

SPEECH OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS, NELSON MANDELA, AT THE FUNERAL OF THE NATIONAL CHAIRPERSON OF THE ANC, OLIVER REGINALD TAMBO.

JOHANNESBURG, MAY 2, 1993.

(<http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/speeches/tambo.html>)

Master of Ceremonies,

Our dear Adelaide, Thembi, Dali, Tselane and the rest of the Tambo family,

Your Majesties,

Esteemed international dignitaries,

Fellow mourners,

Comrades:

A great giant who strode the globe like a colossus has fallen.

A mind whose thoughts have opened the doors to our liberty has ceased to function.

A heart whose dreams gave hope to the despised has for ever lost its beat.

The gentle voice whose measured words of reason shook the thrones of tyrants has been silenced. Peoples of the world!

Here lies before you the body of a man who is tied to me by an umbilical cord which cannot be broken.

We say he has departed. But can we allow him to depart while we live!

Can we say Oliver Tambo is no more, while we walk this solid earth!

Oliver lived not because he could breathe.

He lived not because blood flowed through his veins.

Oliver lived not because he did all the things that all of us as ordinary men and women do.

Oliver lived because he had surrendered his very being to the people.

He lived because his very being embodied love, an idea, a hope, an aspiration, a vision.

While he lived, our minds would never quite formulate the thought that this man is other than what the naked eye could see.

We could sense it, but never crystallise the thought that with us was one of the few people who inhabited our own human environment, who could be described as the jewel in our crown.

I say that Oliver Tambo has not died, because the ideals for which he sacrificed his life can never die.

I say that Oliver Tambo has not died because the ideals of freedom, human dignity and a colour-blind respect for every individual cannot perish.

I say he has not died because there are many of us who became part of his soul and therefore willingly entered into a conspiracy with him, for the victory of his cause.

While the ANC lives, Oliver Tambo cannot die!

While Umkhonto we Sizwe exists, Oliver Tambo cannot die!

Oliver Tambo cannot die while his allies in the South African Communist Party and the Congress of South African Trade Unions remain loyal to the common purpose.

O.R. cannot cease to be, while the millions of our people gather themselves into the democratic organisations that make up our own rainbow coalition.

O.R. cannot be consigned to the past, while those who are with us today from the rest of the world remain as they have been, opponents of the apartheid crime against humanity, proponents of the common vision of justice and peace, defenders of the right of the child, the man, the woman and the beast of the forest to live, to be free and to prosper.

We all know many who have killed in defence of oppression. But we also know that some of these have themselves been victims of oppression.

We know that black and white, across the globe - the Pole, the Greek, the Ethiopian, the Cuban, the Brazilian and the Eritrean, people of all nationalities, are all united in their opposition to apartheid and injustice.

While these exist, Oliver Tambo cannot perish.

Let he or she who dares, stand up and tell us that it will happen that, while humanity survives, it will come to pass that O.R. Tambo will cease to be.

All tyrants, whatever their colour and their shape and their garments, come today and are gone tomorrow. The people, the victims of their tyranny, live on.

All tyrannical systems, whatever the name they give themselves - nazism, colonialism, apartheid, racism are some of their names - all, without exception, come today and tomorrow are no more than a bad memory.

The opponents of tyranny -

the South African, Oliver Tambo,

the South African, Chris Hani,

the South African, Albert Luthuli,

the Indian. Indira Gandhi,
the Indian, Rajiv Gandhi,
the Grenadian, Maurice Bishop,
the Zimbabweans, Herbert Chitepo, Jason Moyo and Josiah Tongogara,
the Mozambican, Samora Machel,
the Swede. Olof Palme,
the Americans, Martin Luther King Jr, John F. Kennedy and Malcolm X,
the Angolan, Aghostino Neto,
the Guinean. Amilcar Cabral,
the Nigerian, Murtala Mohamed,
the Chilean, Salvador Allende,
the Ghanaian, Kwame Nkrumah,
the Egyptian, Abdul Gamal Nasser,
the Motswana, Seretse Khama,
the Swazi, King Sobhuza II,
the woman, the man, the son, the daughter, the unknown soldier, the nameless heroes and
heroines for whom no songs of praise are sung
all of them continue, still, to speak to us because they live.

Dear brother:

You set yourself a task which only the brave would dare. Somewhere in the mystery of your
essence, you heard the call that you must devote your life to the creation of a new South
African nation.

And having heard that call, you did not hesitate to act.

It may be that all of us - your dear wife, Adelaide, your children, those of us who are proud to
count ourselves among your friends, your closest comrades - it may be that all of us will never
be able to discover what it was in your essence which convinced you that you, and us, could, by
our conscious and deliberate actions, so heal our fractured society that out of the terrible
heritage, there could be born a nation.

All humanity knows what you had to do to create the conditions for all of us to reach this
glorious end.

There are many who did not understand that to heal we had to lance the boil.

There are many who still do not understand that the obedient silence of the enslaved is not the reward of Peace which is our due.

There are some who cannot comprehend that the right to rebellion against tyranny is the very guarantee of the permanence of freedom.

We demand answers from all those who have set themselves up as your critics, but still dare to call themselves democrats.

We want to know - if life itself was threatened, as apartheid threatened the very existence of those who are black, was it not imperative that everything be done to end apartheid~ and if necessary by force of arms!

We want to know - if a crime against humanity was being perpetrated, as did the apartheid system, was it not necessary to ensure that the criminals were isolated and quarantined, and if necessary by the imposition of sanctions!

We want to know - if a social system was established whose central pillars were racial oppression and exploitation, such as the apartheid system was, would it not be correct that such a system be rendered unworkable and such a society ungovernable!

We want to know - when powerful, arrogant and brutal men deliberately close their ears to reason, and reply to the petitions of the dispossessed with the thunder of the guns, the crack of the whip and the rattle of the jail keys, is it not right to bring down the walls of Jericho!

Dear brother, dear friend, dear comrade:

You did all this and continued to maintain tolerance for your detractors and a healthy scorn for your enemies.

Today we stand watching the dawn of a new day.

We can see that we have it in our power to remake South Africa into what you wanted it to be - free, just, prosperous, at peace with itself and with the world.

Let all who value peace say together - long live Oliver Tambo!

Let all who love freedom say together - long live Oliver Tambo!

Let all who uphold the dignity of all human beings say together - long live Oliver Tambo!

Let all who stand for friendship among the peoples say together - long live Oliver Tambo!

Let all of us who live say that while we live, the ideals for which Oliver Tambo lived, sacrificed and died will not die!

Let all of us who live, say that while we live, Oliver Tambo will not die!

May he, for his part, rest in peace.

Go well, my brother and farewell, dear friend.

As you instructed, we will bring peace to our tormented land.

As you directed, we will bring freedom to the oppressed and liberation to the oppressor.

As you strived, we will restore the dignity of the dehumanised.

As you commanded, we will defend the option of a peaceful resolution of our problems.

As you prayed, we will respond to the cries of the wretched of the earth. As you loved them, we will, always, stretch out a hand of endearment to those who are your flesh and blood.

In all this, we will not fail you.