

# **APDUSA VIEWS**

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# **A TRIBUTE TO I.B. TABATA**

## **FOREWORD**

It is necessary for the reader of this tribute to know the background as to how APDUSA (Natal) came to pay public tribute to the late I.B. Tabata. The tribute took the form of a public lecture which was delivered on the evening of Saturday, 5th October 1991 at the David Landau Centre, Asherville, Durban.

The audience entering the hall was greeted with banners and placards of the New Unity Movement and APDUSA. Large portraits of I.B. Tabata were placed on the walls. Magnified front covers of his more important works were prominently displayed. The atmosphere was one of triumph rather than dejection and mourning.

The presenter of the tribute, Dr. L. Rajah, had accomplished the difficult task of having to re-read the major works of I.B. Tabata; to extract passages which illustrate themes and to cast them all in a single lecture which had to emerge as a coherent continuity.

The audience was presented with a series of quotations which dazzled it with their clarity and depth of thought, crispness of formulation, total absence of ambiguity, vastness of breadth and vision and last but not least, their great relevance to the current political events in the country.

Yet the man to whom this high tribute was paid was, regrettably, hostile to the New Unity Movement, of which APDUSA (Natal) is an affiliate. Fortunately, the hostility was not based on matters of theory or principle nor could be justified on political grounds. This became abundantly clear when senior members of APDUSA (Natal) visited him and his life-long companion Jane Gool in Harare in October 1985.

Our position is clear. We are political descendants of the leadership of the Unity Movement of which I.B. Tabata was a leading member. He was also its most famous publicist as is evidenced by the list of references which are to be found at the end of this document. We are therefore, at once entitled and duty bound to pay this tribute.

A lecture of this nature does not include a critical appraisal of the man, his life and works. That is the function of his biographer. Our tribute is an expression of our appreciation and gratitude for the tremendous influence he has had over our lives, either directly or indirectly through others. It is also done because the oppressed and exploited of this country should get to know something about one of their greatest champions.

We are not aware whether Tabata's official followers have paid a public tribute. The occasion of his funeral was abused by his epigones who chose to level attacks on the New Unity Movement.

In contrast, our tribute was prepared with due dignity and decorum. It was paid in humility and admiration for a great revolutionary, leader and teacher.

## INTRODUCTION

On 13 October 1990 Isaac Bangani Tabata died in exile in Harare. He was 81 years old.

Tabata was a revolutionary - as a theoretician, writer, orator, organiser he was a Marxist of the highest calibre. This is a tribute to this extraordinary man.

At this stage we make it clear: we do not claim LB. Tabata for the New Unity Movement. He was, in fact, implacably hostile towards the New Unity Movement; and towards Apdusa (Natal) for its role as a founding organisation and an active affiliate of the New Unity Movement. Yet, despite consistent hostility, his failure to forward political reasons was conspicuous.

We recognize that I.B. Tabata has made a colossal contribution to the liberation struggle. From his life and work and, especially from his writings, we adopt all that is revolutionary and which advances the struggle for freedom. That which does not, we do not accept. The former makes up, by far, the dominating and greater part of his contribution. In adopting this approach we are mindful that we remain within the Marxist tradition. Both Lenin and Trotsky used a similar approach towards Plekhanov and Kautsky. We add immediately that we are neither suggesting that Tabata is a South African Plekhanov or Kautsky nor do we arrogate to ourselves the mantle of South Africa's Lenin or Trotsky.

I.B. Tabata played a decisive role in the development of both organizations and individual cadres of the Unity Movement in Natal. His influence has, in many ways, defined and shaped the lives of many of us. Recognising this we pay tribute to his positive contributions.

## A BRIEF PERSONAL PORTRAIT

Tabata was born in Lessyton near Queenstown in 1909. He completed his secondary education at Lovedale. In the 1930's he made his way to Cape Town where he eventually became a member of the Workers' Party of South Africa (WPSA). It was here in the atmosphere of the Lenin Club, the Workers' Party of South Africa and the Spartacus Club (and undoubtedly also through his own ability and serious study) that he matured into a Marxist and a revolutionary.

The Workers' Party of South Africa has played a crucial role in the development of the national political movement. It nurtured Marxism on South African soil. As a revolutionary philosophy Marxism is universal. Its general formulations are of relevance to all. Its weaponry - historical and dialectical materialism - are a sine qua non for liberation. But the revolutionary potential of Marxism is realized only if it is applied to the specific or unique combination of forces facing the oppressed at a particular time. This application was the great service of the Bolsheviks to Russia; of the Chinese Communist Party to China. This has been the great historical service of the Workers' Party to South Africa - in this sense it "South Africanised" Marxism. LB. Tabata was of this political stock. It was an outlook he maintained and continued to apply through the greater part of his political life.

