



APDUSA VIEWS

ISSUE No. 55

SEPTEMBER 1994



RACIALISM IN NON-RACIAL ELECTIONS!

Introduction

It is both necessary and highly desirable that when important and significant events take place, those events should be faithfully recorded.

It has often happened that important events are themselves overshadowed by greater or more dramatic events which dominate the stage and the attention of the people and the media. Reporters and analysts tend to forget about those events which get shoved aside. History of that period becomes incomplete. Or worse. Hack writers and falsifiers have a field day.

One important event which was overshadowed by the intense drama of the elections, the suspense and agony caused by the ineptitude of the Kriegler "Z" team, the results themselves and the inauguration of Mr Mandela, was the reaction of the Natal Indian members of the ANC to the nomination of sellouts J.N. Reddy and D.S. Rajah on to the ANC Election List and subsequent events.

THE ANC ELECTION LIST

The ANC Election List was, par excellence, a mirror of the politics of the ANC. It was drawn without regard to principle or morality of decency. Nor did it reflect any concern for the sensibilities of the rank and file freedom fighters in the liberatory movement who have had to face the repression of fascism. One gets the distinct impression that those who had the final

say in drawing up the list were those who had been sitting safe outside the country, or even safer, on Robben Island.¹

In doing so, they chose to ignore the fact that the sellouts whom they nominated, had, throughout the decades of fascist rule, flouted the will of the people. In spite of near unanimous rejection of the Tricameral Parliament and the Bantustans by the oppressed, these contemptible creatures stood for elections. In arrogant defiance of the wishes of the people, they strutted about like cockerels in the full knowledge that between them and the wrath of the people stood the security police, the army and the prison.

The hatred of the people for the sellouts knew no bounds. Yet the ANC found no difficulty in choosing these people as its representatives!

Not being content with riding roughshod over the feelings of the people, the ANC goes on to pick outright rogues and violators of human rights as part of its parliamentary team.²

¹ This might sound ironical, but the truth of the matter is that for the revolutionary engaged in armed struggle, Robben Island provided a very safe haven. In the country, or even in the neighbouring states, the ruling class went on rampage killing political opponents by the scores. Thus Joe Gqabi, leading ANC member was assassinated after his release from Robben Island and after yet another release from a Treason Trial. On the other hand, there has been no unnatural death of a political prisoner on Robben Island since 1962.

² See APDUSA VIEWS No 51 dated January 1994. The ANC has now announced what has been described as a "tough Code of Conduct" which threatens to expel any of its Member of Parliament found guilty of corruption. The position in Zimbabwe shows how useless these Codes of Conduct are especially when there is a blessing bestowed on the Gravy Train mentality.

Not even the apologists for the ANC can deny that a shockingly large number of names on the ANC Election List would be more appropriately found in a Roll kept by a Prison for criminals and scoundrels than in a Roll of Honour kept by a Parliament claiming to represent Hope and Democracy for millions.

REACTION TO NAMES OF DISCREDITED PERSONS ON THE ANC ELECTION LIST

Surprisingly, there was hardly any public reaction to the names of discredited persons on the Election List. To be sure, there was grouching, muttering and grumbling aplenty. But it was always in private. The LINE had come from ABOVE that it was necessary to work with sellouts and rogues in order to defeat the NATS. The LINE was swallowed with hook and sinker. Had there been a modicum of integrity and sober thinking it would have been realised that it would have been impossible for the NATS to have won the elections.

The only section of the ANC which did raise objections to the presence of certain names on the List was the well-off or middle class or petty bourgeoisie of Reservoir Hills, Greenwood Park etc. This section was outraged that hated sellouts like J.N. Reddy and D.S. Rajah were placed on the Election List. But that was not all. The names of these sellouts were placed relatively high on the List while diehards and committed work-horses like George Sewpersadh, M.J. Naidoo, Farouk Meer and others were consigned to the political glue factory.³

This middle class had long suffered at the hands of the NATS and made no bones about their detestation for the stooges of the NATS. As a class, these Indians are well off and can be very confident and articulate provided fundamental change is not involved. They are not over-awed by the likes

³ That was the fate suffered by the untiring worker of the animals' revolution in George Orwell's "Animal Farm".

of Mandela. They have given generous donations to the ANC and want to make sure that they get their money's worth. They have contempt for the J.N. Reddys of the world and are not impressed by dull intellectuals like Rajah even though the latter earned his degree through normal academic study and not given as a sop as in the case of Reddy.

It was this section of the middle class which supported the ANC that protested loudly about the sellouts. A clear message was sent to the ANC that if those names were not removed from the List, they would boycott the elections and thereby deny the ANC their support and that of their followers and supporters.

The ANC leadership was shaken by the protest and took serious stock of the position. Mr Ahmed Kathrada, who was a party to the compilation of the List, prayed that Reddy and Rajah would withdraw their names.

In due course, those prayers were answered favourably, more likely by a worried ANC than by whoever it was that those prayers were directed to.

When, therefore, the revised ANC List appeared, the names of the two sellouts were missing.

MEDAL AND COURT MARTIAL

The late I.B. Tabata, South Africa's leading political thinker, had a striking method of illustrating important lessons. When making a point about lack of discipline among otherwise loyal members, he drew a military analogy. He stated that according to the military code, a soldier, who performed heroically while disobeying orders, would be first given a medal and then court martialled.

So it is the case with the middle class Indian membership of the ANC. It took courage for them to stand up to the ANC leadership on a matter which they believed to be a principled one. ANC members, by and large, are not inclined to rock the ANC boat and, therefore, remain silent when

there is a duty to speak. But these Indian members did speak out and threatened drastic action. Their outspokenness paid off and hence the disappearance (for good, we hope) of those two sellouts from the political face in this country. For this they deserve a medal.

