

# Scapegoat of Sharpeville

by George Pollock

IF he had chosen, Mangaliso Sobukwe could have avoided going to jail. He knew the consequences. So you might ask: Why raise a fuss about his being in prison?

The answer lies in the personal story of this tall, well-built 36-year-old father of three young children, Methodist lay preacher and university lecturer.

So far, the picture is of a very solid citizen, a man—and he is academically brilliant—who would rate considerable respect in any civilised country. But his homeland is South Africa, where the rules are different, at any rate for Africans, however gifted.

As a member of the faculty of Witwatersrand University, Mangaliso Sobukwe's talents earned him a good income.

He could have lived very comfortably—a fine house, a car, servants and all the middle-class trimmings which, in the minds of most Africans, bear a reservation ticket, "For whites only."

Instead, he and his wife, a trained nurse, chose to live in a standard municipal African dwelling in the township of Mofolo, Johannesburg.

And to go to the university, about 18 miles away, he travelled by train on a third-class season ticket, exposing himself to the daily demand to produce his identity pass as he left the station. By car, he could have avoided this pass check.

But because he is an African he could not have avoided possessing a pass. Every African, regardless of ability, must carry a pass.

## Beliefs

It is the badge of humiliation, the stamp of second-class citizen for having been born with a certain pigmentation of the skin.

It was the carrying of these passes,

and the indignities of the enforcement laws, to which Mangaliso Sobukwe objected.

Apart from anything else, as a practising Christian he could not have done otherwise: it would have made utter nonsense of the Methodist beliefs inherited as a boy from his preacher father in Graff-Reinet, a wine-growing area in Cape Province. (One of his brothers, incidentally, is an Anglican priest.)

From mission school he won a scholarship to the University College of Fort Hare, took a degree and taught in an African high school until he was dismissed for taking part in the 1952 defiance campaign (he was later reinstated at the demand of local townspeople); and then came his appointment to Witwatersrand.

His political activities had started at Fort Hare when he joined the African National Congress Youth League.

But he and others, dissatisfied with the pace at which Congress was prepared to go in its fight for African rights, created an active wing called the Africanists.

They broke away, formed the Pan-Africanist Congress in 1959, and Mangaliso Sobukwe was elected national president.

Any money left after his modest personal needs were met went to the movement, and so it was with the other members of the 12-man executive.

The aims of the Pan-Africanists are socialist, their call "Africa for the Africans." Inevitably, this had led to their being dubbed anti-white. But they deny it. When they talk of Africans, they say, they mean those with the true interests of Africa, whatever their colour.

What they refuse to accept are the so-called Bantu and white areas decreed by apartheid. As Africans, they do not see why eleven million people should be pushed into corners of their own country by a white minority and told to stay there.

## Surrender

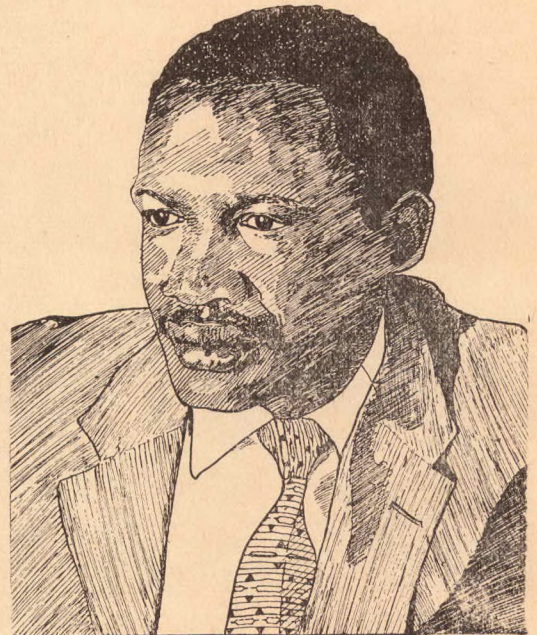
Their decision to challenge the pass laws was planned for March 21 last year. Their followers would go without passes and surrender themselves for arrest at the nearest police station.

For some time before the day, Pan-Africanists went from house to house canvassing support, clerks and teachers who put case soberly.