Tabata was a tireless organizer and a powerful orator. In his rich baritone voice he delivered innumerable speeches - speeches that made the

complex ideas of liberation accessible to the oppressed. Speaking fluently in English and Xhosa, as a master of the idiom, he held his audience spellbound; falling neither into the trap of scholasticism nor of demagoguery. His humour, scathing sarcasm and above all an armoury of clear ideas made him a speaker of national repute. Such was his political stature that he could, in 1952, travel to "Red Square" in Durban and address a mass rally despite the fact that there was no Unity Movement affiliate functioning in Durban at that time.

Tabata devoted his entire adult life to the struggle for freedom. For the greater part of this he worked full-time for the Unity Movement. In so doing he sacrificed the lure of a career and wealth in one or other profession. He lived a disciplined and simple life. His home in Milan Street in Cape Town, where he lived with his wife and life-long co-worker Jane Gool, was simply furnished - almost Spartan. For a long time prior to this he lived at the Stakeby-Lewis Hostel in Harrington Street, Cape Town.

Tabata worked as part of a leadership group. His closest associates included Jane Gool, Dr Goolam Gool, Dora Taylor, J.G. Taylor, B.M.Kies, Saul Jayiya, Ali Fatar, R.O. Dudley. His theoretical and practical work was the product of this group effort In acknowledging Tabata's outstanding contribution we acknowledge also his co-workers. Tabata was not, however, a colourless member of the group. To it he made a dynamic and integral contribution. This group approach was based on principle - the principle being that one works as part of a leadership. Marxists have always held a deep suspicion of individualism and an abhorrence of the cult of the individual or a Leader. In fact although Tabata served on the national executives of both the All African Convention and Non-European Unity Movement he did not hold an official position until he was elected president of Apdusa in the early 1960's.

Even photographs of these individuals in those early years are scarce. Tabata took his political work seriously. He realized fully that the battle for ideas translated into a life or death struggle for the oppressed. For these reasons he detested rabble rousers and dilettantes. From Cape Town Tabata made regular trips to other parts of the country. In this way he kept in touch with the peasantry and also helped win over an entire generation of intellectuals to radical politics; the generation that was responsible for rejuvenating and radicalising of the All African Convention (AAC) that set the scene for the formation of the first National Liberatory Movement in South Africa - the Non-European Unity Movement. In Cape Town he took an active part in hostel life in Nyanga and Langa.

He was regarded as a senior man by both the PAC and ANC. He could, for example, in a letter written in 1948 address Nelson Mandela as a "young man entering politics."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> We may pause here to recall the sound advice he gave the young man at the time: "I think it is of paramount importance for a young man. and especially a young man entering politics to establish the habit of basing his actions on principles. He must be ready if necessary to swim against the stream. Thus armed he is protected against the temptations of seeking popularity and ephemeral success." Such is the irony of history.

Tabata was also a highly cultured man. Shakespeare he loved and would often quote. He had a passion for classical music. But above all he was a Marxist and a revolutionary who performed monumental work in the national movement. To detail it is quite beyond the scope of this tribute; it is in any case inextricably bound up with the history and development of the Unity Movement.

## **THE LEGACY OF I.B. TABATA**

Tabata left behind a legacy of political writings that constitute a lucid and penetrating analysis of South Africa. This is the focus of the tribute. Quoting extensively from his writings we present a selection of ideas. These ideas are neither the personal creation nor property of Tabata. They were developed drawing on the rich heritage of what we may call socialist literature. They were worked out and developed in South Africa by the leadership group to which Tabata belonged. They are also ideas central and fundamental to the revolutionary tradition and position of the Unity Movement. And they are ideas that Tabata helped to develop and which he presented with exceptional skill and clarity.

## **HISTORICAL AND DIALECTICAL MATERIALISM**

The method of analysis and approach of the Unity Movement is that of dialectical and historical materialism.

