

**Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe, new Africanist leader and**

**POLITICAL TOUGH-TALKER**



There is a new name in the political melting pot: Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe. Young, intellectual, uncompromising, he has risen above the heads of the veterans to become leader of the Pan-Africanist Congress, the voice of South Africa's bristling, black nationalism

Written by Matthew Nkoana

A FEW weeks ago the name Robert Mangaliso — it means "Wonderful" — Sobukwe meant little to people outside the inner circle of African politics here. Today the tall, suave, 35-year-old Witwatersrand University lecturer has become a man with a hand on the strings of political destiny.

Until April, Mangaliso was moving quietly behind the political scene, arguing, persuading, organising on behalf of the forces of Africanism which had split last year from the African National Congress. Then, all of a sudden, he was catapulted into the headlines with his election as the first president of the new Pan-Africanist Congress, whose cry is Africa for the Africans.

Before that, it had always been the lavishly-bearded, syllable-spilling Josias Madzunya who gesticulated and thundered into the spotlight when it was directed on the Africanists.

But Madzunya, a comparative newcomer to the Africanist creed, was too much of an individualist to fit in with the rigid discipline which the inner councils of the movement had fashioned for itself.

He had a role to play: to keep the audience interested in Africanism while the stars of tomorrow prepared for the time when they would be able to march boldly from the wings.

That time has now come, and Madzunya has been relegated to the role of an untitled extra.

PLEASE TURN OVER

**'I HAVE BEEN GIVEN THE CHANCE I WANTED'**

A new era has begun in life of Mangaliso Sobukwe, 35, Wits. University lecturer, with his election as president of the Pan-Africanist Congress.

**"I HAVE NOT YET GIVEN UP HOPE..."**

For Josias Madzunya, right, an era has ended with his failure to gain any Africanist group office.





Leaders of the new movement. Peter Molotsi, Peter Raboroko, Potlako Leballo and Mangaliso Sobukwe, first president of the organisation.

### 'The police will pick me up...'

And in the forefront is the polished, unassuming intellectual of the measured words, whose story is inseparably bound with the movement he now leads.

Sobukwe was born at Graaff-Reinet, in the Cape, "the son of a number," as they say in the countryside of people born in locations. He was brought up in a hand-to-mouth fashion by poor parents, but was fortunate to have a strict disciplinarian for a father. It was a discipline fashioned in the crucibles of poverty and religion.

The parents were staunch Methodists, and Mangaliso was the last-born of six brothers, all of whom sang in a church choir. He was given the name of Mangaliso because his parents thought it "wonderful" that all their children should be boys.

From an early age, the boys had to help keep the family going. Their father had a job, but also operated as a wood-cutter after "office hours," and the boys had to do their share of cutting wood before and after school. They also did odd jobs on Saturdays, for about sixpence a day. This routine gave them strength and discipline, but very few illusions.

Mangaliso early showed himself a brilliant student — he read Milton's "Paradise Lost" when he was only in Grade V of "Native education" — and eventually got a first-class matriculation pass.

### Brotherhood-of-man argument

The white principal of the Healdtown Institution offered Sobukwe a loan of £20 a year to help him go to Fort Hare University College, and obtained a further £20-a-year loan from the Cape Education Department. The Bantu Welfare Trust also lent £20, and the Healdtown principal and a white teacher undertook to provide pocket money for the youngster at Fort Hare.

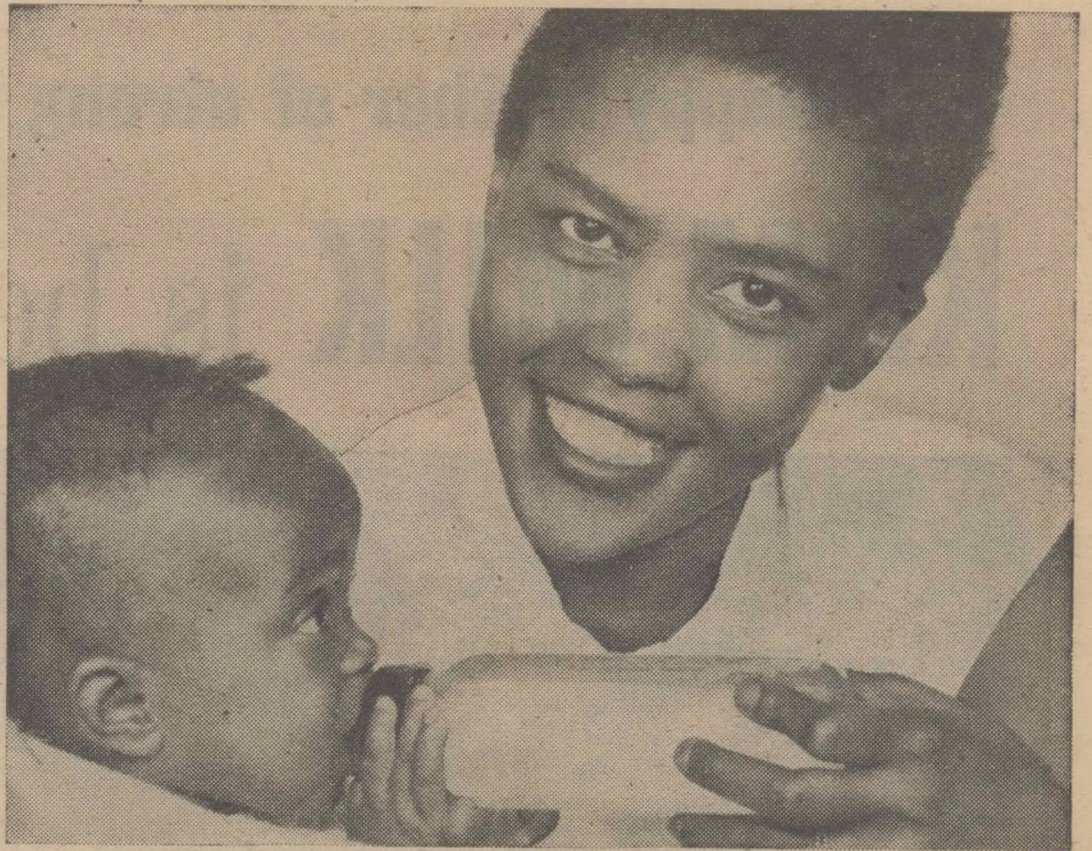
It was at this time that a brilliant young lawyer, Anton Muziwakhe Lembede, was infusing a militant spirit into African politics and setting African youth on a course that kept the then staid A.N.C. leadership on tenterhooks.

