

# RELIGIOUS ACTION NETWORK

for justice and peace in southern Africa

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a project of the American Committee on Africa

**FOUNDING MEMBERS**  
(Partial listing)

**Dr. Wyatt Tee Walker**, *Chairperson*  
Canaan Baptist Church, New York

**Canon Frederick B. Williams**  
Church of the Intercession, New York

**Rev. M. William Howard**, *President*  
American Committee on Africa

**Jennifer Davis**, *Executive Director*  
American Committee on Africa

**Aleah Bacquie**, *Coordinator*  
Religious Action Network

To : Members of the Religious Action Network  
From : Jennifer Davis  
Re : Memorial Service for Oliver Tambo.

I know that many RAN members had personal ties with that great son of Africa, Oliver Tambo, long time President of the ANC who died in South Africa April 24th. We will mourn his loss, even as we rededicate ourselves to the freedom struggle which absorbed his entire life.

RAN members are invited to join in a National Memorial Service on Sunday May 16th, at the Cathedral Church of St John the Divine, where tribute will be paid to this heroic leader. I enclose for your information a flyer, and hope that you will be able to make an appropriate announcement about this very special event from your pulpit on Sunday.



198 Broadway • New York, N.Y. 10038 • (212) 962-1210

William H. Booth, *President*  
Wyatt Tee Walker, *Vice President*  
David Scott, *Vice President*  
Jennifer Davis, *Executive Director*

**HONOR THE FIGHTING SPIRIT OF**  
**OLIVER TAMBO**

**CHAIRMAN OF THE AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS**  
**PRESIDENT OF THE ANC DURING 30 YEARS OF BITTER EXILE**

**October 17, 1917 -- April 24, 1993**

**NATIONAL MEMORIAL SERVICE**

**CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF ST. JOHN THE DIVINE**  
**112th STREET AND AMSTERDAM AVENUE**

**(1 train to 110th St., 1 blk east)**

**SUNDAY MAY 16**  
**2-5 PM**

**Sponsored by the African National Congress**

**For information and fliers contact:**

**The American Committee on Africa**  
**198 Broadway, Room 401**  
**New York, NY 10038 (212) 962-1210**



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THE NEW YORK TIMES OBITUARIES SUNDAY, APRIL 25, 1993

## Oliver Tambo Is Dead at 75; Led Assault on Apartheid

By BILL KELLER  
Special to The New York Times

JOHANNESBURG, April 24 — Oliver R. Tambo, who led the African National Congress through its decades of banishment and its guerrilla war against the South African Government, died of a stroke here early this morning. He was 75.

Nelson Mandela, his lifelong friend and successor as president of the congress, bid forlorn homage to Mr. Tambo as a father figure who held the fractious movement intact during its 30 years of exile.

"He was my partner, my comrade, my friend and my colleague," said Mr. Mandela, who together with Mr. Tambo formed South Africa's first black law firm more than 40 years ago. "He succeeded in developing this organization to become the strongest political force in the country."

### Suffered Stroke in Exile

Mr. Tambo, who was partly disabled by a stroke in 1989 while in exile in Sweden, spent the last two years in the ceremonial post of national chairman of the congress. He was recalled mainly for his gentleness and efficiency, and among the more restive young blacks of today he was part of a generation that had mellowed too much into compromise.

Together Mr. Tambo and Mr. Mandela, who co-founded the congress's youth league in 1944, reinvigorated a flagging antiapartheid organization into a militant liberation movement, preaching civil disobedience and mass protest. Congress members still sing a liberation war song with the chorus: "Tambo is coming!"

After the congress was banned in 1960, it was Mr. Tambo who was sent abroad to rally foreign support, mobilize international sanctions, and build a guerrilla army in the neighboring states of Africa. In 1967, he became president of the congress.

He returned to South Africa from his exile base in London in December 1990, after the legalization of the congress, and was replaced as president in 1991 by Mr. Mandela, who during his 27-year imprisonment had come to symbolize the campaign against apartheid.

