



**T**he birthday of imprisoned ANC leader Dr Nelson Mandela, who turned 70 on July 18, was celebrated by tens of thousands of Inkatha youth at a mass rally near Durban. In paying tribute to Dr Mandela, the President of Inkatha, Dr Mangosuthu Buthelezi, pleaded that the South African Government release him in the interest of South Africa. Even though the exiled leadership of the ANC had vowed to destroy his (Buthelezi's) leadership and had said it would ban Inkatha when it came to power, Dr Buthelezi said the movement did not expect anything in return for their pleas for Dr. Mandela's release. "We in Inkatha can pay no greater tribute to Dr Mandela than to say that he actually is the real President of the African National Congress," he added. "Our tribute to Dr Mandela is that whether or not he turns his hand

against us politically, or whether or not he drew us into what he was doing, we want him released. We lay down no conditions for Dr Mandela's release because we have a deep and abiding faith in the average black South African and are totally convinced that if Dr Mandela was released into a democratically unshackled black South Africa, massive historical forces would be released to work for the reconciliation of black and white." Dr Buthelezi said he believed Dr Mandela has been "misused" by too many political opportunists and various political operators who spoke in his name. "It is high time he was out of prison and was given an opportunity to contribute towards a solution to the South African problem." If he were released Inkatha believed he would be a "great force" for reconciliation not only between black and white but also between black and black. At

present "political nobodies" had tried to use Dr Mandela's name to promote the present black-on-black violence "something which we know he really abhors." He told the gathering that their voices went up "in a cry to God" to soften the heart of the State President, P W Botha. "We pray for Divine intervention in the Government, folly that just does not see that there can only be an upward spiralling of violence while black leaders who are capable of bringing about a permanent negotiated settlement of the South African problem are treated like mortal enemies. "We cannot negotiate behind the back of leaders who have not been given a chance to say whether they want us to negotiate or not. They must like all of us be free to make their choice on this matter." In telling the youth of Dr Mandela's history, he said that he joined the African National Congress in



1944 and was a prime mover in the establishment of the Youth League. Together with Oliver Tambo, Walter Sisulu, J.K. Ngubane, Robert Sobukwe and others, Dr Mandela set about challenging the ANC from within. "What he and his colleagues did in the Youth League rejuvenated the whole organisation. Within a space of five years after the establishment of the Youth League it gained stature and influence which enabled it to be the dominant influence in crucial issues which the ANC was facing at its National Congresses. Eight years after having established the Youth League, Nelson Mandela was elected President of the ANC in the Transvaal. He was then only 34 years of age. Dr Mandela was one of the prime movers in the Defiance Campaign and perhaps did more than anybody else to establish programmes of action which drew together different organ-

isations opposed to apartheid. In all his political leadership, Dr Mandela never once put the good of the party before the good of South Africa. He was always there pushing for more dynamic action; pushing for greater unity within the ANC ... but he never pushed to cripple the good that other organisations could do and he was ever ready to join hands with whomever shared the prime objective of eradicating racism from South Africa." Even though he had been in jail for nearly 25 years, Dr Mandela still gave all the evidence of being committed to work for black unity. Dr Buthelezi said he could not imagine Dr Mandela coming out of jail and moving to join in escalating black-on-black confrontations. "I believe he would come out of jail to thump anybody whoever he or she may be who dared set black brother against black brother on the eve of a final black victory

over apartheid. "As I know him nothing can make Dr Mandela's heart to bleed more than the present black-on-black conflict and violence. "Dr Mandela would regard anything which detracted from the kind of black unity capable of making a final successful assault against the remaining foundations of apartheid as treachery to the struggle."

**D**r Buthelezi said he believed Dr Mandela would regard it as "rank foolishness" for the ANC to make a mortal enemy out of himself and Inkatha in an attempt to "feed the myth" that the ANC was the "sole authentic voice of black South Africa." Dr Mandela would see it as "suicidal" for the ANC to think that it could succeed in the armed struggle if it had first of all to wage a war against Kwa Zulu. "As recently as 1985 Dr Mandela made quite sure that General Olusegun Obasanjo - a leading member of the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group - understood that I would have a role to play in the reunification of political black South Africa," Dr Buthelezi added. He told General Obasanjo, who has repeated this message outside the borders of South Africa, that: "I may not agree with everything the Chief does, but I regard him as a Freedom Fighter in his own right." General Obasanjo repeated Dr Mandela's words to Mr Oliver Tambo, the President of the External Mission of the ANC. "When Dr Helen Suzmen saw Dr Mandela in prison in 1986, Dr Mandela stated that there could not be negotiations without me and Inkatha having a role in them. "Several people that have come out of Robben Island over the years have brought the same positive message from Dr Mandela. This is apart from direct messages by letter to me and to my wife." Through the years of his bitter confinement in prison, Dr Buthelezi said he believed Dr Mandela had always kept an open and balance mind about critical issues. The worst that apartheid could have done to him had been done to him but there were no indications whatsoever that he had become bitter and twisted. Dr Mandela obviously had far too much dignity to accept release under imposed conditions. Dr Buthelezi said Inkatha called on God to "soften the hearts of both the oppressor and the oppressed" to make it possible for the work of reconciliation to succeed. "Without reconciliation we can have no national will to establish a democracy and to maintain it after it has been established."