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Rand Daily Mail

22/2/85

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I was consulted about Mandela, says Mangope

PATRICK LAURENCE
Political Editor

IF THE imprisoned African National Congress leader, Nelson Mandela, was released without restrictions on the exercise of his political rights, he would seek fulfilment of his political aims through non-violent means. President Lucas Mangope, of Bophuthatswana has predicted

Chief Mangope disclosed in an interview with the Rand Daily Mail that he had been consulted by the SA Government on whether it should release Mandela from jail

"When the SA Government spoke to me on this issue, they didn't mention that conditions would be laid before Mr Mandela to accept," he said

"My view was that Mr Mandela should be released ... That would still be my feeling"

When the release offer was discussed with him last year, Chief Mangope understood that Mandela would be free to engage in political activity once released

President P W Botha has since made the release offer conditional on Mandela formally renouncing violence as a means of achieving political ends, a condition rejected by Mandela partly because it was not based on a similar renunciation by Mr Botha

Commenting on the apparent impasse, Chief Man-

gope, officially recognised leader of South Africa's more than two-million Batswana said "I don't see the need for Mr Mandela to renounce violence. If he is free to engage in political activity, he would automatically not see the need for violence"

It was put to Chief Mangope that Mandela would only come to that view if the ban on the ANC were lifted (a condition which the ANC leader himself laid down in an interview with the British peer, Lord Bethell, as a necessary prerequisite for ending the ANC's armed struggle)

Chief Mangope, however, saw Mandela's release as the catalyst which could lead to the lifting of the ban on the ANC

"The freeing of Mr Mandela would make it possible for the SA Government and the ANC to talk and that would result in my view, in the unbanning of the ANC," he said

"One would lead to the other ... If he were allowed to engage freely in political activity, in what capacity would he do that other than as head of the ANC?"

Asked for his assessment of the ANC, President Mangope replied "I have said on several occasions that any reasonable black man would subscribe to its policy, minus the violence ... They have always stood for what we stand for. But perhaps our way to achieve the end result is different"

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