Writing in 1962 Tabata referred to this:

"...there is a unity in nature, and man, being part of nature, lives in unity with it.... (To) survive man has through the ages tried to adjust himself to nature..... (He) has sought to discover the laws of nature. All of science is devoted to this pursuit. But it has taken a long time for man to discover that in the same way as natural phenomena obey strict laws, so does human society itself. Its development is governed by strict laws and it is the task of those who have undertaken to change society to discover the laws that govern social evolution." I

From the application of dialectical materialism as a method of analysis Tabata drew this conclusion:

"If Apdusans take their work seriously, they will have to realise that politics is a full-time job. It is not enough to go around organising the people, though this in itself is very important; but they themselves have to find time to study. Politics is a science and those who do not understand this are lost; for they are unable to know what is involved in the events taking place before their eyes. Science gives us conceptual tools to predict the future and it is this ability to predict that will enable us to survive. ,,2

And five years later, this time writing in exile, and casting his eye across Africa he summarised this approach:

"..... Africa needs leaders who are steeped in dialectical materialism.... If socialism is the path we must follow to achieve progress and independence, we must acquaint ourselves more and more with the analytical tool of the dialectic. If we use it properly, our

difficulties, which at the moment seem to be insuperable, will be seen as not beyond our capabilities.,,3

In his pamphlet "Boycott as a Weapon of Struggle" written in 1952 Tabata encapsulated the Movement's historical materialist approach:

"The struggle of the Non-Europeans of South Africa for liberation is not unique in its general form. Every aspect of it has in some form or another been experienced by other people of the world during some stage of their development..... The struggle of the oppressed in this country is similar to the struggles of all the oppressed people throughout world history. It is part and parcel of the struggle of mankind in its long and arduous march toward progress...4

The Unity Movement has always gone further. Realising that while abstraction allows one to reveal the inter-connection or unity between apparently different phenomena, its revolutionary implications are only brought out by applying general laws to specific or concrete situations. This calls for the ruthless application of the historical law of combined and uneven development. Thus Tabata continued his formulation:

" The Non-Europeans in South Africa at this stage of development are not called upon to traverse entirely new terrain in which they have to forge entirely new weapons hitherto unknown to mankind. What may be unique in this situation is a new (different) combination of forces which calls for an adaptation, in some case a modification of the old methods..... (In South Africa) we find relics of barbarism co-existent with the last word in modern technological advancement..... There are relics of feudal and tribal relations in the midst of industrialism. This fact gives rise to a strange phenomenon..... (In) South Africa...the very fly-wheel of the economic structure is dependent upon...the labour of a landless African peasantry.....(These) particular conditions have to be borne in mind when we consider the form and method of struggle. When ..... we think of the trade union problem, the peasant problem, the relationship between the workers and the peasants, and finally, the National Problem, these objective conditions invest the situation with what may be called a unique quality. It is in this sense, and only in this sense, there is a uniqueness in the problems of the Non-Europeans in South Africa. Nevertheless, the struggles of oppressed in South Africa are basically the same as those of all the oppressed throughout the history of mankind. ,,5

## **INTERNATIONALISM**

Integral to such an approach is the Unity Movement's outlook of internationalism. Writing on the occasion of the Summit Conference of the Non-Aligned States held in Lusaka in 1970 Tabata provided this perspective:

" The leadership of developing countries have to ask themselves what role they must play in this development..... It is necessary for them to come to grips with the realities of situations. The question has to be answered: are we to embrace the system of capitalism-imperialism or consciously take part in what is a world revolutionary process leading to socialism?,,6

And previously, writing in 1958 and drawing the conclusion that the Bantu Education scheme was doomed to failure, Tabata penned this powerful internationalist statement:

" Once more mankind stands on the threshold of spectacular development that must embrace the whole world. ....(Distant) continents have become next-door neighbours; nations have become more and more inter-dependent economically, and in other ways. With the vast network of swift communications, the giant jet planes, radio and television, the world grows smaller and smaller. All these things make it impossible to stand apart from the mainstream of human progress. There are no longer any dark continents for the feudalist to take refuge in; no laagers behind which he can barricade himself. There are no high walls so impregnable that ideas cannot penetrate them."7

## **ANTI-IMPERIALISM**

The Unity Movement is resolutely anti-imperialist. In our view:

".....the main battle facing mankind is the struggle between socialism and capitalism-imperialism. All conllicts, whatever they are, are simply aspects of this global conflict."8

This anti-imperialist sentiment provides the common thread of a collection of Tabata's writings published in exile in 1974 under the title "Imperialist Conspiracy in Africa".

The Movement's analysis extend well beyond a general description of the rapacious nature of imperialism. Consistent with this tradition Tabata maintained an anti-imperialist position in his approach to the National situation. In other words the position he adopts on the International situation is an extension of the position he adopts on the National situation. To this we return later.

