night. Or, did the same thing happen twice? It is a possibility.

Comment [SEC30]:
Sisulu (Sisulu, E.): “They were back to square one...” (p. 146). *Uncited.*

Note: Mandela refers to Naidoo’s comment as causing the discussion to revert to “square one,” whereas E. Sisulu understands that Luthuli’s reconsideration of the ANC’s previous nights discussion as the cause of setting the meeting “back to square one.”

But toward dawn, there was a resolution. The congresses authorized me to go ahead and form a new military organization, separate from the ANC. The policy of the ANC would still be that of nonviolence. I was authorized to join with whomever I wanted or needed to create this organization and would not be subject to the direct control of the mother

Comment [SEC31]:

Sisulu (Sisulu, E.): "Finally, they reached a resolution, and, in a historic decision that was to alter all their lives dramatically, Mandela was given the mandate to form a new military organization that would not be under the direct control of the ANC, which was to maintain its policy of nonviolence" (p. 146). *Mandela cited.*

SADEC: "Eventually, after much heated discussion, Mandela and his group were given a qualified mandate to set up a military wing to engage in tightly controlled violence and avoid injury towards persons at all costs, and to keep it strictly separate and distinct from the ANC" (p. 89). *Mandela cited.* Although from exactly where is unclear.

Mandela (Meredith, M.): "But while Mandela was persuaded about the need for an armed struggle, other ANC leaders were vehemently opposed to it. At a secret meeting in June, 1961, the arguments raged back and forth. By the end of it a compromise was reached. It was agreed that the ANC would remain committed to non-violence, but that it would not stand in the way of members who wanted to establish a separate and independent organization" (p. 124). *Mandela cited in The State of Africa*, chapter notes, p. 693.

Kotane (Bunting, B.): "Mandela said that he and others who felt this way decided to consult leaders of various organizations, including the ANC. 'I will not say whom we spoke to, or what they said.' But he gave the view of the ANC, which was that as a mass organization with a political function whose members had joined on the express policy of non-violence it could not and would not undertake violence, which would result in members ceasing to carry out the essential political tasks of political propaganda and agitation. On the other hand, the ANC 'would no longer disapprove of properly controlled violence. Hence members who undertook such activity would not be subject to disciplinary action by the ANC'" (p. 266). *Mandela cited*, but, of course, not from *A Long Walk to Freedom*. Presumably it w

... [1]

organization.

This was a fateful step. For fifty years, the ANC had treated nonviolence as a core principle, beyond question or debate. Henceforth, the ANC would be a different

Comment [SEC32]:

Tambo (Callinicos): "The ANC's NEC adopted the tactic of formally endorsing a Working Committee – their idea was that a military movement, while separate from the ANC, would nevertheless be linked to it and come under its formal control. Mandela, who had been the most persistent and persuasive proponent for such a move, was mandated to form the Committee, and 'would not be subject to the mother organization'" (pp. 280-281). *Mandela cited.*
I can not come to any other conclusion other than: "The above statement is contradictory."

Meer (Meer, I): "Nelson Mandela was unrelenting in championing the turn of violence. As dawn crept on us, we wrapped up the debate and endorsed the decision that the ANC had taken the night before. We had placed an enormous responsibility on Nelson Mandela. Our decision led to the birth of Umkhonto weSizwe..." (p. 224). *Uncited.*

Mandela (Sampson): "By early morning the Congresses had agreed that Mandela should form a new military organization, which came to be called Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK), or 'Spear of the Nation.' He could recruit his own staff, and MK would be kept quite distinct from the ANC, to avoid threatening the ANC's legal status..." (p. 151). *Mandela cited.*

Note: However, the ANC's status by this point was *already* illegal. Sampson's text should read, "other organizations' legal status."

kind of organization. We were embarking on a new and more dangerous path, a path of

organized violence, the results of which we did not and could not know.¹⁸ ///

///
Before leaving [for the Pan African Freedom Movement for East, Central, and

Southern Africa in Addis Ababa in February, 1962], I secretly drove to Groutville to

confer with the [C]hief. Our meeting – at a safe house in town – was disconcerting. As I

have related, the [C]hief was present at the creation of MK [Umkhonto weSizwe], and

was as informed as any member of the National Executive Committee about its

development. But the [C]hief was not well and his memory was not what it had once

been. He chastised me for not consulting with him about the formation of MK.

I attempted to remind the [C]hief of the discussions that we had in Durban about taking

up violence, but he did not recall them. This is in large part why the story has gained

¹⁸ Mandela, Nelson. pp. 270-274.

Comment [SEC33]:

Meer (Meer, J): "I felt we were moving into unknown territory, and could not help a feeling of disquiet..." (p. 224). *Uncited.*

Comment [SEC34]:

Benson (Mandela): Benson has this meeting after Mandela's trip to Ethiopia, England, and return to Algeria for training (p. 98). ??

Comment [SEC35]:

Bunting (Kotane): "In fact, the formation of Umkhonto and its initial sabotage activity created an immediate problem in relation to the banned President-General of the ANC, Chief Lutuli, who had only that year been awarded the Nobel Prize for his services to peace. Lutuli was not involved in the discussions which led to the formation of Umkhonto. For one thing, he was living under restriction at Groutville and able to keep in touch with the ANC leadership in the Transvaal only intermittently. For another, during the crucial months of 1961 when the decision to set up Umkhonto was being formulated, Lutuli was preoccupied with arrangements in connection with his visit to Oslo to receive his Nobel award. A third factor was simply the reluctance of the ANC leadership to engage in a discussion which might result in a Presidential veto before it was necessary" (p. 268). *Uncited.*

Comment [SEC36]:

SADET: "Later though, his memory failing, Luthuli complained to Mandela that he had never been consulted about the formation of MK" (p. 90). *Mandela cited.*

Mandela (Sampson): "Luthuli would later complain that he had not been properly consulted..." (p. 151). It is unclear who is cited. Sampson's footnote references the *Rand Daily Mail*, on May 29, 1961. This is odd, since the date *precedes* the decision was taken.

Benson (Mandela): "Then Luthuli raised the question which had long troubled him: Umkhonto's announcement in December, 1961 that the policy of non-violence had ended. Aware of Mandela's role, Luthuli criticized the failure to consult himself and the ANC 'grassroots.' He felt they had been compromised. Although apologetic, Mandela said h

[... [2]

currency that Chief Luthuli was not informed about the creation of MK and was deeply

opposed to the ANC taking up violence. Nothing could be farther from the truth.¹⁹

I do not propose that any author, especially Mandela, has adulterated facts or disingenuously fabricated testimony. As Kathada reminds us, "...it should be borne in mind that even people involved in the same event remember the details differently, and amnesia is no friend of accuracy."²⁰ I argue that, as a nascent historian, I have encountered a historiographic problem. The problem is that if a vast majority of post-*Long Walk to Freedom* biographical and autobiographical accounts of the ANC's decision to form MK are funneled (cross-referenced) through the textual gauntlet of Mandela's text, we will find an original source, the historiographical "Adam," if you will. For me to interpret and analyze secondary sources and to compare and contrast them from primary source evidence, I am required to understand the dynamics at work as an emerging nation 'creates' its history. To properly evaluate evidence discovered, one must understand the profound impact of an icon like Nelson Mandela, and his corresponding recollection of events has on the formation of South African history. Any accuracy, or more importantly inaccuracy, in Mandela's account multiplies exponentially as biographies and autobiographies utilize Mandela's (only) version. Mandela's text may be considered 'asexual' in terms of its reproductive qualities. Any mutation will be exacerbated as the 'gene pool' of information is limited. This initial investigation examines the validity of this hypothesis. If the hypothesis is correct, texts written after Mandela's autobiography that cite or draw from it extensively need to be considered with 'a grain of salt.' The weight of evidence in favor of Luthuli's cognizance and support of initiation of MK may therefore be premised only upon Mandela's account from which most others, subsequently, merely reference.

Mandela is Accurate and Inaccurate

"Nothing could be farther from the truth," is Mandela's assertion as it regards people's understanding that Luthuli was "deeply opposed to the ANC taking up violence" and "was not informed about the creation of MK" in August/September, 1961.²¹ While

¹⁹ Mandela, Nelson. pp. 287-288.

²⁰ See first footnote on page one.

²¹ No one provides a specific date. Only Meer gives us "August/September." The first two Working Committee meetings occurred in June, 1961. The National Executive and Joint Congresses meetings happened sometime later in August/September, 1961.

However, Karis and Carter (Volume 3) reference statements made by Mandela during the 1964 Rivonia Trail stating that " 'a full meeting' of the National Executive Committee in June 1961 'carefully considered' his position and decided that the ANC could not engage in violence but would in Mandela's words, 'depart from its 50-year-old policy of non-violence to this extent,'" p. 648. June, 1961 is premature

Comment [SEC37]:

Benson (Mandela): "He [Mandela] had chosen the armed struggle but he respected Luthuli's commitment to non-violence" (p. 96). *Uncited*.

Benson stated this in the context of Mandela's visit to London (Westminster) in June, 1962 between visits to North Africa.

Mandela (Sampson): "...but he had deliberately kept his distance." See reference in Sampson comment number 36 above.

Bunting (Kotane): "However, once Umkhonto was launched and Chief Lutuli could see from newspapers that members of the ANC were involved, it was necessary to put him in the picture. In fact, he demanded an explanation of what was going on. The ANC headquarters sent down two of its leading figures, one after the other, in answer to his summons, but still he was not satisfied. 'Send me Moses Kotane,' he said. And once again, in defiance of his banning order, Kotane traveled to Groutville to meet Lutuli. The two of them sat hidden in the bush and thrashed the whole matter out. Lutuli made it clear he was not able to tell any member of the ANC to resort to violence, but neither was he prepared to forbid or condemn it. The Government [was] to blame for driving the people to desperation. However, Lutuli felt the question of sabotage should have been discussed by the ANC through the usual channels, and said: 'When my son decides to sleep with a girl, he does not ask for my permission, but just does it. It is only afterwards, when the girl is pregnant and the parents make a case, that he brings his troubles home.' Though the ANC was not formally involved, Lutuli felt the responsibility for the actions of the African people as a chief and a father. He was saddened by the violence, but to his dying day he refused to blame those who were driven to it as an act of self-defence against the violence of the Government" (pp. 268-269). *Uncited*.

