

PROPOSAL TO HOOVER INSTITUTE ON WAR, REVOLUTION AND PEACE

RE: ROBERT M. SOBUKWE PROJECT

1. For some time past I have been engaged in collecting information about the late Robert Mangoliso Sobukwe.

Briefly, he was the first leader of the Pan-Africanist Congress; he was jailed for three years for "incitement" after the 1960 anti-pass demonstrations which led to the shooting at Sharpeville; he was thereafter kept in jail without trial for six years on Robben Island; then he was restricted to the city of Kimberley; he died there, of cancer, and still under restriction, in 1978.

2. I have thus far -

- (a) put together and checked the extensive correspondence which passed between him and me during the six years he spent on Robben Island: these reflect the strange circumstances of his imprisonment, and his thinking on a range of issues.

- (b) completed about half of a biographical study. This is intended as a basic statement about Sobukwe's background, his development and his thinking, set in the context of the events of his time.

3. Thus far I have been able to work only on a spasmodic, part-time basis on the project, because of my full-time work commitments here. I now have a sabbatical coming up, however, and would like to make use of the opportunity (a) to devote the time required to completing the project while (b) also having a break from South Africa.

4. I estimate that two to three months of fulltime work is needed to complete the project.

5. It will thereafter be available for publication as the first study of Robert Sobukwe. It will certainly contain unique information and will provide a factual base for other scholars who wish to analyse Sobukwe and the Pan-Africanist Congress. My personal documentary material on Sobukwe will, if need be, be available for disposal.

6. The publishing house of ~~Ray~~ Collings in London has wanted to publish the book. But this has been long-delayed because of my problem in finding the time to devote to the project. Presumably, Collings will be interested if a manuscript can be completed in good time.

7. The Sobukwe project stands on its own. I would, however, also like to set out a supplementary proposal for separate consideration:
- (a) During 1965, as a reporter on the Rand Daily Mail, I wrote a series of reports about the jail conditions of black and political prisoners. This led to a protracted series of criminal trials, over the next four years, directed against my informants, and then, finally, against LOV Gandar, the then editor of the newspaper, and myself. The prosecutions were brought in terms of the Prisons Act, which controls publication of information about jail conditions.
 - (b) The events - the initial reports and the succeeding trials - were highly publicised at the time. The trials and judgements are landmarks in South African legal history. But the full story has never been presented, although there is much to tell for, to put it simply, mass perjury took place.
 - (c) I have detailed records of the public events and a good deal of the detail of the hidden events.
 - (d) I estimate that about three months is needed to prepare the material for publication.

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Robert Sobukwe Papers

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