## **SOCIALISM**

Tabata's perspective was that of a socialist. Speaking at Africa Unity House in London in 1966 he referred to the strategic importance of South Africa in the following terms:

" It depends on which way South Africa goes, whether or not Africa shall be placed in a position to free itself from the economic stranglehold of Europe and the United States. South Africa, with its great industrial potential, with its gold mines and its already high standard of industrial development, with its technical know-how and its > mineral wealth, is the one country that could, if it became free, liberate the whole of Central and East Africa to start with. By freedom I don't mean the so-called independence that has been granted to the other African Slates. I mean real freedom and real democracy, if South Africa became a socialist State.9

## **THE NATURE OF SOUTH AFRICAN SOCIETY**

In our Ten Point Programme we state that "the conflict between those who have political rights and those who do not is an extension of the conflict between labour and capital." Tabata expands on what this means in the first chapter of his book "The Awakening of a People" in which he provides what is today a classic description of South African society. Here he poses the question: "What is the nature of South African Society?" and proceeds to the very essence of the matter:

"...the economic system of South Africa is the same as in the so-called democracies of Europe. That means that in this country, too, the fundamental divisions are class divisions and these are dictated by the irreconcilable clash of interests between employer and worker, between the haves and the have-nots. The real cleavage is one of class, not one of colour." 10

In South African however, the question of class and colour, a question that confuses so many, has to be understood if we are not to lose our way:

".....in the particular historical conditions attending colonial exploitation, the herrenvolk found it possible, and in fact extremely convenient, to utilize the Colour differences to cover over and obscure the fundamental dividing-line, that of class..... (In) the conditions pertaining in South Africa, the clear-cut class divisions have been obscured. The herrenvolk have elaborated a means of re-inforcing economic exploitation with all the vicious machinery of racial oppression. The result has been that the workers have found it difficult to know who are their allies and who are their real enemies.,,11

## **INTERCONNECTION OF INTERESTS**

It was on the basis of this analysis that the Unity Movement was able to present the revolutionary idea that oppression is indivisible. Tabata, in 1945, expressed this as follows:

"We must throw off the isolationist attitude, the pre-occupation with merely local problems and the narrow parochial outlook. No single tribe, however important, or lowly, is signed out for special oppression. No village, big or small, suffers from a special set of laws. Neither is the rural African exploited as distinct from the African living in the towns. One and all we are subject to the same oppressive measures. Oppression is indivisible.

The Government plans for the whole and each scheme is part of a single comprehensive plan... It is precisely this circumstance which imposes on us the duty and necessity to view OUR STRUGGLE ON A NATIONAL SCALE. It is this circumstance which imposes upon us the necessity to evolve the political machinery which will draw together every section of the African people... The very nature of these forces demands that all our struggles must be co-ordinated and unified so that each organization becomes part of a whole and works in connection with all the others... Each struggle must be seen as a particular aspect of resistance to one common oppression. And this common oppression flows from one source - THE LACK OF POLITICAL RIGHTS." 12

## **THE LIBERALS**

Perhaps the greatest service of the Unity Movement has been to struggle for, nurture and develop an independent political tradition in South Africa. To do so has meant maintaining a consistent anti-imperialist position. This demands breaking the link between the liberals and the oppressed.

In this respect Tabata posed and answered the following questions.

Who are the liberals?

.. They are the great Conciliators whose function is to reconcile the oppressed to their chains. Their task is to coin fine phrases and utter noble sentiments to cover up a grimly exploitive system" I3

And what role do the liberals play?

" In politics the demands of a ruling class are never stated openly. Nevertheless every law is the expression of one or other of their economic demands. But the politicians are always careful to cover it over with fine legal phrases and even professions of good-will... (The) liberals perform an indispensable role, without which no Government could so easily achieve its purpose...(It) is understood by the Herrenvolk as a whole that the primary task of the deception of the people falls to the liberals. They know that it is not enough for the Government in power to work out its plans for the exploitation of the oppressed. They have to make sure that such plans (or laws) will be made acceptable to the oppressed. This is where the liberals, the agents of the berrenvolk, step in. ..14

How simply, clearly and powerfully Tabata exposes the treachery of the liberals.

He continued as follows:

.. Here is the basis for all so-called compromises. It explains what at first sight seems impossible - that the oppressed should meekly accept their chains. It is here that the full tragedy of the failure of the African leaders to sever the destructive link binding the oppressed to the oppressor becomes fully revealed. For it has acted like a cancer eating into the political body of the Africans and has nullified all their efforts. ..15

When we consider, on the one band, the example of the role of Van Zyl Slabbert and his hydra-headed IDASA and, on the other hand, the betrayal and opportunism of what is labelled for mass deception as "a negotiated settlement" these words, written in 1950, strike at the very heart of the monster trying to devour, with renewed vigour, the freedom struggle in South Africa.