“nothing could be farther from the truth” as Mandela asserts, research reveals that there is much more that is ‘closer to the truth.’ I conclude that Mandela is accurate in his assertion that “Luthuli was informed about the creation of MK,” although even this is misleading as ‘informed’ is the wrong word. Luthuli was *present* (and chaired) at the meetings and acquiesced to the decision to form a new organization that would embark upon violence. However, in contrast to Mandela, I conclude that Luthuli was indeed deeply opposed to the ANC taking-up violence. Luthuli essentially forbid *Umkhonto we Sizwe*’s formal relationship with the ANC, and thus him, in the compromise he proposed and the subsequent reception of the Nobel Peace Prize forced a reassessment towards a reversal back to the struggle’s original non-violent position (at least for the time being).

Given the now-suspect homogenous post-*Long Walk to Freedom* testimony of Luthuli’s presence, participation, and agreement at the meetings that initiated violence in June, 1961, and given the testimony from Kotane (Bunting), Benson, and Slovo (and as we shall see below on this page, possibly Luthuli himself), indicating Luthuli was not present and did not support the initiation of *Umkhonto we Sizwe*, we must call into question the historical assumption of Luthuli’s support, and subsequent failure to remember it, of the initiation of armed violence. Secondary sources are ineffective in coming to a historical conclusion. Further research that unearths primary sources is required.

Daniel McGeachie, wrote for the generally sympathetic to the South African government British paper *Daily Express*. McGeachie’s seven hundred word report sent by cable through the South African postal service was infamously stopped and held, thus producing a storm of outraged editorials from white and black, liberal and nationalist, journalists as an attack on freedom of the press. The interviews in November record Luthuli’s sentiments regarding violence after the collective decision to form *Umkhonto we Sizwe* and before his acceptance of the Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo in December of 1961. In McGeachie’s article, Luthuli is quoted saying:

*Non-violent agitation will win and I still think that the majority of Black South Africa is behind me. Stories that there are plans of violence may be Government propaganda. The Government wants a show-down. They want us to fight so that they have an excuse to us mow us down.*²²

Luthuli’s hypothesis in the *Cape Times* that “stories” of impending violence are Government propaganda suggest that Luthuli did not participate nor was informed about the decision to initiate violence. By implication, therefore, Luthuli could not have been present at the August/September, 1961 Joint Executive meeting as Mandela asserts. In addition, as we have seen above, evidence from Kotane (Bunting, SEC 35) and Benson (Mandela, SEC 36) indicate that Luthuli was not present at the decision. However, is Benson’s source merely Kotane (Bunting)? Assuming Kotane was summoned by Luthuli following the December 16th initiation of violence, did Kotane (Bunting) base his documentation on Luthuli’s non-involvement, and thus his absence from the

for the NEC meeting because this was the date of the initial Working Committee meeting which referred or recommended the matter to the NEC and subsequently the Joint Congresses.

²² “Afrikaans Press Told Why Luthuli Cable was Held,” *Cape Times*, November 20, 1961, page unknown. Article obtained from publications copies by the Liberal Party, found within the Ballinger Papers, A410, at the William Cullen Library at the University of Witwatersrand.

August/September meetings, on Luthuli's failing memory (as Mandela asserts)? This is unlikely. Surely Kotane, when reporting to Luthuli, would have corrected Luthuli's failure to recall his chairmanship at the three meetings and thus his part in the decision to form *Umkhonto we Sizwe*. Is Luthuli's hypothesis of government propaganda a ploy to goad Blacks into violence simply a means by which to publicly (without admitting complicity) call off or at best postpone the decision taken two to three months prior? The media would be the best way to issue warnings not to following-through on the earlier decision in light of new developments (Nobel Peace Prize).

In the above investigation, it is only Meer who uses the first person plural to describe events and therefore presumably it is only Meer who was present at the Joint Executives Meeting. Tambo was overseas. Asmal speaks as if he was not present. Sisulu was present at the meetings, but his book was written by his daughter-in-law and therefore we know not whether Walter or Nelson testifies that Luthuli was present. Kathrada it seems was present, but he makes no mention of the meetings or Luthuli's presence or involvement in his autobiography (also forwarded by Nelson Mandela). So, we are left with Meer's eyewitness testimony that Luthuli was present and it is Meer's biography for whom Mandela wrote a preface. Could Meer have erred in his recollection of Luthuli being present? Did Meer 'borrow' too much from Mandela's memory? If Luthuli was present and involved, was Luthuli's health and memory therefore so bad that Luthuli forgot, as Mandela claims, that he chaired crucial all night meetings that determined the future of the liberation movement in fundamental manner? Evidence suggests that this may be a possibility. Many worried about Luthuli's health at the time. However, how could Luthuli then put on a stunning display of intelligence and diplomacy at his reception of the Nobel Peace Prize in December, 1961 and continue to be the General-President (yes, banned) of the ANC for another seven years? Dr. Albertinah Luthuli would dispute Mandela's claim that Luthuli simply "forgot," due to ill-health, his pivotal role as chair of three of the most important meetings held in ANC history. Her advocacy of Luthuli's relative good health is motivated by her avowal that Luthuli's mind and health, even during the time of his unfortunate death in '67, was good. Any suggestions that the Chief was 'senile,' in '61 or '62 are as invalid as they were during his death in a train accident. In response to Mandela's testimony that Luthuli's health was poor enough to affect his leadership, the Chief's daughter argues:

The world was [unintelligible] and they know that he wasn't senile, exactly. And then also, I don't like it myself because it kind of fits into this thing that the people who we believed killed him want the world to believe. Ya. We believe that he, you know, he was killed by the Apartheid system, by the Apartheid regime, at Gledhow. It wasn't an accident. And they give the same reasons, when they say, "He was senile; he couldn't hear; he couldn't see." Now, you ask anybody, they will tell you. Veli [Luthuli] tells the story of how the baby was crying in the bedroom and everybody else was sitting in the lounge there, I think that that baby might have been Mntunzi, or whoever it is, I don't know at that time. And the first person who said, "The baby is crying in the bedroom," was Baba. [Laughs.]

Further research seems to validate Nelson Mandela's assertion that Luthuli was present and did participate in the decision to form *Umkhonto we Sizwe*. In recently discovered draft manuscripts of M.B. Yengwa's autobiography, Yengwa affirms that

Luthuli was present during the momentous meetings in August/September, 1961. Yengwa joined the ANC in 1945. In 1951 he was elected to the Natal Provincial Executive Committee of the ANC under Chief Luthuli as President. Yengwa, with Buthelezi and others, participated in the ousting of the dictatorial A.W.G. Champion in favor of Luthuli. This election launched Luthuli's political leadership and Yengwa from that time on was seen to be a close confidante and lieutenant of Luthuli. Yengwa's testimony is important not simply because of his intimacy with Luthuli, but moreso, for the purposes of this investigation, because his draft memoirs were written *before* his own death in 1987 and, perhaps more importantly, therefore *before* Nelson Mandela's "Long Walk to Freedom" was published. Yengwa relates:

Chief Luthuli was still under a banning order and as a result a full Nat [National] Exec [Executive] Committee was called at Chief Luthuli's magisterial district in secret so that he could attend. This was after everyone in the TT [Treason Trial] had been discharged. There was a very long heart searching debate, because the ANC's policy of non-violence had been tried since 1952 and after years of action through strikes and other methods they had only met with violence. Some of us were still skeptical about the use of violence, including Chief Luthuli, on the grounds that the people had still to be consulted and we would not be seen to be democratic in changing without consultation from one policy to another. But we had to accept the logic. The Nat Exec saw the logic of changing from non-violence to sabotage. However, it was decided that to protect the movement from being further harassed and banned the decision should not yet be announced and an organization of UWS [Umkhonto we Sizwe] should be established under the political control of the ANC. NM [Nelson Mandela] was at this stage underground and we were aware that NM was in charge of the armed wing but for security reasons we did not know who were actually involved.²³

I therefore conclude that Luthuli was aware of and did participate in the decision to form *Umkhonto we Sizwe* as Mandela records. If Luthuli was present and did participate in the decision to form *Umkhonto we Sizwe*, what then was his stance on violence?

Luthuli's Stance on Violence: Pro

On July 21, 1967 the death of Albert Luthuli was announced to the world. In a tribute to Albert Luthuli, Oliver Tambo in good propagandist style waxed eloquently about Luthuli's militant credentials. Tambo quoted Luthuli in his reception of the Nobel Prize, "Ours is a continent in revolution against oppression... There can be no peace until the forces of oppression are overthrown" and in 1967 retroactively attributed it as a support of violence despite the fact the award and the speech advocated the opposite. Tambo then provides a further tribute to Luthuli's support of violence with the following defensive argument.

Chief Luthuli is irrevocably linked with the African National Congress and the revolutionary movement of the people of South Africa. The period of his leadership of our organization saw the change over from reliance of solely non-

²³ Yengwa, M.B. Unpublished draft autobiographical manuscript. Found in the Yengwa Collection, Chief Albert Luthuli Museum, Groutville, p. 106.

violent forms of struggle to a need for a combination of both legal and illegal clandestine forms of struggle following the ban on the African National Congress in April 1960. This new period was emphasized by a decision to prepare for armed confrontation of the enemy and the setting up of the armed wing of the our revolutionary movement – Umkhonto we Sizwe.

The enemies of our revolutionary struggle who were bent on fanning divisions inside the ranks of the ANC whilst at the same time making futile attempts to isolate Chief Luthuli from the main stream of the revolutionary movement, came forth with allegations that Chief Luthuli never approved the change-over from emphasis on non-violent struggle to the present phase. This was strongly refuted by Chief himself when he made a statement following the passing of prison sentences on our leaders at the conclusion of the Rivonia Trial in 1964...

