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BLACK WORKERS' STRUGGLES AND MANAGEMENT RESPONSE IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN MINES

By

David Massey

In 1977, the value of minerals mined in South Africa amounted to a record R5.5 billion.¹ Over 80% of the work force required to mine these minerals was provided by black migrant workers coming on contract from neighboring countries and from inside South Africa.² The most arduous and dangerous work on the mines is relegated to these black workers. Francis Wilson has described typical working conditions for black miners underground in the following manner:

(I)t is perhaps easiest to start by thinking of a road laborer digging up a pavement with a jack-hammer drill. Now imagine him doing that work thousands of feet underground, in intense heat, where he cannot even begin to stand upright and where the drill . . . has to be held horizontal and driven into the wall in front. Add to this picture the noise of a road-drill magnified several times by the confined space; . . . and the possibility that the roof of the mine might suddenly cave in under pressure.³

In 1977, nine hundred fifty-three men were killed in mining accidents in South Africa. In the notoriously dangerous gold mines, the probability of accidental death for a black miner was nearly twice that for a white miner.⁴

Although there has been substantial improvement over the last six years, wages for black miners are still only a fraction of those for white miners. The gap between white and black wage levels has in fact widened from R412 in 1971 to R710 in 1977.⁵ The average black miner's cash wage in 1977, R103 per month, was still well below the established household subsistence level of R142 for an African family.⁶ By law, only 3% of the black labor force on the mines has been allowed family housing. The rest of the black miners are housed in compounds of up to 5,000 men with 16-20 men to a room. The most common release activities for the men living in these compounds are reportedly drugs (in the form of alcohol and marijuana), affairs with township women, and homosexuality.⁷

The mines allow no independent black workers' organization. Workers' responses to this repressive situation are,

sporadic, spontaneous, and often violent. Whenever workers' actions begin to take a form dangerous to the maintenance of steady production and profits, the mining companies attempt to subvert and distract the miners from organizing, and have called in armed troops when necessary. This article will first look at the increasing incidence of "faction-fights", strike actions, and desertion from the mines as forms of workers' struggle against repressive working and living conditions. It will then analyze the mining companies' strategies for reestablishing control. Information is drawn mainly from the author's own research*, including interviews with Tswana miners and South African mining officials; from a number of recent studies of mine-compound life⁸; and from the confidential report of the South African government appointed Interdepartmental Committee of Inquiry into Riots on Mines.⁹

"Faction-Fights" and Strike Actions

The long history of strikes and resistance by black workers in South Africa is just beginning to be rediscovered.¹⁰ The most famous mining strikes were in 1920, and in 1946. In 1920, more than 76,000 black miners struck for better pay, better prices in the compound stores, and the lowering of the color bar. The white mineworkers refused to honor the strike, however, and the police forced the men back to work. In 1946, the African Mine Workers' Union demanded a minimum wage of 10 shillings a day and improved food rations. The demands were refused and in the ensuing strike -- involving 74,000 workers -- the authorities killed 9 men.¹¹

From 1946 to October 1972, when 140 black Mozambican workers struck for better wages at Sover Mine, there appear to have been no major disturbances in the mines. Since 1972, however, there has been a continuous series of conflicts. The conventional explanation for these conflicts promulgated by the South African Chamber of Mines is that they have primarily been the result of intertribal rivalries, exacerbated by the insecurity of life on the mine compounds. The conclusion reached, in 1976 by the South African government appointed Committee of Inquiry into the causes of the mine disturbances is perhaps typical:

A study of the history of Bantu tribes from the days of Chaka will reveal that in the case of the Bantu this faction forming has its origin in fear

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or a feeling of insecurity which leads to violence. This fear is passed from generation to generation and is engrained in most Bantu tribes. Despite the influence of the White man, civilization, religion, and Western standards, the tendency to become violent where tribal differences are involved is practically spontaneous. The ethnologist and Bantu expert, Dr. van Warmelo, stated *inter alia* that the southern Bantu tribes are particularly inclined to become violent and even regard fighting as a form of recreation.¹²

Thus, the majority of the conflicts, which between 1972 and 1976 accounted for the deaths of 192 men and the injury of 1,278 others¹³, are conveniently explained away in terms of the prevalent South African racist ideology. It is legitimized, in this case, by the work of an expert anthropologist.