## **TWO STRUGGLES**

It was on the basis of this independent outlook of the Unity Movement that Tabata was able to crystallise the Unity Movement characterisation of "two struggles" in South Africa. Here we return to the position of anti-imperialism; this time applied to the National situation.

.....there are two separate struggles going on at present in South Africa. On the face of it they may seem to be one and the same struggle... But the fact is that they are totally different in aim, in dimension and in direction.

The first is the National Liberation Movement of the Oppressed Peoples of South Africa, in which the whole of the African peasantry in the "Reserves" is involved. The basic struggle is not one that the outside hears or reads about....

The second struggle is the conflict between the representatives of imperialism South African and Boer or Afrikaaner fascist wing, the

Nationalist Government that has been in power since 1948. It is this conflict with all its ramifications that receives publicity both in the home and the world press, though naturally it is not presented in those terms.

This has the effect of creating confusion and blurring the real political issues involved. The unfortunate fact is that a section of our oppressed people themselves have been drawn into this conflict. Some of our best men and women are sacrificing their lives in it. But they are being sacrificed on the altar of imperialism in its own defence.

The first and true struggle for liberation has as its immediate objective, liberty and land. It leads to political freedom and freedom from want.

The second struggle declares as its objective the removal of the Verwoerd Nationalist Government from power. But its ultimate aim though an unavowed one, is neo-colonialism, that is, the loosening of some of the more obvious bonds of political slavery while ensuring the economic stranglehold of imperialism on the soil of South Africa." 16

## **THE WORKERS AND PEASANTS**

We referred earlier to the Unity Movement position that the real division in our society is one of class. Returning to this question in 1962 Tabata gave an eloquent account of what this means:

"In this country it is the toiling masses, who are in the main the Non-European oppressed, those millions of workers and peasants toiling on the land, in the mines and in the factories, who are destined to lead this country out of the crises and create a more rational social order. It is they who create the civilization and lay the basis for a cultural development. They, by virtue of their contribution should be accorded their rightful place of dignity and worth in society. They should participate in the governing of the country for which they have done and continue to do so much. Without their labour, all this magnificence, aU this spectacular development, this wealth and progress would have been impossible." 17

"APDUSA believes that in any society the people who create wealth and civilization, and are therefore responsible for the progress of mankind, are those who provide labour in its many forms. Here in South Africa the bulk of the people who create the wealth of the country are precisely those despised and neglected workers in the gold and coal mines; those workers on the sugar plantations, in the white farms and in the Reserves. We are not saying that the White worker does not make his contribution, but we are saying that it is the majority of the oppressed Non-Whites who contributes the lion's share to a civilization the fruits of which they are not permitted to enjoy. It is those nameless millions who have been reduced to a position of Calibans who carry the whole of South African society on their backs. In this sense all culture, science and technology, literature, music and drama, in short, all that goes by the name of Western Civilization in this country rests squarely on their backs". 18

"APDUSANS turn to the masses not with the idea of using them or their numbers but of identifying themselves with them, drawing strength and inspiration from them, while at the same time imparting to them that feeling of confidence, self-esteem and pride in their own achievements. Our belief is that those who create must decide what is to be done with

what they have created. The producers of wealth in a society must be in the Government of the country. This is our attitude.<sup>19</sup>

## **THE AGRARIAN PROBLEM**

Throughout his political activity within South Africa, Tabata worked closely with the peasantry both in the rural areas and among the migrant labourers in the towns and cities. He possessed a very deep theoretical and practical understanding of the land question. We quote from his address to SOYA in 1956 on the Agrarian Question:

" There are two main problems that lie before us and require immediate solution. They are **the agrarian problem and the national problem**.... The one is intimately related to the other and their solutions are likewise closely linked together.<sup>20</sup>

" From the outset I shall state categorically that landlessness is an instrument for economic exploitation and national oppression. It is the cornerstone of the whole economic edifice of South Africa. .... Land shortage is necessary and fundamental to the whole economic structure of South Africa. The oppressed and exploited people alone can and will alter that situation. <sup>21</sup>

(It has to be understood that) "...the agrarian problem is the fundamental problem in this country. It is the pivot and axis of the national movement. The intellectuals and petty shopkeepers must be made to realise that the agrarian problem is their problem. Whoever flounders on the agrarian question is lost. Such a man will inevitably attempt to lead the Movement into the swamps of opportunism. We must guard the Movement against such individuals.

