

THE INGWAVUMA DEAL

VUSI ZULU, a combatant of Mk, discusses the reasons behind and the implications of the Swazi land deal, with a brief historical background on the territory and people of Ingwavuma.

A clear understanding of the present situation in Ingwavuma requires that the question be viewed from its historical premise. Furthermore an approach that looks at the specific history of the region in isolation would lead to wrong conclusions. Conversely, a similar situation would result if we ignored its specifics.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Facts reveal that the history of Ingwavuma as that of any other peoples dates back well beyond the conquest of our people by the colonisers (1). It was in the 19th century that this area came under the effective control of land-grabbers from Europe. On the other hand this area like much of Southern and Central Africa, was also affected by the inter-tribal wars originating from and around what came to be Zululand (2). It fell on the path of fugitives fleeing in the wake of the wars particularly between Zwide, of the Ndwandwe, and Shaka, of the Zulus. There are indications that even before these conflicts, part of the people of Ingwavuma were forced by wars between themselves and Zwide to trek to about the centre of Swaziland (3). In Cooper's account of Imfecane (4), he refers to wars waged by Swazis with some small Basotho clans in the North-eastern Transvaal which led to some Basotho clans being incorporated into the Swazi nation. This may explain the fact that the Mngomezulu know themselves to be originating from some Sotho-speaking people.



Sources indicate that by the time British imperialism intervened, the people of Ingwavuma still retained relative independence from their neighbours, the Zulus and the Swazis. (5) According to oral sources the British came at the invitation of one of the chiefs in Ingwavuma, Mbikiza of Mngomezulu. The British immediately sent a party to Mbikiza, who gave them land to set up their administrative quarters. No sooner had they come than they extended their jurisdiction over the areas of other chiefs. They then convinced the inhabitants of the need to pay taxes to finance the task of "stopping the spilling of blood". This irony, among other things, included the building of police stations.

This action indicated that the British saw the latter as their first priority. Consequently this intervention prevented the assimilation of these local clans into either of their stronger neighbours. By this time the British had finally conquered the Zulu speaking people and were in the process of fragmenting this ethnic group. It was not in their interest to add any more clans to Ingwavuma.

As regard to Swaziland, this was at a time of conflict between Boer and British colonialism relating to the territory. The Boers on the other hand coveted Swaziland for economic reasons. Already they had obtained farming concessions from the Swazi monarch by treachery. The Boers had entertained the prospects of mining including in particular the possibility of getting an outlet to the sea.

Incidentally, South Africa's wish could be realised only by gaining control of Ingwavuma. On the other hand British imperialism was opposed to both Boer wishes, in particular as relating to Ingwavuma. The independent Boer republics in themselves were a threat to British imperial interests. A position which could be more imperilled by the acquisition of an outlet to the sea. Moreover since this was at a time of the scramble for colonies by capitalist states.

It is thus clear from the above that British imperialism, for its own selfish interest, 'allowed' the continued independent existence of the clans in this region in relation to their stronger neighbours. This situation was deliberately maintained later by the 'Union of South Africa', later the 'Republic of South Africa' (more on this later). Small wonder therefore that the peoples of the area have retained some measure of clan identity.

In reality these peoples lost all their independence. This was a natural result of British imperialist activity in the region. For their part given (i) largely barren lands incapable of supporting a growing agrarian population; (ii) the imposition of taxes, which forced them to flock to white farms and industrial centres in search of wage employment, almost exclusively in racist Republic of South Africa. They then became attached to two worlds. Migrating to the mines on contract and coming to tend their barren lands and their diminishing herds of cattle back home. Before long every man, from the commonest to the future chief* could not escape this development. Needless to say that the discriminatory practices of the colonial regime, on which South African capitalism rests, were equally applicable to them. In a word, all aspects of their lives were now determined by the white capitalist exploiters through Pretoria.

* Ntunja is reported to have had his spell in the mines and industries of the Golden City, Johannesburg.

