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TRIBUTE TO CDE KARRIM ESSACK



(Photograph taken when Karrim was a student at Fort Hare University in 1950)

COMRADE ABDOOL KARRIM ESSACK

(Written by his younger brother who is also his grateful pupil)

Introduction:

On the 29th April 1997, a journalist aged 72 died in the Intensive Care Unit at the Aga Khan Hospital in Dar-es-salaam Tanzania.

Of his relatives only his wife was present at his funeral which took place the same day but which was held up for several hours at the request of the Government of Rwanda which insisted on sending a delegation to represent it at the funeral.

The next few days saw all the major newspapers in Tanzania give prominent write-ups about the death of this person and were generous in their praise of him.

Three presidents, President Mkapa of Tanzania, President Bizimungu of Rwanda and President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda, sent their condolences to the family of the deceased and were unrestrained in their praise for the individual.

All the condolences and laudatory remarks were occasioned by the death of **Abdool Karrim Essack** who fled the country into exile in 1965 and for all practical purposes had made Tanzania his country.

Karrim Essack, as he was known, was remembered on his death in Natal by a notice which appeared in the Natal Daily News and The Natal Mercury and which read:

“AK ESSACK

Died in Dar-es-salaam on 29 April 1997. Abdool Karrim Essack-committed revolutionary – fled into exile in 1965. Natal leader of the Unity Movement and Apdusa, writer of numerous books and pamphlets on the oppressed and exploited people, journalist, radio announcer, teacher in Newcastle, Ladysmith, Clairwood, Umzinto. Practised law in Verulam, Botswana, Zambia and Tanzania....

Mourned by freedom fighters, disciples, former pupils and friends..”

The death notice sets out the just bare bones of Karrim’s adult life story. It remains a skeleton. The tribute will seek to put flesh, blood and nerves so as to recreate a living individual for the reader who did not know him.

Background:

Karrim was born in India. He was the third child of Fathima and Ishaq Hashim.¹ His father was an adventurer and left his family to seek his fortune in South Africa in the 1920’s. In South Africa he tried his hands at various trades and in the end settled for mattress-making, French polishing and the buying and selling of second hand furniture.

In 1932 he sent for his family – his wife and four children. With his family at his side he stopped his wandering and developed roots in the small town of Dundee in northern Natal. Four more children were born. Those born in South Africa were referred to as “The Little Ones” or “Nindas” in the vernacular.

The parents were determined that their children, i.e. the boys should receive the best possible education that could be afforded.

Karrim completed his primary school education in Dundee and then went to study for his matriculation examination in Durban in 1939 at Sastri College, the one of only two high schools available for South Africans of Indian origin in Natal.

In 1943 he completed his matric with an “A:” in history.

That same year there was a public meeting held in Dundee at which members of the Indian community turned out in numbers.

I recall my father returning home and asking my mother to make what he called “Sweet mouth” in the vernacular. This referred to a sweet dish celebrating some occasion. It was a very popular custom and may explain the very high prevalence of sugar diabetes in the community which practises this custom.

When my mother asked what was the occasion for the “Sweet Mouth”, my father replied that Karrim had got up in public and spoke at the meeting. I do not recall him mentioning what he is supposed to have said.

¹ Anglicised to “Essack Hassim”

That meeting was part of the tour of Natal by the Anti Segregation Council and Dr Goolam Gool was a leading speaker in that tour.

Karrim was just 18 years old.

Karrim then went to study law at Wits University. I have no idea how my father managed to pay for his fees and board and lodging. He was the sole breadwinner and was already paying for his favourite and very bright son, Omar, who had gone to India to study medicine.

Karrim obtained a B.A. degree. While studying, he worked as a ticket seller at one of the “Indian” cinemas in Johannesburg, probably in Fordsburg.