Our immediate objective is to create a machinery that will be capable of measuring up to the gigantic task of re-organizing the whole of the political and economic structure of South Africa in such a way that the people are assured of getting Land and Freedom. This means that we have to set the whole of society into motion. This is a mighty task. <sup>22</sup>

"We have to link up the agrarian aspirations with the national aspirations. We have to arouse the peasantry throughout the country through their demand for land. In order to draw the landless peasantry into the Movement we must unreservedly throw in our lot with them in their struggle for their right to land. At the same time we must teach them that the national, that is, the political question is the key to the solution of their problems. In the given conditions of South Africa these two questions are inseparably bound together. For the landless peasantry are by and large the same people who are nationally oppressed without any political rights. The two problems must be solved together. ..<sup>23</sup>

This encapsulates our approach to the Land Question.

## **NON-RACIALISM**

Non-racialism is a founding principle of the Unity Movement. Tabata himself was the complete anti-racist. Non-racialism was a principle that flowed inextricably from his approach to politics.

In a lecture delivered in 1951 he gave this scathing reply to the ideas of herrenvolkism-racialism:

"..... In the final analysis the conflict is not basically that of colour ... We do not ask to know a man's physiological pedigree. We leave that to the cattle breeders. Such a question is part and parcel of a Herrenvolk mentality..."<sup>24</sup>

## **TRIBALISM**

Similarly, and again expressing the view point of the Movement Tabata rejected tribalism in its entirety. Writing in 1952 he said:

".. Let us pause a while to answer certain accusations..levied against us..namely a reactionary desire to return to tribalism ..... (No) one in his senses would seek to glorify the so-called idyllic days of barbarism. We recognize that in the march of man's progress, capitalism, in spite of all its attendant evils, represents a tremendous advance over tribalism. Tribalism, as a famous anthropologist has put it, "is the highest or the upper stage of barbarism. To it belong the Greeks of the Heroic Age, the tribes of Italy shortly before the foundation of Rome, the German tribes of Tacitus (the historian) and the Norsemen of the Viking Age." It would be as ridiculous for us to wish to return to tribalism as for the South African herrenvolk to pine for the days of their tribal forbears of the plains of Europe, the Huns, the Goths and the Vandals who smeared their bodies with ochre. ..<sup>25</sup>

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF IDEAS**

The Unity Movement has always emphasised the importance of ideas. Delivering the opening address to the first conference of the Society of Young Africa (SOYA) in 1951 Tabata expanded on this :

".. Let us look a little further into the question of the importance of ideas. In any given society the current ideas are those of the ruling class. Up to now, throughout successive historical stages in the development of mankind, the ruling class has always been the minority ruling over and imposing its will on the majority. How has it done this? Obviously the use of the more physical force is not enough. It has employed other weapons at once more subtle and more powerful - the power over the mind. From the earlier times, when man began to make it his business to exploit man, he devised cunning, crafty and Machiavellian methods to shackle and enslave the mind. The rulers have had their systems of education, their myths and superstitions, all of which are calculated to prop up the particular system of society. Rulers have always recognised the importance of controlling the mind by capturing it young. The Jesuits of old had a saying: "Give me the young mind up to the age of seven and I don't care what you do after that. I have him."

" Throughout history, rulers have attached great importance to evolving the means of controlling the minds of people and the ideas they absorb. The subjects of any country are made to think in a particular way; from birth they are subjected to a ceaseless din of propaganda which they absorb without knowing it. In many various ways it is constantly insinuated into their minds - through the system of education, the pulpit, the press, the radio, the film, etc. On the face of it, it might seem strange that the oppressed people, who are the victims of the system, should so readily absorb ideas that are inimical to their interest. But one has to realize the enormous power of this vast propaganda machine

bearing down on the people day after day and reducing their mental resistance.

It is against these ideas for the enslavement of the people that the Society of Young Africa will have to fight and counterpose to them the ideas of liberation.<sup>27</sup>

## **DEVELOPMENT OF STRUGGLE**

There is another aspect to the approach of the Unity Movement which is often not appreciated. This relates to what we may call the question of level') of struggle and the development of our struggle. The struggle is a product of a continuous conflict between oppressed and the oppressor. In this sense oppression is a process; and liberation the qualitative change that occurs in this process with the defeat of the oppressors - with the defeat of Herrenvolkism-Imperialism. The process of oppression has a past, a present and a future.

There is the other aspect to this, namely, that there has been a steady, slow, bloody and painful political development of the oppressed. Such a development, which can only be acquired in the heat of struggle and for which the price paid for each lesson is often the highest, means that the camp of the oppressed is continually growing stronger. It is this growth - a growth that threatens to mature to the point of victory - that the ruling class fears and tries continually to prevent, retard or distort. It is a task of revolutionaries to cultivate this political development. For, ultimately, it is only on the basis of the actions of the politically conscious masses that freedom can and will be won. It is in this respect that the leadership grouping of which L.B. Tabata was part, excelled. This was the outstanding service performed by the Workers' Party of South Africa and Non-European Unity Movement. Tabata was always aware of this process. Let us look at how he viewed it.