A sample of mineworkers from Botswana were asked by the author in 1977, what they felt were the primary causes of *mekubukubu* (struggles) on the South African mines.¹⁴ Answers were divided roughly into three equal categories: one-third said that tribal differences were the main cause; one-third said low wages and/or poor treatment; and the remaining one-third said they did not know what caused such disturbances. Clearly there are important ethnic splits among mine workers and when conflict arises between men of different ethnic groups it can lead to large scale violence. According to a miner who was involved, the inter-tribal fighting at the Impala Platinum Mine in 1976, which cost four miners their lives, initially started because a Rondo miner refused to pay a Mosotho woman for his beer at a shebeen.

Although it may be ideologically satisfying for white South Africans to believe that ethnic splits are due to engrained and culturally determined patterns of violence, such racially based interpretations ignore the 'divide and rule' tactics which mine management (and on a larger scale, the South African state) have used to foment such splits. There has been a longstanding practice of segregating black workers by ethnic groups in the compounds and at work in order to weaken the possibility of black worker solidarity. Management insists that certain groups are innately and culturally better suited for certain jobs -- e. g., the Basotho are good shaft-sinkers, Shangaans make good 'picannins' (white miners' assistants), etc. This management practice of segregation can cause problems, however, if ethnic rivalries become exaggerated. In this respect, those mine disturbances which take the form of ethnic faction-fighting can be viewed as instances of *the chickens coming home to roost*. A case in point is the disturbance at

Western Deep Levels in September 1973, during which 11 miners (including 2 from Botswana) were shot dead by the police.¹⁵ The dispute started because a change in pay lowered the differential between the pay of one occupational group, which was comprised mainly of Basotho, and another, which was mainly Xhosa.

Although ethnic segregation increases the risk of disturbances, the mining companies are willing to accept this risk as long as it can be contained at a safe level. The government Committee of Inquiry into mining disturbances rejected the suggestion that conflict could be minimized if only one ethnic group was housed in each compound or recruited for a particular mine on the grounds that, "in the event of trouble or a riot, it is likely that the entire labor force will band together and the mine concerned will, therefore, be most vulnerable."¹⁶ It is only when factionalism results in uncontrollable violence and subsequent losses in production that it is seen as a problem. The solution sought by some mines is to maintain the disunity, but at a less intense level than before. Anglo American Corporation, whose mines have been hardest hit in the recent disturbances, recently began allowing Xhosa and Basotho miners at some shafts to live in alternative rooms in the same housing blocks. This was done in recognition of the fact that under the old system of strict segregation, disputes between individual workers had a tendency to grow into large scale disputes between housing units of hundreds of workers.¹⁷

While the inclination of mine management and the South African state is to explain away disturbances at the mines as faction-fights¹⁸, it is often impossible to draw a clear line between faction-fights and strike actions. (The Setswana word, *mekubukubu*, covers them both.) There are instances when ethnic rivalry is the immediate basis of a disturbance. But most faction fights result in work stoppages and the destruction of mining property, and sometimes among the casualties are staff members who 'got in the way'. In these respects, faction fights begin to take on the appearance of industrial sabotage.¹⁹ Strike actions, on the other hand, can and do sometimes degenerate into full scale rioting and fighting in which ethnic affiliation comes to play a dominant role. For example, the disturbances at Vaal Reefs, in January 1975, in which ten men were killed, seems to have started as a protest against the Lesotho government's compulsory deferred pay scheme but degenerated into clashes between groups of Xhosa and Basotho workers.²⁰

The spilt perception of the causes of the conflicts in the mines by Tswana mineworkers -- one-third attributing them to ethnic differences, and one-third to low wages and/or ill-treatment -- was explicitly bridged by one miner who said in an interview, "we are paid very poor wages, but we cannot complain to the bosses so we fight among ourselves." On the basis of this

one could go into a long analysis of the psychology of powerlessness and the transfer of latent aggression from persecutor to fellow victim. Suffice it to say that there is no sharp dividing line between strike actions directed against management, and what the authorities prefer to think are simply faction-fights. Each evolves out of a situation in which workers have no means of redressing their grievances.

