The South African Miners Strike of 1946


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The South African Miners Strike of 1946

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<td>&quot;Thirty years ago, on 12 August 1946, the African mine workers of the Witwatersrand came out on strike in support of a demand for higher wages - 10 Shillings a day. They continued the strike for a week in the face of the most savage police terror, in which officially 1,248 workers were wounded and a very large number - officially only 9 - were killed. Lawless police and army violence smashed the strike. The resources of the racist State were mobilized, almost on a war footing, against the unarmed workmen.&quot;</td>
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NOTES AND DOCUMENTS*

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September 1976
THE SOUTH AFRICAN MINERS STRIKE OF 1946
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M. P. Naicker
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'O ** '.. K
Z-Mr. Naicker is the Director of Publicity and Information of the African
National Congress (ANC) of South Africa and editor of Sechaba, its monthly
organ.
The views expressed are those of the author. -7
21/76
76-16717 * All material in these notes and documents may be freely
reprinted.
Acknowledgement, together with a copy of the publication containing the reprint,
would be appreciated.

"Two hundred thousand subterranean heroes who, by day
and by night, for a mere pittance lay down their
lives to the familiar 'fall of rock' and who, at deep levels, ranging from 1,000 to
3,000 feet in the bowels
of the earth, sacrifice their lungs to the rock dust
which develops miners' phthisis and pneumonia."
- Sol Plaatjes, first Secretary of the African National Congress of South Africa
describing the lives of Black miners in 1914.

Introduction
Thirty years ago, on 12 August 1946, the African mine workers of the
Witwatersrand came out on strike in support of a demand for higher wages - 10
Shillings a day. They continued the strike for a week in the face of the most
savage police terror, in which officially 1,248 workers were wounded and a very
large number - officially only 9 were killed. Lawless police and army violence
smashed the strike. The resources of the racist State were mobilized, almost on a
war footing, against the unarmed workmen.
But the miners' strike had profound repercussions which
make them felt until this day. The intense persecution of workers' organizations
which began during the strike, when trade union and political offices and homes
of officials were raided throughout the country has not ceased.
The most profound result of the strike, however, was to be the impact it had on
the political thinking within the national liberation movement: almost
immediately it shifted significantly from a policy of concession - begging to more dynamic and militant forms of struggles.

I. THE BIRTH OF THE AFRICAN MINE WORKERS' UNION

Black workers were introduced to trade unionism by the early struggles of white British workers who had begun to form trade unions from 1880 onwards. During the first 30 years of their existence the white workers were occupied in a turbulent struggle for decent wages, union recognition and survival.

Writing about this period Alex Hepple in his book 'South Africa - a Political and Economic History" (I) states:

"It was a struggle of white men, striving for a higher standard of life and inbred with a fiery belief in their cause which carried them into bloody strikes, violence and rebellion. Their main enemy was the Chamber of Mines, a body of men who owned the rich gold mines. The quarrel revolved around the Chamber's low-wage policy. This conflict greatly influenced the pattern and direction of trade unionism in South Africa. It introduced the race factor into labour economics and steered white workers into support of an industrial colour bar, with all its damaging effects on workers solidarity."

Indeed solidarity between white and black workers was lost in those first 30 years never to be regained to this day. The result has been that the white workers became the aristocrats of labour in South Africa being among the highest paid workers in the world, while their black compatriots are, in the main, still living below the breadline. What is worse, the overwhelming majority of white workers in South Africa became the main and most vociferous supporters of successive racist regimes.

However, they taught the black workers one important lesson i.e. in order to win their demands they had to organize. The organization of African mine workers was and remains one of the most difficult and the most essential - tasks facing the trade union and national movement in South Africa. Recruited from the four corners of the country and from beyond its borders in Malawi, Lesotho, Botswana, Swaziland, Mozambique and up to 1973, Angola, the African miners are spread out from Randfontein to Springs in the Witwatersrand, spilling over into the Orange Free State.

They are shut into prison-like compounds, speaking many languages, guarded and spied upon. Any attempt at organization exposed them to the wiles of employers, the antagonism of white workers, and the ferocious arm of the law.

