

SOBUKWE UNLIKELY TO BE FREED SOON

Ultimatum dashes his hopes

EXPRESS REPORTER

SUNDAY EXPRESS

2 MAY 1966

ROBERT MANGALISO SOBUKWE is not expected to be released from Robben Island when the "Sobukwe clause" of the 1963 General Laws Amendment Act expires on June 30, this year.

At one stage recently, it was suggested that Sobukwe stood a good chance of being allowed to leave South Africa on an exit permit when the clause expired.

This week, the Minister of Justice, Mr. Vorster, said in Parliament that the Government had not yet decided whether to extend the provision which gives him the power to detain certain prisoners indefinitely even after they have served their terms in jail.

Last month a political pamphlet was posted to most newspapers on the Rand. Signed: "The Pan-Africanist Congress of S.A., Maseru," it demanded that Sobukwe be released before June 30, "or else." Although Government officials refused to comment on the possible effects of this ultimatum might have on Sobukwe's case, I understand it seriously jeopardises his chances of being released.

Sobukwe, a former lecturer at the University of the Witwatersrand, is the only political prisoner to be held in South Africa under the jail-without-trial clause.

In 1960, he led the Pan-African-

ist Congress campaign against the pass laws—which culminated in the Sharpeville shootings—and was sentenced to three years' imprisonment when later convicted of incitement.

His sentence expired on May 3, 1963. He was then transferred to Robben Island where he has since been held under the Suppression of Communism Act of 1950, as amended by the General Law Amendment Bill.

REFUSAL

At that time, Canon John Collins, chairman of "Christian Action" in London, sent a cable to the Minister of Justice, appealing for Sobukwe's release.

Mr. Harold Wilson, then leader of the British Opposition—and now Prime Minister—also supported a call for Sobukwe's release.

In January last year, Sobukwe applied for permission to leave South Africa on an exit permit. The Minister of Justice refused.

In Parliament, a few months later, Mrs. Helen Suzman (M.P., Houghton) asked the Minister: "How long are you going to keep him (Sobukwe) locked up?"

Mr. Vorster did not give a definite answer.

PUBLISHER:

Publisher:- **Historical Papers, The Library, University of the Witwatersrand**

Location:- **Johannesburg**

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DOCUMENT DETAILS:

Document ID:- **A2618-Cp1-30**

Document Title:- **Sunday Express: Sobukwe unlikely to be freed soon**

Author:- **Express Reporter, Sunday Express**

Document Date:- **2 May 1965**