One pamphlet distributed was the copy of a letter to the Police Commissioner signed by Mangaliso Sobukwe.

His letter promised co-operation with the police in any orders they might give, including orders for crowd dispersal, but urged that reasonable time should be allowed for this when crowds were large.

A second pamphlet stated that they were not fighting against anybody but opposing the myth of racial superiority, the "Calvinistic doctrine that a certain nation was specially chosen by God to lead, guide and protect other nations. That is our fight."



MANGALISO SOBUKWE

Enlisting the printer's aid with capital letters, Mangaliso Sobukwe emphasised:

"Our people must be taught NOW and CONTINUOUSLY THAT IN THIS CAMPAIGN we are going to observe A B S O L U T E NON-VIOLENCE the only people who will benefit from violence are the Government and the police."

The day came, a Monday. Suddenly, in just over half-a-minute—the time taken to discharge 705 rounds of ammunition from police Stenguns and revolvers—67 men, women and children were dead, 186 wounded. All, needless to say, Africans.

And the world vocabulary acquired a new, sickening word for horror: Sharpeville.

### Different

Two versions of events at Sharpeville give extraordinarily different impressions. One is by Lieut-Colonel G. D. Pienaar, the police officer in charge, the other is from evidence gathered by Dr. Ambrose Reeves, the Bishop of Johannesburg, since expelled from South Africa.

According to the colonel, the police had their backs to the wall and were surrounded by "a frenzied mob of 20,000 natives."

According to the bishop, the crowd around the police station was nearer 5,000 than 20,000, and it was good-humoured, not riotous.

The colonel said he had given an order that there was to be no shooting without a specific order from him.

He had not at any time, he said, given any order to fire, although when the shooting began he was preparing to give an order to open fire at a bunch of Africans who were forcing their way through the police station gate.

Then, he said, two shots rang out from the mob, followed by a barrage of stones.

Next he heard two shots from the left flank of the police line, and then the whole line opened fire. He jumped in front of policemen who were using their weapons, waving his arms and ordering them to cease fire.

### No Stoning

According to the bishop, there was no stoning that threatened danger to

the police, and there was no adequate evidence that shots had been fired from the crowd. Nor was there evidence that the crowd had left weapons behind when they fled—unless a few walking sticks and umbrellas can be classed as weapons.

At the public inquiry, the colonel was asked: Did the shooting continue after danger had passed?—I calculated that after five or six seconds the necessity for firing had ceased and I ordered the men to stop.

So the shooting continued after the need had passed?—You cannot stop firing as if with a press-button; the men are human.

Under cross-examination, the colonel said that he had in mind the firing of a few well-directed shots at the leaders in the event of a rush, but had made no arrangements for this with his men.

During the half-hour you were there, you did nothing to disperse the mob? I had no time.

You had not time; the first ten or fifteen minutes you did nothing at all, and the next quarter of an hour you spent deploying your men?—I was concerned with my men; I could not apply my mind to anything else. I was waiting for a moment of calm.

Why did you not detail an officer to deploy the men while you occupied your mind with methods of dispersing the crowd?—I thought my place was with the men.

If you did not climb on a Saracen (armoured vehicle) and try to address the crowd yourself, why did you not detail another officer to do this? I did not think of it.

### Summed Up

You did not inquire if there was anybody who knew and could speak to the leaders?—I did not expect anybody to know them.

In fact, Colonel Pienaar, you thought of nothing but shooting?—No. That is not so.

Mangaliso Sobukwe's letter to the Commissioner of Police promising Pan-Africanist co-operation over crowd dispersal, might never have been written.

The inquiry commissioner summed up the evidence but did not consider it part of his duty to establish responsibility.

On the evidence he had gathered 70 per cent of the casualties shot

in the back as they fled, one woman hit after running 100 yards—Dr. Ambrose Reeves considered it was his duty to establish responsibility.

He reached three conclusions; the firing by the police was unnecessary force; the firing was deliberately continued into the backs of the fleeing crowd after all semblance of danger to the police had vanished; the firing was punitive and not in self-defence.

### Arrested

On the same day, at Langa African township, Cape Town seven Africans were shot by police and 46 injured.

