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*File Obituary*

**AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS  
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OBITUARY OF MOSES KOTANE

23/5/1978.

*File* *OBITUARY*

On the night of the 19th of May, 1978, in Moscow, Comrade Moses "Malome" Kotane, Treasurer-General of the African National Congress and General Secretary of the South African Communist Party passed away at the age of 72.

The African National Congress lowers its banners in respectful memory of this outstanding revolutionary and patriot, this great son of Africa and the international working class movement. In spite of himself, his unbending revolutionary will did finally submit to the dictates of nature, bringing to an end a glorious life spent in struggle. Death has removed from our ranks one whose experience and contribution as an activist, a thinker, an organiser and a leader cannot be duplicated; one whose experience and contribution, studied, understood and assimilated by present and future generations of our people, will forever remain the inspirational spearhead of the revolutionary struggles of the masses of our people.

MOSES MAUANE KOTANE was born on August 9th, 1905 at Tambukstad, near the Groot Madikwe River in the district of Rustenburg, Transvaal, the second child of 11 children of Samuel Segogwane and Siporah Mmadira Kotane. He was brought up in a peaceful and loving family. From his parents he inherited the pride in his people and the hatred for national and race oppression, which until death almost became his personal hallmark.

Born into a peasant family, in his youth he helped as a herdboy, looking after the family cattle and other stock and was afterwards employed at the age of 13 on a white farm. Later he worked as a domestic servant, waiter, mine-worker and baker, moving from job to job partly

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because he wanted to improve his educational level.

Comrade Kotane attended school for only a few years and never managed to finish primary school. As a young man, like the youth of our country today who have died in struggles against an oppressive system of education, he was very interested in education. He therefore taught himself to read and to write as he moved from job to job.

Having moved to Johannesburg permanently in 1924, Comrade Moses was very fortunate to be introduced to a night school run by the Communist Party. As he himself said later:

"It was at that night school where English was taught to me in the right way... It was there that many things and concepts were made clear to me and where I began to understand the capitalist society, its class divisions and national oppression and exploitation."

It was perhaps inevitable that, given his background, Moses Kotane would be drawn into the struggle to liberate his people. It is as though Comrade Moses had been recording the days on a calculating machine for when he passed away two days ago he was exactly 50 years in the African National Congress having joined in 1928.

At this time it was already clear to Malome that the only way in which we could win our freedom was by making sure that the ordinary working people of our country were themselves involved in the struggle, that we could not win merely by relying on the educated ones to do the fighting for the majority.

Therefore in the same year that he joined the ANC, in 1928, Comrade Kotane joined the Bakery Workers Union, beginning a life-long involvement with the struggles of the workers of our country. By 1929, already, he was elected Vice-Chairman of the S.A. Federation of Native Trade Unions. It was again this involvement in working class struggles which drew Moses Kotane to the Communist Party which he joined in 1929. Three decades later, when



he was banned already, Comrade Moses maintained very close association with the late President-General of the ANC, Chief Albert Lutuli. Whenever a difficult problem arose Chief Lutuli used to say:

"Kotane is the leader of the workers. We just hear what the leader of the workers has to say about this."

Malome was therefore an outstanding Marxist-Leninist as well as a fervent patriot. As he himself declared:

"The fullest freedom for the self-expression of nationalities can, with internationalism, be found only within the framework of socialism."

Convinced that Africans can hold their own in fair competition, he despised white supremacy and would not tolerate any trace of it under any circumstances. The Communist Party and the African National Congress were not competitors, he urged, but the strong fists of a single political force which would succeed only if both were trained to strike their blows at the same time and in total agreement. Throughout his life he therefore made it his business to strengthen the two arms of the liberation movement.

Because of these political positions and his dedication to their fulfilment, Comrade Moses was elected General Secretary of the Communist Party in 1939 and a member of the National Executive Committee of the African National Congress in 1946, rising later to the very responsible position of Treasurer-General of the ANC, charged among other things, with the task of the proper control and use of the funds and assets of the movement, for the advancement of the struggle and not for personal gain.

In his long life of struggle, Comrade Moses Kotane was, as always side-by-side with his colleagues, subject to continual police harassment and persecution. He was for instance one of those arrested in the campaign to suppress the great Mine Workers' Strike of 1946. During the same year he was arrested and charged with sedition.



After the Communist Party of South Africa was banned in 1950, he was one of the first to be served with banning orders and was later again one of the first of our leaders to be put under 24-hour house arrest. He was of course also involved in the Defiance Campaign and was one of those charged during the marathon Treason Trial of 1956-61.

A committed and consistent internationalist, Malome has maintained direct contact with the world anti-imperialist movement since 1931 when he first went to Moscow to attend Party School. He went back again to Moscow in 1935, this time for discussions with the leadership of the Communist International.

Virtually opening the external mission of the African National Congress, Comrade Moses, accompanied by Maulvi Cachalia, attended the Bandung Conference in Indonesia in 1955. This further emphasised his stature as one of the outstanding leaders of the national liberation movement of all the oppressed and colonised peoples, one of the founders of the non-aligned movement.

During this visit overseas, Comrade Moses was able to meet and discuss with, among others, Pandit Nehru, Prime Minister of India, Abdul Gamal Nasser, Prime Minister of Egypt, President Sukarno of Indonesia and Chou-en-lai of People's China.

Malome was a founder-member of Umkhonto we Sizwe, our people's army. As he said at the ANC conference held in the then Bechuanaland in 1962, under the watchful eye of the British colonial police:

"When a man takes no notice of what you say, sometimes you have to twist his arm to make him listen to you."

As part of the decision to step up the armed offensive against the racist regime, it was agreed that Moses Kotane should leave South Africa to help in the preparation of Umkhonto we Sizwe and in strengthening international support for our struggle. He left the country in 1963 and for the next six years worked tirelessly and in



close community with Comrades Oliver Tambo, President of the ANC with whom he had, by then worked for twenty years and with the late J.B. Marks, his close comrades-in-arms for forty years.

He suffered his first stroke in 1968 and in 1969 was moved to hospital in Moscow. To his death on the 19th of May he was cared for with great attention and affection in the first country of socialism where race and national oppression and class exploitation were eliminated by the Great October Socialist Revolution of 1917. For this we wish to express our sincere appreciation to the CPSU, the Soviet Government, to the doctors and nurses and the people of the Soviet Union.

His death is a severe loss to us. We are sad because his unquenchable desire to return to the country of his birth, South Africa, to fight for its total national and social emancipation, was not fulfilled. We will carry on the struggle, inspired by his example, led by revolutionary heritage that he has left behind. Our heroic people, under the leadership of the African National Congress will surely seize power and bring to a brilliant conclusion Malome's life's work for which the ANC granted him its the highest award, ISITHWALANDWE and the USSR, the highly honoured Lenin Peace Prize.

Our heartfelt condolences go to Malome's wife, Rebecca and his sons, Leni, Joseph, Sam and Isaac. To you we say:

Gomotsegang jalo dikhutsana.  
O ile mogale, mochwarathebe ya  
Kgosi,

O madi a borena mo boreneng,  
Losho lwagagwe ke chwellopele  
le bophelo.

Mayibuye iAfrika!

Thuthuzelekani ngoko  
zinkedama,  
Kuf'ikhalipha nefanankosi,  
Egazi lithetha kwinkosi  
yeenkosi.  
Ukufa kwalo kunomvuzo  
nomvuka!  
Mayibuye iAfrika!

Amandla ngawethu!  
Maatla ke a rona!  
Power to the People!