From Oliver Tambo

18 November 1957
Johannesburg, South Africa

Facing prosecution by the government of South Africa for his anti-apartheid work, the secretary general of the African National Congress (ANC) requests King’s support for the upcoming international day of protest against apartheid. A week after the protest the South African government withdrew charges against Tambo and 60 of the other 155 activists accused of high treason for their anti-apartheid stance.

Rev. Martin Luther King,
Dexter Ave. Baptist Church,
Montgomery,
ALABAMA, U.S.A.

Dear Sir,

We learn with gratitude that some outstanding personalities are sponsoring an international protest against the inhuman apartheid policy of the government of the Union of South Africa. The proposed protest is due to take place on Universal Human Rights Day, the 10th of December, because of South Africa’s continuous violation of the Declaration of Human Rights.

We, the oppressed people of South Africa, highly appreciate this step and we now appeal to you to give your full support.

Yours faithfully,
[signed]
O. R. TAMBO
SECRETARY-GENERAL

T.I.S. MLKP-MBU: Box 66.

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1. The Day of Protest was observed in at least twenty-one nations and forty-two communities in the United States (John Gunther to Reverends, 26 December 1957). Oliver Reginald Tambo (1917–1993), born in Mbizana, Cape Province, South Africa, received his B.S. (1941) from University College of Fort Hare. In 1944 Tambo was one of the founders of the African National Congress Youth League (ANCYL), which reinvigorated the ANC’s political struggle by mobilizing thousands of South Africans in the war against apartheid. Tambo was appointed secretary general of the ANC in December 1955, and in 1958 became deputy president of the organization. In 1960, facing possible detention and increasing restrictions against the ANC, Tambo went into exile, from which he continued to rouse world-wide protest against the apartheid regime. In 1967 he became president of the ANC. Tambo returned to South Africa in 1991, after more than three decades in exile.