



SPECIAL ISSUE

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RASSOOL ON JANE GOOL, AN
AGING REVOLUTIONARY
NEAR THE END OF HER LIFE**

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A VILE DECEPTION BY CIRAJ RASSOL ON AN AGING REVOLUTIONARY NEAR THE END OF HER LIFE

By Kader Hassim

About twenty years ago we learnt that a university student proposed writing the biography of leading revolutionary and thinker – I.B.Tabata. This was indeed good news. The country never got to know its leading thinker. The country's newspapers were full of ersatz leaders – leaders imposed on the population by the very powerful propaganda machinery of imperialism and the liberal bourgeoisie. The vitally important and long overdue piece of writing was to be done by a certain Ciraj Rassool who happened to be a grand-nephew of the well known Gool sisters. Who better than a member of the Gool family, the descendant of the Indian-born wife of the patriarch, Yusuf Gool? Tabata's own life was closely intertwined with members of the Gool family for over fifty years. It was therefore doubly appropriate that a member of the Gool family should write and record the life of one of the most remarkable men in the struggle for liberation of the oppressed people of this country.

By the mid 1980s our group, Natal Apdusa had become *persona non grata* with the Tabata/ Jane Gool leadership of the Unity Movement of South Africa (UMSA). The principal cause was our group's involvement and activity in the formation of the New Unity Movement (NUM) which effectively excluded the overseas UMSA leadership from exercising any organisational influence.

During February 1993, we happened to run into Jane Gool in Cape Town. Prior to that I had expressed my fear to Minnie Gool the real possibility of losing forever the history of the Workers Party of South Africa (WPSA) since there were no prospects of that history being written by either RO Dudley or Alie Fataar.¹ Without my knowledge Minnie Gool broached the subject with Jane Gool and told her that I wanted to discuss the preservation of that history with her. When Jane Gool asked me what was it that I wanted to know, I repeated my fears of that history being lost forever. Jane Gool's response was a curt: "That has been taken care of!" I assumed that Dr Norman Traub had been entrusted with that task.

I now realize that what Jane Gool meant was that the task was entrusted, not to the faithful and loyal Norman Traub but to, in retrospect, a Machiavellian Ciraj Rassool. It is merciful that Jane Gool did not live to see the nightmare of what she believed had been "taken care of".

Once it was agreed by the UMSA leadership under Jane Gool that the biography of Tabata be written by Ciraj Rassool, no effort was spared to see this objective realized.² There were numerous interviews; Ciraj Rassool was plied with all kinds of

¹ I raised the matter of the history of the WPSA with Cde Alie Fataar during the 1990 conference of the New Unity Movement, he being a member of the WPSA. Cde Fataar told me that he had previously raised the matter with Mr. Dudley (also a member) who reminded him that WPSA members were bound by an oath never to reveal the activity of the WPSA. If therefore they considered themselves bound by that oath, there were no prospects of them recording the history of the WPSA.

² On page (ii) of Rassool's "Acknowledgements" in his thesis, Rassool states: "Aunty Jane (Jane Gool) and Aunty Minnie (Minnie Gool) were always very supportive of my research, and answered all my questions even when they were complicated ones."

documents which might have a bearing on the design and creation of the autobiography. Jane Gool submitted herself to no less than eight interviews. There was tremendous enthusiasm and expectation. At long last, the people of South Africa in the main and to a lesser extent the people of Africa would get to read about I.B. Tabata who was described by Professor Linda Chisholm³ as “arguably one of finest intellectuals South Africa has produced in the 20th century”⁴

It was expected of Rassool that his biography would bring to the fore Tabata the activist revolutionary, the orator without equal and the single-mindedness with which he devoted his entire life for the liberation of his people for no reward other than the satisfaction of doing so.