That morning, Mangaliso Sobukwe and other Pan-Africanist leaders were arrested. When they had conceived the anti-pass campaign, they knew they must expect arrest. To prevent their organisation being entirely destroyed, two executive members had been sent into exile to carry on the fight: one to Ghana, one to London.

But there was a personal problem Mangaliso Sobukwe had to consider. His wife had just given birth to twins. If he had to leave home, she would be faced with bringing up three young children alone, the family income gone.

All along, Sobukwe could have chosen an easier path for himself, enjoying the economic privileges of his position as a university lecturer. Instead, he identified himself completely with the struggle of less fortunate Africans.

He had not doubt about his duty in the anti-pass campaign. Whatever the consequences to himself, the protest had to be made.

At his trial for incitement, he refused to plead—"the law under which we are charged is a law made exclusively for the whiteman, and the officers administering the law are whitemen. We do not see how justice can be done in the circumstances."

Before sentence was passed, he told the court:

"The history of the human race has been one of struggle for removal of mental, moral and spiritual oppressions, and we should have failed had we not made our contribution to that struggle."

*Continued on next page*

## United Action—the way

### Forward Continued from page 17

workers. They must know what their grievances are, and be prepared to take them up. They must defend the interests and react to the demands of all workers. In carrying out their work to secure justice for the workers they must at all times choose forms of struggles which the majority of the workers are prepared to support, and not advocate actions to which only the most advanced and most militant will respond.

#### Union Policy

A united working class is only possible where the workers have full democratic control over their organi-

sation and its leaders. Weaknesses in colonial Trade Unions must be eradicated where they exist, as for example, the tendency to have matters in the hands of one or two individual leaders instead of insisting on democratic discussion of union policy, and on the democratic control of union finances and union leaders. Trade Unions are not to be regarded as occasional, temporary organisations, or glorified strike committees, which do nothing for their members between strikes, but must maintain constant activity in defence of the daily and long-term interests of the workers.

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### “Rod of Iron” Continued from page 6

In the Soviet Union, what Lord Home is pleased to sneer at as the “Russian empire,” and which before the advent of Soviet power, was known as “a prison house of peoples,” educational opportunity is open to all.

If one takes the Central Asian Republic of Tajikistan, with a population of two million, there are now 370,000 children studying at general educational schools, with another 32,000 studying at schools of higher education and specialised secondary schools.

#### Patience Gone

Before the advent of Soviet Power Tajikistan did not have single person with higher education. Today there are over 42,000 specialists working in the economy of the Republic with higher education, while the Republic’s research establishments and higher schools employ over 2,000 research workers, mostly Tajiks.

Yet Lord Home considers that “British colonialism is already an

example in freedom which may be used to prise the communist empire wide open.”

The African people of Rhodesia are still battling for the basic “one man, one vote,” which the former oppressed peoples of Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan obtained 40 years ago.

They are still fighting for equality of educational opportunity which the Homes, Sandys, Macleods, Whiteheads and Welenskys are still denying them.

Men like Joshua Nkomo and Kenneth Kaunda have shown patience in the past, some will think perhaps too much patience, with their colonial oppressors.

The British people must now know that patience is at an end.

If the African people in these colonial territories are to differentiate between the ordinary people of Britain and the Government which is perpetrating these latest constitutional swindles on them, then the British people must make their voices heard now.

## The Party System

Continued from page 11

its existence on the practice of compromise which is foreign to any dictatorial system.

In all discussions in African councils each man was at liberty to affirm or to oppose. He did not have to play rigidly this or that role. There was no division between those who supported and opposed the measure. The whole thing was discussed in the context of *wisdom* rather than of *cleverness* as European politics are apt to do. The pleasure of the men was sought: “So-and-so, do you agree to this?” Or, “so-and-so does not agree. Let us hear him.”

A perusal of many of the discriminatory laws of South Africa and Southern Rhodesia reveals that the whole aim of legislation is to neutralise African opposition. The African is denied the vote so that he may never get to a point where he would oppose the whiteman. The constant banning of African political parties under one pretext or another, is a determined, subtle effort to exterminate African opposition.