The twentieth century opened with tube military conquest of the indigenous population complete. Tribalism had been smashed and capitalism imposed on its ruins. Previously: " It had been a (military) struggle in defence of land. The beginning of the twentieth century opened a new phase of struggle - a political form of struggle".<sup>28</sup> The political forms of struggle had to be learned - and was learned at great cost. The first groupings formed - such as "Imbumba ye Zizwe" - were more a grouping of tribes around a particular man than organizations in the modern sense of the word. But tribalism was dead; as Tabata described it : "The normal progress of the African under the new civilization rendered those organizations outmoded. <sup>29</sup>

The next step in political development was the formation of the African National Congress (ANC) in 1912. "It was the first important organisation to be built on the model of European organisations, with an individual basis of membership...(and) represented a step forward from the tribal organisations".<sup>30</sup> But the ANC, unable to break completely with the tribal past and increasingly tied via its intellectual leadership to the liberals could find no effective response to the disastrous 1913 Land Act (apart from sending a deputation to England to petition and plead for assistance from the British Government!).

The next step in this upward political development was the formation of the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union (I CU) in 1919. Tabata summarised the significance of the ICU in this respect:

" The African was now realising the two-fold nature of his oppression: he was not only oppressed as a member of a conquered race but he was also exploited as a worker. 31

However" the African workers were inexperienced in the industrial struggle. They had only just recently realized the double nature of their oppression, racial as well as economic. They were only then painfully evolving a means of self-defence against exploitation. They had no clear idea on the form of organization itself and much less had they clarity on their political objectives. In a word, they were politically and theoretically unarmed. The African people had to pay very dearly for their knowledge. 32

As a result while the ICU "held itself up as a champion of the workers' cause, at the same time it made its appeal to the Africans as an oppressed race, and in this sense it became neither fish nor fowl. It was neither a trade union nor a political organization. The African had to learn that the weapon he had forged belonged to the day of the advent Capitalism, the days preceding trade unionism in Europe. He would have to find modern weapons to fight his modern enemy.33

The next forward movement occurred in 1935 with the calling of the All African Convention (AAC) in response to Hertzog's three Slave Bills. The AAC marked a turning point in the history of the oppressed people.

"The period 1935-1937, marked the highest point in development of organizations affecting (the African people) as a group. The political exigencies of the time and the crises of the Hertzog Bills had compelled them to organize on a nation-wide scale. The creation of the AAC was a spontaneous act. Without any premeditated theory the people brought into being a form of organization which could knit them together into a single compact unit, capable of being a fighting force.,,34

"In creating this body, the African people made a tremendous discovery... With a leap of imagination and a creative genius - which a people achieve under stress - they had lighted upon a form of organization which was not only capable of welding a whole population into a single unit, but at the same time opened up a vista of theoretical and political possibilities. ,,35

Then came a stage beginning at about the end of the Second World War.

"...there was a striking change of attitude. A maturing process had been taking place and registered for the first time on a national scale in 1943, when the All African Convention issued a call to the people, a call to unity not only of the Africans but of all the Non-European oppressed. This was the first crack in the walls of the racial pens. ,,36

"This was the first sign of revolt against their political tutelage under the liberals. ,,37

"The December Conference of the AAC in 1943, was one of those Conferences which marked a turning point in our history. It had far-reaching consequences, laying down as it did the basis of future developments. 38

This period heralded a new outlook, the new road of the Unity Movement. It represented" a sharp break with the past. What emerges can be expressed under a number of points:

- a) the rejection of the inferiority of the Black man ,and
- b) the claim for full equality;
- c) the clear formulation of the tasks facing the oppressed and consequently
- d) the evolving of new methods of struggle.

"....1943-44 ushered in a new period, with its new outlook and new methods of struggle. The Movement was launched on a principled basis... (In) the past people had been guided more by their allegiance to this or that particular leader - whithersoever he might lead them - than by allegiance to a principle. Leaders themselves, lacking sheet-anchor, were often prone to follow the path of opportunism. Now principles replaced opportunism and leadership replaced individual leaders.,,4o

The formation, growth and development of the Unity Movement marked a qualitative advance in the development of the political consciousness of the oppressed.