His years at Wits were charged with intensive political study. He belonged to an organisation called the **Progressive Forum** . It was an organisation of the non Stalinist marxist intellectuals. Its members, apart from Karrim, were A.I. Limbada (later Dr), Enver Hassim (later attorney), Zulei Christopher (later Dr), Dolly Hassim (newspaper columnist) David Soggot (later Advocate), Mike Davis (Later Advocate), Errol Vawda (later Dr) Ivan Stoller (later advocate), Jennifer Heyman (later ANC) Bernard Berman, Jesse Berman, Leslie Martin, Andrew Lukhele (later attorney), Victor Sondlo, Fathima Meer (later Natal Indian Congress and Professor) Dr Seymour Papert (maths/physics), Norman Traub (later Dr), AKI Vahed (later attorney) and others of similar calibre. This was a star-studded group of intellectuals which attracted many young people. They were a formidable group which was highly trained politically. In debates and discussions, they had no match.

This group was affiliated to the Unity Movement.

Karrim was a senior member of this group and was regularly visited at Park Rynie, South Coast by members like Enver Hassim, Seymour Papert and Dr Limbada.

A caring person

Very little is known about his life at Wits. What I recall is that he shared quarters with the Khan brothers of Stanger. Its leader was Amanullah, a tall lean but very muscular and powerful man. Amanullah was the right hand man of the notorious Sherrif Khan (of Park Rynie) who had to fight a gang of extortionists led by Old Man Kajee. Initially Sherrif Khan's gang was a defensive organisation. Once the power from the group became evident, it became a gang of criminals in its own right. Amanullah was a very fearsome man. The gang fights involved the use of hatchets and guns.

Karrim befriended the Stanger Khans. What is remarkable is that he tamed the beast in Amanullah. The latter became a changed man and in 1956 he took up studying for his matric and after many long years of hard work and dedication completed his LLB and became an advocate. Amanullah had nothing but gratitude for Karrim.

He cared for his younger brothers

While studying at Wits and Fort Hare, Karrim made it his duty to visit his family in Dundee at every available opportunity. His contemporaries used to make it a point of asking the "Nindas" as to when Karrim would be coming to Dundee. And when he did come there would be warm reunions. But what was also remarkable was the amount of care and affection Karrim had for us, his younger brothers. The age gap between him and us ranged from 8 to 12 years. We looked forward to his visits with great intensity. Apart from the fact that this student surviving on a meagre budget always found money to buy sweets for us, he spent long hours with us. We loved nothing more than to be told stories based on the great literary classics. Not only would he narrate the stories but often he enact scenes. This would happen on the sparse lawn of our front garden during the warm summer evenings. Our favourite was "The Three Musketeers". We learnt all about D'artagnan, Porthos, Arthos and Aramis and Karrim's version of how sword fighting was done. The sequel was many hours of sword fighting with sticks in imitation of the brave musketeers.

After storytelling, we would just lie on the lawn gazing at the stars. He then told them about stars being suns and about the galaxies and the universe.

Those were quality hours they spent with him. Until the very end we gratefully remembered those hours and the love that made him spend those hours.

Unable to afford the cost of further studies at Wits for law, Karrim decided to become teacher and went to Fort Hare University to do the University Education Diploma. His stay at Fort Hare got him in touch with the African intellectuals from the Eastern Cape.

As A Teacher

Karrim excelled as a teacher. His dedication to teaching was merely an extension of his dedication as a teacher of politics. He was easily able to relate to his fellow teachers and students as he was able to with the ordinary people.

He stood out in sharp contrast to the rest of his colleagues who while being dedicated to the subjects they taught, had little knowledge of other vital fields of knowledge. Karrim's training in the Progressive Forum and Unity Movement was an all round training and he soon established himself as a leader among the teachers. He politicised them as he did with senior students at the various high schools where he taught.

Karrim's activities no doubt came to the attention of the authorities and he was therefore subjected to a series of punitive transfers. First it was the Umzinto High School, then it was Newcastle, Ladysmith and finally the high school in Clairwood. The authorities no doubt believed that they were punishing him for his subversive" activities. It is true that it was not easy to make new friends and to forge new relationships each time a person gets uprooted. But what the authorities failed to realise is that the punitive transfers permitted him to do his political work in *different* areas and not just in *one*.

Wherever he was sent to he sowed the seeds of radicalism. In time to come he was able to draw on the persons with whom he had come into contact to make a contribution to the struggle in one form or another.

