

# The man S A fears

FOR the sixth year in succession, the South African Parliament has approved the continued detention on Robben Island maximum security prison of Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe.

The former leader of the banned Pan-Africanist Congress is to be held for yet another year although his prison sentence has been fully served.

Asking Parliament for approval for Sobukwe's continued detention, the Minister of Justice, Mr Piet Pistor, has said it is not in the national interest to free Sobukwe. He would, said the Minister, simply take up the struggle against apartheid where he had left off in 1960 when he was imprisoned for three years for incitement.

The law under which Sobukwe is being held provides that if the Minister of Justice is satisfied that anyone serving a sentence for certain specified political offences is likely to further any of the statutory objects of Communism, he may keep him in prison from year to year, provided Parliament approves. Sobukwe alleges that the police have told him his determination will be "life-long".

Sobukwe was president of the Pan-Africanist Congress, which was formed in 1959 and which organised anti-pass demonstrations which led to the Sharpeville shootings in 1960, the banning of the PAC, and the declaration of a five-month State of Emergency.

## From STANLEY UYS

Sobukwe himself was charged with incitement and sentenced to three years' imprisonment. He completed the sentence in May 1963, but just before he was due to be released the Government introduced a law providing for "extended detention". Every year since then the law has been renewed for a further year.

Every year since then, too, the Opposition in the South African Parliament has opposed the renewal of the law, without success. The Minister has refused to budge.

He has just told Parliament: "I would have failed gravely in my duty if at this stage I were to let the interests of the country give way to a strong humanitarian impulse to make a change in this man's fate... Let me tell you frankly that there is peace between me and my conscience."

"The powers that are seeking our downfall are gathering their forces to destroy us, and are at this very moment assiduously looking for a star to give lustre to their nefarious schemes. And the man concerned here would, if he were given the opportunity, I believe, not hesitate to do everything in his power to make up and regain what he has lost during his time of detention, because in his life and aspiration he has in no way changed in his attitude or aims."

"Can it now reasonably be expected of me, willingly and with the knowledge at my disposal, to play into their hands and to give them the opportunity to rally around the man who, they believe, can mobilise them and bring about the unity among them which will eventually lead to our downfall?"

Opposition politicians, though, remain sceptical. "It is incredible that with all the powers which the Government

has at its command it should be so afraid of a single African man that it keeps him in detention even after he has served his jail sentence in full," said Mr Michael Mitchell, MP. "For how much longer will this continue?"

Sobukwe, now 43, was a demonstrator in the Bantu Department of the University of Witwatersrand (Johannesburg) at the time of his arrest. He holds a B.A. honours degree.

When his period of "extended detention" started, the Government issued a statement in which it said Sobukwe

would be detained "under a completely different set of conditions" from those under which ordinary prisoners were held.

"Instead of being imprisoned in a cell, he will henceforth live in quarters which up to the present have been occupied by Coloured (mixed race) warden trainees. He will have complete freedom of movement within a large prescribed area. Newspapers can be supplied to him, and he will be able to receive visitors weekly. He will by no means be treated like a prisoner, but will receive special treatment in respect of food, movement, utilising of leisure hours, hours of rising and retiring, clothing, etc."

In 1964 Sobukwe applied for a one-way exit permit to leave South Africa permanently, but it was refused on the grounds that he would resume the leadership of the PAC in exile.

A few Government and Opposition MPs have been allowed to visit Sobukwe on Robben Island. One of the Government MPs, Mr G. Froneman, has said that when he saw Sobukwe he noticed various books on Marxism and Leninism on his bookshelves.

If Sobukwe were to be released, said Mr Froneman, he would become the leader of "the terrorists waiting on our borders".

The Minister of Justice,

however, has stated that "I will not say Sobukwe is a Communist", but he believed Sobukwe would incite people "to commit the deeds which Communism aims at".

An Opposition MP who visited Sobukwe, Mrs Helen Suzman (the only Progressive Party MP), said that Sobukwe was studying French, and that he had the Bible and a wide variety of literature on his shelves, "which so doubt he is reading to keep himself sane".

Sobukwe, the "man on the island" as he is known, is the only person who is being held under the "extended detention" law. It is not known whether other non-white leaders will be similarly detained once their sentences expire. — OFNS.

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