

## **Unity Movement: the Kader Hassim Collection - an introduction**

Kadir Hassim was a member of the Non-European Unity Movement in Pietermaritzburg. In 1971, he was arrested by the South African Government and charged under the Suppression of Communism Act. A year later, he was sentenced to 8 years imprisonment on Robben Island for ‘terrorist’ activities. A lawyer by training, he suffered not only the brutality of a lengthy incarceration, but also the indignity of being removed from the roll of Attorneys by the Natal Law Society in 1975. He was reinstated 21 years later on 16<sup>th</sup> July 1996.

The Kader Hassim Collection comprises a wide range of materials, all of which relate to the Non-European Unity Movement and its affiliated groups. As such, it offers an important documentary record of the history of anti-colonial resistance in South Africa, particularly the years 1940 to 1960. These materials centre on the activities of the following groups: the Workers’ Party of South Africa (WPSA), the All African Convention (ACC), the National Anti-CAD Movement (Anti-CAD) and the Non-European Unity Movement (NEUM). The APDUSA collection (PC 21) is a smaller collection which showcases the work of the African People’s Democratic Union of South Africa. APDUSA was established in 1985 as a successor to the NEUM. I.B. Tabata, former member of the NEUM and one of its more charismatic leaders, became president of the new organisation.

### **Selection Criteria**

All primary materials in the respective collections have been recommended for digitisation. Those materials which are available elsewhere in published form (journal articles and books) have been omitted from the DISA collection. Digitised materials have been grouped into 5 main categories (this is not how they appear in the original collection):

### **Part I: Organisations**

1. Draft Thesis of the Worker’s Party in South Africa 1934/35 (incomplete)
2. Minutes and Proceedings of the first, second, third, fourth and fifth National Anti-CAD Conferences held in South Africa between 1943 and 1954.

3. Reports on the Anti-CAD conference and the NEUM conference (7 April 1948)
4. Minutes of the All-African Convention held in 1949.
5. Minutes and Proceedings of the third, fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh Unity Movement Conferences held in South Africa between 1945 and 1951.

**Part II: Political Education and Pamphlets (NEUM, AAC and the TLSA)**

1. “The Crimes of Bantu Education in South Africa” by Jane Gool
2. *The Background of Segregation* by B.M. Kies (29 May 1943)
3. “The 10-point Programme of the Unity Movement” (1943)
4. “The Rehabilitation Scheme: A New Fraud” (December 1945)
5. “Let Us Rally” Issued by the AAC. (195-).
6. “A Declaration to the People of South Africa from the Non-European Unity Movement’ (April 1951).
7. *The Origin and Development of Segregation in South Africa* by W.P. van Schoor (1951).
8. *The Boycott as a Weapon of Struggle* by I.B. Tabata (June 1952).
9. “To the People of Natal: Race Riots and the Nation” (August 1952)
10. *Self-Rule in the Transkei: A Monstrous Fraud*. Issued by the AAC. (December 1953)
11. “The First Ten Years of the Non-European Unity Movement” by Hosea Jaffe. (December 1953).
12. A Presidential Message by Dan Wessels of the TLSA (May-June 1968)

**Part III: Miscellaneous**

1. “In Appreciation of a Great South African”: Tribute to Jane Gool by Archie Mafeje (March 1991)
2. Various Press Cuttings on the Death of I.B.Tabata
3. “The Political Formation of South African Trotskyism” by Tony Southall (Based on an interview with Charlie van Gelderen) (nd)

#### **Part IV: Kader Hassim**

1. Interview with Kader Hassim conducted by Sibongiseni Mkhize and Ruth Lundie on 26<sup>th</sup> November 1997.
2. Various Press Cuttings on Kader Hassim's reinstatement to the roll of Attorneys.
3. "A Tribute to My Jailer" by Nina Hassim. *Natal Witness*, 7 August 1998.

#### **Part V: APDUSA**

1. "Presidential Address of the African People's Democratic Union" by I.B. Tabata (April 1962).
2. "The Tasks Before Us – The Nation" (Used in the APDUSA trial, 1971-1972)
3. "New Unity Movement" (April 1985)
4. New Unity Movement Bulletin 1(2) (1987)
5. New Unity Movement: "Elections '94 and the Workers" (1994).
6. South Peninsula Educational Fellowship. Statement on Closure of Schools
7. Consumer Boycott

#### **Background**

The contribution made by the NEUM and its associated groups to the South African liberation struggle is not widely known. Its historic formation as an organisation defined largely in opposition to the African Nationalism of the ANC has meant that it has generally not found a prominent place in either the politics or the historiography of the post-1994 period. The political energies which resulted in the formation of the Unity Movement in December 1943 can be traced back to an earlier period. The late 1930s saw a move from the conciliatory politics of an older generation of leaders to a much more militant and confrontational style. One of the catalysts of this shift was a government proposal which sought to remove Cape Africans from the voter's roll. This was to be replaced by the wholly ineffectual Native Representative's Council (NRC). The proposal was met with fierce resistance. In December 1935, almost 2000 people assembled in Cape Town to register their protest against what became known as the 'Hertzog Bills'. The result of this meeting was the formation of the All African Convention, headed by D.D.T. Jabavu. Despite these efforts, the Bills went through parliament in 1936 and the African vote was lost.