There are those amongst us who, whilst claiming to have been permanently inspired by Chief Luthuli's qualities of leadership are, however, working against the policies of the organization he led until his last breath. These are people from within the ranks of the oppressed population are counseling against the use of revolutionary violence with the plea that those who advocate this form of struggle are leading the people to catastrophic suicide.²⁴

The ANC has claimed, and continues to this day to repeatedly claim, that Chief Albert Luthuli supported the move to initiate violence. In many documents emanating from the ANC over the years, the same refrain is read.

There is a wrong and unfortunate impression that Chief Lutuli was a pacifist, or some kind of apostle of non-violence. This impression is incorrect and misleading. The policy of non-violence was formulated and adopted by the national conferences of the African National Congress before he was elected President-General of the organization. The policy was adopted in 1951 specifically for the conduct of the "National Campaign for Defiance of Unjust Laws" in 1952. What is correct, however, is that as a man of principle and as a leader of unquestionable integrity, Chief Luthuli defended the policy entrusted to him by his organization and saw to it that it was implemented. When that policy was officially and constitutionally changed, he did not falter.²⁵

The above statement was printed in special supplement to Vol. I, No. 8 issue of *Sechaba*, the official organ of the African National Congress of South Africa. It was again published in Volume V, No. 30 issue of *Spotlight on South Africa*. It was again published in the book *Luthuli Speaks: Statements and Addresses by Chief Albert Luthuli of the African National Congress* and again in a publication entitled *The Road to Freedom is via the Cross*, published as the third volume of *South African Studies*.²⁶ The same apologetic can also be found on the current ANC internet website.²⁷ Undoubtedly, there is a consistent effort to cast Luthuli as an initiator and leader of the armed struggle.

²⁴ Tambo, O.R. "July 21," Original typed manuscript, ANC Archives, Fort Hare University, Oliver Tambo Papers (A2561).

²⁵ "Chief Albert John Mvumbi Luthui, 1898-1967," *Sechaba*, insert supplement to Vol. 1, No. 8.

²⁶ All of these publications (or drafts to be submitted to the above publications) can be found at the University of Cape Town Historical Archives, Jack and Ray Simon Papers, BC 1080, P.28.1.

²⁷ www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/lutuli, p. 4.

In the most recently produced documentary on Luthuli, various ‘Struggle’ icons testify that Luthuli was supportive of initiation to resort to violence. Billy Nair remembers:

He [Luthuli] already knew, before he left for Oslo, to receive the Nobel, he knew that night, that Umkhonto was going to be launched. Chief is safe in his home, nine o’clock that night, throughout South Africa there were bombings taking place. And I was part of that campaign.²⁸

The former Deputy President of South Africa, Jacob Zuma, goes so far to say that it was Luthuli himself who named the military wing of the ANC. Zuma tells the listener an anecdote that Luthuli intimated to rationalize the name.

At the end [of our discussion] when we were saying, ‘What is this organization going to be called?’ he [Luthuli] told a little story and said, ‘If you are a man and you fight with somebody out there, and this somebody is stronger than you are, and you retreat to your home, and this somebody gets into your home, attacking you in front of your wife and the children, what do you do if you are a man?’ [Luthuli] says, ‘You take up your spear, and use your spear to fight the man.’²⁹

Kadar Asmal relates:

Clearly, Albert Luthuli favored non-violent means of struggle against apartheid. For example, he advocated economic sanctions against the apartheid regime as a way to advocate a ‘relatively peaceful transition.’ Yet he was not a pacifist. He once observed that anyone who thought he was a pacifist should try to steal his chickens.³⁰ I believe that he came to appreciate – under the pressure of events – that some measure of force was inevitable, but he felt that any use of force should be done through a military formation that was separate from the political movement of the ANC. I know that the plans for an armed struggle, under the auspices of a new military formation, were submitted to Chief Albert Luthuli for his approval. Just days after Albert Luthuli received the Nobel Peace Prize, on 16 December, 1961, the military wing of the ANC, Umkhonto we Sizwe, engaged in its first use of force to sabotage a government installation. In the hope of peace, an armed struggle had begun.³¹

The African Liberation Reader, Vol. 2: The National Liberation Movements, edited by de Braganca and Wallerstein, include Luthuli’s statement responding to his dismissal by the Nationalist government of his chieftainship in their chapter entitled “The Road to Armed Struggle.” This inclusion of Luthuli’s statement in a chapter thus entitled is, for a biographer of Luthuli, at best, highly anachronistic, and at worst, an implied distortion of historical reality. The title of the Luthuli’s statement, “The Road to

²⁸ ‘The Legacy of a Legend: Chief Albert J.M. Luthuli’: documentary film, produced by *Amandla* Communications, sponsored by the Department of Arts and Culture, 2005.

²⁹ ‘The Legacy of a Legend’

³⁰ This famous tale about chickens seems to derive from Mandela. Sampson, Anthony. *Mandela: An Authorized Biography*, p. 151.

³¹ Kader Asmal, David Chidester, and Wilmot James, (eds.), *South Africa’s Nobel Laureates: Peace, Literature, and Science*, (Johannesburg and Cape Town: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2004), pp. 9-10. Curiously, Asmal does not state that Luthuli granted his approval for the plans for a new military formation that were submitted to him. Asmal shared essentially the same sentiments in ‘The Legacy of a Legend’.

Freedom is via the Cross” is virtually ignored. For anyone mildly conversant with the Christian faith, the title screams that suffering and non-violence are the means to liberation (or, theologically, “salvation”). No amount of theological hermeneutics or political contextualization can claim that the way of the cross of Jesus Christ included violence. To infer that anything stated by Luthuli in this statement is a precursor to violence is to state the opposite of what Luthuli wrote. “The Road to the Freedom” for Luthuli was the cross; precisely the opposite would be “The Road to Freedom is Armed Violence.” Iconic political commentators such as Oliver Tambo and Nelson Mandela frequently cited Luthuli’s famous 1952 statement responding to his dismissal as some kind of philosophical prelude to, or justification for, armed violence, wherein Luthuli asks, “...who will deny that thirty years of my life have been spent knocking in vain, patiently and moderately and modestly at a closed and barred door?”³² However, all conveniently forget that Luthuli consistently and unreservedly advocated only non-violent methods to attain liberation after this statement made in 1952. Those who cite this passage neglect to also reference that which follows it: “...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*” (italics my emphasis). The way of the cross, for Luthuli is specifically, through non-violent suffering.

In South Africa, ‘struggle credentials’ (such as a term at Robben Island or a member of *Umkhonto we Sizwe*) are a necessary ingredient in any aspiring politician’s *curriculum vitae*. Likewise, the accolades, memorials, foundations, and biographies, and the naming of streets, municipalities, and building structures requires a persistent justification of the armed struggle by prominent retiring liberation icons thus encouraging a rationalization and sanitization of the highly controversial positions taken at the time. Ambition and justification renders the historical ‘protection’ of the perceived utility of armed struggle by liberation icons necessary. Such is the case with any nascent country. Nationalism affects not only a country’s present perception of itself, but also its perception of its past. Recent historians of Africa are beginning to seriously question the efficacy of the armed struggle in South Africa, to examine the decision taken in August/September, 1961 tactically, strategically, and without prejudice in favor of living legends that rightly deserve to be placed in the pantheon of great twenty-first century human rights leaders. Many historians today, looking back, can only agree with Luthuli’s warnings about the use of violence. In *The State of Africa*, Martin Meredith provides ample rationale for Mandela to remember that the leader of the ANC supported the move towards violence rather than remember that the leader of the ANC was against it.

In terms of the objectives that Mandela had set, Umkhonto’s sabotage campaign was a total failure. The impact on the economy was negligible. Foreign investors, far from being frightened away during the early 1960s, became more deeply involved. The white electorate reacted in support of the government not in opposition to it. The government, instead of changing course, was spurred into taking ever more repressive counter-measures, obliterating fundamental civil rights on the ground that it was dealing with a communist-inspired

³² Callinicos, Luli. *Oliver Tambo: Beyond the Engeli Mountains*, p. 289 and Mandela, Nelson. Rivonia Trial transcripts, ANC Archives, Fort Hare University, Oliver Tambo Papers, (A2561).

*conspiracy to overthrow the state. All that was proved, ultimately, was that a collection of amateur revolutionaries were no match for the brute strength of the South African state. In trying to explain the collapse of Umkhonto, revolutionary enthusiasts spoke of 'a heroic failure.' But it was more than a fatal miscalculation about the power of the government and the ways in which the government was willing to use it. The price for this miscalculation was huge. With the nationalist movement destroyed, a silence descended for more than a decade.*³³

Luthuli's Stance on Violence: Con

How accurate are the above representations of Luthuli's affirmation of the use of violence? When one examines the primary source evidence of Luthuli's stance on violence the conclusion reached can only be that Luthuli was consistently and unqualifiedly against any move towards violence. The evidence that Luthuli objected to violence before, during, and after the decision to form *Umkhonto we Sizwe* is overwhelming, *ad nauseam*. Recorded in 2002, in a hospital in Sacramento, N.T. Naicker's is recorded remembering his associations with Luthuli. Sadly, the date of a meeting Naicker had with Luthuli is not provided, but the context tells us it was before August/September, 1961.

*He entertained us for a while and then he told us, 'why don't we get into the car and go away from here.' He drove around into the bamboos behind his residence. He said, 'since it was getting a little dark and late, there's no likelihood of the Security Branch (the Apartheid Political Police) getting in here – at least we would know before hand, if they do.' When we got there he had a flashlight that he turned on and we were able to converse. All he wanted to know was, whether we had any knowledge that there were any steps being taken to move one aspect of the movement into violence. I said as far as I was concerned we are non-violent and there is no way we will become violent and if the ANC (African National Congress) is with us it should be happy. Chief was happy with that it and it seems to cut some measure with his association with organizations that are non-violent. So he was non-violent to the utmost.*³⁴

A brief chronological expose through Luthuli's speeches and statements over the years will provide a plethora of evidence making clear Luthuli's consistent disapproval of violence as a means to attain liberation. We can trace his advocacy of non-violent methods quite early, in fact preceding his involvement as a political leader in 1951 when he began President of the Natal branch of the ANC. In 1948, Luthuli visited the United States on a lecture tour. Luthuli apparently was asked to speak in Washington, D.C. on the occasion of the hundred year anniversary of Howard College whereat the Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Society was reminding the public of the Indian saint's contribution to humanity. Luthuli's handwritten speech emphasizes Gandhi's non-violent methods. Luthuli would have been quite familiar with Gandhian methods, for on a previous ecumenical journey in 1938 he traveled to Madras, India. Luthuli says in 1948:

³³ Meredith, Martin. *The State of Africa*, (Jonathan Ball Publishers, Johannesburg, 2005), pp. 127-128.