As it turned out, when Rassool completed the biography, the reader was presented not with “one of the finest intellectuals South Africa has produced...” but a shocking *caricature*.⁵ All the worst vices of politicians, especially those from the Third World and most pertinently of the new rulers of this country were visited on Tabata’s head⁶:

- Dishonesty, fraud, petty jealousy and fear of being outshone politically through Neville Alexander
- Intolerance and dictatorship through Livingstone Mqotsi
- Senility, mental degeneration, abandonment of the revolutionary struggle through the insanity-drenched pages of Frank Anthony’s book “The Journey”
- Plagiarism or perpetrating a fraud on the public by not acknowledging that his works were written in part by Dora Taylor, through Ciraj Rassool
- Patronage
- “Presidentialism” – betrayal of the principle of collective leadership presumably and developing a craving to be addressed and treated as a President
- Betrayal of the interests of the working class through Baruch Hirson
- Abandonment of Marxism through Baruch Hirson

The unkindest cut of all was Rassool’s act or his active connivance in the act of expelling Jane Gool from the side of Tabata in the display in the District Six Museum and placing a portrait of Dora Taylor in its place.

It is doubly merciful that Jane Gool did not live to see this malice-driven dastardly deed.

Rassool claims that at some stage in his research he chose to abandon the route of a conventional biography of Tabata. He gives no credible reason for this sudden *volte face*. It only reinforces the suspicion that he had all along intended this and made his move at a time when Jane Gool could no longer defend herself or Tabata and when Minnie Gool was reaching out for her century

³ Who is accepted nationwide as a highly talented intellectual who is with the Human Science Research Council and who is presently seconded to Mrs. Angie Motshega, the incompetent Minister of Basic Education.

⁴ “Education, Politics and Organisation. The Educational Traditions of the Non European Unity Movement 1943 -1986 by Linda Chisholm and published in “Transformation” 15 (1991)

⁵ The Caricature took the form of a doctoral thesis submitted by Rassool to the University of Western Cape and for which he was awarded a doctorate.

⁶ The one vice that Rassool could not place on Tabata’s head was living a life of affluence and luxury.

Let us put it differently. Had Jane Gool and Tabata's followers like Minnie Gool and Gwen Wilcox known how Tabata's "biography" was going to turn out, they would *never* have cooperated with Ciraj Rassool. More importantly they would have alerted all Unity Movement - orientated persons about Rassool's true intentions. In the end Rassool would have been left only with Tabata's detractors.

Ever since I had sight of Rassool's thesis, I kept wondering what is it that could make a person engage in such deception. I have made some inquiries about possible motives on Rassool's part. Various theories were suggested – one enough to make one's hair stand – but there was no hard evidence.

Ultimately I have been left with a number of strands suggesting possible motives.

1. It is significant that Rassool dedicates his thesis to, amongst others his mother's father, Daniel Michael Crowe, a Stalinist who was a member of the Communist Party and to his mother. Rassool claims that it was the Stalinist Crowe who "stimulated my imagination about the cultural history of radical politics." It strains credulity to understand how the most shameless falsifiers of history could have stimulated any imagination. One has no idea of how much seepage there has been of the poison of Stalinism from grandfather to grandson. It is not accidental that Rassool dedicates his thesis to his grandfather who belonged to a party which considered the Unity Movement personified by people like Tabata as its mortal enemy. The thinking of grandfather and grandson on this score is what lawyers call *ad idem*, of one mind. What can be more fitting than to dedicate a massive character assassination of a leading Marxist-Leninist-Trotskyist to a Stalinist?
2. Anybody who knows of or knew the family of Yusuf Gool will concede the rivalry between his two wives and which rivalry was passed on to their descendants. One sees it trickling out from time to time in Joe Rassool's book "*District Six Lest We Forget*." To what extent did that rivalry affect Ciraj Rassool? Did it have anything to do with the public act of "divorcing" Jane Gool from Tabata's side? We get a glimpse of his own hatred for the Gool family (meaning the family from Hajima, the wife from South Africa) through a cheap jibe at the image projected by the Gool family when he referred to it as the "Gool family gloriana"⁷
3. In heaping ignominy on Tabata and relegating stalwart Jane Gool to the sideline, Ciraj Rassool seeks to discredit the Unity Movement as a whole. Ever since its formation, the Unity Movement has been a huge thorn in the flesh of the ANC and the SACP. In all major debates, these two organisations were almost invariably trounced thoroughly by the Unity Movement. It was the Unity Movement which exposed the collaboration of these organisations and their ilk with the ruling class of the day. It was the Unity Movement which condemned the racialism practiced by these organisations. And it was the Unity movement which exposed the various adventuristic stunts parading as the freedom struggle.

