



APDUSA VIEWS

Issue No. 73

June 2004

WOULD GANDHI HAVE VOTED FOR THE ANC?

**APDUSA VIEWS
P O BOX 8888
CUMBERWOOD
3235**

e-mail: malentro@telkomsa.net

WOULD GANDHI HAVE VOTED FOR THE ANC?

INTRODUCTION

In a last minute effort verging on hysteria, the ANC pulled out all stops to get South Africans of Indian origin to vote for the ANC. The ANC believed that the Indian vote was going to be crucial in deciding whether the ANC or IFP became the ruling party of Province of KZ Natal.

The death of Dullah Omar was used to win sympathy votes. Memorial services for him were held in areas where there is a heavy concentration of Indian people. Where memorial services could not be held, the ANC-run KZN Department of Transport used taxpayers money to publish full page advertisements in newspapers circulating in areas heavily populated by Indian people about the greatness of Dullah Omar.

Mandela was brought out to address the Indian people in Mount Edgecombe where he was garlanded.¹ The Pahad brothers, because of their Indian origin, met Indian organisations. Mr Thabo Mbeki² attended the Tamil New Year Celebration in Chatsworth Durban.

Then, finally the ANC produced its ace of trumps – a poster asking the question:

“WHO WOULD GANDHI HAVE VOTED FOR?”

¹ The story about Indians and garlands is something. A person receiving such a garland feels highly honoured and flattered until the receiver comes to realize that the Indian people have been dishing out garlands to all sorts of persons, from bridegrooms to those who were believed to have power, regardless of political outlook. During the dark days of fascism, the fascist rulers like B.J.Vorster and PW Botha were garlanded and made to feel like royalty.

² We do not know in which capacity – as leader of the ANC or as President of the country. He has been switching hats with such speed and rapidity, it is not always possible to work out the capacity.

Below that poster, yet another poster purporting to answer the above question by Ms Ela Gandhi:

“MY GRANDFATHER WOULD HAVE VOTED ANC.”

DEFRAUDING THE SOUTH AFRICANS OF INDIAN DESCENT

Ms. Ela Gandhi does not present the public with a fraction of a statement from her grandfather that the South African Indians ought to unite with the African people and struggle against a common oppressor, viz; British Imperialism and the Afrikaner racists as substantiation of her claim that her grandfather would have voted for the ANC. Instead she relates how the ANC adopted the teachings and principles of her grandfather. This “*substantiation*” merely proves that the *ANC would have voted for Gandhi* and **NOT** that Gandhi would have voted for the ANC!

There is no proof whatsoever that Gandhi would have voted for the ANC.³

It is totally dishonest for the ANC and Ms. Ela Gandhi to have made the claim that Gandhi would have voted for the ANC.

WHAT WAS THE NATURE OF GANDHI’S POLITICS WHEN HE WAS IN SOUTH AFRICA?

³ If there was, the reader can rest assured that that proof would not only have been paraded from the lamp-posts but from the skies through aerial advertising!

It is not possible in an article of this nature to do more than glance at his basic approach. Edward Roux in his classic work on the history of struggle in this country, **“Time Longer than Rope”** gives us a very revealing glimpse:

“The Anglo-Boer War which broke out ...provided an interesting revelation of how Gandhi’s philosophy worked out in practice. ‘It must be largely conceded,’ he (Gandhi) said, ‘that justice is on the side of the Boers,...but so long as the subjects owe allegiance to a State, it is their clear duty generally to accommodate themselves, and to accord their support to acts of the State....Our rulers profess to safeguard our rights because we are British subjects, and what little rights we still retain, we retain because we are British subjects’.”⁴

This attitude indicates that Gandhi considered himself a loyal subject of the British Empire, i.e. British Imperialism, which at that time was as economically and militarily powerful as is the US today and, we may add, hated as much by enlightened, civilised and oppressed peoples all over the world.

While the apologist may succeed in squeezing some justification for the pro-British Imperialism stand on the grounds of the racism of the Boers, it is impossible to do so when it comes to the position Gandhi adopted when it came to the Bambata Rebellion of 1906.

⁴ Page 104 of the Second Edition 1972 , The University of Wisconsin Press

GANDHI'S POSITION ON THE BAMBATA REBELLION

By 1905, the Zulu-speaking people of Natal had been defeated militarily and subjugated for almost three decades by British Imperialism. As a defeated people, they lay prostrate and defenceless, a position highly desired and prized by imperialism. While in that state, the Natal Parliament enacted a poll tax of one pound per African person in Natal. Bambata, a former chief who was deposed by the British Government, organised armed resistance to the payment of the poll tax. The response by the Natal Government was swift and brutal. In a matter of four to five months, some 3500 Africans were killed.

When the armed resistance broke out, Gandhi, as a loyal servant of British Imperialism, offered the military services of the Natal Indians on the side of the Natal Government.