³⁴ "Naicker Remembers Chief Luthuli," *South African Beacon*, Vol. 10, No. 2, Summer, 2003, p. 20.

I have no doubt that [Mahatma Gandhi's] efforts for his people inspired the African people such as Dr. J.L. Dube and others to concern themselves with seeking human rights for their people, the Africans, in South African, their native land. His distinctive and unique contribution was his unshakable belief in the dignity of man and the efficacy of non-violence as an instrument of struggle for oppressed people...May those inspired by his philosophy become his undaunted disciples.³⁵

Though a matter for further inquiry and study, it must be pointed out that Luthuli was tremendously influenced by Gandhi. Furthermore, the ANC's post-1961 method of interpreting Gandhi possibly demonstrates the exact same errors the ANC has adopted in its interpretation of Luthuli. For example, an article in *Sechaba*, it states incredibly,

It is unnecessary for our purposes to examine Gandhi's philosophy, which derived largely from his religious beliefs. The main field of Gandhi's activity was politics; it is here that the role of the Mahatma is to be sought.³⁶

In ignoring the theological foundation of any leader who is theologically grounded, historic commentators risk distorting and confusing the fundamental principles that allow one to know the character of a historical figure and the rationale behind his actions.

In December, 1952 Luthuli was elected as President General of the ANC, a position he held (though the organization was banned in 1960) until his death in 1967. The banning order imposed on him in November, 1952 was renewed in 1954 after he had campaigned against a scheme which deprived Africans their few remaining land rights. In that same year, Luthuli wrote in the Communist party journal, edited by Ruth First and Brian Bunting, *Fighting Talk*,

I however must enjoin our people in words, actions, and attitudes, to respect the policy of non-violence wisely adopted by our Congresses. Non-violent resistance will acquaint our people and the world with the facts of our situation.³⁷

In 1956 Luthuli was arrested, along with 145 other leaders of the ANC, on allegations of high treason. Released with sixty-six others in 1957, he continued his vibrant leadership of the ANC. However, in 1959 Luthuli was placed under house arrest in Groutville and banned from all further gatherings for five years. During his banning, Luthuli spoke out against riots that occurred in Durban, yet sarcastically remarked that he could little to quell them as his status as an agitator prevented him from placating. Luthuli is quoted by a newspaper saying,

We have shown our constructive concern in several ways. We have issued statements strongly advising people against violence. Violence is not only contrary to our policy, but most inimical to our liberation struggle.³⁸

³⁵ Signed original handwritten, by Luthuli, speech, "Mahatma Gandhi Memorial on the Occasion of the Centenary Celebrations of the Washington University, U.S.A." (sic), no date provided.

This handwritten speech was provided to me by Mr. Boyi Christian Luthuli, son of Chief Albert Luthuli. "Washington University" is most likely "Howard University" in Washington, D.C. as the text refers to "a century of meritorious service in the interest of Higher Education among the American Negroes..."

³⁶ "From Gandhi to Mandela," *Sechaba*, May 05, 1969, written in commemoration of the 75th Anniversary of the formation of the Natal Indian Congress by Mahatma Gandhi.

³⁷ "Let Us Speak of Freedom," *Fighting Talk*, October, 1954.

In a report circulated at the Natal People's Congress in Durban on January 17, 1959, Luthuli elaborated on the then-recent riots and he further explained the rationale for the liberation movement's 'pacifist' stance:

*Congress has adopted the policy of using extra-parliamentary methods of struggle, but strictly on the basis of non-violence. This policy has been adopted deliberately following a profound study and experience of the South African situation. We believe that as conditions as they are in this country it is possible for the people, by the use of overwhelming peaceful pressure, to win their demands for freedom. We are aware of the fact that people, as a result of desperation at the terrible conditions under which they live, and sometimes owing to deliberate provocative acts by the authorities may sometimes resort to violence. Our task is to educate our people as to the efficacy of Congress methods of struggle. We do not preach the use of non-violent methods for the benefit of our enemies but for the benefit of our own people and for the benefit of our multi-racial society. Under our conditions in South Africa violent struggle would probably leave a legacy of bitterness which would render it difficult to establish a firm and stable multi-racial democracy in the future.*³⁹

Luthuli's stance on violence previous to 1961 is not a debatable issue. Therefore, the need to document Luthuli's statements previous to the time in question is as redundant as it is tedious. The few above examples provided are included merely to provide context to the 1961 debate and to demonstrate a consistent position that Luthuli had against violent methods throughout his political leadership of the ANC. The above quotations also serve to point out just how impossible it would have been for the ANC to reverse its staunch non-violent position while being a banned organization. Since its inception in 1912, while a legal institution, the Congress advocated, as can be seen above, and taught non-violence with increasing degrees of militancy. Following the Sharpeville Massacre in 1960, the ANC was banned, its leadership unable to meet, and, more fundamentally, its grassroots unable to provide direction for and receive directions from the leadership. Joe Slovo mentions in his autobiography that the Communist party had been banned for some time and that time allowed the Communist party to reconstitute itself under ground. However, in comparison with the Congress, the Party was small and more centralized (urban and petty bourgeoisie) and thus better able to communicate a new ethos, new strategies and, perhaps more important, do it with minimal legal risk. The Congress, on the other hand, was much more unwieldy. For the Congress, while banned and illegal, to educate, seek consensus, and re-strategize on something as fundamental as non-violence was a next to impossible task. Hence, Luthuli and others pressed in the compromise agreed to that the armed movement not be associated with the ANC.

The linchpin upon which my study focuses is the later half of 1961 when the decision form *Umkhonto we Sizwe* was made, the Prize was announced, and much of Luthuli's advocacy of non-violent methods was published. The plethora of statements from Luthuli advocating 'strategic pacifism' began in October, 1961 after he was told by Mr. E.V. Mahomed that he had won the Nobel Peace Prize. Those who knew Luthuli intimately testify that after hearing that he won the Nobel Peace Prize, Luthuli

³⁸ "Luthuli Denies A.N.C. Part in Disturbances," *The Star*, August 25, 1959.

³⁹ "Luthuli's View of Riots," *Natal Mercury*, January 18, 1959.

sequestered himself in his home for several hours in deep thought, prayer, and meditation. It is during this time that he must have determined his strategy so that the struggle for liberation got maximum coverage, and thus sympathy, from the reception of the award. Consultation with other banned leaders of the Congress movements was impossible. It was a *kairos* moment wherein bold leadership was required. Luthuli had to speak, argue, and declare consistently and resolutely. Many suspect, both then and now, that the award was given to Luthuli to reinforce his and the liberation movement's non-violent stance, thus pushing them farther away from the violent precipice all knew was on the horizon. If the Nobel committee's decision was determinative rather than responsive, it was fantastically successful with the former, for Luthuli swung hard toward tactical pacifism. In terms of the latter, the Nobel Committee failed miserably, for Nelson Mandela did not reevaluate the changed context, acted autonomously, and possibly negated much of the practical benefit that the movement might have derived for the Nobel award. In response, to a query related to the rationale for the selection, Luthuli replied,

*I think I won it [Nobel Peace Prize] because I was leader of the African National Congress and generally of our liberation movement here. The A.N.C. and its allies had decided to carry out its struggle along non-violent lines. It was my happy task to help implement that decision, and I think, because I was leader of the movement, I became a symbol of the people and their peaceful actions.*⁴⁰

A ten minute documentary was prepared by Mr. Theo Greyling, the SABC political authority on Africa questioning Luthuli's credentials and worthiness to win the Prize. In response to the highly criticized SABC aired radio broadcast the Chief fired off an angry letter to the *Rand Daily Mail* saying, "All I can say is that I will continue to stand for the prosecution of our freedom struggle along peaceful lines."⁴¹ Luthuli with the August/September meeting in mind was well aware that many of the oppressed were becoming impatient and more militant. Countries throughout the African government, beginning with Ghana in 1957, were being added to the list of free and independent countries on a monthly basis. A spirit of "Independence Now!" was in the air. However, despite this revolutionary continental climate, Luthuli proved consistent with his primary strategic method of non-violence when he stated,

*To my fellow Africans I say, 'Let us continue to exercise patience and forbearance, even in a situation that provokes a spirit of enmity.'*⁴²

Luthuli spoke with many well-known and credible journalists in November and December of 1961. One journalist, Benjamin Pogrud, was Robert Sobukwe's friend and biographer. Let us examine the implications of the interview when compared with the ANC's supposition repeatedly published since 1967 until the present, that "When that [non-violent] policy was officially and constitutionally changed, [Luthuli] did not falter." What is unclear to this study is when the ANC policy was "officially and constitutionally changed." Does this refer to the August/September, 1961 agreement to not discipline

⁴⁰ "Added Burden Upon People of Liberation Movement," *Star*, October 24, 1961.

⁴¹ "Insult to Nobel Prize Committee – Luthuli," *Rand Daily Mail*, October 27, 1961.