Many unsuccessful attempts were made to form a trade union prior to 1941. But in that year, on 3 August, a very representative miners' conference was called by the Transvaal Provincial Committee of the African National Congress. The conference was attended, not only by workers from many mines, but also by delegates from a large number of African, Indian, Coloured and white organizations, as well as representatives from a number of black unions. Some white unions gave their moral support and even the Paramount Chief of Zululand sent an encouraging message. A broad committee of 15 was elected to "proceed by every means it thought fit to build up an African Mine Workers' Union in order to raise the standards and guard the interests of all African mine workers." (2) From the first the committee encountered innumerable obstacles. The miners were ready to listen to its speakers, but the employers and the authorities were determined to prevent organizational meetings. Speakers were arrested and meetings broken up.

Another serious obstacle was the wide-scale use of spies by the mine owners, Time and again provisional shaft and compound union committees were established: only to end in the victimization and expulsion from the mines of the officials and committee members. Nevertheless, the organizing campaign progressed steadily and the stage was reached where a very representative conference of mine workers was held. The Conference formally established the African Mine Workers' Union and elected a committee under the presidency of J.B. Marks, who soon thereafter was elected President of the Transvaal African National Congress, as well.

II. BACKGROUND TO THE STRIKE

In 1941, when the decision to launch the Mineworkers' Union was first mooted the wage rates for African workers was R70 per year while white workers received R848.* In 1946, the year of the great strike the wages were: Africans R87 and whites 11106 (3). In both cases it would be noticed that the wage gap between white worker and the black worker was 12:1. With the formal establishment of the Union, organizational work began in earnest in the face of increased harassment, arrests, dismissals, and deportation of workers by the police and the mine management. Nevertheless, the Union grew in strength and influence. The Chamber of Mines, however, refused even to acknowledge the existence of the African Mine Workers' Union, much less to negotiate with its representatives. The Chamber's secretary instructed the office staff not to reply to communications from the Union. (4) Unofficially, of course, the Chamber was acutely conscious of the Union's activities and secret directives were sent out to break the Union. But, with the rising cost of living, starvation of families in the reserves and increasing pressure by the mine management and white workers, the demands of the workers became more incessant.

In order to stave off the growing unrest among the African mine workers, the regime appointed a Commission of Enquiry in 1943, with Judge Landsdowne...
as its Chairman. Among the members of the Commission was A.A.0.-ocr. "t:e
President of the mostly white Trades and Labour Council.
The African Mine orkers' Union presented an unanswerable case before this
Commission in support of the workersl claim to a living wage. The Chamber of
Lines made no serious attempt to rebut the Union's case, reiterating that its policy
was to employ cheap African labour. Ileanwhile, however, the 'Guardian, a
progressive South African weekly, which was the only paper which totally
supported the strike, was sued by four mining companies for 40,000 pounds for
publishing the UnionT S memorandum on the grounds that it was false and that
the recruiting of mine labourers would be hindered. The Court decided against the
Guardian and awarded 750 pounds damages to each of the fou- companies. No
serious student of South African politics could have expected otherwise. It was
surprising that the awards to the mine magnates were not higher.
The report of the Landsdowne Commission which appeared in
April 1944 was a shameful document. It accepted the basic premise of the mine
owners, all its recommendations were quite franlay made within the framework of
preserving the cheap labour system. The miner's wage, said the Commission, was
not really intended to be a living wage, but merely a "supplementary income".
Supplementary, that is, to the workers' supposed income from his land. The
evidence placed before the Commission of acute starvation in the Transkei and
other reserves was ignored.
4/ "The Impending Strike of African Line Workers,"
a statement by the African Mine Workers' Union,
August 1946.

The report of the Commission was received with bitter
disappointment by the workers. Even its wretchedly miserly recommendations
were rejected, in the main, by both the regime and the mine owners.
The recommendations were:
- an increase of 5 pence (one twentieth of the pound sterling)
per shift for surface workers and 6 pence per shift for
underground workers, on the basic rate of 22 pence per
shift obtained for nearly a generation;
- cost of living allowance of 3 pence per shift;
- boot allowance of 36 pence for 30 shifts;
- two weeks' paid leave per annum for permanent
workers; and
- overtime wages at time and a half.
Towards the end of that year the racist Prime Minister, Field Marshal Smuts,
announced that wages were to be raised by 4 pence for surface and 5 pence for
underground workers, and that the extra wage would be borne by the State in the
form of tax remission
to the mines. The Chamber of Mines also agreed to overtime pay. All the other
recommendations, miserly though they were, were completely ignored.
Obviously expecting that this would do little to allay the general discontent among the African miners, Smuts issued a Proclamation (5) prohibiting gatherings of more than 20 persons on mining property without special permission. J.B. Jarks, the President, and two other officials of the Union were arrested in December 1944, when they held a meeting at the Durban Deep Compound on the Witwatersrand.