There was jubilation galore in the ranks of the protesters. Dr Goonam, with a last sniff and a dab at the eyes, withdrew her resignation and re-embraced the ANC. The others followed. The revolt was over.

But in all the din and drama caused by the elections and the subsequent events, one important matter was overlooked or ignored by all. That matter was the presence of the names of the OTHER SELLOUTS on the Election List - SELLOUTS from the corrupt and repressive Bantustans and the disreputable House of Representatives. Our medallists who protested so loudly against J.N. Reddy and D.S. Rajah did not utter even a whisper of protest against the African and Coloured 'J.N. Reddys and D.S. Rajahs'. Equally silent were other members of the ANC, SACP, COSATU etc. Hence the court martial!

OWN AFFAIRS

How does one explain a very blatantly contradictory behaviour? An act of betrayal is not peculiar to any ethnic or racial group. Even a child knows that there are scoundrels and rogues in all communities and racial groups. Can it be that the ANC regards African and "Coloured" sellouts better or superior to Indian sellouts? If that is not so, then why did the ANC act only against Indian sellouts? Why did the Indian militants protest only against Indian sellouts?

We can think of two main reasons:

1. The Indian members of the ANC believe that it not their affair to condemn African and Coloured sellouts. Their thinking runs like this: Let the Coloured members condemn Coloured sellouts.

Likewise, African members should condemn African sellouts. This is the politics of OWN AFFAIRS.

2. The majority of the ANC Executive members have no problems with collaborators and sellouts, provided the latter supported the ANC. Those who were on Robben Island during the 60's and 70's will tell you that Mr Mandela and his supporters consistently advocated participation in the Bantustan governments and dummy institutions. For them a participant in these bodies and structures did not rank as a sellout.

The above will go some way in explaining why only the Indian sellouts were singled out for attack.

INDIAN APPEALS TO INDIAN

For an election which has been hailed as South Africa's first non-racial election, it was amazing how much of racialism was used to influence the voters. The Indian members of the ANC have remained "Indian" at heart. Most were NIC-TIC members with ANC membership cards.

Let it go on record that throughout those long decades when membership of the ANC invited arrest, torture, detention and imprisonment, the overwhelming majority of NIC-TIC members kept far - really far - from the ANC. They distanced themselves from the ANC and MK by claiming adherence to Gandhism and the philosophy of non violence.

When the ANC was unbanned, the Indian petty bourgeoisie, especially from NIC-TIC, flocked to join the ANC. Certain rich Indians, capitalists, also joined. The motives for joining were varied. There were the usual bandwagon climbers who flashed their ANC membership cards for the same snobbish reason that people display their cellular phones. The capitalists believed that by joining they were making an investment for the future safety of their wealth and enterprises. There were the medical aid fraudsters; there were lawyers who had visions of massive fees without end.

There were even drug dealers who believed that they were buying amnesty and indemnity from future prosecution.

But there were many who believed that the ANC was the only vehicle for the attainment of democracy and peace and, therefore, joined.

As election day drew near, it became clear that the majority of the Indian people were going to vote for the NATS. They did not trust the ANC. They did not believe that the ANC would look after their interests. Their hatred for the NATS was superseded by their fear of the ANC.

When the results of the opinion polls on how the Indians were going to vote became known, there was panic in the ranks of the ANC. Well known Indian members were summoned to save the situation. Even Nelson Mandela was summoned.

Not being content with that, whole page "Vote ANC" advertisements in newspapers appeared. The very noticeable features of those advertisements were:

1. Lawyers, doctors, pharmacists and other glitterati - all Indians - appended their names to the advertisements. The intention of the advertisements was clear. If the "cream" of the Indians intended voting for the ANC, there could be no reason why the ordinary Indian would vote for anybody else.
2. The advertisements were racial through and through. It showed Indians addressing Indians as Indians. No Africans were involved or mentioned. It was strictly an "Own Affairs" business.

Then there was the racist blackmail. People were threatened with dire consequences from the African people if they did not vote for the ANC. Of course, this kind of filth was not done publicly. It was a one to one affair.

Last, but not least, there was the appeal to opportunism and the discarding of a principled approach to politics. Mr Yunus Carrim, whose star in the

ANC is rising, crowned his appeal to the Indian people to vote for the ANC because it was the "winning side."⁴

CONCLUSION

In recent weeks we would have all read of the battle royal carrying on in the Natal Indian Congress. The issue is whether to keep the NIC alive or whether to subject it to political mercy-killing.

It strains the bounds of credulity that in the middle of the last decade of the 20th Century, people should still be arguing earnestly about the merits and demerits of keeping alive a racial "Indian Only" organisation in the political field. There can be no question of a nation being formed for as long as people think and organise politics along racial or tribal lines.

Whilst people like Dr Goonam and Mr M.J. Naidoo have correctly called for the dissolution of the NIC, that in itself is not proof that they have shed their "Indianness". We must not forget that it was people like them who, while objecting to the presence of J.N. Reddy and Rajah, said nothing about the presence of sellouts who were not Indian.

There can be no nation if people feel inhibited from criticising another for no other reason than that the other is of a different racial stock. In the absence of frankness, openness or transparency, unrestricted debate and discussion, a nation is doomed at birth.

Racialism takes on many forms. One form is the failure to treat a person as an equal. You do not treat a person as an equal if you do not say what has to be said on grounds of so-called sensitivity based on race. In fact, it is racialism of the most insidious variety.

⁴ In fairness to Mr Carrim it must be said that he never preaches that which he himself has not first practised.