Now to come back to our subject: Is it the one-party system or the two-party system which ensures democracy? What really ensures democracy is any system which allows free elections, free representation, free discussions, free compromise and free opposition. The essence of democracy is the free will of the people, not this or that system.

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### Scapegoat

Continued from previous page

Of the 23 accused, four were found not guilty and discharged, 14 were sentenced to 18 months, four to two years, and Mangaliso Sobukwe received three years’ imprisonment.

#### Ruling

Dismissing the appeal against severity of sentence, the judge ruled that the magistrate’s court had been entitled to take into account the

repercussions outside the area where the acts had been perpetrated.

In short, Mangaliso Sobukwe and the others were scapegoats for the police outrages at Langa and Sharpeville.

This is why protest must be made to the South African authorities, who cannot be allowed to forget that, in all this, they are the guilty men.

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## **Nationalistic**

### **Role** *Continued from page 14*

running for centuries? It was outlawed because it was "non-cooperative," and because it was "pagan" (whatever this means).

To call an African custom pagan, and therefore unchristian, shows clearly how very narrow and self-conceited an imperialist mind can be. What is lost sight of is that the "Pagan" worships the same God as the Christian, as the Muslim (Allah), as the Buddhist (Holy Mother) or as the Hindu. Commenting on this, a prominent Kenyan leader, Ochieng Oneko said in July 1952: "We do not know God. What we know is Ngai. We believe in Ngai whether the missionaries say we are pagans or not."

#### **It Served Them Right**

He was speaking the mind of Africa. Our forefathers knew and worshipped Nyame (Twi), Nyomgbo (Ga), Chuku (Ibo) or Oluwa (Yoruba) before the Europeans came. They also took oaths, and that did not make them any less holy than their European counterparts who swore by the bible. More so when their intentions were holy.

It will therefore be seen that there would have been no terrorism in Kenya if the Colonial Government had sat down to redress the social wrongs that had become mounting unbearable, rather than take negative and suppressive steps like banning political parties and legitimate traditions like oathing.

In fact, right from the onset of oathing in 1948, which itself was the

## **La Lecon de Bizerte**

**L**A crise de Bizerte est un résumé de la lutte menée par la Tunisie en vue de consolider son indépendance et s'assurer une réelle souveraineté.

La crise en effet est une preuve justificative sans équivoque de la politique de neutralisme positif et de non alignement avec aucun des deux grandes puissances.

La Tunisie a été pour l'Occident et en fut très fière. Ceci pourtant ne l'a nullement protégée contre une agression de la part de son ancien patron colonial et ne lui a non plus valu l'appui et la solidarité de l'Occident pendant ces heures cruciales de son histoire.

Si au demeurant la Tunisie appartenait à la grande famille des Nations Africaines, son ancien patron n'aurait aucunement osé lui déclencher cette attaque non avenue et idiote. Si en effet la Tunisie avait accepté les propositions pour la mise sur pied d'un Haut Commandement auquel participeraient tous les Etats Africains, France se serait énormément repentie de son action.

Nous sommes heureux d'entendre Les Etats Unis ont refusé de nous

vendre des avions de guerre et France et l'Ouest nous ont decu. Nous avons perdu confiance en eux. Mr. Mohamed Masmoudi déclarer "Bizerte nous sert de lecon; la l'attitude de l'Occident à l'ONU démontre leur appui au colonialisme".

Cette tentative denote une seconde convoitise pour l'Afrique. Elle souligne la nécessité de la réalisation rapide d'une Unité Africaine. Une Afrique unie pour un seul peuple ayant un but et un destin communs.

L'épisode démontre clairement l'utilité de l'établissement accéléré d'un Haut Commandement Africain en vue d'écarter ces bravades aux intérêts et honneur des peuples Africains.

Du Cap au Caire, du Maroc à Madagascar, nous devons aussitôt nous unir pour promouvoir et protéger la liberté et l'indépendance de l'Afrique.

Seule l'unité peut sauver l'Afrique. Seul une Afrique unie peut efficacement gagner la cause de ses peuples et sauvegarder sans défaillance leurs intérêts.

