



APDUSA VIEWS

SPECIAL ISSUE

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A TRIBUTE TO AHMED HASSIM (AMDHI)



INTRODUCTION

On 9 May 1985, AHMED HASSIM, aged 49, of Pietermaritzburg, and Principal of COOL AIR SECONDARY SCHOOL, near Dalton, Natal, died in hospital as a result of a heart attack.

His sudden death came as a severe shock to all who knew him.

On the day of his funeral, there was an unending stream of mourners – students, members of the teaching profession, workers, friends, neighbours and relatives – who went to pay their last respects to the man they loved and admired.

AHMED HASSIM, known as AMDHI to friends and relatives, was a remarkable man in many respects. As such persons are uncommon, it behoves us to treasure his memory and to record some of his important qualities both as a tribute to him, and as a set of standards for the younger generation to emulate.

BACKGROUND

AMDHI was born and brought up in Dundee, Natal where he matriculated. After working as a shop-assistant for two years, he enrolled at the University of Fort Hare in 1956 for the degree of Bachelor of Science. He taught for a year in 1959 and then completed the University Education Diploma in 1960. Thereafter he taught at various high schools, mostly in Natal. He was Vice-Principal of the high school in Vereeniging, Acting Principal of the Esther Payne Smith Secondary School and finally the Principal of the school at Cool Air.

AS AN EDUCATIONIST

As this field is a technical one, APDUSA VIEWS sought the opinions of persons qualified to make an assessment of AMDHI's capabilities as an educationist:—

“As an educationist — teacher, vice-principal and principal — Mr Hassim presented a most likeable and approachable personality. His humility, simplicity and outstanding human relations endeared him to his colleagues, pupils and the community at large.

He was a highly intelligent person whose analytical and fertile mind always enabled him to map out solutions to problems with promptness and precision.

In his role as school administrator, his primary concern, apart from the academic and professional growth of teachers, was for the pastoral care and the overall growth of every pupil in the school. His pupil-centred approach to his calling was most admirable. Such was this inter-personal relationship with pupils, that even the “most difficult” pupils would seek his help and guidance. Mr Hassim's caring attitude towards his pupils rubbed on to his teachers.

He was a firm believer of a democratic type of leadership which lent itself to a two-way communication. This characteristic together with his human approach made for a well-motivated staff which was prepared to give off its best for the pupils.

All those who worked with him and under him, and all pupils who passed through his hands will have fond memories of a man who worked honestly and selflessly in the pursuit of all that is good and truthful."

AS A PERSON

AMDHI was a warm and gentle person who made lasting friends wherever he met people. He was never ambitious for personal gain and glory. In a profession noted for its intense rivalry and the disgusting rat race for position and promotion, AMDHI was able to rise above all that. Hence none had an unkind word for him. His camaraderie, his even temperament and his keen sense of humour drew people to him.

Outside the precincts of the school, AMDHI related to people with natural ease and spontaneity. Snobbery in any form was totally alien to him. One of his strongest attributes was the patience and sympathy he displayed to persons who came to him with their problems. His advice was invariably valued because of his sincerity in the concern he showed for people and their problems.

*"His life was gentle and the elements
So mixed in him that Nature might stand up
And say to all the world: This was a Man"*

(Shakespeare : Julius Caesar)

AS A MEMBER OF THE UNITY MOVEMENT

For over thirty years, AMDHI was a committed member of the UNITY MOVEMENT.

At the University of Fort Hare, he joined the SOCIETY OF YOUNG AFRICA, the most advanced national youth organisation in South Africa in that period and which was affiliated to the Unity Movement. In 1960, he joined the DURBAN STUDENTS UNION, also an affiliate of the UNITY MOVEMENT. When APDUSA was formed in 1961, AMDHI was among the first to join and remained its loyal member until the day he died.

In 1971 AMDHI was detained briefly by the Security Police concerning APDUSA activities which resulted in the major trial of APDUSA members on charges of "terrorism".

Having imbibed the teachings of the UNITY MOVEMENT and APDUSA as a young man, AMDHI was well equipped to enter his vocation as a teacher in the noblest sense of that word. He refused to be

constrained by racial education. He consciously instilled in his students and colleagues the quest for human freedom and liberation. He refused to dole out racist and inferior education as he was expected to. He defied the system with that quiet strength and consistency that we would love to have more from our teachers.

AMDHI found that without attracting the attention of a vindictive and repressive education department, a dedicated person can make a positive contribution to the struggle. He has demonstrated that participation by teachers in the struggle for freedom is possible and very vital to our young.

CONCLUSION

AMDHI leaves his wife, VIJI and three children – PAVEL, PERVEEN and SHAFEEKA. To them we offer our most profound sympathies. We assure them that APDUSA will always honour AMDHI as a true COMRADE.

APDUSA salutes AHMED HASSIM!

We mourn the loss of our Comrade!

*"Fear no more the heat of the sun
Nor the furious winter's rages
Thou thy worldly task hast done
Home art gone and taken thy wages . . .
Quiet consummation have,
And renowned be thy grave."*

(Shakespeare : Cymbeline)