

Isitwalandwe-Seaparankoe Bishop Trevor Huddleston KCMG

At the age of thirty, Father Trevor Huddleston CR was sent to Sophiatown from England to continue the education and pastoral work of his religious community, the Community of the Resurrection. He had grown up in a comfortable family, linked to the Anglican church. He attended Oxford University from 1927-31 and spent the few years following at Wells Theological College.

Across South Africa the CR had founded churches and schools and Fr Trevor served in Orlando, Soweto and around the western areas, with a base in Sophiatown. By the time Fr Trevor arrived in 1943 he found a vibrant community which instantly took him to its heart, where he lived for twelve years, working to overcome the conditions of poverty in which his congregations lived and providing education – most notably at St Peter’s School and St Cyprian’s in Sophiatown. Following the 1948 election he became more active working against apartheid policies coming into regular conflict with the authorities, for instance closing down St Peter’s School, rather than handing it over for government control under the Bantu Education Act. As a result, Huddleston gained a reputation as a respected priest and an anti-apartheid activist. This earned him the nickname ‘Makhalipile’ or dauntless one. During this time he developed a close friendship with Oliver Tambo, who taught at St Peter’s.

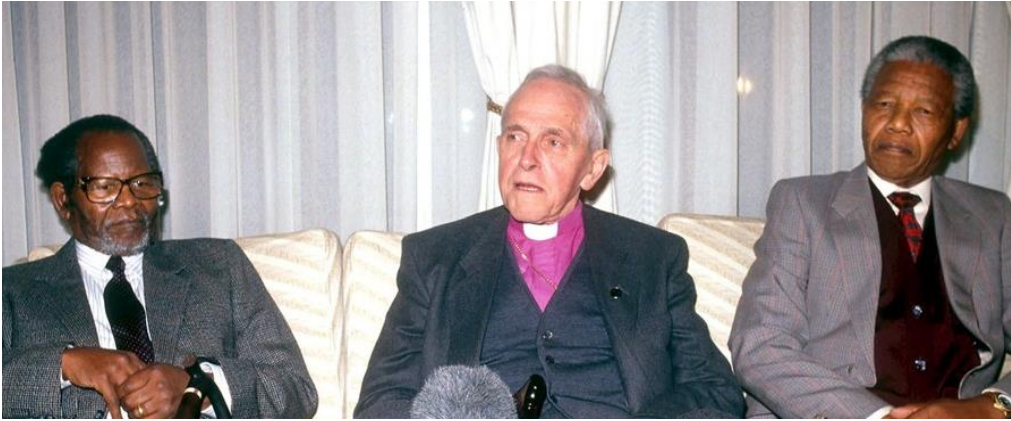
In 1955, along with Chief Albert Luthuli and Dr Yusuf Dadoo, Huddleston became the first recipient of the Isitwalandwe/Seaparankoe, the highest award given by the African National Congress (ANC) to people who have made an outstanding contribution to the liberation struggle of South Africa.

Fr Huddleston returned to the UK in 1956, recalled by his community, but committed to the struggle in new ways, and was one of the founding members of the 'Boycott Movement' - the pre-cursor to the Anti-Apartheid Movement in the UK. His first book was published in 1956, 'Naught for Your Comfort'. It was banned in South Africa but sold 250,000 copies all over the world and so many more people came to hear about the true nature of apartheid. In 1959, Huddleston and Julius Nyerere addressed the founding meeting of the Anti-Apartheid Movement (AAM) which was held in London. He served in AAM’s leadership for thirty-three years from 1961 as Vice-President and as President from 1981-1994.

In 1960 Huddleston was consecrated Bishop of the Masasi (Tanzania); in 1968 he became Bishop of Stepney; ten years later he was appointed Bishop of Mauritius and elected Archbishop of the Province of the Indian Ocean. Throughout those years he met as often as possible with OR Tambo – himself in exile from 1960 – frequently in Tanzania and in London.

Fr Huddleston retired as Archbishop in 1983 and was awarded the United Nations gold medal. The Zambian government awarded him the nation’s highest award, the Order of Freedom 1st Class, in 1984. Huddleston also received the Dag Hammarskjold Award for Peace in the same year.

In June 1984, in order to protest the visit of President P.W. Botha to the UK, Huddleston led an AAM delegation to meet Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. He delivered a worldwide petition calling for the release of Mandela and also addressed the United Nations Special Committee Against Apartheid. Along with Thabo Mbeki, Huddleston addressed the Artists Against Apartheid, AAM march and festival on 28 June 1986, which was attended by 250 000 people.



In 1987 he organised the Harare International Conference on 'Children, Repression and the Law in Apartheid', which brought together leaders of the South African Liberation Movement. In 1988 Huddleston initiated the 'Nelson Mandela Freedom at 70' campaign which included the birthday concert at Wembley Stadium and the 'Nelson Mandela Freedom March' from Glasgow to London. On 18 July 1988, on the eve of Mandela's 70th birthday, Huddleston and Archbishop Desmond Tutu addressed a rally of 200 000 at Hyde Park. In April 1989 Huddleston was awarded the Grand Commander of the Order of the Niger, the country's highest award.

Fr Trevor's last publication 'Return to South Africa; the agony and the ecstasy', was written after his visit in 1991 – an absence of 35 years – when he was invited by the ANC to attend the 48th National Conference in Durban – the first in South Africa for 30 years, which O R Tambo was hosting as President of the ANC, no longer in exile.

In 1994 Fr Huddleston was awarded the Torch of Kilimanjaro from Tanzania and the Indira Gandhi Award for Peace, Disarmament and Development. On 26 April 1994, Huddleston entered South Africa House in Trafalgar Square, London, for the first time in order to cast his vote in South Africa's first democratic election. In 1995 Huddleston became the founding Patron of Action for Southern Africa (ACTSA), which was established as the successor to the AAM, and held this position until his death.

Huddleston was appointed by the Queen of England as Knight Commander of the Order of St Michaels and St George in 1998. At his Investiture on 24 March 1998 he chose the designation 'Bishop Trevor of Sophiatown'. Bishop Trevor passed away barely a month later on 20 April 1998. His ashes are interred in his beloved Sophiatown, at the Church of Christ the King.