RSA HANDS RESPONSIBILITY FOR AREA TO KWAZULU

After administering the area as an integral part of South Africa for over half a century, the 'Union of South Africa', then renamed the Republic of South Africa, handed over control of the area to its puppet creation, the KwaZulu government. The question may arise: *why to the Kwazulu bantustan and not to Swaziland who had claimed it for quite a long time?* Was it benevolence towards the Zulus or spite for the Swazis? Was it ignorance of the historical origins of the peoples of Ingwavuma?

It is very unlikely that Pretoria may not have considered giving this area to Mbabane. Later developments prove that spite was definitely not the reason for this oversight. Whatever reasons the Boers may have in records of confidential meetings in Pretoria, or with Mbabane-Lobamba, historical evidence show that they did not see this in their interest. We shall recall that South Africa always cherished the idea of ultimately incorporating Swaziland itself. It is therefore clear that whilst they could have given Swaziland this territory, such a step would have been self-defeating.

For as long as Mbabane remained beyond their reach, they had no intentions of doing them any favours. This belief was further strengthened by Swaziland's subsequent independence recognised as such internationally and capable of pursuing a foreign policy repugnant to Pretoria. It is in view of this situation that Pretoria saw Ingwavuma as a carrot that they could dangle in the eyes of Mbabane. This was correct from their point of view in the sense that it was the best way to serve their selfish interests.

But why did they give Ingwavuma to the KwaZulu government? Was it a change of heart in the form of benevolence to KwaZulu? No way! Before the defeat of the Zulus by British imperialism the main aim of the Boers and the British was to break up the indigenous people's tribal authority and cohesiveness. This is also evident in Sir Theophilus Shepstone's policy of dividing Zululand into thirteen separate chieftaincies. This was no longer the case by the middle of the 20th century and afterwards. By this time the process of detribalisation was entrusted with Pretoria. The latter introduced the Bantu Authorities Act of 1959 which was accompanied by an accelerated implementation of the abhorrent bantustan system. Fortunately for Pretoria, Gatsha Buthelezi accepted the invitation to head the KwaZulustan. Geographical incorporation of Ingwavuma into the latter was the only logical result of Pretoria's policies.

The only obstacle had been the Mngomezulu led by Chief Ntondziwe II (Ntunja) who, like his father, rejected the Bantu authorities. However, Pretoria ousted him in favour of a rival who readily accepted this system. The resistance of Ntunja's followers, a preponderant majority, was brutally crushed and Ntunja fled into Swaziland with a number of his followers.

When Ntunja's rival died, Pretoria simply found another replacement, so that the present chief of the Mngomezulu is not of royal ancestry. Such is the 'good will' of Pretoria to 'its people'. A goodwill without consideration of consequent suffering of the people in the implementation of its unique policies to its unique problems. The result is continuous tension as the people resist these policies. As for ignorance of the origin of the local people, no one would charge Pretoria with that crime given the expertise of Boer - British imperialism in keeping colonial records.

With the knowledge of later events some liberals and reactionaries may argue that

Pretoria made a mistake by incorporating Ingwavuma into KwaZulu. Wrong, we shall say that Pretoria took the only correct decision in the circumstances, one that best served its racist capitalist interests. Others will say that Pretoria was grossly shortsighted by not giving the area over to Swaziland. To these we say you fail to understand that shortsightedness in this regard is inevitable for colonialists and racists alike.

1982 - THE PRETORIA-MBABANE/LOBAMBA DEAL

How are we to understand the 1982 turnabout when Ingwavuma once again changes hands, now to Mbabane? If the earlier decision was correct it is only logical that its opposite should be wrong. But nothing can be further from the truth. We have already pointed out that one thing - and one thing only - determines changes and the modifications of Pretoria's internal and foreign policy, namely, what best serves the interest of the extraction of super-profits from the super-exploitation of the subjugated. Having said this we must then determine what in Pretoria's viewpoint has changed greatly during this period.