One example of this was the campaign he initiated against Dr AD Lazarus the reactionary president of the Natal Indian Teachers' Society. In a move to unseat him, Karrim rallied all the friends and contacts in the teaching profession he had established over the years. There were teachers who had other grounds of opposition. Karrim rallied them all and came very close to moving a vote of no confidence in him by calling for the Society's disaffiliation from the Institute of Race Relations whose function was, objectively, to advise the ruling class how best to oppress the people.

By the late 1950's Karrim decided the he had had enough of the spying of the Education Department on his activities and he felt the strong need to come out openly as a freedom fighter.

Karrim our tutor and mentor:

It was after he had left teaching that we saw more of Karrim in our local activities. He was organisation's chief pamphleteer. He wrote in a manner which arrested the attention of the reader. His style was hard-hitting and provocative. At the same time it was extremely logical and well argued. Only two of his leaflets remain. The one dealt with the tribal conflict which broke out at the Ohlange Institute and the other dealt with the exclusion of African students from the ML Sultan Technical College. I recall his introductory lecture on Marxian economics – wages, surplus value and production for profit and not use. I also recall his lecture on Chinese history concerning the Stalinist betrayal of the 1927 revolution. In the polemic which wracked the Unity Movement in the mid and late 1950's Karrim's contribution revealed his wide reading and knowledge on a whole range of subjects like the role of the peasantry and the land question, trade unions and the working class, the nature and role of the intellectuals. One got the impression that he was knowledgeable on all these aspects of our struggle.

Most importantly, he taught by example. He was always the first to do necessary work which involved an element of unpleasantness, like the long and slow trip from the Victoria Street Bus Rank to Happy Valley where he met contacts. While more often than not our hearts sank at the prospect of the long and dreary journey, with numerous stops en route and the heavy head ache caused by the revving of the engine when the bus waited waiting for passengers. Karrim on the other hand exuded equanimity.

As a lawyer:

Karrim as a young person suffered from a stutter. He gradually fought it and by the time he began teaching it had all but disappeared.

He studied for his law examination part-time while he was serving articles with Attorney Ashwin Chowdree. He completed his exams and his articles and opened his practice in Verulam in the early 1960's.

This period coincided with the banning of the ANC and PAC and the eclipse of the Natal Indian Congress from the political arena. The way was open for APDUSA to assert itself.

Karrim's practice was basically a criminal practice with clients coming from Kwa Mashu and the peri-urban areas. He employed in his office a certain Benjamin Madikwa who was previously a member of the Society of Young Africa, an affiliate of the Unity Movement. Madikwa was both clerk/interpreter and organiser for Apdusa.

Soon Apdusa held meetings at the Sonny Moodley Gymnasium in Prince Edward Street Durban on a regular basis on Sundays. The people from the peri-urban areas came in their numbers. When there were no meetings being held, the young members of SOYA and APDUSA went with Karrim and his band of organisers to those areas. The young intellectuals learnt about the meetings and how intellectuals should conduct themselves at meetings of the people.

The New Approach

Soon after the first APDUSA conference held in Cape Town in April 1962 Tabata undertook a perilous journey out of the country and visited a large number of countries. He was well into his middle age, yet he crossed the border on foot illegally and returned the same way. His mission was to see first hand what was going on in Africa and to what extent was Africa prepared to assist the Unity Movement. He returned during December 1962 and kept us enthralled with a narration of his experiences.

Briefly, Tabata's report was that he was well received in Africa, especially in Tanzania and Algeria and that Africa would assist anybody who was fighting the oppressive regime in South Africa. It (Africa) would not examine too closely the ideological position of those seeking help. Time showed that this was a fatally dangerous superficial conclusion. The truth

of the matter was that “Africa” examined with a gigantic magnifying glass the political position of organisations seeking help. Tabata was to learn this with great bitterness. He spent almost three decades seeking help and recognition – his entire stay in exile. Thanks to the Stalinist SACP/ANC and their masters, Soviet Russia, the Unity Movement never did get recognition.

But in early 1963, there was a lot of talk and expectation of leaving the country to get military training and to return and engage in an armed struggle against the oppressive state.

In this period Karrim was in his element. He already had at his disposal a functioning organisation of organisers, both full time and part-time. These organisers were out in the field every day of the week. Karrim’s office in Verulam and his home in Alfred Street, off Wills Road, Durban became centres where meetings were held daily; where reports were given and instructions and directives issued.