In 1949, Mangaliso was elected — under a new constitution — the first president of the Students' Representative Council at Fort Hare. His political career had begun in earnest, and he set himself on a course from which he has never deviated.

An indication of Mangaliso's forthrightness, his refusal to allow sentiment to intrude on his outlook, is shown by an incident at Fort Hare. The principal of the Healdtown Institution — the man who had made it possible for him to go to Fort Hare — was addressing a meeting at the college. The principal spoke of the brotherhood of man, and suggested that such a spirit could be fostered between white and black in South Africa by personal contact in homes and at other informal meetings without changing the state's laws.

It was a different Sobukwe from the youth who had left Healdtown who stood up to face his former mis-

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# Mangaliso gets sacked from small-town teaching job

sionary principal. He said: "The moment I step out of your home, sir, after a show of the brotherhood of man, the police will pick me up for a pass offence."

"But that won't be my fault," countered the missionary.

"It will be," protested the young Sobukwe. "You are part and parcel of the set-up in this country. The Church cannot absolve itself from this. The Methodist Church itself is pursuing a segregationist policy: it has different stipends for its white and black ministers."

The missionary explained that this was because African congregations could not afford to pay more.

"Then why is it that white ministers who administer to African congregations get more than their African colleagues?" went on Sobukwe remorselessly.

Not long after leaving Fort Hare, Mangaliso became a teacher in the sleepy Transvaal town of Standerton. He was dismissed after taking part in the Defiance Campaign in 1952, but was reinstated later on condition that he became a "good boy." But he was far too restless and politically-minded to accept this muzzle on his activities, and soon quit to take up a post at the University of the Witwatersrand.

In Johannesburg he continued his political work, but was clever enough to avoid open clashes with the established leadership of the A.N.C. Nevertheless he made no compromises in his chosen line, and when he did speak out it was in terms sharp and biting, leaving no doubt as to just where he stood.

## Quarrel with the Left

His attitude to Communism in South Africa for instance: "There are no Communists in South Africa: only Communist quacks. Like Christianity, Communism has been unfortunate in its choice of representatives here."

His quarrel with the left-wing is that "they are, one and all, opposed to African nationalism."

"My first awakening to this danger came after the A.N.C. had adopted the 1949 Programme of Action. In the programme was a clause providing for a one-day national stoppage of work as a protest against national subjugation. June 26, 1950, was tentatively set for it. Meanwhile the left-wingers persuaded other leaders to agree to a change in schedule so that the stoppage should coincide with the Workers' Day — May 1. The struggle was changing its complexion from a national to a class struggle."

Sobukwe says that he had further "forebodings" at the end of the Defiance Campaign in 1952. "With the mass expulsion of members who became too critical of the A.N.C. leadership, my fears of a creeping bureaucracy heightened."

Sobukwe's attitude to the forces outside Africa were set forth in a recent speech.

"Africa is being wooed with more ardour than she has ever been. There is a lot of flirting going on. . . . Some Africans are flirting with the Soviet camp, and others with the American camp. The wooing occurs at a time when the whole of the continent of Africa is in labour, suffering the pangs of a new birth. And everybody is looking anxiously and expectantly towards Africa to see, as our people so aptly put it, *ukuthi uyozala nkonomi* (What creature will come forth).

"Our answer . . . has been given by the African leaders of the continent. Ghana's Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, for one, has repeatedly stated that in international affairs, Africa wishes to pursue a policy of positive neutrality, allying itself to neither of the existing blocs."

On the perennial question of national group relations in South Africa, Mr. Sobukwe has declared that the ultimate goal of the Africanists is a non-racial democracy in which no minority group as such will be accorded special rights. He is emphatic about equal citizenship rights for individuals of any colour who are prepared to identify themselves with the interests of Africa and the African nation.



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