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only way out of the restrictions on freedom of association, the Government did not carry out any practical reform to meet the people's wishes. Instead, they flung thousands of oath takers into jail, often under untold sub-human conditions.

Even women who sang religious hymns in prayers for their husbands in jail were catted into the same jails.

The Colonial Government spent thousands of pounds buying spies and informants—most of whom were political "moderates" and Chiefs. The natural reaction was that these informants were treated as black-legs and punished in various ways. In most cases, they were beaten up, or their houses were burnt. Which served the spies and traitors right.

# RADIO GHANA VOICE OF AFRICA

Transmission Times and Wavelengths

## ENGLISH SERVICE

### (i) SUDAN, ETHIOPIA, SOMALILAND

1415—1500 GMT	21.545 Mcs	13.92 Metres
1830—1915 GMT	11.805 Mcs	25.41 Metres

### (ii) EAST AFRICA

1500—1545 GMT	21.545 Mcs	13.92 Metres
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### (iii) SOUTH, SOUTH WEST AND SOUTH EAST AFRICA

1500—1545 GMT	17.740 Mcs	16.91 Metres
2000—2045 GMT	15.285 Mcs	19.62 Metres

### (iv) WEST AFRICA

1500—1545 GMT	9.545 Mcs	31.43 Metres
1700—1745 GMT	9.545 Mcs	31.43 Metres
2000—2045 GMT	9.545 Mcs	31.43 Metres
2130—2215 GMT	6.070 Mcs	49.42 Metres

## FRENCH SERVICE

### (i) CONGO, CENTRAL AFRICA, MADAGASCAR

1745—1830 GMT	11.805 Mcs	25.41 Metres
1915—2000 GMT	11.805 Mcs	25.41 Metres

### (ii) WEST AFRICA

1745—1830 GMT	9.545 Mcs	31.43 Metres
1915—2000 GMT	9.545 Mcs	31.43 Metres
2045—2130 GMT	9.545 Mcs	31.43 Metres

## PORTUGUESE SERVICE

### (i) ANGOLA, MOZAMBIQUE

1415—1500 GMT	17.740 Mcs	16.91 Metres
1630—1715 GMT	17.740 Mcs	16.91 Metres

### GUINEA ANGOLA

1630—1715 GMT	9.545 Mcs	31.43 Metres
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## HAUSA SERVICE

### (i) WEST AFRICA

1545—1630 GMT	9.545 Mcs	31.43 Metres
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## ARABIC SERVICE

### (i) UNITED ARAB REPUBLIC, SUDAN, LIBYA

1630—1715 GMT	21.545 Mcs	13.92 Metres
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### (ii) MOROCCO, ALGERIA, TUNIS

2000—2045 GMT	11.805 Mcs	21.41 Metres
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## SWAHILI SERVICE

### (i) EAST AFRICA

1715—1800 GMT	21.545 Mcs	13.92 Metres
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### (ii) EAST AFRICA, NORTH EAST CONGO

1830—1915 GMT	21.545 Mcs	13.92 Metres
	11.805 Mcs	25.41 Metres

## SPECIAL ENGLISH SERVICE TO THE UNITED KINGDOM AND EUROPE

2045—2130 GMT	11.805 Mcs	25.41 Metres
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## Imperialism Weakening

Continued from page 5

economic and social council to bring them in harmony with the needs of the organisation and with the expanded membership of the United Nations."

They also asked for a re-organisation of the United Nations secretariat and the admission of the People's Republic of China into the United Nations.

They requested that the German problems should not be solved by "resorting to or threatening the use of force."

## Renascent

## Africa

Continued from page 16

great importance not only to Africans but also to all men of goodwill. Africans have the obligation to develop those policies which will command the respect of the world. Our friends in other parts of the

world will also have to understand the real and staggering problems which face the peoples of Africa. The time at the disposal of Africans to develop their institutions in the depth and magnitude to meet our changing times is very limited, and for decades Africans will need the moral and material assistance of the advanced countries.

More important still, the great powers must appreciate that the old order in Africa is dead. Any attempt to delay the process of change or to preserve the *status quo* in Africa cannot but lead to very strained relations between themselves and all Africans.

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