⁴² "Luthuli: Not Much Time Left to Save S. Africa," *Sunday Times*, October, date unknown (about the 25th), 1961.

those who have been given sanction to form a new violent organization? Or does it refer to the Lobatsi Conference (see footnote 55) and referenced by Bunting (Kotane)? Given the fact that the ANC was illegal since 1960, how could the ANC officially and constitutionally change its policy? Nonetheless, in mid-November, 1961, Luthuli stressed to Pogrund:

*Africans dare not forsake the path of non-violence. To do so would lead to disaster both for themselves and for South Africa. It is true that we have not had great success in the past in the achievement of our aims by following non-violent methods. But this does not mean that the methods have failed us – only that we have failed the methods...It is my hope that the successful application by Africans of non-violent methods will exert sufficient pressure on White South Africa to cause Whites to say, "We can't go on like this. Let us sit down and discuss our mutual problems." It is the task of the Africans to organize and discipline themselves so as to make the fullest use of non-violent methods to bring this about.*⁴³

In the above *Rand Daily Mail* interview, Luthuli seems to summarize the debates held in the ANC Working Committee, ANC Executive, and Joint Congresses Executive meetings. Luthuli even quotes J.N. Singh's comment regarding the efficacy of non-violent tactics (SEC 27). Therefore, we have further evidence to substantiate Mandela's claim that Luthuli was in fact present at the August/September, 1961 Joint Congresses meeting. Pogrund goes on to explain that the methods Luthuli had in mind included stay-at-homes, demonstrations, and "non-collaboration" generally – all of which were accepted throughout the civilized world as democratic and peaceful ways of registering protest against Government policy. Pogrund continued to explain Luthuli's position that up to now, Africans had not made the fullest possible use of these methods – and it was therefore wrong for them to think that they had exhausted non-violence. Luthuli is quoted further:

*Even the highest form – the stay-at-home has not been employed to the fullest extent. No stay at home by Africans has yet been fully supported...I wish the Government would assist us in continuing along a non-violent path. It is not easy to guide our people when the Government and its leaders constantly talk and act in terms of force. Despite this, we shall continue to exert pressure through non-violent means. We will continue to be the legitimate kind of pressure used all over the world (sic).*⁴⁴

As one scans through the newspaper clippings, it appears as if at every attempt, Luthuli is declaring that the non-violent methods are not just a method, but The Method. Apparently, in a conversation on November 23, 1961 with J.J. Hurley, the ambassador of the Canada in Pretoria, Luthuli affirmed "that it would in his opinion be 'suicidal folly' to try to overthrow the government by force."⁴⁵

⁴³ "Non-Violence is Path to Freedom – Luthuli," *Rand Daily Mail*, November 14, 1961.

⁴⁴ Pogrund, Benjamin. *Rand Daily Mail*, November 14, 1961, page unknown. Article obtained from publications copies by the Liberal Party, found within the Ballinger Papers, A410, at the William Cullen Library at the University of Witwatersrand.

⁴⁵ Sampson, Anthony. *Mandela: An Authorized Biography*, (Jonathan Ball Publishers, Johannesburg, 1999), p. 159. See footnote 103 on page 599.

Many newspaper editors and political commentators debated the pros and cons of Luthuli's Nobel Peace Prize as one drama after another unfolded. What would the reaction of the South African government be? Would Luthuli be granted a passport? Would he be able to travel? Pro-Nationalist or not, universal opinion was that it would do the government far more harm than good to prohibit his travels and deny him a passport as a consequence of his political banning. For the government, the decision to allow Luthuli's attendance or not was a lose/lose proposition. If allowed to attend, Luthuli would effectively denounce the South African government's policy of *Apartheid*. If Luthuli was denied permission to travel, the government would have the rather ironic privilege of accepting it on his behalf. Luthuli was begrudgingly and ungraciously granted a passport under many loosely defined conditions, for example that he not make any political statements nor tarnish the image of South Africa. After an overnight delay at the Johannesburg airport due to mechanical problems, Luthuli arrived in Oslo to accept the award. On December 12, 1961 Luthuli, despite all the harassment and complications arising from the government's cantankerous response, delivered his Nobel address and continued to emphasize the movement's non-violent methods. Luthuli stated,

Through all this cruel treatment in the name of law and order, our people, with few exceptions, have remained non-violent. If today this (Nobel) peace award is given to South Africa through a Black man, it is not because we in South Africa have won our fight for peace and human brotherhood. Far from it. Perhaps we stand farther away from victory than any other people in Africa. But nothing we have suffered at the hands of the Government has turned us from our chosen path of disciplined resistance. It is for this, I believe, that this award is given.⁴⁶

In Norway, Luthuli 'walked the walk' and 'talked the talk' of a pacifist, though he had stated before that he is not one. Contrary to *Sechaba's* claim that once the ANC decided to opt for military methods, "Luthuli did not waver," Luthuli spoke the opposite. Luthuli is quoted as saying on the occasion of receiving the Nobel Peace Prize:

I firmly believe in non-violence. It is the only correct form which our work and our struggle can take in South Africa. Both from the moral and the practical point of view the situation of the country demands it. Violence disrupts human life and is destructive to perpetrator and victim alike...To refrain from violence is the sign of the civilized man..."⁴⁷

During the recognition, Luthuli was physically taxed to the limit. Committed to a heavy program and concerned about Luthuli's health, Oliver Tambo sought medical advice in Norway. Luthuli had flown from Durban to Johannesburg, Johannesburg to London, and then London to Copenhagen. His next stop was in Gothenburg and then finally to Oslo. In Norway, Luthuli emphasized to Norwegian reporters his principle of non-violence. On the evening of his first night in Oslo, Luthuli gave an interview to an international news agency.⁴⁸ In the course of that interview Luthuli again reiterated his refrain:

⁴⁶ "Way of Violence Still Rejected," Publication undetermined, December 12, 1961. Nobel Peace Prize speech.

⁴⁷ Legum, Colin and Margaret Legum. *The Bitter Choice: Eight South Africans' Resistance to Tyranny*, (World Publishing Co., New York, 1968), p. 62.

⁴⁸ "Luthuli Suffering from Strain," *Star*, December 08, 1961.

*We feel that to engage in any other method might bring bloodshed. To gain freedom without bloodshed is a much better way.*⁴⁹

It is hard to fathom that those in the High Command of *Umkhonto we Sizwe* were not paying attention to the audio and print news which at the time was saturated with articles and editorials on Luthuli. It was agreed in August/September that the armed movement would fall under the political guidance of the ANC. One would imagine, given the very limited means of communication and coordination, that every word uttered from Luthuli would be gleaned and parsed to discern its message. Luthuli was still very much the leader of the liberation movement as the President-General of the ANC. It is inconceivable that Mandela would not have known about the blunt statement reported by the domestic paper *Rand Daily Mail* Luthuli was reported to have made regarding the way forward. In it Luthuli issues a stern directive: to responsibly desist from implementing the decision taken in August/September, 1961.

*Even for purely practical reasons non-violence is the only course we can follow. Direct attack by an unarmed public against the fully armed forces of the Government would mean suicide. There are no responsible persons among us in the African National Congress who advocate violence as a means of furthering our cause.*⁵⁰

What Really Disconcerted Luthuli

If Luthuli did participate in the decision to form *Umkhonto we Sizwe*, and we have in this investigation concluded that he had participated, we must ask, “Why did he agree to the formation of a new organization that focused on violence?” The answer is that Luthuli was out-voted and acquiesced. However, to further distance himself and the ANC, Luthuli proposed a compromise allowing for a separate organization to be formed that did not ‘dirty’ his and/or the ANC’s hands. Second, if Luthuli agreed in the NEC and Joint Congresses meetings to allow for armed violence, why did he then so vociferously speak-out against it? The answer is as obvious as it is simple. In Chief Albert Luthuli’s mind, the ANC with its Congress partners agreed in the August/September, 1961 to allow for an armed struggle. However, in October, 1961 Luthuli was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. It is not simply modesty that caused Luthuli to emphasize over and over again that the award was not an award for him personally but an award for the ANC which he led and for the liberation struggle in general. Luthuli emphasized in all his press interviews the award was given in recognition of the non-violent struggle. Therefore, all of the sudden, with the announcement of this award, Nelson Mandela’s claim during his speech in Addis Ababa to the Pan African Freedom Conference that “all opportunities for peaceful agitation and struggle have been closed to us” was no longer true or valid. The international community had just given the non-violent movement a whirlwind of publicity, sympathy, and success. The tactics that enabled Gandhi to conquer the British Empire by appealing to consciences and to

⁴⁹ BBC’s current affairs program, *Panorama*. Cited in newspaper article entitled, “Help from the World Welcomed,” newspaper and date unknown, about December 12, 1961.

⁵⁰ “100 Brave Cold to Greet Luthuli,” *Rand Daily Mail*, December 12, 1961.

universal standards of human rights and with the international community's ability to "shame" an oppressor to reform were beginning to come to fruition. Surely, Luthuli must have thought, the decision that we took as the NEC and the joint Congresses ought to be re-visited, re-examined, and quite possibly reversed and/or postponed until the full benefits of the awarding of the Prize are learned and utilized. In other words, the decision to allow *Umkhonto we Sizwe* to form was based on an enthusiastic, by Mandela, and a reluctant, by Luthuli, realization that non-violent tactics had reached a *cul-de-sac*. However, in Luthuli's mind, the Prize unveiled a new hope, new opportunities, and an extension to the road. Surely, the other members of the ANC, despite their inability to meet and re-assess tactics for the dramatically changed situation, would come to the same conclusion and at a bare minimum, place plans for violent action on the 'back-burner.' In his many press statements, Luthuli's emphasis on non-violent tactics, his warnings of the suicidal nature of violent resistance, and his steadfast avowal that the ANC remained non-violent was not a treacherous betrayal of a decision collectively made in September/August to allow for the formation of *Umkhonto we Sizwe*. Nor was it an indication of Luthuli's ill health, senility, a stroke, or poor memory. Luthuli's numerous November and December press statements and speeches highlight the fact that Luthuli as the leader of the largest liberation movement on the continent, had, as a prerogative of leadership, decided to place the past decision made in September/August on hold in light of the October announcement and December reception of the Nobel Prize so as to tactically maximize this non-violent form of opposition and hence gain the sympathy of the world. Luthuli, realizing he could not call a working committee meeting, an NEC meeting, or a Joint Congresses meeting due to the logistical difficulties and legal recklessness of such a gathering due to bannings, was unable to re-visit the issue in a democratic fashion. Instead, as leader of the ANC he utilized the press to greatest degree possible to announce the repeal, suspension, and/or postponement of the August/December decision to allow a violent movement to form. If Luthuli was not questioning the decision to form a new organization, then he was surely saying unequivocally, "Do not do anything stupid *now!*"

Mandela testifies in his autobiography that Luthuli was forgetful and he failed to remember three all night meetings which he chaired just months before. However, again, we must revisit the quotation by Ahmed Kathrada mentioned earlier: "...it should be borne in mind that even people involved in the same event remember the details differently, and amnesia is no friend of accuracy." I argue that, "Yes, Luthuli was angry with Mandela." However, that anger was not as Mandela understands: a result of Luthuli being upset that he was not informed of *Umkhonto we Sizwe*. For, Luthuli was present (chaired) and more importantly remembered being present. Luthuli was instead angry for other reasons that can be realized in light of this study.