A few days later P. Vundi and IT. Kanye, two organizers of the Union, were arrested on a similar charge in Springs. The arrested men were found not guilty on a technicality. The offence created by the Proclamation was that of being present at a gathering of more than 20 persons, whereas the accused had been charged with "holding a meeting." From that time, the police were more careful to frame their charges in correct legal phraseology and all trade union meetings in or near mine compounds ceased. Though the war ended, the Proclamation was not withdrawn.

2/ War Measure No. 1425.

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Despite these difficulties the African Mineworkers' Union increased its following in numerous mines throughout the Witwatersrand. And, on 19 May 1946 the biggest conference yet held of representatives of the workers, instructed the Executive of the Union to make yet one more approach to the Chamber of Mines to place before them the workers' demands for a ten shillings (one Rand) a day wage and other improvements. Failing agreement, decided the Conference, the workers would take strike action.

From May till July the Union redoubled its efforts to get the Chamber to see reason. To all their repeated communications they received one reply - a printed postcard stating that the matter was receiving attention. In his evidence at the subsequent trial of strike leaders and their supporters, Mr. Limebeer, secretary of the Chamber of Mines said that the postcard had been sent in error. It was the Chamber's policy, he added, not to acknowledge communications from the Union.

Decision to strike

On Sunday, 4 August, over 1,000 delegates assembled at an open air conference held in the Newtown Market Square - no hall where Africans could hold meetings was big enough to accommodate those present. The conference carried the following resolution unanimously:

"Because of the intransigent attitude of the Transvaal Chamber of Mines towards the legitimate demands of the workers for a minimum wage of 10 shillings per day and better conditions of work, this meeting of African miners resolves to embark upon a general strike of all Africans employed on the gold mines, as from 12 August 1946."
Before the decision was adopted, speaker after speaker mounted the platform and demanded immediate action. One worker said the strike must start on 12 August. He went on:
"When I think of how we left our homes in the reserves, our children naked and starving, we have nothing more to say. Every man must agree to strike on 12 August. It is better to die than go back with empty hands." (6)

6/ Guardian, Cape Town, August 9, 1946.

After the decision to strike was adopted, the President, J.B. Harks, stressed the gravity of the strike decision and said that the workers must be prepared for repression by possible violence. "You are challenging the very basis of the cheap labour system" he told them, "and must be ready to sacrifice in the struggle for the right to live as human beings." His speech was loudly cheered, as was that of the Secretary, J.J. Liajoro, who declared that their repeated efforts to secure improvements by negotiation had always ended in failure, owing to the refusal of the Ckamber of Hines to recognize the existence of the Union. : (7) There is little doubt that the regime would attempt to suppress the strike by brute force. But the meeting was in a militant mood. An old miner shouted: "I on the mines are dead men already." (8)

III. MINES STRIKE
A letter conveying the decision of the meeting to the Chamber, and adding a desperate last-minute appeal for negotiations, was as usual ignored. The press and mass media, except the South African progressive weekly, Guardian, did not print any news of the decision until the morning of i.onday 12 August, when the Rand Daily!ail, came out with a front page story that the strike was a "complete failure." The report was obviously mischievous and lying as the paper went to bed before midnight the previous day, when the strike had not even begun.
The Star that evening, however, had a different tale to tell: tens of thousands of workers were out on strike from the East to the West Rand; the Smuts regime had formed a ‘7’ special Committee of Cabinet instists to "deal with" the situation; thousands of police were being mobilized and drafted to the area.
They dealt with it by means of bloody violence. The police batoned, bayonetted and fired on the striking workers to force them down the mine shafts. The full extent of police repression is not known but reports from miners and some newspapers reveal intense persecution and terror during the week following Monday 12 August.
A peaceful procession of workers began to march to Johannesburg on what became known as Bloody Tuesday, 13 August, from the East Rand. They wanted to get their passes and go back home. Police opened fire on the procession and a number of workers were killed. At one mine, workers forced to go down the mine, started a sit-down strike underground. The police drove the workers up - according to the Star, "stope by
stope, level by level" to the surface. Then they started beating them up, chasing them into the veld with baton charges. Then the workers were "re-assembled" in the compound yard and, said the Star, "volunteered to go back to work."

