



APDUSA VIEWS

DECEMBER 1984

THE DEATH OF INDIRA GANDHI

1. INTRODUCTION

The assassination of MRS INDIRA GANDHI by her Sikh body guards has once again turned the world spotlight on India, that unhappy land beset with endless strife and suffering.

State dignitaries from over 90 countries paid glowing tribute to INDIRA GANDHI as the Prime Minister of the "WORLD'S LARGEST DEMOCRACY", as a leading member of her sex and as a charismatic leader. Some of her followers paid their tribute in a less orthodox manner, viz, by slaughtering over 2 000 Sikhs (10 000 according to Maneka Gandhi) and by inflicting grievous wounds on many times that number.

Even White S.A., through P.W.Botha, sent condolences. Expectedly, the Natal Indian Congress held a Memorial Meeting and asked INDIAN merchants to close their business for a few hours. Others wrote lengthy newspaper articles extolling MRS GANDHI'S virtues:

The nature and amount of expressed feelings were such that Mrs Gandhi has been elevated to the status of AVATAR, a goddess who had assumed a human form .

In keeping with our outlook of searching for the truth at all times, we of APDUSA believe that important events and prominent personalities in the public eye must be carefully and frankly assessed and examined.

2. ROLE/.

2. ROLE OF THE INDIVIDUAL IN HISTORY

Our attitude concerning the role of the individual in history is that individuals by themselves (and apart from organisation and historical conditions) do not make history. Outstanding qualities in individuals can change individual features in a general movement of social forces. But they cannot and do not create that general movement. Therefore we reject the notion that LEADERS, SAVIOURS OR MESSIAHS can liberate a people held in bondage. Therefore we abhor the **CULT OF THE INDIVIDUAL**.

We judge individuals, organisations and governments with the inflexible yardstick of their relationship with the workers and peasants and with the weakest and most helpless sections of the population i.e. the aged, the children, the sick, the crippled and the destitute.

An individual is either FOR the oppressed and exploited or AGAINST them. There can be no fence sitting on this score. Further, if a person is FOR the oppressed and exploited, then that commitment must be universal. In other words the commitment must apply to ALL the oppressed and exploited and not to some only.

3. WAS MRS GANDHI THE CHAMPION OF THE OPPRESSED?

It is common knowledge that Mrs Gandhi has been held in high esteem by a section of the S.A. oppressed because of her anti-apartheid statements and because of her financial and other assistance to certain organisations. That, however, is insufficient to honour her as a champion of the oppressed. The real test is the treatment by Mrs Gandhi and her ruling party of the over 600 million workers and peasants and their families in INDIA.

We need to look at the position of workers and peasants of India after almost 40 years of political independence from British rule. Relevant questions to be asked are: Is the wealth of India being equitably and fairly distributed amongst its people so that none starves and none is ill-clad? Are all its people provided with decent housing and proper medical care? Are basic human rights strictly enforced so that its people can live, work and prosper in peace?

The answers to these questions will give us some indication of the role of Mrs Gandhi and these answers are to be found if we look at the essential features of Indian Society.

4. FEATURES OF INDIAN SOCIETY

- (a) Indian Independence from British Rule in essence entailed the stepping down of the British and their replacement by Indian rulers. Indian Society remained **INTACT** for all practical purposes.
- (b) The Indian National Congress though supported by millions, was led by the representatives of the Indian factory owners and financiers.
- (c) British investments were not only untouched but guarded and enhanced.
- (d) All governments of India since 1947 were an alliance of the factory owners, the landlords, the rich landowners and a huge army of civil servants and members of the managerial class.
- (e) India was the first experiment in **NEOCOLONIALISM** i.e. where the Colonial Power hands over the reins of government to a local ruling class which acts as watchdog for the investments of that Colonial Power.
- (f) Since 1947 there have been 5 different governments. Not one of these governments made any attempt to alter the socio-economic structures of India. Capitalism ruled supreme in the urban areas whilst feudalism had rural India in a vice-like grip. The rich simply grew richer and the poor poorer.
- (g) The caste system of India, that shameful heritage of the past, runs rampant. In the villages the caste system dovetails with the social classes - the upper castes being the rich landowners while those designated "**UNTOUCHABLES**" constitute the landless peasants and agricultural workers. There are over 107 million Indians who are classified **UNTOUCHABLES** against whom the most horrific atrocities are committed.
- (h) The past 37 years, far from being idyllic with song and philosophy, were racked with convulsions. It has left a trail of blood and destruction.

The wretched of the Indian earth rose time and again to bring about radical change in Society. But each time they rose, they were crushed by the might of the Indian Army. There was the revolt in Telangana, Hyderabad in 1950 and there was the rise and spread of the Naxalite Movement in West Bengal in 1967. Both these uprisings were peasant based with land redistribution as their main objective. Both were ruthlessly crushed.

The various governments of India, without exception, made their standpoint very clear. Any attempt by the workers and peasants to redistribute the wealth and natural resources of India would not be tolerated. The wealth of the factory owners and landowners must be protected even if it means bloody massacres.