As indicated earlier in this investigation, in May, 1961, following the failed strike, its leader, Mandela, held a press conference with western journalists. In that interview Mandela stated that "In my mind we are closing a chapter on this question of a nonviolent policy." Mandela recalls that he was reprimanded by the NEC for making such a statement public without first consulting with the movement. Luthuli felt that Mandela had done the same in the manifesto announcing *Umkhonto we Sizwe* on December 16, 1961. Although there is in the manifesto reference to violence being used as a "complement to previous actions" and although it states that "repression and violence

will no longer be met with non-violent resistance only,” the overall tone of the manifesto declares, “We are striking out on a new road for the liberation of the people of this country.” Statements like “closing a chapter” and “striking out along a new road” imply that nonviolent methods have been abandoned which, according to the compromise agreed to at the NEC and Joint Congress movements, was not the case. In fact, the decision to launch a separate movement was to initiate a parallel strategy at best, and more realistically, it was to be a tangent to the continuance of the primary political resistance. “The time comes in the life of any nation when there remain only two choices: submit or fight.” Mandela here made a political statement that equated Luthuli’s militant non-violent methods with ‘submittal’ and violence with ‘fighting’ and declares boldly, “We shall not submit...”⁵¹ Benson and the manifesto point to the central problem which is *not* about Luthuli being marginalized from the decision to form *Umkhonto we Sizwe*, but rather the unilateral political statements that accompanied the premature actualization of the new organization’s methods. Benson astutely writes, “Luthuli raised the question that had long troubled him: Umkhonto’s announcement in December, 1961 that the policy of non-violence had ended. Aware of Mandela’s role, Luthuli criticized the failure to consult with himself and the ANC ‘grassroots.’ [Luthuli] felt compromised.”⁵² The manifesto stated the “Umkhonto we Sizwe fully supports the national liberation movement and our members, jointly and individually, place themselves under the overall political guidance of that movement.”⁵³ Tambo states (see comment 32) that though the new organization would be separate from the ANC, “it would nevertheless be linked to it and come under its formal control.” Yengwa states the same. While it is true that due to the political climate the precise relationship between the ANC and the armed movement was nebulous and often characterized oxymoronically, Luthuli did feel that the December 16 implementation of the new methods and the rationale for justifying it was intrinsically political. As Luthuli was not consulted about the timing of the December bombings the spirit, if not ‘letter,’ of the compromise was violated in light of the Nobel Peace Prize. Sisulu relates, “At a meeting to review the launch of MK, Chief Luthuli was clearly embarrassed about the timing and unhappy about the apparent recklessness that led to the casualties.”⁵⁴ Second, the entire manifesto essentially indicts and rebukes the ‘former’ nonviolent strategies, not only viewing them as obsolete, but as fueling continuing oppression. Mandela states, “The government has interpreted the peacefulness of the movement as weakness; the people’s non-violent policies as a green light for government violence.”⁵⁵ It was Mandela with the distribution of the manifesto leaflets, not Luthuli who had ‘forgotten,’ who had failed to honor the agreements reached at the September/August meetings. Mandela was willing to place the ‘cart before the horse,’ or was willing to be the ‘tail that wags the dog.’ Mandela successfully did this before during in the interview with foreign journalists following the May, 1961 strike. Mandela himself states in his autobiography, “...sometimes one must go public with an idea to push a reluctant organization in the

⁵¹ “Umkhonto we Sizwe Manifesto, 1961,” *Nelson Mandela: The Struggle is My Life: His Speeches & Writings 1944-1990*. (Mayibuye Books, Bellville, 1994), p. 122.

⁵² Benson, Mary. p. 98.

⁵³ Umkhonto we Sizwe Manifesto, 1961, p. 122.

⁵⁴ Sisulu, Elinor. p. 147.

⁵⁵ *ibid*, p. 123.

direction you want it to go.” This Mandela did, not just in word, but also deed. Luthuli was helpless to stop it. Third and finally, the meetings agreed to the *formation* of an organization that would utilize violence as a means toward liberation. However, the decision was not for the newly formed organization to embark upon violence (“effective immediately”). The decision to ‘form’ was not necessarily a decision to ‘implement.’ Mandela not only was reckless in his failure to understand the tactical implications of the Nobel Prize, but even without the Prize, he acted premature in the actual implementation of the tactics which only the formation of the separate entity to carry out acts of violence was authorized. The difference between the decision to agree to form an entity and the unilateral action by that entity is not an insignificant nuance, but rather a significant breach of covenant. This breach is what angered Luthuli. At the NEC and Joint Congresses meetings, it was explicitly stated that though the armed movement was to separate from the ANC, it was also to be subject to the mature, wise, and prudent leadership of the ANC. The armed movement was to be separate, but under the political authority of the ANC – and its leader, Chief Albert Luthuli. In Luthuli’s mind, the bombings on December 16, 1961 not only violated this agreement, but it violated it in the most harmful and tactically unwise manner possible – on the heels of the Nobel Peace Prize. Reckless. Irresponsible. Hot-headed. And insubordinate. These were Mandela’s actions in Luthuli’s estimation. But, he kept silent. There was nothing he could do. The damage was done. He had to silently support the movement.

A “Strategic Pacifist”

The African National Congress never abandoned its method of a militant, nonviolent struggle, and of creating in the process a spirit of militancy in the people. However, in the face of the uncompromising White refusal to abandon a policy which denies the African and other oppressed South Africans their rightful heritage – freedom – no one can blame brave just men for seeking justice by the use of violent methods; nor could they be blamed if they tried to create an organized force in order to ultimately establish peace and racial harmony...They represent the highest in morality and ethics in the South African political struggle; this morality and ethics has been sentenced to an imprisonment it may never survive.⁵⁶

The above quote is perhaps the second most often quoted by the apologists for violence that retrospectively argues that Luthuli supported the initiation of violence. Unfortunately, for those who ascribe to this point of view, a close reading of the tortuously crafted quote reveals quite the opposite. First, in the above text Luthuli takes pains to highlight that as late as 1964 the ANC upholds non-violent methods.⁵⁷ This is

⁵⁶ Aquino de Braganca and Immanuel Wallerstein, eds. *The African Liberation Reader, Volume 2: The National Liberation Movements*, (Zed Press, London, 1982), p. 40.

Statement issued by Chief Albert Luthuli on June 12, 1964, when Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, and six other leaders were sentenced to life imprisonment in the “Rivonia Trial.” It was read at the meeting of the United Nations Security Council on the same day by the representative of Morocco. The statement was taken from the text entitled, *United Nations and Apartheid, 1948-1994*, pp. 282-283.

⁵⁷ The opening statement that the “ANC never abandoned its method of militant, non-violent struggle...” is problematic. In his draft biography, M.B. Yengwa comments upon the Lobatsi Conference, held in secret just over the now Botswana border in October, 1962. Yengwa records, “Surprisingly the subject of

significant. First, why highlight the ANC's adherence to non-violent methods in a statement related to those who were imprisoned for life for implementing violent methods if the point was not to gingerly make a distinction between the writer who represents the ANC and those convicted? The point of the statement is, "As Luthuli is the leader of the ANC, therefore Luthuli continues to uphold non-violent methods." Second, it is a reality that Luthuli, for years, repeatedly warned that "time is running-out," that "people are desperate and impatient." Luthuli most likely agreed, as Asmal rightly stated, that violence was inevitable given the intractable position of the Nationalists. We have also learned that Luthuli, with others like Z.K. Matthews who were of the same ilk as Luthuli, acceded to those justifying a resort to violence because they had very persuasive, if not convincing evidence, based on historical precedent, to validate their claims. Hence, Luthuli states, "...who can blame brave men...?" However, it is clear that Luthuli is not one of these "brave men" who have resorted to violence in order to seek justice. Luthuli had always characterized an initiation of violence as "reckless." Bravery is not necessarily intelligent, discerning, wise, or pragmatic. Third, and perhaps most difficult to explain away, is Luthuli's declaration that Mandela and others possess "...the highest in morals and ethics within the liberation struggle." By lauding the ethics and morals of Mandela and others, he confesses that he is not a pacifist. So, why could Luthuli not advocate and support armed violence, despite being the leader of a liberation movement that effectively agreed to initiate violence? The reasons are as simple as they are complex. Luthuli's strong "Christian leanings" (his ecclesiastical upbringing and his theological foundation) and the mutually suicidal context for the oppressed people and their liberation movement should violence be initiated prevented him from supporting the initiation of violence by *Umkhonto we Sizwe*.