It did not take long before the Fusion government began to train its sights on the Coloured franchise. Proposals to form a Coloured Affairs Council led to the establishment in 1943 of the Anti-CAC movement which (after the formation of the Coloured Affairs Department) later became known as the National Anti-CAD. The Ant-CAD became a rallying point for many of the oppressed (not only those designated 'coloured') as they sought to resist all forms of segregation. At this time, there was also a growing realisation that political success was attendant on the creation of a united front of all the oppressed, irrespective of race. In December 1943, a range of organisations assembled at a conference in Bloemfontein with the specific aim of creating a broad-based political organisation strong enough to take on the might of the South African state. The NEUM, as it became known, was conceived as a federal organisation which brought together a wide range of existing political, trade union, civic, cultural and social organisations under a non-racial banner. The two main components of the NEUM were the AAC and the Anti-CAD. However, as the documents in this collection testify, NEUM conferences attracted many participants, including the Cape-based Teachers' League of South Africa (TLSA), the Cape African Teachers' Association (CATA), the New Era Fellowship, the Transkei Organised Bodies, the Communist People's Club and the Trotskyite Fourth International Club. The Unity Movement was unable to recruit either the ANC or the South African Indian Congress to its cause; part of the reason for this was its demand that all affiliates swear unwavering allegiance to a set of basic principles, known as the 'Ten-Point Programme'.

The Kader Hassim Collection includes detailed minutes and proceedings of many of these early conferences. There are a number of reasons why these documents are important. First, they offer a record of attendance – who was involved, their organisational affiliations and the kinds of groups (cultural, political, religious, civic, etc) which were represented. The NEUM and the anti-CAD are often remembered as 'coloured' organisations. The record of attendance in these minutes reveals a much more diverse constituency, one which strove to implement an unqualified non-racialism in all its activities. Second, apart from the chairman and secretary's reports, the minutes, in many cases, also include various key discussion papers which will be of interest to scholars of the movement. For example, in the Proceedings of the 3<sup>rd</sup>

Unity Movement Conference in Cape Town in 1945, I.B. Tabata delivered a speech entitled “The Building of Unity” in which he discussed the importance of a federal structure of organisation. This was to become a major point of contention in the years that followed. Finally, the minutes also include detailed conference resolutions as well as verbatim accounts of conference discussions. They therefore provide essential information about the dominant preoccupations and concerns, strategic decisions, conference resolutions and, importantly, areas of conflict and the ways in which they were managed in the groups in question. They also give a very vivid and immediate sense of the organisational culture: the established rituals and protocols, styles of debate, rhetorical strategies, internal hierarchies, dominant players, as well as information to do with women’s participation and the gendered division of labour.

A significant element in the collection is a draft thesis of the Trotskyite Workers’ Party of South Africa. The WPSA was an off-shoot of the Cape Town-based Lenin Club which was established in the early 1930s. The inclusion of this document in the Kader Hassim Collection testifies to an important aspect of the NEUM’s intellectual and political roots, something which NEUM members tended to downplay in later years. Three of the most prominent individuals in the NEUM – namely Goolam Gool, Jane Gool and I.B. Tabata – experienced their first real political education in the discussion groups of the WPSA. While socialist ideas were clearly influential, the *public* emphasis in the movement was on developing an effective anti-colonial struggle and on attaining full citizenship rights.

The NEUM concentrated its efforts on political and cultural education, on the building of a critical vanguard through which the pressure of revolutionary consciousness would eventually be felt by all layers of South African society. Unlike the ANC, NEUM leaders maintained that clarification and the spread of ideas had to take place prior to direct action. As Ben Kies put it, in an address to the Third Unity Conference entitled “The New Unity”, “we will have to teach and teach and teach them, until they understand” (1945:45). Apart from a remarkable consensus among Unity Movement members, this strategy also produced a strong culture of scholarship and discussion – particularly in the Western Cape – and a theoretically astute intelligentsia which was far in advance of other liberation movements. NEUM intellectuals produced an impressive body of anti-establishment, mainly historical

scholarship, the significance of which is only beginning to be recognised. This emphasis on political pedagogy is apparent in many of the conference discussion papers and pamphlets in the Collection. These speeches and pamphlets – which address topics such as *The Boycott as a Weapon of Struggle*, “The Unity Movement and the World Situation” (Minutes of the Fourth Unity Conference, 1945) and “The Rehabilitation Scheme: A New Fraud” – are an important part of the Unity Movement’s impressive intellectual corpus.

The remaining documents provide details of Kader Hassim’s recollections of his experiences in the NEUM (Interview), as well as newspaper reports of his eventual reinstatement on the Attorney’s roll. Various newspaper reports also record the responses to NEUM leader I.B. Tabata’s death in 1990. Other documents give a sense of some of the work which was undertaken in the later period under the banner of APDUSA. The original collection includes a number of copies of *APDUSA Views*, the journal of APDUSA. These have already been digitised as part of Phase I of the DISA project.

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