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It has become a tradition in our movement that when an historical event o  
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an important occasion takes place it is commemorated, indeed celebrated  
in

a fitting mannero During this year, an event that must necessarily form pa  
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of the 75th anniversary of our movement is the birthday of one of the stal  
warts

of our revolution - Ode Oliver Reginald Tambo, President of the MCo He  
was

the dUitrUr Ct

bom 70 years ago on October 27 in Bizana j\* the Transkeio

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The masses, it is said, make history0 But individuals, too, make their  
imprinto The role of the personality in history and politics does influence  
the course of events. One suoh personality is OR Tambo who has been a  
t the  
centre of South African political action all his adult life and has been  
pivotal in all the innovations and developments within the ANC and South  
Africa  
as a whole\*.

## EARLY EEGIMINGS

Ode Tambo, like most people of his time, grew up in the rural areasc At  
the age  
of 12 he attended the mission school at Ludefce in Holy Cross near flagst  
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Thereafter he got a scholarship from two English missinary women and w  
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' j to Sto Peter\*s in Johannesburg where he completed matriculation with a  
first

class in 19380 He was awarded a scholarship by the Transkeian Bhunga  
and

proceeded to Fort Hare in Alice where he graduated with a B.Sc0 degree  
in  
/1941.

It was while he was at Port Hare that his long political career began. He  
became a key actor in a student protest over the assault of an Afroan  
female employee by a white boarding mastero Cde Tambo had this to sa  
y about

the incidentooo "I was just an ordinary studentooo I\*d always got along w  
ith

the authorities quite well o\* o I found myself playing quite a leading role i

n  
the protest against what happened to this woman,"

Having graduated he went to Johannesburg where he came into contact with AKA  
politicians, notably Walter Sisulu. By the time he went back to Fort Hare for his University Education Diploma he had already widened his contacts

within the the movement. ©

In 1942, "back at Port Hare, he was elected head of his hostel. TCI is was in recognition of his leadership qualities,. As the head of the hostel he was requested to approach the hostel warden about the reconditioning of an old tennis court.

But the very attitude of the authorities to basic rights of the students led to confrontation between the students and the authorities over this request. Cde Tambo found himself again leading a students' protest. He was expelled. But he was not the only one to be expelled. Some left voluntarily in sympathy with those who had been victimised. Describing these events Cde Tambo says, "They pulled me out of my sense of security."

After this expulsion he went back to Johannesburg where he improved his contacts with the AUC. He taught at St Peter's and had among his students Duma Nokwe, who was later to become Secretary General of the ANC in an Executive headed by Chief Luthuli and Cde Tambo. Again here, as a teacher, he had many brushes with the

humiliating realities of the apartheid system. For instance, he was once barred, together with his black students, from entering a cathedral from the front door."

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True to character he ignored the white priest who was confronting him and proceeded to kneel and pray."

## THE YOUTH LEAGUE

As a young man he had become very much immersed in politics. It is, therefore,

logical that he was one of the prominent youth that became impatient with the pace

and manner in which the struggle was being conducted., They were mainly intellectuals - teachers, lawyers, doctors and prominent members of provincial or local students' associations.

As a group of youth that articulated the aspirations of their generation and the masses of the people they held frequent political discussions. These discussions did not confine themselves to the South African situation but touched upon such

issues as the rise of fascism in Europe, the situation in the African continent, etc.

It was this increasing role of the youth in the national liberation struggle that

led to the annual conference of the AUC in 1942 resolving that the Executive should

institute a Youth League of the AUC. The 1943 Conference adopted a similar resolution.

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Thus, with Cde Tambo one of the leading participants, the AUC Youth League was instituted in April 1944. Featuring prominently with him were figures such as

Lembede, Mandela, Sisulu, Mda, Ujongwe, Nkomo, Ngubane, Sobukwe and many others.'

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The aim of these young men and women was simple and honest: a desire to remodel the ANC and broaden the circle of its recruitment as well as maintaining a

permanent youth wing. Outside of these organisational aims, the Youth League stated

its political aims as follows\*- to articulate ideological questions such as African nationalism, to work out political strategies, militant policies and programmes and to map out suitable organisational structures for the realisation of these objectives.,

Cde Tambo's leadership role in the ANC was firmly established during this period.

For a while he served as the national secretary of the Youth League, then became

its Transvaal president and, in 1948-49 was national vice president. But even

before this latter position, he had been elected to the Transvaal Provincial

Executive Committee of the ANC in 1946.

The Youth League produced the Programme of Action in 1949. This document changed

the face of the ANC. Even in future years only those who signified their willingness to carry out this militant Programme of Action would be elected to

the oncoming Executive. And, into that Executive Cde Tambo was elected in 1949.

Since then he has been rising from an ordinary member of the National Executive.

Committee to the position of Secretary General, then to Deputy President and

today president of the ANC.