This is how Robert Payne, in his very instructive book, *THE LIFE AND DEATH OF GANDHI* describes Gandhi's position:

“When the Zulu rebellion broke out, he (Gandhi) was in a quandary. “I bore no grudge against the Zulus. They had harmed no Indian,” he wrote. “ I had doubts about the rebellion itself . *But I then believed that the British Empire existed for the welfare of the world.* A genuine sense of loyalty prevented me from even wishing ill to the Empire. *The rightness or otherwise of the rebellion was therefore not likely to affect my decision.*” (Our italics and emphasis)

In his article in “The Indian Opinion”⁵ Gandhi called upon the Indians to fight on the side of the British.

According to Payne, in the summer of 1906, Gandhi wrote:

“...Why, then, should we fear the death that may perhaps overtake us on the battlefield? We have to learn much from what the whites are doing in Natal. There is hardly any family from which someone has not gone to fight the Kafir rebels. Following their example, we should steel our hearts and take courage. Now is the time when the leading whites want us to take this step; if we let go this opportunity, we shall repent later. We therefore urge all Indian leaders to do their duty to the best of their ability.”

As it turned out, the imperialists did not accept Gandhi’s offer. They either did not trust the Indians with guns, or, more likely, they had a very poor opinion of the fighting prowess of South African Indians. It was finally agreed that a contingent of Indian volunteers perform service as stretcher-bearers.

Let us be clear about one thing. The decision to do service as stretcher-bearers was not born out of any compassion for an oppressed people about to be brutally repressed. Remember the original intention was to help Britain **to suppress** the Zulu-speaking African people of Natal **by force of arms**. It was only when Britain rejected Gandhi’s military help that he volunteered stretcher-bearer service. The principal reason for offering to do stretcher-bearer work was a **service to be rendered to British Imperialism**.

⁵ The name of a newspaper which was run by Gandhi

THE CONSPIRACY OF SILENCE AND CONDONATION OF FALSIFICATION

Gandhi's intended role in the resistance against the Poll Tax led by Bambata, is not a dramatic revelation. The probabilities are overwhelming that Gandhi's position on the Bamabata Revolt is known to Ela Gandhi, as it is to historians, researchers, academics like Professor Fathima Meer and to politicians, including those formerly in the Natal Indian Congress and now finally in the ANC.⁶

Yet not a word to rebut the falsification! Hence, when decency and the defence and upholding of truth cries out for rebuttal, and when those who know different maintain a silence, then they are just as guilty of the falsification as the actual perpetrators! This is yet another case of how the Indian voters were deliberately misled. It shows contempt for the people. It shows a total lack of respect for people. People who are capable of displaying this behaviour will have no difficulty in abusing the people by exploiting and oppressing them.

WHO WOULD GANDHI HAVE VOTED FOR?

So, who would Gandhi have voted for? Rajbansi and his Minority Fraud? Whatever Gandhi's political shortcomings were, he would not have countenanced a man found guilty of committing acts of fraud by abusing public office to

⁶ All those who entered the world of radical politics were given "TIME LONGER THAN ROPE" as compulsory reading. Roux in dealing with Gandhi's activities in South Africa exposes Gandhi as a loyal servant on British Imperialism and confirms Robert Payne's expose of Gandhi during the Anglo-Boer War and the Bambata Rebellion

such an extent that a judicial commission of inquiry found him *unfit to hold any public office!*⁷

•
Then who? The Democratic Alliance (DA) like Gandhi did, serves imperialism. Gandhi, like the DA, had a propensity for close relationship with capitalists. For instance, he was given permanent abode in the palatial mansion of India's richest family, the Birlas.
The probabilities favour Gandhi voting for the DA!

Yet if Edward Roux is correct in stating that Gandhi's ideas on his doctrine, *satyagraha*, or soul force, was "derived in part from Tolstoi and Ruskin and which might be called largely Christian..", the probabilities are that he would have voted ACDP!

There is no evidence that Gandhi ever advocated that there be unity between the African and Indian oppressed of South Africa. On the contrary, his view was:

*".....we cannot ignore the fact that there is no common ground between them (the African people) and us in the daily affairs of life."*⁸ (Our emphasis and italics)

The evidence is overwhelming that Gandhi harboured strong racialistic views.

Only liars and falsifiers of history can claim the contrary!

SOUTH AFRICAN INDIANS REJECTED GANDHI'S RACIALISM

⁷ That finding has not been challenged or disputed, nor has it been reversed.

⁸ From a statement of Surendra Bhana which is quoted by a journalist from India, MS Prabhakara in an article, "A Cautionary Tale" printed in the Weekly Mail and Guardian. The cutting we have does not bear a date, but it does state that it was during the "week Thabo Mbeki is visiting India."

South Africans of Indian descent have a tendency to keep to themselves for reasons of religion, culture, language and history. Hence they do not readily intermarry or socialise with other racial groups. The nature of South African society being what it was – dominated by racial division – the Indians, like the Africans and so-called coloured people, had their separate political organisation.