The concept of part-time organisers was his creation. The organiser would be given sufficient money for transport and subsistence. He would then be told the area to visit. There he was to make contact, deliver the basic message that the time had come to make Apdusa the parliament of the people and for it to make weighty decisions on how to confront the enemy. The use of military analogy was frequent – a central authority which would make all important decisions; no isolated uprisings; the absolute necessity for coordinated action etc. Karrim’s car was available 24 hours a day for the work of Apdusa.

He organised a panel of drivers from the Apdusa members (Mac Reddy, Sunny Venketrathnam, Jay Sundar, Vishnu Tewary, Clive Vawda, Yusuf Jacobs) whose function was to transport organisers/ recruits from one place to another, covering hundreds of miles, almost always at night. There would be cars flying down to Pondoland with Makikwa and other organisers to meet the militants there. There would be trips to northern Natal to meet organisers.

The name of Apdusa became popular overnight in Pondoland. Recruitment of members was rapid. The sophisticated version of the New Approach was soon abandoned by the organisers and replaced by a straight appeal on the basis of arms and an armed struggle.

There were times at the meetings of organisers and Karrim and his group, when the walls would be adorned with large maps showing areas covered

by organisers and areas yet to be covered. To the onlooker, such meetings had all the hallmarks of a military operation being reviewed.

The initial contacts in Pondoland led to the Unity Movement leadership making contact with mass underground organisations of the peasants – The Makhuluspan, the Likwepepe, the Kongo

The Crackdown

The early 1960's was full of talk of the armed struggle and of training outside the country. I recall that three young intellectuals who had completed their professional training offered the senior leadership to abandon their profession and serve the organisation overseas on a full time basis. For better or for worse, the senior leadership felt that their skills were more needed in the country than on the outside. So they remained.

With Karrim and his squad organising in a spirit of great urgency, the carefully crafted presentation of the New Approach (eschewing the direct appeal to arms and the use of analogies to convey the same message) was discarded. Madikwa and the organisers openly spoke of the armed struggle.

This could not go on without reaction from the state.

At first, there were the magisterial warnings in terms of the Suppression of Communism Act. These were followed by banning orders, which at times were coupled with house arrest orders.

Then came the detentions under the notorious 90 day law.

Karrim was one of those who was arrested in 1964.

His arrest was a signal for a sizeable section of the leadership actively working with the peasantry to flee the country, which they did. This included people like Dr Limbada, Karrim's partner, Alma Carolissen, Leonard Nikane, Diliza Lande, Eddie Ncalu. Cassim Kikia and Mannie Pillay.

By this time Madikwa, the chief organiser in Karrim's squad had been detained and word was spread that he had sold out to the police.

The comrades in Johannesburg knew fully the threat Madikwa presented and lured him to Johannesburg and for all practical purposes placed him in "*protective custody*". The police searched high and low for him. He was to

be the star witness against Karrim in a case which would have sent Karrim, at least, to life imprisonment.

In times of crisis, you are left only with your true friends. All those members of the petty bourgeoisie who enjoyed the thrill of talking of the armed struggle dashed for their funkholes when repression was unleashed. With Karrim in detention, his partner having fled the country and the younger comrades being banned, the burden fell heavily on his youngest brother Essop to see to his needs while in detention.

One can write a book about Essop. This extremely timid but warm hearted and unbelievably loyal comrade. He was terrified of the Security Police and they knew this and took full advantage of it. Yet he did things under their very noses which would have required a tremendous effort to quell his fears. Even in times like these, there were funny episodes. During one visit to the Amanzimtoti Police Station where Karrim was detained, Essop noticed Karrim kept handling one of his shoes in an abnormal manner and asked Essop to attend to it. Of course we all believed that Karrim had secreted a note in the layers of leather. So Essop opened up the shoe completely only to find nothing. It later transpired that the shoe had in truth been troubling Karrim and all he wanted was that it be attended to. Essop displayed the true trait of courage – where a person is able to consciously suppress fear and do what is required.

Fortunately for Karrim, the 90 day law was lifted in January 1965. Immediately an application to the then Supreme Court was made for his release on bail. Leon QC, led the application. It was Karrim's good fortune that the judge was Judge Solly Miller. Judge Miller had gained the reputation of being a leading civil rights judge. He was strongly a believer in the rule of law and the upholding of civil liberties. A number of his judgements were hailed by detainees and civil liberty lawyers.