⁷ See Footnote 3 on page 439 of Rassool's thesis. What is ironical is that Ciraj Rassool is the grandson of the very same "Gool half sister" he mentions in the footnote.

Nothing would please the new ruling class more than the massive assault on Tabata's political reputation.⁸ Nothing would please the new ruling class more than a systematic accusation against the foremost personality of the Unity movement of all the very political vices the Unity Movement had accused the ANC and SACP of.

That massive assault would be considered by the new rulers as precious service rendered. There would be rewards aplenty from the new ruling class for a young ambitious man who can render such valuable service.

Ciraj Rassool is not averse to being heaped with positions and what he considers honours. He is even less averse to inflicting a narration of these honours on the readers of his thesis.⁹ There is no better way to garner positions and honours than by singing the praises of the new rulers and slandering and vilifying their most persistent gadfly.

Let us be clear about one thing. It is not our intention to try and psychoanalyse Ciraj Rassool for actual motives in perpetrating the vile deception. When you accuse someone of vile conduct, it is expected from your audience that you furnish some indication of the motive. But the purpose of the rebuttal is not to supplant the work of an alienist but to deal with the more important of the slanders and to show their baselessness.

We intend showing that:

- The level of scholarship displayed by Rassool falls short insofar as factual and objective presentation is concerned
- The standard displayed by Rassool concerning fair and balanced presentation
- In basing his attack on the Unity Movement and Tabata by employing the article by Baruch Hirson Rassool has revealed his own ignorance of the politics of Tabata and the Unity Movement.
- Rassool scrapes the barrel by relying on "work of fiction" by Frank Anthony when the latter during a period of mental breakdown poured out his hatred against those whom he perceived were his political opponents.
- Without research and investigation he accepted the version presented to him by Neville Alexander concerning his suspension of from the Society of Young Africa and his subsequent relationship with the Unity Movement
- He accepted without testing the validity of the version given by Livingstone Mqotsi and thereby was unable to provide a rational political

⁸ The new ruling class like the Mafia can be extremely cynical. They did everything in their power to destroy one of the most impressive creations of the liberation struggle, which is SACOS. Then they offer the past presidents of SACOS awards for their struggle through SACOS! The ANC and SACP did everything in their power to deny the Unity Movement recognition by the OAU and thereby were responsible for the denial of access to much needed resources. It is now incontrovertible that the Unity Movement mission abroad failed because of the withholding of recognition. Tabata died in exile with his dream and life's work remaining unfulfilled. The ANC government thereafter granted him an award. The Mafia with incomparable cynicism used to bring the largest floral tribute to the funeral of a victim, assassinated by the Mafia in the first place!

⁹ See page 502 to 512 of his thesis.

- explanation for the behaviour of Mqotsi and failed to reconcile his conduct with his subsequent considerably low key political involvement for the rest of his life
- With deliberate and malicious intention he reduces Jane Gool's role as that of a mere companion of Tabata with no mention at all of Jane Gool's considerable political talent, skill and contribution¹⁰
- Without any factual evidence Rassool makes the absurd claim that Dora Taylor was strongly influential in Tabata's development as a political thinker and activist
- Without any acceptable factual evidence Rassool makes the claim that Tabata's works and writings were the outcome of joint effort and contribution by himself and Dora Taylor which Tabata failed to disclose, acknowledge or make public
- Rassool committed the cardinal error of not researching and not studying the most important component of the life of his subject for biography. In Tabata's case that component was his political outlook which is inextricably bound up with the organisations he worked in and advanced.
- In writing about Tabata and the Unity Movement Rassool showed shocking ignorance so as to render his entire thesis falling short of what is generally considered to be fair objective academic scholarship.