Yet the nature of oppression and the harsh and vicious treatment of all sections of the oppressed people became a unifying factor. Increasingly, there was a need for the oppressed people to unite. It was in response to this need that the Non European Unity Movement (NEUM) was formed in 1943.

At the founding conference the Indian people were represented by the South African Indian Congress led by a backward and reactionary merchant class leadership headed by A.I.Kajee. The idea of the full franchise for all human beings was repugnant to them and they walked out of the NEUM.

But the matter did not end there. A new leadership was rising among the Indian people. This leadership represented the workers, the radical intelligentsia and shopkeepers.

This leadership formed the ANTI-SEGREGATION COUNCIL (ASC) and had as its main gangplank the UNITY OF THE OPPRESSED people. They advocated unity with the African and so-called coloured people. In pursuance of this objective, the ASC, representing 25 organisations of the Indian people, affiliated to the NEUM in 1945. The ASC also advocated the policy of Non Collaboration and had a programme of demands called the Ten Point Programme.

Unfortunately, the development and maturation of that unity between the Indian and African people was interrupted by the disruptive tactics of the Communist Party. It could never countenance its members working in harmony with radical and militant people and organisations which were anti-Stalinist.

Upon the leadership of the ASC capturing the executive positions in the South African Indian Congress (SAIC) the ASC was dissolved and the leadership distanced itself from the NEUM. Its first act of betrayal following the withdrawal from the NEUM was to engage in an *Indians Only* passive resistance campaign in 1946. And that, too, involved an issue which affected the property rights of the rich Indian merchants. And in keeping with the Gandhian principle of treating the oppressor with respect, the Natal Indian Congress sent a telegram of congratulations to the fascist Nationalist Party upon the latter defeating the United Party in the 1948 Whites Only elections! We repeat – **a telegram of congratulations to the fascist Nationalist Party.**⁹

UNITY BETWEEN THE INDIAN AND AFRICAN OPPRESSED

The 1950s, nonetheless, saw an increasing working together between the African and Indian people in Natal. The NEUM under the leadership of Karrim Essack and Dr. Ahmed Limbada spread rapidly in Northern Natal. Dr. Limbada, of Indian origin, spoke the Zulu language fluently. He worked intensively with the African peasantry in the Nqutu area as represented by the illustrious freedom

⁹ So sleeping in the same bed with the Nats these days should not come as a great shock.

fighters, the Molefe brothers, Chief Isaac and Jack together with the formidable Isreal Moloji. Dr Limbada clearly posed a threat to the ruling class with his preaching of Unity of the oppressed, Non Collaboration with the ruling system and the striving for a democratic society based on the solution of the land question.

It thus happened that Dr. Limbada was the *first person* in Natal from amongst the oppressed community to be subjected to a banning order under the Suppression of Communism Act. The reason for the banning order was, inter alia, that in conflict with the Gandhian position, Dr. Limbada actively preached and practised Unity between the Indian and African oppressed people and rejected the policy of appealing to the rulers for a change in the lot of the oppressed people.

This phenomenon of unity of the African and Indian people being preached and practised (for those times it was, indeed, a phenomenon) was followed, in a manner of speaking, by the ANC and the South African Indian Congress through the Defiance Campaign, the holding of the Congress of the People, the formulation and publishing of the Freedom Charter and the stay-aways.

1960 saw the birth of the African Peoples Democratic Union of Southern Africa (APDUSA). Its doors were opened to ALL people regardless of race, colour, creed or sex provided there was an acceptance of its programme, policy and principles.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, there was the birth of the Black Consciousness Movement which advocated

SOLIDARITY of the African, Indian and so-called coloured people. While one can never accept, support or condone the exclusion of a person based on the colour of her or his skin, the Black Consciousness Movement stood for unity of the oppressed. That in itself was progressive.

It was in the name and belief of Unity that the South Africans of Indian origin and so-called coloured people overwhelmingly rejected the racist Tricameral Parliament.¹⁰ One of the principal grounds of the rejection was that no political dispensation or political solution to the conflict in South Africa could be considered without the full participation of the African people.

CONCLUSION

In the years that followed when fascism struck with its fist of steel, freedom fighters from the Indian community were not found missing from the front line of struggle. Side by side with their comrades from the African, so-called coloured and white sectors, they challenged the fascist rulers and suffered repression in the form of intimidation, job losses, banning orders, arrests, detentions, torture, highly-stressful trials and long terms of imprisonment.

Contrary to what Gandhi believed, the South Africans of Indian origin found a great deal in common with the African people.

¹⁰ Only the shameless and self-seeking quislings like Rajbansi and Alan Hendrickse participated in the Houses of Shame called Delegates and Representatives. But times have changed. The ANC govt has decided to honour quislings and traitors. Quisling Kaiser Matanzima was given a hero's funeral; Rajbansi was made an MEC in KZ Natal while Hendrickse was awarded the Order of Baobab by President Mbeki on 16th June 2004 for "exceptional services rendered to his countrymen." Heroes, martyrs and traitors and sellouts were all honoured in one breath. The difference is regarded as being without meaning, substance or consequence!