

Pace



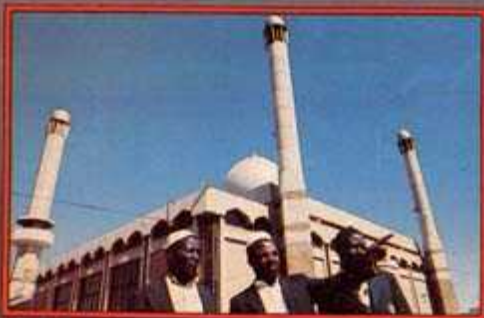
THE MAN WHO CAME BACK FROM THE GRAVE

THE BEHALI'S AMAZING
DREAM HOUSE

Fort Hare erupts again

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Robert Sobukwe remembered

The tranquillity of the sleepy dorp of Graaff Reinet was shattered when hundreds of people converged on the town to honour its most famous son

by our Eastern Cape correspondent

A cloud of dust announces that quite a number of people are about to emerge from a bend on the untarred road. The first to appear is a 12-year-old boy, rather unkempt. A placard he is waving intimates boldly: "We shall serve, suffer and sacrifice for Mother-Afrika". Hundreds of others are

marching peacefully behind him, united in a touching song.

Scores of other banners and placards demand the release of detained leaders. Some profess freedom and others advocate a "united states of Africa". The procession makes its way to the local church, a rather uninspiring building.

It is August 15—a day out of the ordinary in Graaff Reinet. Hundreds of Africans

from all corners of the country have converged on this small Karoo "dorp" to unveil the tombstone of the late founding president of the banned Pan Africanist Congress, Mr Mangaliso Robert Sobukwe.

Police, maintaining a discreet presence, monitor the movements of the crowd from distant points. Some, with what appears to be binoculars, are observing the march to the church from atop a hill overlooking the tiny township.

The atmosphere grows even more electric an hour and a half later when the crowd emerges, joins forces with others who could not be accommodated in the small church, and takes to the centre of the Afrikaans-

dominated town. There are now nearly 2 000 people singing about freedom, about "our leader Sobukwe", about Azania. White passers-by look on alarmed surprise. Shutters swing open in the centre of town and disbelieving faces look in awe as the writhing mass of ebony bodies makes its way through the town—freedom songs leaping at the Sunday tranquility.

The sun is scorching, rather surprisingly for a mid-August day, and the route to the cemetery is the better part of 10-kilometres. It is by no means an ideal day for marching, but the crowd is oblivious of the weather and the chanting goes on. More onlookers join the procession and the crowd snowballs to

Sobukwe's spirit lives on

about four times its original size — forming a rather intimidating mass of people as it gets to the cemetery.

The tombstone is a glistening two-metre structure, with a picture of Sobukwe on top, an engraved map of Africa and the words, "True leadership demands complete subjugation of self, absolute honesty, integrity and uprightness of character, courage and fearlessness and above all, a love for one's people."

And as the crowd settles around the grave of Sobukwe, the 54-year life of "one of the most illustrious sons of Africa" unfolds in the words of various speakers.

Orators put the clock back to 1924, when Sobukwe was born in Graaff Reinet. To Headtown for his post primary school education. To the then South African Native College (Fort Hare) for a Bachelor's Degree in Arts which he obtained around 1948.

Sobukwe then taught for a few years before proceeding to Johannesburg to take up a lectureship at the Wits University.

"Prof (as Sobukwe was affectionately known by colleagues) became the leading theoretician among the Africanists within the ANC," recalled Mr W. Toboti, an old colleague. "When the ANC adopted the multi-racial Freedom Charter at Kliptown in 1956, the contradictions between the ANC and the African nationalists sharpened, and the two groups finally broke up in 1958."

Mr Toboti then turned to Sobukwe's efforts during the status campaign, which he launched in June 1959. The campaign was aimed at the projection of the African personality and the rejection of "baaskapism" as demonstrated in such derogatory appendages as "boy", "Jim", "Native", "John", and such nomenclature.

A second speaker, Mr Benjamin Pogrand, deputy editor of the Rand Daily Mail, viewed Sobukwe's life



Parts of the massive 2000-plus crowd who attended the service at Graaff Reinet.



One system but calm during the speeches at Graaff Reinet. From right, Sobukwe's son, Benjamin Pogrand, wife Veronica and a

Mr Benjamin Pogrund, deputy editor of the Rand Daily Mail speaks at the unveiling.



from a different angle. He spoke of the man's struggle to gain access to literature in his early days.

Recalled Mr Pogrund: "Books were present in the Sobukwe household. But they were not fancy books, in fact they were books that other people no longer wanted. But they were books and they took the young Sobukwe into worlds beyond the location and the sleepy town. His father brought home books which the town library threw away. His mother brought books given to her by the children of the family in town for whom she worked.

"In the area of ideas he soon came to be a strong proponent of African nationalism," Mr Pogrund said. "At the same time he was engaged in vigorous argument with those who dismissed African nationalism as a propelling force and who spoke instead of the power of collaboration.

"What followed is well-known history. The breakaway from the ANC in 1958 and the formation of the PAC in 1959. The launching of the anti-pass campaign in March 1960. The shootings at Sharpeville and Langa . . . and, as his three years in jail were about to end, the rushing through Parliament of a special law, the 'Sobukwe Clause', to give the Government the power to keep him in prison.

"And as we know, they did just that. For six years he was kept on Robben Island without any further trial. And then they consigned him to Kimberley under tight restrictions and bannings," Mr Pogrund said.

"South Africa, and Africa, mourns a son who could have brought about mighty change in our country, for the good of all our people. We can only pray that the spirit of Mangaliso Robert Sobukwe will still serve to guide us," he said.

PUBLISHER:

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

Location:- Johannesburg

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DOCUMENT DETAILS:

DOCUMENT DETAILS:

Document ID:- A2618-Cd10

Document Title:- Pace magazine: Robert Sobukwe remembered

Author:- Colin Legum

Document Date:- October 1982