



*Mangaliso Robert Sobukwe*

## MAN ON THE ISLAND

Sobukwe has survived the first three months of his life-detention on Robben Island with remarkable courage. As usual Verwoerd's henchman, Vorster, has miscalculated. His attempt to break Sobukwe down has boomeranged. A law was passed specifically to enable him to detain Sobukwe in perpetuity. The law came into force on the very day that Sobukwe was due to be released from a three years' term of imprisonment. Told of this act of unmitigated barbarism directed at him, Sobukwe's brief comment was, "If you believe in freedom, you must suffer for it". No hysterical recriminations or futile indulgence in self-pity. At the time of the Sharpeville shootings, Sobukwe set the pace of the revolution in South Africa. From his prison cell he is now setting the tone for the coming struggle. He is driving the point home that it is going to be a hard and bitter struggle and that

personal sacrifices on an unprecedented scale will be demanded.

When the word was passed around among the political prisoners on the Island that Sobukwe was coming, there was a noticeable and an immediate uplift in their morale. Although he is kept strictly isolated from the other political prisoners, he remains a source of inspiration to them.

The arrest of over 5,000 people in a period of less than a month, the mass-hangings, the 90-day detentions, the nightly police raids and reprisals against the families of the detained, have not succeeded in breaking the backbone of the resistance movement. On the contrary, these acts have only helped to underscore Sobukwe's message to alert the people on what the struggle for freedom means. We are at a crucial moment in our struggle, the situation demands clarity, firmness and certainty as well as an unmatched capacity for planning and foresight. Sobukwe possesses these qualities of leadership in no mean measure. Although Dr. Verwoerd has tried to silence him, although there is what amounts to a conspiracy of silence internationally regarding Dr. Verwoerd's actions against him, to the people of South Africa, Sobukwe has become almost a legendary figure—a man destined to shape the future course of events in South Africa. He has acquired a unique position now in that whatever concerns him has significance, whether it is his silence or his utterances, his absence or his presence.

White South Africa has given whole-hearted support to Verwoerd's tyranny in keeping a man in prison in perpetuity without having found him guilty of any crime except his passionate belief in human freedom. It has connived at the debasement of justice and the rule of law. In preparing to fight for what is so indefensible, so basically repugnant to human standards, it has made sure that we are set irrevocably on a collision course.

Have we already gone beyond the point of no-return!