

CONCERNING THE MAHATMA GANDHI CENTENARY.

1969 is being observed all over the world as the centenary of the birth of Mahatma Gandhi. The occasion is being observed in different ways by people in numerous countries.

SOUTH AFRICA AND GANDHI.

We in South Africa have a particular reason to observe the centenary of Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhi began his political career in South Africa where he spent over twenty years. By the time he returned to India in 1914 Gandhi was a world famous figure as a result of his passive resistance campaigns in South Africa. The method of Satyagraha was developed and fashioned in South Africa before it was taken to India and used on a mass scale.

FROM GANDHI TO MANDELA.

Today our people in South Africa embarked on armed struggle. The revolution in Southern Africa has been launched. In this revolution the South African people are destined to play an honourable part.

Is the armed struggle a repudiation of Mahatma Gandhi? Is Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy in contradiction with our armed resistance?

The essence of Mahatma Gandhi is resistance to evil and falsehood. It is on this basis he resisted all forms of oppression. He believed in non-violence. But he felt that there should be resistance rather than submission. So that whilst he preferred non-violence he hated cowardice and submission. To Gandhi violence was better than cowardice. Because his method was non-violent the essence of his philosophy, namely, the struggle for truth, is often missed.

The harsh South African conditions which first provoked Gandhi into political action have been a severe test of his ideas. The political movements in South Africa, particularly during the fifties, adopted non-violence as a policy of struggle against apartheid; but racist Fascism maintained its aggression. The people have now decided on armed resistance against an utterly immoral and unscrupulous system.

It is suggested that wherever possible seminars and meetings should be held by the ANC giving our view of Gandhi in observance of the anniversary and also to prevent Gandhi being used as an ideological weapon against our struggle. In London a seminar is being organised at which it is hoped that prominent personalities will take part. A paper is to be presented there entitled "From Gandhi to Mandela." It is hoped that the President of the ANC could be a speaker at this seminar to be held in May.

Our India office will make plans for some activity around the issue of the centenary. At home the centenary celebrations are being handled in Natal.

SECRETARIAT.

March, 1969.