In 1948, at the instance of Sisulu, Cde Tambo began to study law and in December

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1952 started a legal practice with Nelson Mandela. This partnership cemented

a long-standing relationship which had started at Fort Hare, seen the founding

of the Youth League, gone through the Defiance Campaign of 1952, into the general

strikes against the government and was to see them sitting together in the dock

in the famous Treason Trial of 1956.

It was during this partnership that Cde Tambo married Adelaide Tshuku du, a woman

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who has proved to be a pillar of strength to him throughout these years.©

Another flower to the Tambo-Mandela relationship was Nelson's marriage to

Winnie, a very close friend to Adelaide.

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Cde Tambo was Secretary General from 1954 to 1958.© It was during this time that

he was served with a banning order barring him from attending all gatherings and

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restricting his movements to the magisterial districts of Johannesburg and Benoni

for two years. In 1959 he was served with a further government order prohibiting from attending any gathering for a period of 5 years.©

These banings affected the legal practice and Nelson Mandela had set-up to

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'A week after the Sharpsville masscre and two days before the declaration  
of the  
State of Emergency in March 1960, he was directed by the National Exec  
utive  
Committee to go out of the country to put the case against South Africa in  
world  
fora0

A SINCERE REVOLUTIONARY

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He has always beeb a straightforward, sincere and simple man0 You nee  
d to see him  
in action to fully appreciate this0 His sense of justice, dedication and pas  
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for discovering the truth are some of ^outstanding characterie features',,

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He has always welcomed as comrades and allies in struggle all those Sou  
th Africans  
belonging to organisations dedicated to the destruction of the oppressive  
system  
in South AfricaÂ© When the Communist Party was banned in in 1950, C  
de Tambo, speaking  
at a meeting in May said, "Today it is the Communist Party,,Tomorrow it w  
ill be our  
trade unions, our Indian Congress, our African People's Organisation, our  
Africaii  
National Congress"Â© Prom this statement it can be seen how he has al  
ways looked  
at our struggleÂ© He has held to these views consistently Â© Throughout  
the yeais

he has fought to make the ABC a representative of all the people of Sout  
h AfricaÂ©

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He has never thought that this would have to imposed on  
ensured that the ANC truly transforms itself from an African organisation i  
nto a

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national organisation of like-minded people, united by their hatred of colo  
nialism,  
racism, exploitation and national degradation; sharing a common goal -  
the Freedom  
Charter - and whose activities consist in propagating its ideas amongst t  
he people  
and fighting in a constituency which defines itself. This aim realised itsel  
f fully  
at the Second Consultative Conference of the ANC in Kahwe in June 19  
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## INTERNATIONAL WORK

The banning of our organisation had been foreseen hy the movement's  
leadership. Hence it instructed Cde Tambo to leave the country to mobil  
ise for  
international support. This proved doubly important because when the  
leaders of  
Umkhonto Wesizwe were arrested in Rivonia, the external mission of th  
e ANC had to  
take over the tasks of the armed struggle. Cde Tambo featured prominentl  
y in the  
planning of the training, organisation and campaigns of Umkhonto Wesiz  
we. It can be  
said that with his dedication to the struggle, he has inspired our vanguard  
  
combatants to withstand difficult times such as those when the racist sta  
te was  
still surrounded by its colonialist friends, up to now when Umkhonto oper  
ates from  
  
anyoneo Rather, he has



every center of South Africa. As Commande-in-Chief of MK, he is at. living symbol of courage, the spirit of no-surrender and preparedness to lay down his life for the freedom of his people.

Comrade Tlamo's role in arousing world consciousness on the plight of the people of South Africa has been tremendous. His basic thesis is that in liberating South Africa we are contributing to the international community's struggle for justice and therefore assistance to us is: not an act of charity it is a revolutionary act. Apartheid is not only fraudulent, says Tambo but anachronistic. Our struggles against the apartheid system is therefore connected with the worldwide struggle for peace-our armed struggle is basically a struggle for peace.

Since coming out of South Africa in 1960, he has earned the respect of many world figures by his honesty, his modesty, his incisive intelligence and his historic indelible contributions against the apartheid regime at the United Nations; and others. So ably has he presented the case against racist South Africa that he

has come to be regarded as a man whose authority cannot be challenged on such issues. The esteem with which he is regarded in Africa can be judged by the fact that the movement he leads, the ANC, is regarded as the authentic and representative voice of the oppressed and democratic forces in South Africa.

During his campaigns in Africa and overseas, he has met many world leaders, who have developed great respect for his opinions. Many countries have published and

translated his speeches into many languages.

This is Othello, the man of the people, leader of the oppressed masses of South Africa.

Should maker of history. This is Othello, the man hated by the racists because he represents

what they do not believe in- democracy and equality &£ all0 As Nikolai O  
strovsky,  
the great Soviet writer would say, his 70 years is 70 years spent as to leave no  
torturing regrets of a life wasted. His life has been dedicated to the noble  
st  
goal of man- the liberation of mankind.