

How Can Man Die Better: Sobukwe and Apartheid

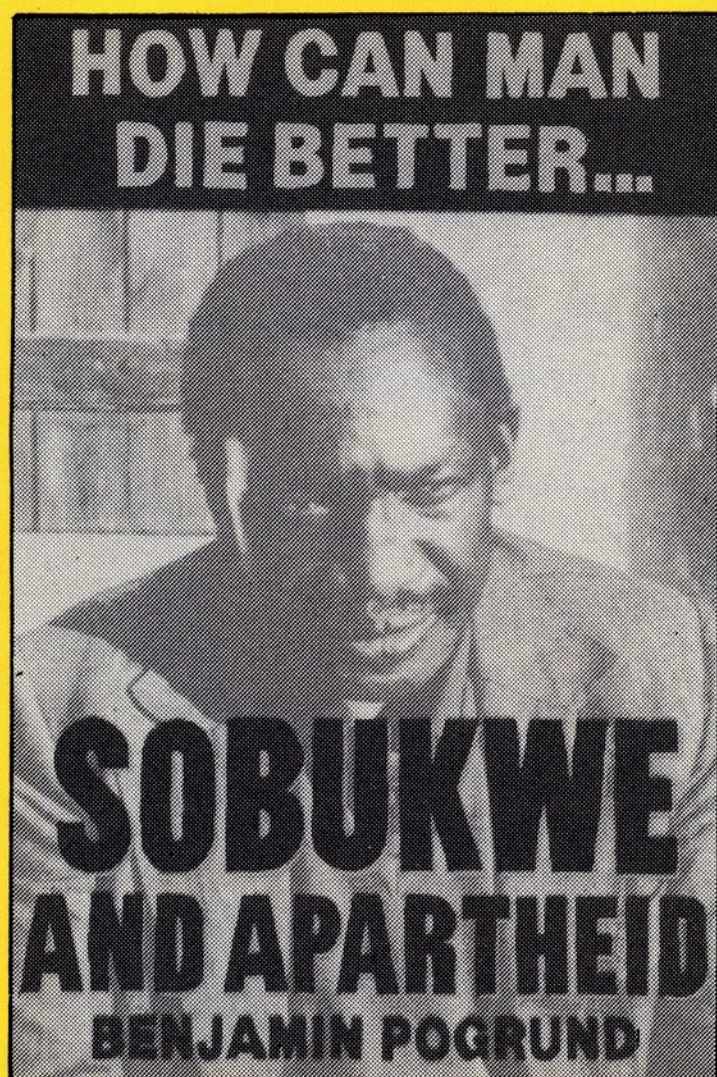
BENJAMIN POGRUND

Thirty years ago, Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe called for mass defiance of Apartheid in South Africa. He urged blacks to break the hated pass laws, and follow him to jail. Thousands were willing to do so, but their protest turned to tragedy when the police opened fire on a crowd, killing 69. It was 21st March 1960, at Sharpeville. The protest was a turning point.

The Government jailed him for 'incitement'. Three years later, his release imminent – they rushed through a law to keep him in jail without trial. Detained on Robben Island for the next six years, then banished to Kimberley, he died in 1978.

Sobukwe was the mentor of Steve Biko who, although 'banned', once travelled far to consult him. Nelson Mandela was Sobukwe's political rival, but they became friends sewing mail bags in prison in Pretoria.

Pogrund, Deputy Editor of the former *Rand Daily Mail*, was a white liberal, Sobukwe was the African Nationalist leader – yet their friendship crossed the colour barrier.



Benjamin Pogrund came to Britain in 1986. He is Editorial Director of The Panos Institute in London, and appears frequently as a commentator on Southern Africa.

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