5. THE ART OF DECEPTION

If Mrs Indira Gandhi and her government have been responsible for the retention of the oppressive features of Indian Society, how then did she succeed in becoming so popular with the Indian people? the answer is a single word- **DECEPTION**. The Indian Rulers of India have perfected the art of deception. They eloquently say the right thing but do the opposite. They profess to be socialists and in the name of socialism uphold capitalism and feudalism. They pass the impressive Land Ceilings Act which purports to restrict the amount of land any one family can own. But nothing is done to stop landlords from owning large tracts of land through the nominee system. Copious tears are shed over the poverty of the millions but the real causes of poverty are left untouched. Bribery and corruption are condemned but those who condemn, practise these vices on a grand scale.

The tools of deception are words - seductive words of a bright future, of a land of milk and honey. The power of words is such that the dark deeds are forgiven and forgotten. It is but a matter of time before the magic of words wears out. When that happens Asia's second giant will shake the world!

6. SOME FACTS AND FIGURES

(a) From the documentary film "**BEFORE THE MONSOON**" we learn that:-

- (i) 46% of agricultural land in India is owned by a mere 6,8% of the landowners.

R12 million/..

- (ii) R12 million of public money was lost by the Late Sanjay Gandhi in an enterprise to manufacture the "peoples' car". Only 7 cars were produced.
- (iii) During the State of Emergency from 1975, 10 million people were sterilized, many through use of force.
- (iv) Before "Independence" 40% of the population lived below the poverty datum line. 30 years later 70% of the people live below the poverty line.
- (v) 150 000 homes and shops in New Dehli were demolished and over 1 million people were forcibly settled in colonies outside New Dehli. The Shah Commissior of Inquiry found Sanjay Gandhi guilty of unlawfully demolishing those structures and evicting the occupiers.
- (vi) During the State Emergency in the State of Kerala ALONE, there were:-
 8021 detained
 1618 tortured by the Police while in detention
 28 died of torture.

(b) From the journal RACE and CLASS (XVI,4 1975) we learn that:-

(i) There were 35 000 political prisoners in 1975, most of whom were members of the Naxalite Movement and who were brutally treated in prison.

(ii) During the great Railway Strike of 1974, over 50 000 strikers were detained. Later 10 000 were dismissed and 100 000 were demoted.

(c) From the publication of the Minority Rights Group called "THE UNTOUCHABLES OF INDIA" we learn that:-

(i) 90%..

6.

- (i) 90% of the "Untouchables" live in rural India where they are mercilessly exploited
 - (ii) Whole families and neighbourhoods have been murdered.
 - (iii) In 1978 reported cases of these atrocities was 15053. Many other cases remained unreported.
- (d) From the book **"INSIDE INDIA TODAY"** by **DILIP HIRO**, we learn that:-
- (i) ₹5 000 million in India is blackmoney i.e. money about which the Receiver of Revenue has not been told and which escapes taxes.
 - (ii) Rural labourers earn as little as ONE RUPEE (about 10c) a day plus a meagre breakfast and lunch.
 - (iii) Urban labourers earn about THREE RUPEES a day.
 - (iv) Businessmen and company directors earn from 5 000 to 50 000 rupees a month. They live in the lap of luxury-paying 300 rupees for French champagne or spending 50 000 rupees on a wedding.

We could go on endlessly presenting these horrifying facts and figures. But the point has been made. This is the picture of real India- a system maintained, upheld and defended by all governments of India including those led by Mrs Indira Gandhi.

7. APOLOGISTS:

There have been and still are many apologists of MRS GANDHI. They will all tell us about the enormity of India's problems, its vast population, the deep roots of the caste system, the ignorance of its population and the backwardness of the people. To us there is nothing less than a COVER-UP for the oppression and exploitation of the workers and peasants.

What/..

What of those movements like the Naxalites and DALIT PANTHERS who attempted radical change in India? Why were such organisations crushed and their members killed or thrown in prison?

The truth of the matter is that Mrs Indira Gandhi and her governments have shown that their true commitment was to defend, protect and uphold the exploiters and oppressors of the millions of down trodden workers and peasants. By their cowardly COVER-UP, the apologists are just as guilty of the crimes against the victims.

8. CONCLUSION

If, then, Mrs Gandhi and her government have acted against the workers and peasants of India, she could not have been a true friend of the workers and peasants of S.A. It is not possible to be oppressor and liberator at the same time.

Those persons and organisations who have sung MRS GANDHI'S praise whilst concealing the other side of the picture have themselves practised a deception on the people of this country.

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APDUSA'S RELATIONSHIP WITH WORKERS AND PEASANTS

" The democratic demands and aspirations of the oppressed workers and peasants shall be paramount in the orientation of APDUSA in both its short term and its long term objectives".

(Clause (c) of APDUSA'S Constitution)

" APDUSA believes that in any society the people who create wealth and civilisation, and are therefore responsible for the progress of mankind are those who provide labour in its many forms."

" Our belief is that those who create must decide what is to be done with what they have created. The producers of wealth in a society must be in the Government of the Country".