

Mr. Robert Sobukwe, 44, was not intended to be released until the end of the year, but, on the earliest possible date, as are

deemed necessary for the safety of the State. Certain administrative arrangements are still to be made and as soon as these have been completed the necessary steps for his release will be taken.

SOBUKWE TO BE FREED

6-year detention on Robben Island ends

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CAPE TOWN.

MR. ROBERT SOBUKWE, 44-year-old former Pan-Africanist Congress leader, is to be released after his six years' detention on Robben Island.

This was announced at midnight last night by the Minister of Justice, Mr. Pelsor.

The Minister said a letter was sent to Mr. Sobukwe yesterday "advising him it is not intended to detain him beyond June 30, but to release him at the earliest possible date subject to such restrictions as are deemed necessary for the safety of the State."

Mr. Pelsor added that certain administrative arrangements were still to be made. "As soon as these have been completed the necessary steps for his release will be taken," he said.

This means that Parliament will not be asked this year to pass a special law for the detention of Mr. Sobukwe, as has been the case since he was first detained on Robben Island after serving a three-year sentence for incitement. He completed his three-year prison term at the beginning of May, 1963.

Not released

Mr. Sobukwe, who has a B.A. (honours) degree, was a lecturer in African studies at the University of the Witwatersrand before becoming President-General of the P.A.C.

In March, 1963, he was himself one of the Orlando police station, Johannesburg, with about 50 other anti-pass demonstrators. He first appeared in court with 18 others on March 27, charged with incitement and contravening the pass laws, and on May 4 was sentenced to three years imprisonment for incitement.

But he was not released at the end of his sentence. Parliament passed a Bill on May 1, 1963, which made special provision for his further detention until June 30, 1964.

He did not serve his prison sentence on Robben Island but was transferred there for his detention.

The Prime Minister, Mr. Vorster—then then Minister of Justice—said at the time that Mr. Sobukwe would not be treated as an ordinary prisoner. He would have special quarters, right of movement, leisure hours and his own clothing.

Offered job

In January, 1964, it was first disclosed that he was applying to leave South Africa on an exit permit and Mr. Vorster confirmed in February of that year that an application had been received.

Four months later Mr. Vorster announced that the application had been refused on the grounds that granting it would not have been in the interests of South Africa.

Meanwhile, more legislation had been introduced during the 1963 session of Parliament to extend Mr. Sobukwe's detention for another year until June 30, 1965. It was extended after that, year by year, until last year's law provided for his continued detention until June 30 this year.

During 1964 Mr. Sobukwe was offered a home and a job in America by the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People and the Montgomery Fellowship for Foreign Aid.

His wife, Mrs. Veronica Sobukwe, appealed to the Government to release her husband. She said the main reason for their wishing to leave the country was for the family to be reunited—they have four children, including twins.

Methodist

The year-by-year renewing of the "Sobukwe clause" has met with consistent opposition from both Opposition parties.

Among M.P.s who have been outspoken in their opposition to the Sobukwe clause are:

- Mr. Gray Hughes (U.P., Transkei), who said in 1962: "This clause is a blot on our statute books."
- Mrs. Helen Summan (Pret., Houghton) who has spoken more on the clause than any other M.P. In 1964, for example, she said it was "a travesty of justice" and "a complete abrogation of the rule of law." She pointed out he had served double the sentence imposed by the court.
- Mr. P. A. Moore (U.P., Kensington) who has made several appeals for Mr. Sobukwe's release.
- In 1967, 33 British peers made a special plea for his release. Several United Nations' committees have also appealed to the South African Government to release Mr. Sobukwe.
- The latest United Nations' move came only on Tuesday when the world body's special committee on apartheid decided to appeal to all countries to ask South Africa for the release of Mr. Sobukwe.

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