Karrim was granted bail on a Friday. That night, Essop and Comrade Vishnu Tewary (now late) came to our flat in Pietermaritzburg. They were on a mission to Johannesburg. They did not reveal the nature of the mission. On their return on Sunday, they again called.

Then on Monday Essop informed us that Karrim had failed to report in terms of his bail conditions and that the notorious Van Dyk from the security police had come to Karrim's house.

Finally it became public knowledge that Karrim had escaped to Botswana.

It then became clear the nature of the mission that Essop and Vishnu had undertaken. They went to pave the way for Karrim's escape from Durban to Johannesburg from where he would be taken to Botswana.

Had the security police known of Essop's and Vishnu's mission, they would have been beaten and probably tortured to death to extract information about the escape route. This is an example of Essop's tremendous courage. He was prepared to risk arrest and torture because he loved Karrim as his brother and mentor.

Within a few weeks, there was a visitor with a note from Karrim authorizing the presenter of the note to take his car to Botswana. This was done smoothly and without fanfare.

Once again the notorious Van Dyk threw an apoplectic fit. This time Essop had a ready answer. He was to refer all inquiries about the car to his brother Kader who was an attorney. Van Dyk had a good idea as to what had happened and did not pursue the matter.

No soon as Karrim reached Botswana, was Madikwa released from "*protective custody*". Madikwa had subsequently accused Comrade Vusani (now late) as his captor. Karrim had a great deal to be grateful to Comrade Vusani. If Madikwa was set free while Karrim was in detention, he would never have got bail. He would have seen Durban only in the 1990's.

In Exile:

Karrim was in exile from January 1965 until the day he died in 1997 in Tanzania – over 30 years of it.

Jumping bail and fleeing to Botswana opened a new vista in his life. The alternative would have been prison and after 1994 a few years in legal practice.

Then in 1965 he had a whole new world opening before him. It must have been very exciting and challenging because he could not predict what the future held in store for him.

He embraced his new situation with confidence and exuberance. . He was a man of tremendous strength of character, energy, determination and enterprise.

In Botswana, he immediately got down to the business of being admitted as an attorney. He was able to obtain a certificate from the Registrar of the Natal Supreme Court that no action for striking him off the roll of attorneys was pending. He opened practice as an attorney and soon was able to attract a clientele and many friends from the local population.

In Zambia

Botswana was just the stepping stone. To get to the world it was necessary to get to Zambia. That is where he went. It was there that the exiled leadership of the Unity Movement assembled. Sadly for the Unity Movement Karrim was forced to tender his resignation. This is not the place to deal with the merits of his resignation, save to say that it was the abrasive and heavy-handed conduct of the Tabata and Jane Gool leadership eagerly supported by the second tier leadership - Tsotsi, Ally Fataar, Dr Limbada etc. that Karrim was lost to the Unity Movement.

In due course the last named themselves fell victim to the same abrasiveness and heavy-handedness on the part of the most senior leadership.

With his resignation the Unity Movement lost one of its outstanding cadres in matters of dedication, loyalty and productive hard work. Throughout his remaining life of almost three decades, not once did he publicly criticise the Unity Movement or seek to belittle it as is the manner of renegades. He always spoke and wrote admiringly about it and its exceptional leaders like IB Tabata and Tsutsha Honono.

Usually the consequences of resignation of a refugee from his/her organisation meant being declared a prohibited immigrant and returned to the country of origin. But it not for nothing that Karrim along with Ally Fataar was the Unity Movement's most dynamic and resourceful organisers.

To escape deportation, Karrim resuscitated the fact that he was India born and obtained necessary documentation to study in India. At the age of 55, he chose to embark on a co-career of Journalism. He thus went to India and studied journalism. It was while there that he befriended Benjamin

Mkapa the future president of Tanzania. It was on the advice and at the invitation of Mkapa that Karrim decided to relocate to Tanzania.

In Tanzania, the iconoclast in Karrim was given free rein.