Historians (and theologians) ought to always be wary of proof-texting. One is inevitably able to pull from the cornucopia of speeches, declarations, statements, and articles a quotation that proves one's point, even if the speaker of the quote actually made exact opposite point. This occurs frequently when a speaker, in the spur of the moment, utilizes hyperbole to emphasize a point. Often the hyperbole is quoted and taken literally while the central point is missed. Earlier in this study we touched on the Mahatma Gandhi and Luthuli's admiration of him for his strict non-violent methods. However, a desperate display of acrobatic interpretation, the ANC mouthpiece *Sechaba* argued on 75th anniversary of the formation of the Natal Indian Congress that Gandhi was not a pacifist, if the definition of pacifist is 'one who abhors violence under any

sabotage was not very controversial and the conference unanimously agreed to embark on the armed struggle." Later, Yengwa states, "In [the] 1963 trials the Lobatsi [C]onference was used as evidence of the ANC's support for the armed struggle" (p. 108). Is Luthuli's statement a continuation, long overdone, of Slovo's characterization of the distinction between the ANC and *Umkhonto we Sizwe* as "a necessary fiction"? Or was Luthuli correct, Bunting Kotane state, "The Lobatsi conference took no specific decisions about the use of violence, and the actions of Umkhonto we Sizwe were not discussed. One reason for this was the presence at the conference of a representative of the Bechuanaland police...However, the delegates were briefed in private by Kotane and others at talks held outside the conference hall, and the conference resolutions made it plain that the delegates were all very aware that violence was an inescapable reality of the political scene, and they accepted it," p. 273. Slovo states that "The public posture of MK as an independent body was formally maintained until the end of 1962 when in a London speech Robert Resha referred to it as the military wind of the ANC," p. 151.

circumstances.⁵⁸ To provide evidence that Gandhi was not a pacifist, *Sechaba* quotes him.

*Where the choice is set between cowardice and violence I would advise violence. I praise and extol the serene courage of dying without killing. Yet, I desire that those who have not this courage should rather cultivate the art of killing and being killed, than to basely avoid danger. This is because he who runs away commits mental violence; he has not the courage of facing death by killing. I would a thousand times prefer violence than the emasculation of a whole race. I prefer to use arms in defense of honor rather than remain the vile witness of dishonor (bold my emphasis).*⁵⁹

Above, from a 1936 “Declaration on the Question of the Use of Violence in Defense of Rights,” *Sechaba* understands that the true ‘prophet of non-violence’ (Gandhi, whose non-violent credentials are on par with Jesus of Nazareth and the Dali Lama) himself “concedes that violence was preferable to cowardice and dishonor.” However, in searching for an ethical loophole to justify their own violent methods, the ANC through *Sechaba* mistakes hyperbole for reality, interprets it literally, and thus misses Gandhi’s fundamental point that is precisely opposite to their own. It is true that Gandhi states, “Where the choice is set between cowardice and violence I would advice violence.” However, with this statement Gandhi is proposing a self-imposed ultimatum whereby one is forced to choose between two, and only, two choices. Gandhi, in this hypothetical world, chooses violence because cowardice and dishonor would “emasculate a whole race” by committing “mental violence.” Luthuli says the same in Oslo, Norway when he reasons that as a Christian he cannot “look-on” while “systematic attempts are made” to “debase the God-factor in man or 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.”⁶⁰ In other words, violence is preferable to being a coward, to doing nothing in the face of oppression, and to therefore participate in one’s own dishonor because one is negating one’s own God-given potential. Immediately thereafter Gandhi maintains, and this is the central point missed by the author of this article in *Sechaba* justifying the use of violence, “I praise and extol the serene courage of dying without killing.” In other words, Gandhi states that those who die in the struggle *without killing* are the ones who are truly and perfectly courageous! Gandhi sees a third option and is therefore not locked-in his hypothetical bilateral world of those who are cowards and those who are violent. In fact, Gandhi implies that those who resort to killing are the cowards when he says, “Yet I desire that those who have not this courage [to die without killing] should rather cultivate the art of killing and being killed.” The ‘praised’ and ‘extolled’ option is to struggle and to die in courage without killing. By misinterpreting Gandhi’s hyperbole, the author in *Sechaba* concludes that the armed struggle in South Africa does not contradict Gandhi, for Gandhi states he prefers violence to cowardice. However, in reality, Gandhi states the opposite.

⁵⁸ Aquino de Braganca and Immanuel Wallerstein, p. 43-47.

Author unknown, *Sechaba (ANC)*, III, May 05, 1969, written in commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the formation of the Natal Indian Congress by Mahatma Gandhi.

⁵⁹ Mahatma Gandhi. “Declaration on Question of the Use of Violence in Defense of Rights,” *Guardian*, December 16, 1938.

⁶⁰ Luthuli, Albert. “Africa and Freedom,” lecture delivered in Oslo, Norway on December 11, 1961 on receiving the Nobel Prize.

In the contemporary historical analysis of Luthuli, are not elite political icons mistaking Luthuli's seemingly positive references to the use of violence ("If someone takes my chickens...!") and interpreting it in the same manner *Sechaba* did Gandhi? We have easily mined Luthuli's speeches for hundreds of quotations advocating 'strategic pacifism' that are strikingly similar to Gandhi's and we also find commentaries similar to *Sechaba's* that argue Luthuli found loopholes to this 'strategic pacifism' and hence it is reasoned that Luthuli advocated the opposite of that for which he stood. Luthuli's use of hyperbole and even the reference to cowardice (again, strikingly relevant to *Sechaba's* interpretation of Gandhi's philosophy intended to prove its compatibility with *Umkhonto we Sizwe's* tactics) can be observed. In 1953, *Drum* magazine printed a quote that would make an Africanist, now or then, quiver with discomfort. Luthuli, in a defense of Indian leaders who agreed to let Africans take the lead in the 1952 Defiance Campaign, snaps,

*Since we welcome the sympathy and support of all races in the rest of the world, it would be absurd and contradictory to reject Indians in our own country. I myself would rather see the African people destroyed than see them turn against the Indians.*⁶¹

Above, we see Luthuli, like Gandhi, conjure-up a bi-lateral hypothetical situation so as to emphasize his primary point. For Luthuli, marginalizing the Indians within the context of the struggle would be unthinkable. The central point is not, "Luthuli would rather see the African people destroyed."

We can also see a similarity of Luthuli's thought with Gandhi's related to the issues of cowardice and tactical pacifism. Luthuli, like Gandhi speaks of two types of cowards: one, apathetic and indifferent (loathed by both Gandhi and Luthuli) and two, those who have not enough courage to die struggling non-violently. The former Luthuli conveyed in a speech in a 1958 speech in Johannesburg when he said:

*There is in the Bible a verse which says that all those who are cowards, all those who grow apathetic because of the difficulties before them and run away from the struggle – that they shall not be able to reach that glorious place. It also says that the cowards will be together with all the evildoers.*⁶²

The latter appeared in the *Star*, upon his arrival in Oslo, Norway. Luthuli spoke to one of the many reporters and said the Blacks' struggle in South Africa is...

*...militant, but along non-violent lines – we don't need cowards in the movement, people with shaky knees.*⁶³

A legitimate focus of inquiry leads any researcher to question whether Luthuli was a pacifist. Contemporary political commentators will immediately howl that this is a non-issue as Luthuli himself stated many times that he was not a pacifist. However,

⁶¹ *Drum*, May, 1953.

Pillay, Gerald J. *Voices of Liberation, Volume I, Albert Lutuli*, (HSRC Publishers, Pretoria, 1993), p. 14.

⁶² Luthuli, Albert. "Our Vision is a Democratic Society," speech delivered in 1958 to a meeting organized by the South African Congress of Democrats in Johannesburg.

Pillay, Gerald J. p. 129.

⁶³ "200 Welcome Luthuli," *Star*, December 07, 1961.

reviewing the study above and the conclusions reached, the question must be asked, “Was Luthuli a pacifist?” It is true that Luthuli himself declared on various occasions that he was not a pacifist. In an interview following the announcement of his being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, Luthuli stated,

*I must say that I would not pigeon-hole myself as a pacifist. I would not hesitate to give a hand if my country went to war. But on practical consideration it would be suicidal in the circles today to abandon our policy of non-violence.*⁶⁴

The most prominent denial of being a pacifist occurred during Luthuli’s testimony at the Treason Trial. In response to the lordship’s direct question, ‘Are you a pacifist?’ Luthuli responded equally directly, ‘No, I’m not.’ The debate continued, ‘Then perhaps you might explain the position, the difference between the non-violence campaign and your not being a pacifist?’ Luthuli retorted, ‘My lords, I merely talk as one feels – I’m not conversant with [the] theory of pacifism, but I am not a pacifist.’⁶⁵

Also in court during the Treason Trial Luthuli answered questions related to the ANC’s then policy of “tactical pacifism.”

Court: As far as you personally are concerned, would you be party to violent struggle to achieve your aims?

Luthuli: In the circumstances that obtain in the country – I must say this first – I may have indicated that there may be differences of point of view among different members, but as far as the [C]ongress is concerned, in the circumstances that obtain definitely we are for non-violence (sic). When it comes to a personal level, as to whether at any time one would, I would say that if conditions are as they are, I would never be a party to the use of violence because I think it would be almost national suicide, in the circumstances as they are.

Court: And quite apart from that point of view, what would you say with regard to your own beliefs?

Luthuli: My own beliefs as I have already said are to a certain extent motivated by Christian leanings. Because of my Christian leanings I would hesitate to be a party to violence, my lords. But, of course, I must say in that connection that I am not suggesting that the Christian religion says this and that I am not a theologian, but my own leanings would be in that direction.

Court: Have you at any level of the [ANC] heard a suggestion that the policy [of non-violence] should be changed?

*Luthuli: My lords, I’ve never heard any such suggestion, nor a whisper to that effect.*⁶⁶

Court: As far as you personally are concerned, what would be your attitude if such a suggestion were made?

⁶⁴ “Luthuli Proud – But with a New Burden,” *The Cape Argus*, October 24, 1961.

⁶⁵ Pillay, *Voices of Liberation*, Vol. I, p. 157.

⁶⁶ Luthuli may be contradicting himself here as earlier he stated, ‘...there may be differences of point of view [regarding violent struggle] among different members...’ (see above).

Luthuli: I would oppose it.

Court: Why?

Luthuli: Well, I would oppose it on two grounds really: firstly, from a personal angle, but also because it's not – or it would not be – in the interest of the liberation movement, it would not be a practical thing...

Court: ...Why is it that from time to time, if that is the accepted policy, one finds at meetings reference to your non-violent policy; why should it be necessary to do that?