For Pretoria the change is for the worse. Its position as the last bastion of imperialism in Africa has grown more untenable. The collapse of Portuguese colonialism in Angola and Mozambique, the final decolonisation of Zimbabwe, and the intensification of the liberation war in Namibia have seen racist borders contracting greatly. Its political isolation continentally and internationally is growing rapidly. Within her borders the struggle is escalating, the working class and the rest of the oppressed majority whose consciousness is growing by the day is more and more coming into the forefront of that struggle. These mass economic and political struggles are reinforced and enhanced by the growing armed resistance led by our people's army, Umkhonto we Sizwe. Coupled with this is a deep economic crisis facing Pretoria and the whole imperialist world. A situation not helped by the growing awareness of the working masses that this crisis can only give way to an even longer and deeper crisis. We can thus see that it is no mere propaganda gimmick of Pretoria to claim that it is facing a 'total onslaught'. It is its interpretation of the causes of this situation, and therefore the solutions it comes up with that are all wrong (still 'correct' from its point of view). But that Pretoria's problems have grown much worse over the last decade cannot be doubted. No wonder Pretoria sees her deal with Mbabane as one of the essential steps in the implementation of her grand 'solution', 'total strategy'.

PRETORIA'S 'STRATEGY'

Seen in this light, Pretoria's benevolence to the Swazis acquires a very sinister meaning. Who can suggest a better way;

1. of 'solving' a growing unemployment problem, than simply changing borders so that over one million people cease to be Pretoria's responsibility;
2. for Pretoria to ensure that the million plus people stop struggling for their birthright under the leadership of the 'communist-backed' ANC;
3. of ensuring a serious and long-lasting conflict between the Swazi and South African peoples;
4. of ensuring that the Kingdom of Swaziland (part of the liberated zone in Africa) adopts a hostile attitude to the South African liberation move-

ment headed by the African National Congress;

5. of de-Africanising herself so that finally there may be no more oppressed majority with a right to African statehood; and
6. of including Swaziland to enter the 'constellation of states', becoming a full casino star in her own right; etc. All that at the cost of a largely barren tract of land which is difficult to defend, and a possible reward of getting some arch-reactionary imperialist power like the US to conveniently come to the 'aid' of Swaziland and building a 'seaport' for her which would then need to be 'defended' from the 'communists'?

Another important point is that, from the point of view of Pretoria, ceding land to a neighbouring country is not an irrevocable step. Activities against less tractable neighbours demonstrates this point. If Pretoria occupies Namibia illegally for such a long time, occupies part of Angola, invades any country, with the most feeble excuse, what can prevent her from repossessing land it has given away? All revolutionaries and anti-imperialist forces should do all they can to dissuade the Kingdom of Swaziland from taking a course hostile not only to the interests of the South African liberation struggle but to her own interests and those of the world anti-imperialist forces.

We must now look into the practical implementation of this 'solution' of Pretoria. The regime has been determined against opposition not only from the liberation movement, but also from within its own ranks. In the latter instance the so-called KwaZulu government managed to get court decisions against Pretoria. Evidently the latter had miscalculated and admitted this by 'agreeing' with puppet Gatsha Buthelezi and Mabuza of Ka-Ngwane, to form a commission of inquiry to investigate the matter and present recommendations. A no less important contribution to this retreat of Pretoria was the Mbabanne position that the former must sort out its 'problems' before it can accept the 'gift' (as if Pretoria could sort out such a 'problem') herself. What went wrong?

What went wrong is what inevitably goes wrong with all Pretoria's solutions to the political problems she faces. All never achieve the desired result. All are shorter or longer-lived. None is lasting. The much-proclaimed 'victories', be they the Kassinga, Matola or Maseru massacres, be they the 'acceptance of independence' by Xhosas, Vendas, etc., are hollow. All colonial and fascist regimes scored the same 'victories'. All were defeated finally. Pretoria will go the same way.

But this answer is too general and fails to clarify the issues sufficiently, if at all. Nor can it definitely be said that Pretoria's current retreat is final on the issue. The opposite is more likely though it may come in different garb. To give a more meaningful answer we need to look a bit more closely into what the people learned (or failed to learn) in their struggle against this 'solution'. For convenience and to assist better understanding we will begin by looking into the forces represented by the 'KwaZulu government'. This is not because this force played the decisive role. Quite the contrary as we shall prove later.

To be continued in the next issue.