He chose to live in the urban decayed section of Dar-es-Salaam. He bought a “house” there. He learnt to keep no valuables there. The denizens of the neighbourhood had stolen him blind. He was mugged a number of times until he became known as a “person of the area.” That gave him a large degree of immunity. But never 100%.

He began revelling in the practice of journalism. His training in the Unity Movement in the political analysis of history, society and current events and as speaker held him in good stead in the profession of a journalist. His lengthy analytical articles began appearing with increasing frequency and was on the radio both as reporter and as analyst.

Don't make a fetish of writing

Previously, members of the Unity Movement were somewhat reluctant to put to print their views in the form of pamphlets, booklets etc. This was because the standard set by Unity movement luminaries like Tabata, Jane Gool, B.M. Kies, Dr Gool and Dora Taylor was very high. It had the unfortunate effect of inhibiting and stultifying persons with lesser qualities from going to print. Karrim was one of the victims. With membership of the Unity Movement a thing of the past, Karrim broke loose and produced a vast number of books/booklets on a whole range of subjects. His attitude was: *Don't make a fetish of writing*. Indeed he did not. He wrote profusely. He paid for the cost of printing out of his own pocket. I don't know whether he recovered any thing close to what he spent.

He travelled the world attending conferences as a reporter. He built up a vast network of contacts throughout the world

There was a great deal of research and effort put into his writings. But a number of them were subject to severe criticism. By this time Karrim had broken free of the Unity Movement ideology and drifted without rudder.

At times he adopted totally opportunistic positions. The worst example was his booklet on North Korea. It was a nauseating piece of writing devoted to sycophantic praise of the North Korean dictator and his son who was being primed to take over the dictatorship.

Karrim was by this time accountable to no person or organisation for the things he advocated and wrote – like “The Great Leader” and “The Beloved One”, referring to the North Korean dictator and his son

By the time he settled in Tanzania, his legal practice took a back seat, so to speak. He thumbed his nose at the legal establishment. He planned to take only about two cases a month. For his legal office, he used his Volkswagen Beetle in which he interviewed his clients.

Enormously Popular

With his friendly and warm personality, Karrim made friends widely and rapidly. Dar es Salaam was the centre of the revolutionary exiles. Zambia was closer to South Africa, but its ruler, Kenneth Kaunda, was vicious, mean and capricious.

He picked and chose which of the liberatory movements should be recognised. He did not conceal his preferences or his dislikes.

For this reason liberatory movements felt safer and more comfortable in Tanzania. Dar es Salaam was a political beehive. It was there you would find the offices of the Palestinian Liberatory Organisation, Ugandan organisation represented by Yoweri Museveni, ZANU represented by Mugabe, Chitepo, Shamyarira, the Rwandan patriots. There was also the ANC, the PAC and the Unity Movement.

Understandably, Dar es Salaam was a boiling cauldron of revolution. It was there that Karrim forged friendships with the exiles. So strong were those ties that many years later, Karrim was always given the respect of being allowed to meet with his former fellow-exiles who were now high in government office and who had busy schedules to fulfill.

Whenever there was a struggle against a dictatorship or oppressive regime, Karrim took up the cause of those freedom fighters without expecting anything in return. In a world governed by corruption, it was a rare person who would spend money for a cause which did not directly affect him and which cause he took up purely out of solidarity.

He thus became the roving champion of the cause of the PLO; of Yoweri Museveni and the Ugandan struggle; of the people of Rwanda and the Rwandan Patriotic Front; of Laurent Kabila and the struggle in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Ironically, it was his friendship with Laurent Kabila from the latter's days of exile in Tanzania which precipitated Karrim's death. When Kabila's

faction emerged as the most powerful and Kabila was head of the new State, Karrim, the newshound, could not stay away from the DRC. He had to meet Kabila and interview him. This he did and in answer to one of the questions, Kabila asserted that Karrim's writings was one source which shaped his thinking. How proud Karrim must have felt being vindicated and acknowledged by the head of the latest democratic government! Karrim wasted no time in producing a pamphlet on the DRC including a photograph with him and Kabila.

All who knew him felt that the hazards of that trip to the DRC was what triggered his death. It would have meant neglect of his health; it would have meant ignoring the numerous warnings his body must have given him. Karrim must have been in a state of high euphoria, being involved in the production of his pamphlet and regaling his friends and colleagues of his experiences in the Congo.