Luthuli: Well, it is very necessary that we should do so, firstly because in so far as we are concerned we are embarking on something which people may not be fully acquainted with, so that our task is to educate our own members and the African people. Then, of course, the other reason is that we so believe in it that we feel that we should take no chance of anybody not knowing and being tempted to deviate...⁶⁷

This and many other statements to this effect, including court testimony of the Treason Trial, upholds the ANC's view that Luthuli was not a pacifist and contradicts a claim from the *The Star* in 1972 that he was.⁶⁸ However, the question of whether Luthuli was a pacifist is an interesting one. I conclude that Luthuli was a pacifist, though he claims he was not. However, in his declarations of not being a pacifist he qualifies the statement by indicating that he is “not conversant with [the] theory of pacifism” and that he is “not a theologian.” Is Luthuli being evasive in his rationale for his beliefs or is he being genuine by intimating his lack of academic or ethical inquiry into ‘pacifism’ as it relates to a field of study or school of thought and non-violence as it relates to the Christian Scriptures and Christian ethics. It is highly unlikely that Luthuli would have neglected to investigate the matter given his ecclesiastical upbringing in mission churches and schools, his trip to Madras, India in 1938, his tour of the United States in 1948, his cooperative efforts with Martin Luther King, Jr., and the central role Luthuli and the ANC made non-violence in the struggle for liberation. Despite his numerous statements that he was not a pacifist, his rationale for advocating non-violence presumes he is. Furthermore, his rationale for non-violence demonstrates a keen awareness of the moral, ethical, existential, and spiritual tenets at stake. For example, Luthuli states that the main reason, in addition to tactical, for the adherence to non-violent methods is because, “our better natures and our conscience demand this of us.”⁶⁹ Many other commentators on Luthuli, such as Greybill (1995)⁷⁰, Gerhart (1978),⁷¹ Callan (1962), Legum and Legum

⁶⁷ Pillay, *Voices of Liberation*, Vol. I, p. 152.

Excerpts from Chief Albert Luthuli's evidence at the Treason Trial (August, 1958 - March, 1961) dealing with his understanding of a non-violent liberation struggle. Indeed, that which Luthuli feared in his Treason Trial testimony would happen (that leaders would be tempted to deviate) did happen shortly thereafter.

⁶⁸ “Albert Luthuli – Martyr or Tool of Communism?” *The Star Johannesburg*, July 22, 1972.

⁶⁹ Benson, Mary. *Chief Albert Luthuli in South Africa*, (Oxford University Press, London, 1963), p. 64.

⁷⁰ “The primary reason he eschewed violence was that it could not be morally justified given the sacredness of the human person made in God's image.”

(1968)⁷², and all written before Mandela's autobiography (or in the case of Greybill without the use of Mandela as she nowhere cites him), are quite assured that Luthuli harbored no sentiments in favor of agreeing to any violent methods. Many of Luthuli's comments regarding violence reject it categorically on moral, religious, philosophical, and strategic grounds. For example, Luthuli writes in his 1962 bibliography:

*As long as our patience can be made to hold out, we shall not jeopardize the South Africa of tomorrow by precipitating violence today... We do not struggle with guns and violence, and the supremacists array of weapons is powerless against the spirit....*⁷³

Though Luthuli provides 'existential' rationale for his non-violent stance most of Luthuli's justifications for non-violence are strategic. Hence, I have before, and will continue to argue that Luthuli was a "tactical" or "strategic pacifist." Luthuli conveys this title best when he stated, late, as it concerns our study, in 1962:

*Is it any wonder that among the people of our country suffering from intense oppression – deprivation of home and family, of livelihood and of hope, there are some who, goaded beyond human endurance to the point of desperation, see no way out but to engage in desperate forms of reckless violence?*⁷⁴

It is true, as one commentator mentions in the same publication, that "Luthuli does not condemn those in South Africa who have been goaded into 'desperate forms of reckless violence,' though the words he uses suggest that he sees no future in such action."⁷⁵

Conclusion

Our initial investigation was historiographic in nature. It is observed that Nelson Mandela is The Source for the majority of post-1995 biographies and autobiographies that testify to the formation of *Umkhonto we Sizwe* and Luthuli's role in it. Because most pre-1995 commentators (Karis and Carter, Benson, Bunting, Slovo) understood Luthuli to be uninvolved and unaware of the decision to form a new organization that would utilize violence, Mandela's testimony in *A Long Walk to Freedom* and all subsequent

"The better reading is that he did not lead the ANC into its new position and would not had he been in apposition to do so," p. 64.

Greybill, Lyn S. *Religion and Resistance Politics in South Africa*, (Praeger Publishers, Westport, CT, 1995), p. 5.

⁷¹ ...an aggressively anti-white stance could perhaps be ruled out on grounds of practicality alone, but more important to the genuine Christian – and there were many in the ANC – no African organization could ever be regarded as *morally* justified if its appeal for support was based on the policy of an eye for an eye," p. 99. (Italicized emphasis by Gerhart.)

Gerhart, Gail. *Black Power in South Africa: The Evolution of an Ideology*, (University of California Press, Berkeley, 1978).

⁷² Legum, Colin and Margaret Legum. *The Bitter Choice: Eight South Africans' Resistance to Tyranny*, (World Publishing Co., New York, 1968), p. 62.

⁷³ "A Different Perspective; Albert Luthuli's Autobiography," *Cape Times*, February 22, 1962.

Quotations taken from Luthuli's book, *Let My People Go*.

⁷⁴ "No Arms for South Africa: An Appeal from Albert Luthuli," *Peace News*, supplement, May 24, 1962, p. i.

⁷⁵ *ibid*, p. ii.

regurgitations of his record were thus suspect. After a review of primary sources (Yengwa, A. Luthuli) we understand Mandela to be accurate as it regards Luthuli's presence and involvement in the decision to form *Umkhonto we Sizwe* but inaccurate in his recollection of precisely why Luthuli was upset at Mandela during their "disconcerting conversation" following the December, 1961 bombings. I hypothesize that Luthuli did agree and was mentally alert enough to remember the NEC and Joint Congresses meetings and his involvement in them. However, the October announcement that the Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to Luthuli and the non-violent struggle for liberation rapidly and dramatically extended the road previously thought in September/August to have been a *cul-de-sac*. Luthuli re-assessed the now efficacious non-violent tactics in light of the publicity and international sympathy and, as the President-General, re-doubled his advocacy of an exclusively non-violent struggle. Luthuli from October to December repeatedly emphasized to the High Command, through the press, a desperate need to cancel, revisit, and/or postpone any implementation of plans by the newly formed organization. In Luthuli's mind, the High Command ignored his leadership and with the December 16 bombings acted recklessly, at best, and insubordinately, at worst. In Luthuli's mind, the December bombings (and more specifically their timing) superseded the High Command's mandate to only form an organization (not actualize it), rendered mute the mandate to remain under the political supervision of the ANC, and demonstrated gross strategic immaturity. Finally, it was concluded that despite Luthuli's repeated denial that he was a pacifist, all his words save two and all his actions save none determine for a historian that he was. Several hundred pre and post 1961 quotations reveal that Luthuli's stance on violence can be characterized as 'pacifist.' Only two enigmatic and highly out-of character statements can be found stating otherwise: one, when Luthuli states that Mandela and others "represent the highest in morality and ethics in the South African political struggle," and, two, when Luthuli stated, "I would not hesitate to give a hand if my country went to war." Why he otherwise denied the term pacifist and consistently embraced the philosophy of pacifism in word and deed is a matter for further inquiry.

Sisulu (Sisulu, E.): "Finally, they reached a resolution, and, in a historic decision that was to alter all their lives dramatically, Mandela was given the mandate to form a new military organization that would not be under the direct control of the ANC, which was to maintain its policy of nonviolence" (p. 146). *Mandela cited*.

SADEC: "Eventually, after much heated discussion, Mandela and his group were given a qualified mandate to set up a military wing to engage in tightly controlled violence and avoid injury towards persons at all costs, and to keep it strictly separate and distinct from the ANC" (p. 89). *Mandela cited*. Although from exactly where is unclear.

Mandela (Meredith, M.): "But while Mandela was persuaded about the need for an armed struggle, other ANC leaders were vehemently opposed to it. At a secret meeting in June, 1961, the arguments raged back and forth. By the end of it a compromise was reached. It was agreed that the ANC would remain committed to non-violence, but that it would not stand in the way of members who wanted to establish a separate and independent organization" (p. 124). *Mandela cited* in *The State of Africa*, chapter notes, p. 693.

Kotane (Bunting, B.): "Mandela said that he and others who felt this way decided to consult leaders of various organizations, including the ANC. 'I will not say whom we spoke to, or what they said.' But he gave the view of the ANC, which was that as a mass organization with a political function whose members had joined on the express policy of non-violence it could not and would not undertake violence, which would result in members ceasing to carry out the essential political tasks of political propaganda and agitation. On the other hand, the ANC 'would no longer disapprove of properly controlled violence. Hence members who undertook such activity would not be subject to disciplinary action by the ANC'" (p. 266). *Mandela cited*, but, of course, not from *A Long Walk to Freedom*. Presumably it was referenced from Mandela's famous speech in the Rivonia Trial of 1964.

SADET: "Later though, his memory failing, Luthuli complained to Mandela that he had never been consulted about the formation of MK" (p. 90). *Mandela cited*.

Mandela (Sampson): "Luthuli would later complain that he had not been properly consulted..." (p. 151). It is unclear who is cited. Sampson's footnote references the *Rand Daily Mail*, on May 29, 1961. This is odd, since the date *precedes* the decision was taken.

Benson (Mandela): "Then Luthuli raised the question which had long troubled him: Umkhonto's announcement in December, 1961 that the policy of non-violence had ended. Aware of Mandela's role, Luthuli criticized the failure to consult himself and the ANC 'grassroots.' He felt they had been compromised. Although apologetic, Mandela said he thought that, tactically, the action had been correct. Besides, they had wanted to protect Luthuli and the ANC from involvement in the drastic change in policy" (p. 98). *Uncited*.

Slovo (Slovo): "...Chief Albert Luthuli...was not a party to the decision, nor was he ever to endorse it" (p. 147).