### No Delay Expected

His death was not expected to alter the pace of negotiations aimed at producing South Africa's first universal elections by early next year. Nor will it generate the same sense of vacuum created earlier this month by the assassination of Chris Hani, the charismatic black leader of the South African Communist Party who was shot on the driveway of his home outside Johannesburg on April 11.

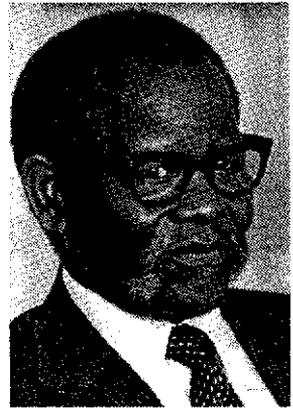
But the death was an uneasy reminder of the age of other senior leaders, most indispensably Mr. Mandela, who is apparently in robust health though

only nine months younger than Mr. Tambo.

Like Mr. Mandela, Mr. Hani and many other top leaders of the anti-apartheid campaign, Mr. Tambo came from the impoverished hills of the Eastern Cape, in a region later designated by the architects of apartheid as the "independent" homeland of Transkei.

He was born on Oct. 27, 1917, to peasant farmers who were members of the Pondo tribe in the Transkei village of Bizania. He spent what he later called a politically sheltered childhood, attending Anglican and Methodist mission schools. He won a scholarship to Fort Hare University, where he studied science and education and received a bachelor's degree in 1941.

It was during his college years that he became politically active. After an attack on a black woman dining-hall employee by a white male student went unpunished, Mr. Tambo led a student protest. He remained at the university for graduate work but was expelled in 1942 after he led a large student protest against arbitrary restrictions on the



Oliver R. Tambo

Camera Press, 1967

## Tambo defended violence, but he is recalled for his gentleness.

use of a campus tennis court.

In 1944 Mr. Tambo founded the Youth League of the African National Congress with Mr. Mandela, a fellow student at Fort Hare, and several colleagues at St. Peter's, his high school alma mater, which hired him as a teacher after he was expelled. The league was generally disenchanted with the cautious approach of the parent organization toward seeking the overthrow of white minority rule and urged more direct action.

Their prodding led the congress, in 1952, to adopt a "Programme of Action" drawn up by the youth league, including strikes, boycotts and general defiance of apartheid laws.

In 1956, Mr. Tambo and Mr. Mandela were arrested and charged with treason. They were tried nearly two years later and found not guilty in 1960.

The shift from a nonviolent, civil disobedience approach came the same year, when police opened fire on a demonstration in Sharpeville, killing 69 people and wounding 181 others. At that point, Mr. Tambo said later, he "knew that nonviolence had become meaningless." The African National Congress was banned two days later, and its members went underground and began organizing a military wing called Umk-

honto we Sizwe, or Spear of the Nation.

In 1962, after a series of attacks on Government buildings believed to symbolize apartheid, Mr. Mandela was arrested, tried and sentenced to life in prison. Mr. Tambo, after failing to win support from the United States for the congress, obtained an agreement in 1963 with the Soviet Union to supply arms.

By 1981, attacks on police stations, pass-records offices and oil refineries were occurring on an average of one every 53 hours. In 1985 radio broadcasts from Lusaka, Zambia, Mr. Tambo urged black South Africans to make their townships "ungovernable."

### Defended Group's Tactics

Mr. Tambo periodically defended the group's tactics by arguing that the apartheid Government he was fighting had engaged in far worse kinds of terrorism in its effort to preserve its power. In a 1982 interview, he said: "We are called terrorists. After 70 years, what would anybody do if the response had been murder, torture, life imprisonment? Who is a terrorist? Is it not the person who has been persecuting human beings simply because they are black?"

In his last active years, as the white Government began to give ground, Mr. Tambo pressed the congress to take a more flexible approach to economic sanctions, to allow selective investment in the economy the congress would inherit. His appeal was rejected as premature.

Mr. Tambo is survived by his wife, Adelaide, a well-known campaigner against apartheid whom he married in 1956, and three children.

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American Committee on Africa  
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Judge William Booth, President  
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Jennifer Davis, Executive Director  
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