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In protest against these savage brutalities, a special conference of the Transvaal Council of IHon-European Trade Unions (COMETU) decided to call a general strike in Johannesburg on Wednesday 14 August. The Johannesburg City Council sent a deputation, to plead with CONTU to maintain essential services. Many workers heeded the call, but the weakness of the unions generally, and the failure to bring the call home to the workers in the factories resulted in only a partial success of the strike. COTTU called a mass meeting of workers at the Newtown Market Square on 15 August. The meeting was banned in terms of the Riotous Assemblies Act, and the decision banning the meeting was conveyed by a senior police officer, backed by a large squad of armed police. Those present were given 5 minutes to disperse. Only quick action by people's leaders who went among the angry crowd averted a massacre. A procession of women tobacco workers marching to this meeting was attacked by the police and one pregnant worker was bayoneted. By Friday 16 August, all the striking workers - 75,000 according to the official government "Director of Native Labour" but probably nearer 100,000 - were bludgeoned back to work. Throughout the week hundreds of workers were arrested, tried, imprisoned or deported. Leaders of the African Trade Unions and the entire Executive Committee of the African Mine Workers' Union, the whole of the Central Committee of the Communist Party and scores of Provincial and local leaders of the African National Congress were arrested and charged in a series of abortive "treason and sedition" trials. Innumerable police raids, not only in the Transvaal but in all the main cities in the country including Durban, Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, Kimberley and East London, were carried out on the offices of Trade Unions, the Congresses and the Communist Party. The homes of leaders of the A.N.C., the Communist Party, the Indian and Coloured Congresses and the Trade Unions were also raided simultaneously. The white South African State was mobilized and rampant in defence of its cheap labour policy and big dividends for the mining magnates and big business. This marked the opening of a phase of intense repression by the racist regime of the day, led by Field Marshal Smuts, against the forces for change in South Africa. This repression continues to this day under the Vorster regime. The African line workers' Union, mainly because of the very difficult circumstances under which it operated, was never a closely organized well-knit body. During the strike the central strike committee was effectively cut off from the workers at each mine by massive police action and the workers had to struggle in isolation. They were
continually told that all the other workers had gone back to work, and apart from Union leaflets hazardously brought into the compounds by gallant volunteers - a large number being caught and arrested there was no system of interchanging information.

Nevertheless, thousands of miners defied terror, arrest and enemy propaganda and stood out for five days - from 12 to 16 August.

During the strike 32 of the 45 mines on the Rand were affected according to one report received by the Union and later confirmed by the Star, a Johannesburg daily. According to the estimates issued by the Chief Native Commissioner for the Witwatersrand, 21 mines were affected by the strike, eleven wholly and 10 partially. The dead, according to this official, numbered nine, of whom four were trampled to death, three died in hospital, one was shot dead and one "killed himself by running into a dustbin."

The regime called the strike a failure. But no great movement of this character is really a "failure", even though it might not succeed in its immediate aim.

The African miners' strike was one of those historic events that, in a flash of illumination, educate a nation, reveal what has been hidden and destroy lies and illusions. The strike transformed African politics overnight. It spelt the end of the compromising, concession-begging tendencies that dominated African politics. The timid opportunism and servile begging for favours disappeared for all practical purposes. The Native Representative Council which, in a sense, embodied that spirit, in its session on Thursday 15 August, in Pretoria, decided to adjourn as a protest against the Government's breach of faith towards the African people. They never met again.

Meanwhile, Dr. A.B. Xuma, President-General of the African National Congress joined a delegation of the South African Indian Congress (SAIC) sent to the 1946 session of the United Nations General Assembly when the question of the treatment of Indians in South Africa was raised by the representatives of the Government of India.

He, together with the SAIC representatives, H. A. Naidoo and Sorabjee Rustonjee and Senator H.M. Basner, a progressive white "Native Representative" in the South African Senate, used the occasion to appraise Member States of the United Nations of the strike of the African miners and other aspects of the struggle for equality in South Africa.

