

WARS OF RESISTANCE

From the time alien rule was imposed there has been - historically speaking - unbroken resistance to this domination. It has taken different forms at different times but it has never been abandoned. For the first 250 years there were regular armed clashes, battles and wars. The superior material resources of the enemy, the divided often fragmented nature of resistance, the unchallenged ascendancy of imperialism as a world system up to the beginning of the 20th century, the historically understandable absence of political cohesion and leadership in the people's camp; these and other factors combined to end the first phase of resistance against alien domination.

Strategy and Tactics of the ANC, Morogoro 1969

It is with the coming of the Dutch settlers in 1652 and British colonisers in 1806 that brought to an end the diversified and developing agrarian economy of the early African societies. The African people stood up to the settlers and colonisers like in the histories of the people of Asian and Latin America for the ownership and use of their lands. The wars of resistance by the African people were fought on isolated tribal levels often old rivalries surfaced which facilitated the process of dispossession. Superior weapons of the imperialist powers complemented with tactics of 'divide et impera' (divide and rule), the treaty system gradually led to the replacement of the previously existing forms of production with the single form of the exploitation of wage labour.

The Khoikhoi and San Resistance

The Khoikhoi people maintained good relations with Europeans who visited the Cape on a seasonal basis. But the relations got strained when the Khoikhoi realised that their livestock were being stolen, frontiers changing and prohibited from using long established sources of water. The intention of the Dutch East India Company (DEIC) was to establish a fresher station to serve the passing Company's fleet to the Far East and back with fresh water, vegetables and meat. The increasing requirements of the DEIC and other socio-political reasons led to the founding of a small settler community that trekked beyond the Company's boundaries which gave rise to contradictions with the Khoi people.

Doman, who had been in the service of the Company as an interpreter, managed to form an alliance of the Goringhaiqua, Gorachouqua and the warriors of the Ankaisoa to fight the settlers. The first Khoikhoi-Dutch War began in May 1659 and ended a year later in a stalemate. The Khoi could not storm the fort of the armed settlers and the Dutch concentrating on defending their fort could not

harm the fast moving guerilla band of the Khoikhoi. In April and May 1660 the Company signed peace treaties with the Goringhaiqua and the Gorachouqua respectively. Doman was captured and imprisoned on Robben Island. According to the terms of the treaty, the misbehaviour of the settlers was punishable in accordance to new proceedings; the Khoikhoi were not obliged to return the booty captured during the war but had to give up claim of the territories occupied by the Company - "a concession with ominous implications" for the future

The settler's expedition on the Cochoqua led to the second Khoikhoi-Dutch War of 1673-1677. Gonenma, the leader of the Cochoqua had to fight not only the Dutch commando but also their allies. A peace treaty was signed in 1677. The Cochoqua were required to bring a tribute of 30 cattle to the company. In the process the farms of the settlers spread into the interior and the Khoikhoi were reduced into a state of dependency on them for livelihood and security.

The Khoikhoi under the leadership of Klaas Stuurman joined forces with the Xhosa of Ndlambe in 1799 to fight the Boercommando and British army out of Suurveld. The news of victory spread throughout the Graaf-Reiniet and Swellendam districts and many Khoikhoi deserted the Boer farms to join Stuurman. He was later defeated at Langekloof. The alliance pact between the Khoikhoi and the Xhosa worried both the settlers and the colonisers, who set out to destroy it by promising the Khoikhoi people better treatment as workers.

Though practising a lower mode of production, the San people viciously resisted the extension of settler farms into their hunting grounds. They conducted guerilla campaigns against them. The settlers could not locate them during the confrontations between 1701 and 1754. Their numbers were greatly reduced by the smallpox epidemics of 1713 and 1755 but this did not deter their spirit of opposition. Some of the San people who survived the joint Boer-Khoikhoi expedition of 1775 settled on the banks of Orange River and in South West Africa - now known as Namibia.

The Xhosa Wars against dispossession

The Xhosa people under able leaders like Ndlambe, Hintsa, Makana, Maqoma, Sandile and many others put up a strong resistance against the settler and colonial communities. In the wars of 1779, 1789 and 1799 the Boers were defeated by the Xhosa who were later overpowered by the British when they annexed the Cape in 1806. The Xhosa people heroically fought nine wars of resistance from 1779 to 1878

against alien domination. The Cape authorities did not encourage white settlement between the Kei and Natal border, fearing further armed confrontation. With the discovery of mineral wealth in 1866, the area became a large reserve of cheap labour for white owned mines, farms and industries throughout the country.

The length and tenacity of the Xhosa resistance bears testimony to the advanced stage of their economy, it was able to sustain men under arms for long periods.

