

*Order of the Companions of O.R. Tambo in Gold,
South Africa*

Presented posthumously to Dr. Cheddi Jagan on April 27, 2005

The order of O.R. Tambo was instituted in 2002 to award heads of state and senior diplomats of other countries for showing friendship towards South Africa. It was awarded to Dr. Jagan for his exceptional contribution to the struggle against racial oppression and colonial exploitation.

The Order of the Companions of O R Tambo

The late Oliver Reginald Tambo played a central role in the freedom struggle against *apartheid*, and remains a true icon of our liberation history.

From an early age, Tambo rose through the ranks of the liberation movement. He was a founder member of the African National Congress Youth League (ANCYL) in 1944. In 1948, he was elected President of the Transvaal ANCYL and national Vice-President of the ANCYL in 1949. In 1955, when the then Secretary General, the late Walter Sisulu, was banned in terms of the Suppression of Communism Act, it was Tambo who was appointed to fill his post. In 1958, Tambo was elected to the post of Deputy President of the ANC. Finally, in 1967, after the death of ANC President General Chief Albert Lutulu, Tambo was appointed acting President of the ANC, an appointment confirmed by the Morogoro Conference in 1969. He held this position until 1991 when he had to relinquish it due to ill health.

Tambo dedicated his life to overthrowing the *apartheid* regime by mobilising fellow citizens to resist the *apartheid* government and relentlessly mobilising world opinion against the odious *apartheid* ideology and regime.

Tambo was known in the liberation movement for his gentle character and compassionate qualities. His benevolence and personal concern for the plight of freedom fighters and their conditions in the field endeared him to thousands of liberation fighters.

It is thus appropriate that the central motif of the design of the Order named after O R Tambo is the *majola* (mole snake), which, in African mythology, visits babies in a spirit of benevolence. The snake comes as a friend and protector to prepare the baby for a successful and safe adult life, and it is said that the only non-threatening way to drive it away is for the mother to squirt it with her own breastmilk.

Although the mole snake can be aggressive when cornered and can give painful bites, it is non-venomous. The African myth interprets the snake as a friend and a member of a dynamic ecology. The *majola*'s visitation is thus seen less as a benign demonstration of goodwill, and more as an active expression of solidarity and support, encouraging long-term success of the young and, by extension, the human race. In the design of the main badge of this Order, the enveloping and watchful eye of the *majola*, with fangs extending from both the top and bottom, symbolises the active expression of solidarity and support for South Africa. In the centre is a tomoye of four sections, inspired by the universal ying and yang that speak of a meeting point for diverse spiritual energies. This is enclosed by north and south pointers representing the relationship between countries of the north and countries of the south.

The Order of the Companions of O R Tambo comprises four elements: a neck badge (a gold, silver or bronze medallion on a neck band); a miniature (a miniature gold, silver or bronze medallion for wearing as a brooch or on the breast pocket); a lapel rosette (also in gold, silver or bronze) and a wooden ceremonial staff incorporating an entwined mole snake. The stick, carved out of dark, indigenous wood, symbolises appreciation for the support and solidarity shown, and also symbolises a commitment to support and stand by the recipient in return.

Recipients of the Order are entitled to indicate that they have been invested with the relevant category of the Order by the use of the following post-nominal letters:

- SCOT for recipients of the Supreme Companion of O R Tambo (gold)
- GCOT for recipients of the Grand Companion of O R Tambo (silver)
- COT for recipients of the Companion of O R Tambo (bronze).

The Order of the Companions of O R Tambo is awarded in three categories to eminent foreign nationals and other foreign dignitaries for friendship shown to South Africa. It is therefore concerned primarily with matters of peace, co-operation, international solidarity and support and is integral to the execution of South Africa's international and multilateral relations. The Supreme Companion of O R Tambo in gold is awarded to those who have actively promoted the interests and aspirations of South Africa through excellent co-operation and active expression of solidarity and support. The Grand Companion of O R Tambo in silver is awarded to those who have actively promoted the interests and aspirations of South Africa through outstanding co-operation, solidarity and support. The Companion of O R Tambo in bronze is awarded to those who have actively promoted the interests and aspirations of the Republic through co-operation, solidarity and support.



Dr Cheddi Jagan (1918 - 1997)

ORDER OF THE COMPANIONS OF O R TAMBO IN GOLD



**AWARDED TO CHEDDI JAGAN
FOR HIS EXCEPTIONAL CONTRIBUTION
TO THE STRUGGLE AGAINST RACIAL OPPRESSION
AND COLONIAL EXPLOITATION**

Dr. Cheddi Jagan was born on a sugar plantation, Port Mourant, on March 22, 1918 to parents who were indentured labourers from Uttar Pradesh, India. He attended secondary school in the capital, Georgetown. Between 1936 - 1942 he attended Howard University, Washington DC, Northwestern University Dental School and the Central YMCA College where he obtained a B. Sc. In 1943 he married Janet Rosenberg. They had two children.

Jagan returned home in 1943 and quickly emerged himself in politics as the social conditions of especially the majority African and Indian population deteriorated. In 1946 he formed the Political Affairs Committee, the aim of which was the formation of a political party. He scaled down his dental practice and in 1947 contested and won a seat in the Legislature, where, almost single-handedly, he took on the colonial authorities.

In 1950 he formed the People's Progressive Party whose main goal was independence from colonial rule. To that end a massive national campaign was launched. In 1953 he surprised the British by winning the national elections, the first ever under adult suffrage. He became Minister of Agriculture and leader of the Assembly. His pro-worker programme infuriated the British who labeled him a communist, suspended the constitution, sent in British troops and deposed Jagan and his colleagues. In 1954 he was jailed for breaking a restriction order.

In spite of the shenanigans of the British which engineered a split in the PPP, Jagan won the 1957 and 1961 elections and became the country's first Premier. His government embarked on an aggressive social programme in health, education and housing, making land available to farmers and bringing about improved labour laws.

Between 1962-1964 opposition forces with covert and overt support by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency fomented political and ethnic strife in an effort to overthrow the government. The British opposed independence under the Jagan government and openly sided with the opposition and again sent in troops. Jagan, although he won the highest number of votes in the 1964 elections, did not gain a majority and two opposition parties formed a coalition government.

Jagan became opposition leader and for twenty-eight years struggled against the government which continued in power through successive rigged elections and attacks on human rights. His long struggle for a return to democracy bore fruit when in 1992 he was elected President of the Republic. He continued his people-oriented development and internationally advocated a new world dispensation of peace and co-operation.

In the Caribbean and South America, Dr Jagan was a leading advocate against *apartheid* in South Africa, becoming close friends with O R Tambo and Usuf Dadoo.

Cheddi Jagan will be remembered for his committed opposition to oppression and exploitation.



Walking Stick



Neck badge



Lapel rosette



Miniature



REMEMBERING
CHEDDI



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