

MANDELA'S FULL REPLY TO PRESIDENT BOTHA'S OFFER

THIS IS THE FULL text of Nelson Mandela's response to the conditional offer of freedom made in Parliament by the State President, Mr P W Botha.

The response was read on Mandela's behalf by his daughter, Zindzi, at a function in Jabulani, Soweto, yesterday:

"On Friday my mother and our attorney saw my father at Pollsmoor Prison to obtain his answer to Botha's offer of conditional release.

"The prison authorities attempted to stop this statement being made but he would have none of this and made it clear that he would the statement to you, the people.

"Strangers like Bethell from England and Profesor Dash from the United States have in recent weeks been authorised by Pretoria to see my father without restriction yet Pretoria cannot allow you, the people, to hear what he has to say directly.

"He should be here himself to tell you what he thinks of this statement by Botha. He is not allowed to do so. My mother, who also heard his words, is also not allowed to speak to you today.

"My father and his comrades at Pollsmoor Prison send their greetings to you, the freedom-loving people of this our tragic land, in the full confidence that you will carry on the struggle for freedom.

"He and his comrades at Pollsmoor Prison send their very warmest greetings to Bishop Tutu. Bishop Tutu has made it clear to the world that the Nobel Peace Prize belongs to you who are the people. We salute him.

"My father and his comrades at Pollsmoor Prison are grateful to the United Democratic Front who without hesitation made this venue available to them so that they could speak to you today.

"My father and his comrades wish to make this statement to you, the people, first. They are clear that they are accountable to you and to you alone. And that you should hear their views directly and not through others.

"My father speaks not only for himself and for his comrades at Pollsmoor Prison, but he hopes he also speaks for all those in jail for their opposition to apartheid, for all those who are banished, for all those who are in exile, for all those who suffer under apartheid, for all those who are opponents of apartheid and for all those who are oppressed and exploited.

"Throughout our struggle there have been puppets who have claimed to speak for you. They have made this claim, both here and abroad. They are of no consequence. My father and his colleagues will not be like them

"My father says:

'I am a member of the African National Congress. I have always been a member of the African National Congress and I will remain a member of the African National Congress until the day I die.

'Oliver Tambo is much more than a brother to me. He is my greatest friend and comrade for nearly 50 years. If there is any one amongst you who cherishes my freedom, Oliver Tambo cherishes it more, and I know that he would give his life to see me free. There is no difference between his views and mine!.

"My Father says:

'I am surprised at the conditions that the Government wants to impose on me. I am not a violent man. My colleagues and I wrote in 1952 to Malan asking for a round table conference to find a solution to the problems of our country but that was ignored.

'When Strijdom was in power, we made the same offer. Again it was ignored.

'When Verwoerd was in power we asked for a national convention for all the people in South Africa to decide on their future. This, too, was in vain.

'It was only then when all other forms of resistance were no longer open to us that we turned to armed struggle.

'Let Botha show that he is different to Malan, Strijdom and Verwoerd.

'Let him renounce violence.

'Let him say that he will dismantle apartheid".

'Let him unban the people's organisation, the African National Congress.

'Let him free all who have been imprisoned, banished or exiled for the opposition to apartheid.

'Let him guarantee free political activity so that the people may decide who will govern them.

'I cherish my own freedom dearly but I care even more for your freedom. Too many have died since I went to prison. Too many have suffered for the love of freedom.

'I owe it to their widows, to their orphans, to their mothers and to their fathers who have grieved and wept for them. Not only I have suffered during these, long, lonely, wasted years.

'I am not less life loving than you are. But I cannot sell my birthright, nor am I prepared to sell the birthright of the people to be free.

'I am in prison as the representative of the people and of your organisation the African National Congress which was banned.

'What freedom am I being offered whilst the organisation of the people remains banned?

'What freedom am I being offered when I may be arrested on a pass offence?

'What freedom am I being offered to live my life as a family with my dear wife who remains in banishment in Brandfort?

'What freedom am I being offered when I must ask for permission to live in an urban area?

'What freedom am I being offered when I need a stamp in my pass to seek work?

'What freedom am I being offered when my very South Africa citizenship is not respected?

'Only free men can negotiate. Prisoners cannot enter into contracts.

'Herman Toivo Ja Toivo, when freed, never gave any undertaking, nor was he called upon to do so',

"My father says:

'I cannot and will not give any undertaking at a time when I and you the people are not free. Your freedom and mine cannot be separated.

'I will return'".

+ The Department of Prison Services was asked to comment on the allegation that it attempted to prevent Mandela making the statement but had not responded by late last night.

RAND DAILY MAIL, Monday, February 11, 1985.