The Zulu opposition

During the 1800s the Zulu kingdom (?) was one of the biggest kingdoms in Southern Africa. During the difacane (forced migration 1818-1828) Dingiswayo and later his successor, Shaka (1787-1828) managed to weld together many of the defeated tribes and chiefdoms into a nation.

From 1872 the Zulu kingdom under Cetshwayo was regarded as an obstacle to the expansionist designs of British imperialism. They therefore wanted to end the independence of the Zulu nation. The British force met a crushing defeat at the Battle of Isandlwana (January 22, 1879). Friedrich Engels writing on the battle commented on the Zulu army: "... did what no European army can do. Armed only with pikes and spears and without firearms, they advanced under a hail of bullets from breech loaders right up to the bayonets - acknowledged as the best in the world for fighting in close formation - throwing them back more than once: and this despite the colossal disparity in arms ...". The British had to see to the restoration of their prestige. This decision was met by many years of fighting. In 1887 Zululand was declared British territory and was divided into thirteen districts with salaried chiefs, a resident magistrate and a police force. The Zulu people were overpowered by superior weapons during the Bambata Rebellion of 1906 against the imposition of a hut and dog tax; a move designed to make them wage earners.

The struggles beyond the Orange River

The Sotho people under their astute leader Moshweshwe I carried out strong opposition to colonial expansion. In 1854 they defeated the British force at the Battle of Berea. They also subdued the Boers during the first (1858) and together with their allies the Fengu, Tlokwe and Rolong at the second (1865-69) Sotho-Boer Wars.

Since the colonisers could not impose their will on the Sotho, they resorted to the use of the treaty system. This system recognised the right of the people to govern themselves beyond the colonial frontiers but abandoned when it had

fulfilled the imperialists interests. According to the terms of the treaty, the chiefs were to be paid an annual salary, to be supplied with ammunition in order to keep peace, But with no provision for the supervision of the often undefined borders. The treaty system was adopted with various Griqua states and the states of Ciskei and Pondoland.

The second treaty of Aliwal north was signed in 1869. The boundaries of Lesotho were laid down as they are today. In 1884, the Sotho fell under direct British control as its protectorate and on October 4, 1966 got their formal independence from Britain.

Resistance in the Transvaal

The Pedi under Sekhukhuni put up a tenacious fight against the settlers, who tried to settle on their lands. In 1852 and 1869 the Boers carried unsuccessful attacks on the Pedi. A joint British and Swazi force defeated the Pedi in 1879 and this ended the independent life of the Pedi.

The Boers encountered strong opposition as their farms moved towards the Venda borders. The in-fightings amongst the Venda chiefs weakened their opposition that made them vulnerable to Boer invasion of 1898. Mphahlele and a number of his followers fled across the Limpopo into the British colony of Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). At the end of the Anglo-Boer war (1899-1902) they came under British control.

Tribal sectionalism gave way to a national consciousness as a people against colonial domination. This gave rise to the formation of one of the first national liberation movements in Africa, the African National Congress then known as the South African Native National Congress until 1919 or 1923. The discovery of diamonds at Kimberly in 1866 and gold on the Witwatersrand in 1886 brought about significant political, social and economic changes that necessitated new forms of struggle not just merely as a dispossessed people but also as a class of proletarians.

Question:

How can the national question be solved in a free, democratic and non-racial South Africa?

Bibliography

- African National Congress: Strategy and tactics, Morogoro 1969
: January 8th message, 1979. Sechaba April. Issue pgs 2-6
- Friedrich Engels: The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State.
Selected Works Vol. II, Moscow pg 254
- Richard Elphick: The khoikhoi and the founding of white South Africa. Ravan Press, Johannesburg 1985, Chapters 4-11, pgs 55-168
- Edwin Diale: Makana. Sechaba, December 1979 pgs 27-28
- A. Lerumo: Fifty Fighting Years. Inkululeko Publications, London 1980
pgs 1-20
- * -Here *
- John Pampallis: National struggle, class struggle in South Africa since 1870.
London. Chapter I pgs 1-13
- Neil Parsons: A new history of southern Africa. Hong Kong 1982 pgs
- Sechaba: The Battle of, isandlwana, February. 1979
- Alexander Sibeko: An epic of African Resistance, AC 1st Quarter pgs 19-30
- Jack Simons: Lectures- Slavery at the Cape
British colonialism and merchant capitalism
The rise of the Zulu kingdom
The struggle for Xhoseni
Moshoeshoe builds a nation
- Joe Slovo: No middle road - The theory of the South African revolution. Penguin Books, 1977 Chapter 3 pgs 150-178
- University of Western Cape: Let us Speak of freedom. Bellville. *Part B: The struggle for land*
pgs 11-20
- *Bernard M. Magubane: The political economy of race and class in South Africa.
Monthly Review press, New York pgs 20-54
- * Karl Marx: Grundrisse. Harper and Row, New York 1971 pg 31