

“Let Sobukwe go to U.K.” plea to Vorster

SUNDAY EXPRESS REPORTER

THE Minister of Justice will be asked to allow the former Pan-Africanist Congress leader, Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe, to leave South Africa on an exit visa because he has been offered a free scholarship in Britain.

I learned this last week during an interview with Dr. W. F. Nkomo, an African medical practitioner in Pretoria.

Dr. Nkomo said he had been approached to ask the Minister, Mr. Vorster, to give Sobukwe and his family exit visas and would do so during the next three weeks.

This move to free 36-year-old Sobukwe comes as a complete surprise because:

● The Government has not indicated that it would allow him to leave South Africa on any condition.

● And because it is not known if Sobukwe would be prepared to accept an exit visa even if he offered one.

Sobukwe is presently detained on Robben Island. He was sent there last April when he finished a three-year prison sentence in Pretoria Jail.

He had been jailed for incitement after leading the Pan-Africanist campaign which culminated in the Sharpeville shootings.

Approached

I can disclose that Sobukwe's wife, Veronica, was recently approached by a man who said he represented several Johannesburg businessmen.

Mrs. Sobukwe was asked to visit her husband on Robben Island as soon as possible to persuade him to accept an exit visa if one could be obtained.

Mrs. Sobukwe was told that her husband had been offered a scholarship in Britain. The news spread quickly through Johannesburg's locations last week. The general feeling among the men inhabitants was that Sobukwe would refuse to accept an exit visa.

But the women were of the opinion that Sobukwe might accept for the sake of his wife and their four children.

Before his arrest, Sobukwe was a lecturer in Bantu languages at the University of the Witwatersrand. He obtained his B.A. at Fort Hare.

The secretary

If Sobukwe accepts an exit visa, this will raise another question. Will he officially hand over the leadership of the P.A.C. to Potlako Leballo?

At the time of Sobukwe's arrest, Leballo was the national secretary of the movement.

When Sobukwe was sent to Robben Island, Leballo announced that he had taken over the leadership of the P.A.C.

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