When he had the stroke, he apparently was in his dwelling. Somehow, he had the prescience to know that he was in trouble. He had enough state of mind to seek help from friends. Where else except where the journalists assembled? He was found lying on the ground near the building and when asked what was the matter with him, he was found to be disorientated. He was rushed to the Agha Khan Hospital in Dar es Salaam. Initially it appeared that he would survive. He insisted on walking to the bathroom. He smiled at his visiting friends.

Then he surprised them all by quietly dying.

I have not known a person who had so much verve for life. He lived it to the full doing all the things he wanted to do and more importantly, to do it his own way. There was so much will and determination in him that if his body could have managed it he would have lived for two more lifetimes doing the things he loved doing. The vast number of friends he made wherever he went would have even excited the envy of a saint. He was liked, loved and respected. For all the tremendous effort and endeavour he gave for the causes he supported, he asked for nothing in return for himself. Wherever he went, he built lasting friendships. Decades later people with whom he lived or whose lives he touched would recall lovingly details, including the funny ones, of their interaction.

After spending decades in East Africa, he chose to make it his home and his concern. He took a decision not to return to South Africa. All his work

and his friends were in that region. There was nothing for him in South Africa.

Although Karrim was not one to seek or solicit praise, he would have been less than human if he would not have been touched at the plaudits that came pouring on his death from those who mattered most to him. Happily he was never to know about the assassination of his friend Kabila.

Yet if it was at all possible for him to offer an opinion about something which mattered a great deal to him but which was left unattended, he would have said:

My people in South Africa were not amongst those who bade me their last farewells.

That reproach would have hit where it hurt the most. We have said farewells to all and sundry, even to cats and dogs. Yet when a man who has had such great influence in our lives dies, we have as yet been unable to spare a few appropriate words.

Our failure to pay due tribute to Karrim did not happen because we did not appreciate his contribution to the struggle and to our development or that we did not know our duty towards comrades who have passed on, but it was due to a certain ambivalence which had grown in us towards him.

The man we met over twenty years later was not the same man we last knew.

His solitariness had exposed him to adopting a number of political positions which went against all that we (both Karrim and ourselves) had stood for and upheld in the Unity Movement, officially and unofficially. For reasons not germane to this tribute, Karrim and his partner Alma lived in separate countries. Karrim stayed in Tanzania and Alma in Zimbabwe. Karrim would come regularly to Zimbabwe and meet up with Alma at her flat or they would visit other countries together.

Despite his periodic visits to Alma, he must have been very lonely although he would not have shown it. There are people who deal with grief and stress by being flippant about the cause. He related to me the occasion when he was informed that his younger brother Amdhi had died. There was no one in Tanzania who would be able to share that grief and thereby reduce it. He stood alone. He chose to deal with that grief by wearing a

suit, something he rarely did. He then went out to face the world. As expected he was asked by the friend what the occasion was to merit him being all dressed up. Karrim answered: My younger brother died today and I am showing him my respect by this special dressing.

After his death, Alma lugged all the way from Tanzania, plastic bags full of audio tapes of Indian music. They were all Karrim's. I had no idea that he listened to Indian music! Mostly they were what are called "golden oldies" by immortals like Saigal and Mohammed Rafi. Many were old and had stained covers through frequent use. One can imagine him being all alone at night, reading or typing² with the tapes playing songs one has heard over and over again.

Political and personal loneliness can breed all kinds of intellectual pathologies.

The question arose as to how can one pay tribute for what we considered to be his positive contribution and not denounce his later-held positions? To have maintained a silence on such matters would have amounted to a falsification of the man's role and activities.

Conclusion:

That what has been written above has in our opinion resolved the dilemma. His positive contribution, his dynamic character, his total devotion to the struggle, his care and devotion to people, his charisma has been stated to record our appreciation.

His failings have not been ignored. They have been mentioned and also recorded.

It is not the function of a tribute to present a critical assessment of the man and his activities. That is the function of his biographer or any other person who wished to delve into Karrim's venture into what we believe to be an unscientific and anti- Marxist Leninist position, namely, into the false and chimerical world of Pan Africanism.

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² Until the very end (April 1997) he used a manual typewriter.

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