Dealing with this visit the ANC at its Annual Conference, from 14 to 17 December 1946, passed the following resolution:

"Congress congratulates the delegates of India, China and the Soviet Union and all other countries who championed the cause of democratic rights for the oppressed non-European majority in South Africa,

and pays tributed to those South Africans present in America, particularly Dr. A.B. Xuma, Messrs.
H.A. Naidoo, Sorabjee Rustonjee and Senator H.M. Basner, for enabling delegates to the United Nations to obtain first-hand information and data which provided the nations of the world with reasonable grounds for passing a deserving judgement against the South African policy of white domination.

"Conference desire to make special mention of the Council of African Affairs for its noble efforts to defend fundamental human rights ..." *

When the Council adjourned the Prime Minister, Field Marshal Smuts, met members of the Council and outlined new proposals to end the deadlock. Among his proposals was "a form of recognition for African Trade Unions. However, he made it clear that such recognition would not include African mine workers. For the miners, he proposed that their affairs be dealt with by an Inspectorate functioning under the Department of Native Affairs. After considering this proposal, the Councillors stated:

"It is asking for too much to expect the African people to believe that this new Inspectorate, whatever the grade of officers appointed, will make a better job of protecting the interests of the mine workers than the Inspectorate has done in the past. The African mine workers demand the right to protect themselves through the medium of their own recognized and registered organizations." 9/

In a statement on 11 May 1947, on the Council's decision to adjourn, Dr. A.B. Xuma, President-General of the African National Congress, dealing with the Smuts proposals reiterated the demands of the ANC for "recognition of African trade unions under the Industrial Conciliation Act and adequate wages for African workers, including mine workers." 10/

* The Council on African Affairs, led by Mr. Paul Robeson and Dr. W.E.B. DuBois, American black leaders, hosted the delegation during its visit.


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The brave miners of 1946 gave birth to the A.H.C. Youth League's Programme of Action adopted in 1949; they were the forerunners of the freedom strikers of 1 May 1950, against the Suppression of Communism Act, and the tens of thousands who joined the 26 June nation-wide protest strike that followed the killing of sixteen people during the 74ay 1st strike. They gave the impetus for the 1952 Campaign of Defiance of the Unjust Laws when thousands of African, Indian and Coloured people went to jail; they inspired the mood that led to the upsurge in 1960.
and to the emergence of Urkhonto we Sizwe (The Spear of the Nations) - the military wing of the African National Congress. And, it is in keeping with the tradition set by the brave miners who fought and died during the 1946 strike that the recent developments in Soweto must be viewed.

IV. THE PRESENT SITUATION

South Africa produces more precious minerals than any other country in the world, outside the Socialist States. Of the known reserves, South Africa's share is: 70 per cent of the platinum, 60 per cent of the manganese, 50 per cent of the uranium, 70 per cent of fluorspar, 100 per cent of crocidolite and amesite asbestos. / Gold mining is the hub of the mining industry although diamonds were discovered in large quantities before gold and provided the capital for the development of the gold mining industry.

The historical importance of the gold mining industry to South Africa needs hardly be elaborated upon. Suffice to say that the industry has long been the basis for South Africa's prosperity, and for the foreign exchange with which it buys arms and equipment for its armed forces and police. In 1970 gold production accounted for 10.5 per cent of the gross national product. Sales of gold in 1971 amounted to 1.5 billion dollars - equal to all other exports combined.12/ For more than a century, the whole white supremacy system in South Africa has been backed up by gold. The best lands have been expropriated and all Africans have been crowded into tiny reserves - or homelands as they are now termed - which are, in actual fact, cheap labour reservoirs.

The gold mining industry served as a model for all subsequent sectors of the white economy. Controlled by a handful of giant corporations, under a single umbrella organization - the Chamber of Mines - it has spread its tentacles into coal, iron, copper, diamonds, manganese and platinum mining; into the manufacturing sector - petroleum, breweries, explosives, chemicals, cement, brick making and many other industries into wattle and other plantations; and beyond South Africa into neighboring African countries, as well as many distant countries of the Western world.

The mining industry is the biggest employer of African and white workers in the country. According to the 1974 issue of "Mining Statistics", published by the Department of Mines, the number of persons employed in mining during 1974 was as follows:

<table>
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<th>All Mines</th>
<th>Gold Mines</th>
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<tr>
<td>Whites</td>
<td>89,105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coloured</td>
<td>8,291</td>
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- 12 -
The mining industry in general and the gold mining industry in particular depend extensively on "foreign" African Labour.

Most of the African workers employed on the gold mines are "foreign" Africans.