THE APPROACH TO THE REBUTTAL OF RASSOOL'S THESIS.

1. We do not belong to the academia and are thus not trained in the rules governing debate and disputes between academics.
2. We are political activists and have been so for a long time.
3. We intend responding to Rassool's thesis as we would any polemical matter.
4. We debate hard and do not engage in niceties and euphemisms. We say what we have to say bluntly and where anger is justified then anger is expressed.
5. We do not submit the Rebuttal as an academic thesis to be assessed and given a grade. We submit our Rebuttal as both a defence of the honour integrity and reputation of very special individuals which have been sullied and attributed with infamy and also as an attack on the dishonourable motives and questionable techniques employed by Rassool in seeking to smear Tabata's life with infamy, which life by and large was free from most of the vices of human beings.
6. We also seek to repel Rassool's malicious relegation of Jane Gool to the sidelines and thereby deny her her rightful place in the liberation struggle, both as an activist and a theoretician. And knowing both Tabata and Jane Gool for decades, we reject out of hand the assertion by Rassool that she was a mere companion to Tabata because for 60 years she was his partner in life, his comrade, his co-political strategist and his fellow-fighter, always together in the forefront of battle.

CONCLUSION

¹⁰ As it happened it was Jane Gool who had recruited Tabata into the WPSA.

It is our intention to publish our Rebuttal on the Apdusa Views website either as a single piece or in sections, depending on factors of convenience and practicality.

ABOUT THE PERSON WHO HAS BEEN ENTRUSTED WITH THE TASK OF FORMULATING A REBUTTAL OF CIRAJ RASSOOL'S DOCTORAL THESIS WHICH IN THE MAIN SEEKS TO DENIGRATE AND DEFAME THE POLITICAL REPUTATION OF LEADING REVOLUTIONARY AND INTELLECTUAL, I.B. TABATA.

APDUSA VIEWS has taken a decision to administer a full rebuttal of the thesis insofar as it seeks to denigrate I.B. Tabata, to marginalize the role of Jane Gool and through these means to undermine and belittle the contribution made by the Unity Movement and Apdusa in the liberation struggle. Apdusa Views has appointed its editor Kader Hassim to prepare, formulate and publish the rebuttal.

It is our view that Kader Hassim is qualified to execute this task. He has been actively involved in Unity Movement politics, both organizationally and theoretically for the past 59 years. Over these decades Kader Hassim has interacted with the leadership of the Unity Movement at various levels – from the local to the national.

With the passage of time, the number of people who have intimate knowledge about the Unity Movement has drastically diminished either through death or through desertion. There are few left who have a substantial knowledge of important information about the Unity Movement. Kader Hassim is one of them. Kader Hassim joined the Unity Movement in 1951 as a student. He went on to become an activist in the Anti Segregation Council in Dundee in that same year. He continued his political activities when he was employed in a factory, as a university student, as editor of the journal "The Soyan" in 1959, as Vice president of SOYA¹¹ in 1961, as an attorney, as prisoner on Robben Island, as one of the leading members of the revived Apdusa in Natal in 1982, as a member of the steering committee of the New Unity Movement and as its Vice president in 1988. He was appointed as editor of Apdusa Views in 1984 and has remained in this position until the present.

On Robben Island, he was placed in "B" section with people like Pokela and Masemola of the PAC, with Govan Mbeki of the SACP and Nelson Mandela of the ANC and others from 1973 until his departure from Robben Island in February 1980.

Kader Hassim has met and interacted with leading personalities of the Unity Movement over the decades.

¹¹ Society of Young Africa

In the preparation and formulation of the rebuttal, Kader Hassim has been actively assisted by his wife and comrade, Nina Hassim who herself has been involved in the liberation struggle through the Unity Movement since she was eleven years old, i.e. for over 60 years. She is the niece of Jane Gool and I.B. Tabata and has known them since she was a child.

The Rebuttal is relatively substantial. Work on it commenced during August 2008 when the existence of the thesis on the internet came to our attention.

APDUSA VIEWS EDITORIAL COMMITTEE