This in turn laid the basis for the emergence of the concept of "Building One Nation ", first expressed at the 1951 Unity Movement Conference. At the time Tabata described its significance as follows:

### **"The Birth of a Nation.**

This conception directs the population along new channels of thought. It signalizes the beginning of political maturity. No longer do the Non-Europeans see themselves a "problem to be solved". On the contrary, it is they who will have to solve the problem of South Africa. With full consciousness of political manhood and the responsibilities that go with it - responsibilities that devolve upon them they examine the situation in South Africa and find - a Herrenvolk problem. They find that the leadership of the state is in the bands of a section that is suffering from a mortal sickness, a Herrenvolk mentality..... They see themselves as faced with the task of Building a Nation, a healthy, virile nation.

This is the stage which the Non-Europeans have reached in their political development...

(The) Building of a Nation, originating from the NEUM OPENS UP A NEW PERSPECTIVE .....bringing to the consciousness of wider sections of the people the two-fold nature of oppression; national oppression and class exploitation".41

Developing on this basis Tabata presented in his 1962 Presidential address the question of the paramountcy of the interest of the workers and peasants with outstanding clarity. We have quoted from the address previously and need not repeat ourselves here.

The New Unity Movement has continued to nurture this process; but as Tabata, sadly, excluded himself from our ranks we will not pursue this aspect any further.

We see, then, that the job of a revolutionary is not simply to work out clever ideas in his head.

To do that alone is to be part of that dreaded species - the academia. The revolutionary is, rather, an integral part of the struggle to develop and realize the class consciousness of the most progressive class in his epoch; to start from objective conditions, to understand its subjective expressions, and to move by series of approximations to the higher level of socialist culture. This was, and is, our approach.

## **WHY WE WILL SUCCEED**

The approach of the Unity Movement is premised on the belief that the oppressed will, through their independent initiative, ultimately triumph. We maintain this belief not on the basis of moral chest-thumping or a sense of indignation and blind outrage at social injustice. Our belief is based on the knowledge that liberation is a progressive step forward in the historical development of humankind. In other words, in the struggle between oppressed and oppressor in South Africa the oppressed represent the forces of historical progress.

Tabata applied this approach when he concluded in 1958 that "Bantu Education must fail". Having established that the Verwoerdian Bantu Education scheme was an attempt to trap the Africans in conditions of tribalism, Tabata drew the following conclusions:

" The prognosis of the failure of the Verwoerdian scheme rests not only on a consideration of the subjective factor, the Africans' rejection of it, but also on an examination of the objective situation in South Africa. The whole concept of Bantu Education flies in the face of the economic, cultural and political forces at work in society..... In spite of all the severe legal impediments to urbanization, the Non-Europeans constitute the largest labour force and are part and parcel of the industrial machinery of the country.

This inescapable fact has dictated a change that is rapidly taking place in their mode of living, with all its hardships, and in their habits of thought. The operation of an industrial machine is itself a potent means of education of a kind necessary to the society that is no longer tribal or feudal. The hand that moves the lever is very different from the hand that wielded the hunter's club, or the plough. For the worker the machine and the factory dictate a new set of relationships and attitudes and outside the factory also, a new set of social and economic needs. In this industrial setting education for tribalism has no place and no meaning. It is an absurd anachronism."42

In this vein he concluded his 1962 Presidential address:

" We believe that only that class which has a historical future can lead society out of the crisis. History has placed the destiny of our society in the hands of the toiling masses. If we are to succeed in our task of liberation, we must link ourselves dynamically and inseparably with the labouring classes, that is the workers and the peasantry. Without them we are nothing. With them we are everything, and nothing can stand in our way. No power on earth can hold us back in our march.,,43

## CONCLUSION

I. B. Tabata dedicated his life to the struggle for freedom. To it he made a fundamental contribution. Today we in the New Unity Movement stand tall precisely because we stand on the shoulders of political giants of the calibre and stature of LB. Tabata. While Tabata is dead the ideas he stood for live on, and will continue to be of relevance for so long as the goals of the freedom struggle remain unrealised.

In this tribute we have considered a selection of ideas from the writings of one of Africa's great revolutionaries. Tabata presented those brilliant and awe-inspiring ideas of freedom with the mastery and skill of a revolutionary of the highest calibre. In doing so he placed and places before the oppressed those cardinal ideas of the Unity Movement upon which the struggle for freedom will have to be conducted if it is to triumph. At no stage did Tabata ever present his ideas as his personal property - patented and copyright. Such an approach was anathema to him. He presented political ideas to the oppressed to be used as weapons to smash herrenvolkism-imperialism in order to build a higher advanced culture.

To this uncompromising Marxist and revolutionary we pay our highest tribute.

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