

Angola War Called Harbinger for S. Africa

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Special to The Washington Post

FRANCISCO, Calif. — Robert Sobukwe, one of the most respected black leaders in South Africa, believes the success of leftist forces in Angola has hastened the destruction of white supremacy here.

He is convinced large-scale guerrilla war will soon break out in Namibia (Southwest Africa), a territory Pretoria now holds onto grimly, and will ultimately spill over into the South African heartland itself. The tide of black liberation, he thinks, cannot be resisted, and the regime of Prime Minister John Vorster, for all its outward strength, will crumble surprisingly fast.

Sobukwe, an anti-Communist, founded the Pan-Africanist Congress as a breakaway from the African National Congress because he believed the latter group was

controlled by a Communist fraction. But Sobukwe believes blacks here will take aid from any source now. South Africa, he argues, has made communism respectable among blacks by suppressing their liberty.

Sobukwe lives in a kind of open jail in this diamond town. A legal half-person, subject to a "ban order" since 1969, he can't move outside the town. At night, he home from seven at night to six in the morning, can't receive visitors, can't attend gatherings of three or more persons and can't publish or help prepare anything for publication. That last requirement means he can't be quoted directly.

For a man starved for intellectual companionship in this sleepy backwater, Sobukwe bears his existence with great cheerfulness and an unlooked-for sense of humor. Trim at 51, he has a remarkable physical resemblance to the late

Martin Luther King and an almost religious certainty in the rightness of his cause and its eventual triumph.

Sobukwe thinks Mozambique was a turning point. There rural blacks far less sophisticated than the urban millions of South Africa routed a white Portuguese army on South Africa's border. That shattered the myth of white invincibility. What was left of the image of white power received another blow from the South African military pullback in Angola.

Now, Sobukwe understands, young South African blacks greet each other in the segregated townships with clenched fists, the symbol of black power.

In any event, he hopes and expects—like most blacks here—that the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola will triumph in Angola. There, he reasons, the Russians who will have made

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victory possible will not permit the new regime to make a Mozambique-like deal with Pretoria.

Angola will then become a haven for the South-West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO), the guerrillas who are now raiding across the border to set up a free black state.

Sobukwe is under no illusions that SWAPO will carry its fight farther, across the Orange River to South Africa. But he thinks SWAPO will offer refuges to black South African guerrillas. He believes that there are a few hundred of these already in the field, in the Caprivi Strip, the northern border of Botswana.

Sobukwe has every reason to know about the formidable security system here under the Bureau of State Security (BOSS) and its vast network of white and black informers. But he believes the black informers will fade away as

guerrillas come down into South Africa. There are 17 million blacks in the country, the muscle for mining and manufacturing. Sobukwe believes slowdowns, sabotage and strikes will accompany the guerrilla advance and ultimately overwhelm BOSS.

He does not envision a bloody holocaust in the streets of Johannesburg. Rather, he thinks there will be a surprisingly rapid accommodation by the whites to a new order in which every man has one vote and segregation will cease.

Sobukwe has plenty of time to think such thoughts because all political action has been blocked to him for 16 years. His Pan-Africanist Congress lasted just 11 months before it was declared illegal. He still troubles the regime like an aching tooth. Just the other day, Vorster felt compelled to explain to Parliament that he had not let Sobukwe accept an invitation to the presidential

inauguration in Liberia because no one had "elected" Sobukwe a leader.

In this sleepy town, which with its "whites only" signs looks like a prosperous Piedmont city of 30 years ago, Sobukwe defends black clients charged with theft, rape and diamond smuggling. The more lucrative civil cases are a white monopoly. He reads those books he gets by mail; the town library is for whites only. By special concession, he sees two movies a month in the black theater.

Sobukwe worries a bit about getting too used to this half-life, about going too soft from legal fees. He misses his older son and daughter, in college in Atlanta, and he has received many invitations to teach and lecture at universities abroad.

With a characteristic Kafkaesque touch, the regime has given Sobukwe a one-way exit visa. But he can't use it, he says, because he can't travel to the international airport in Johannesburg.

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