For instance, of a total African labour force employed in the gold mines in 1973, 297,131 were "foreign" as against 95,300 Africans from South Africa. (13)


A breakdown of the figures shows the following areas of recruitment:

Lesotho 76,114
Botswana 20,339
Swaziland 4,821
Angola 2,745
Rhodesia 2
Transkei 47,139*
Malawi 109,723
Mozambique 83,387
344,270*

It must be noted that all these workers, including those from South Africa itself, are migrant labourers. They live in compounds in prison-like conditions. During their term of contract, they are separated from their families and the relations between management and worker are akin to the relations between warder and prisoner.

The gap between wages paid to white workers and African workers is over 1311. Including wages and allowances, the monthly average cash earnings per head, in 1973 were: (14)

White R598
African R 44

The accident rate on the mines is extremely high.

Between 1936 and 1966, 19,000 men, 93 per cent of them Blacks, died as a result of accidents in the gold mines - an average of three deaths per shift. An enormous number were disabled by accidents. In 1968, a year when the fatality rate was at an all time low, 491 Blacks and 18 Whites were killed and 25,000 Blacks and 2,000 Whites were disabled for at least two weeks by accidents. (15) According to recent figures published by the Underground Officials' Association (awhite mineworkers' organization), 5,500 men died in gold mining accidents in South Africa from 1964 to 1974. In 1974 alone 485 men died and 22,222 injured in the gold mines. (16)

* It is presumed that the remaining 48,171 workers were recruited from areas of South Africa, other than Transkei.

114_ Ibid., page 186.
The following are recent figures of fatal accidents on all mines, given by the Minister of Mines: (17)

<table>
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<th>Year</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Coloured</th>
<th>Asian</th>
<th>African</th>
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<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>729</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>31</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>666</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>43</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>689</td>
</tr>
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But these deaths do not include the huge numbers of slow deaths and disablement resulting from lung damage and other occupational hazards for which there are often no records. In the Transkei, "tuberculosis has reached epidemic proportions, affecting almost one-quarter of those surveyed." (18)

The enforced separation of the workers from their families, the slave-like working conditions, the high accident rate and, above all, the miserable pittance African workers received for their back-breaking work have led over the years to many major strikes and to clashes between workers on the one hand and the management and police on the other, or among the workers themselves.

From the time eleven black miners striking for higher wages were shot dead by police in Carletonsville, near Johannesburg, in September 1973, clashes involving mineworkers caused 132 deaths and at least 500 injuries up to March 1975. (19)

Various reasons have been put forward by different people to explain the clashes. But by far the most important reasons for the outbursts are outrage and frustration caused by boredom (most of the clashes started over the week-ends), lack of proper consultation with the workers by both management, the government, revolt over the starvation wages paid to black workers, and the fact that hundreds of men, from different ethnic groups and nationalities, speaking different languages and with different customs and backgrounds, are herded into vast single-sex compounds with no privacy and with no women and children.

In the words of the International Labour Organisation's report on South Africa:
"Although these incidents have not in many cases been labour disputes in the strict sense of the word, it would be an entirely mistaken conclusion to attribute them primarily to alleged antagonisms between the various African ethnic groups represented in the labour force. The fundamental reasons must be sought in employment and living conditions on the mines, and in the migrant labour policy which is at the basis of the whole mining system." (20)

The mining industry, like the racist regime in South Africa, is sitting on a powder-keg. As the dawning of independence spreads inexorably southwards in Africa, the flow of "foreign" African labour will dry up. Already Angola as a source has been stopped. Mozambique will no doubt follow suit, if not immediately, then very soon. Workers from independent African countries such as Lesotho, Malawi and Mozambique have, after each strike or clash, elected to go home rather than continue working under prevailing conditions. This was particularly so during 1974 when some mines had to work with only 73 per cent of their required complement of African labour. (21) This situation will repeat itself over and over again as the patience of the workers at being treated as they are now is exhausted, and as the full awareness, awakened after the defeat of Portuguese colonialism in Africa, in 1974, seeps home.

The only alternative is for the mining industry to find its labour from within the boundaries of South Africa itself. And that it cannot do - save at bayonet point - while conditions for the working miners remain what they are. South African workers know that wages and conditions in industry, bad as they are, are far better than those on the mines, unlike the pattern in other developing countries. They are also increasingly aware of the changes that are taking place in southern Africa, and how these changes were brought about.