The frequency and severity of disturbances in the mines over the last five years have been unprecedented. There are a number of theories as to why this sudden surge in unrest has taken place.²¹ The root cause, however, seems to be increased awareness on the part of the mine worker of the crucial role his labor plays in the industry. The politicization of workers from Mozambique, Lesotho, Rhodesia, and South Africa itself has spilled over into the mines. Although the official government Committee of Inquiry seems to have tried very hard, it was unable to discover any "communistic" conspiracy underlying the riots. Surprisingly, it did find an undercover agent from the Department of National Security, formerly the Bureau for State Security (BOSS), involved as an agitator in one riot.²² The Committee finally concluded that there had been a general heightening of worker consciousness in the mines:

*The mine worker is becoming more and more aware of himself and the important part that he plays in the mining industry. He is aware of the enhanced gold price and that the industry is dependent on him and is very vulnerable -- seen from the labor point of view.*²³

The Committee went on to warn that the South African government and mine management must be increasingly vigilant and "protect" workers from communist influence. A primary concern was that the Mozambican workers, influenced by Frelimo, would be infiltrated by "terrorists." The Committee noted that "at certain times there was an attitude among Mozambicans during times of Frelimo successes that Frelimo was showing how to deal with whites."²⁴ The drastic cutback in the number of Mozambicans working in the mines, from 102,000 in 1974 to 38,000 by mid-1977, is partly a response to this fear. Ironically part of the deficit caused by the loss of workers from Mozambique (and Malawi) was taken up by recruitment from Rhodesia. To the embarrassment of South Africa, it was revealed in early 1977, that the mines were being used as a conduit and recruiting ground by the Zimbabwean liberation forces. Zimbabweans recruited for the mines would simply desert shortly after arriving in South Africa and make their way in safety to Botswana, and then to Zambia, for training as freedom fighters.²⁵ Another source of embarrassment was that the exiled Basutoland Congress Party uses the mines in Welkom as a "half-way house through which

communication from the exiled opposition in Botswana moves back and forth to Lesotho."²⁶

Thus, the South African mines are becoming the victims of the struggles that are going on around them as well as in them. What previously had been an advantage of the migrant labor system -- the drawing of labor from different countries and ethnic groups -- has become a liability as political changes in the labor reserves leads to greater worker consciousness, and hence, militancy in the mines. As a result, South Africa is running out of "safe" countries to recruit African labor. Even the current policy of labor supply "internalization", emphasizing increased recruitment from within South Africa itself in order to lessen dependence on risky foreign suppliers, provides no guarantee of a docile work force. Recently, it was announced that recruitment in the urban areas of South Africa had been a failure. Figures for recruitment in the Pretoria and Kimberley areas, however, do not bear this out, leading one to suspect that this was a political decision.²⁷ The Chamber of Mines seems to have decided that it does not want to import the turmoil of the townships into the compounds.

It is difficult to judge from the outside to what extent the struggles in the mines are continuing. That there have been and still are numerous incidents in the mines which go unreported is a certainty. The suppression of information about disturbances is more common today than several years ago, given the self-censorship imposed on the South African press by government threats, backed by the example of the banning of *The World*. The Government Committee of Inquiry had a dim view of the role of the press in the increasing unrest:

In bygone years there were also riots, but they were not brought into prominence as is the case today. We read in the Press of conditions in the compounds and hostels, critical comment concerning the system of migratory labor and the handling of riots. All the problems with which the mines have to contend are brought into the public eye and the black workers become fully aware of the vulnerability of the mining industry.

*The injudicious radio and newspaper reports regarding riots, in our opinion, contributed to the increase in riots. We feel that publicity should be confined to a minimum and that comment should be fair and moderate.*²⁸

Returning Tswana mineworkers told the author in interviews about disturbances at Vaal Reefs Gold Mine in June,

and at Western Platinum Mines in July 1977, which were not reported in the papers; and Andrew Prior, in the *South African Labour Bulletin*, described a conflict in a mine in 1975 that went unreported in the press.²⁹

Desertion as a Form of Workers' Struggle

If life in the mines becomes intolerable, the only viable alternative open to a black miner is to withdraw his labor power and go home. Mineworkers are specifically excluded from the provisions of the Bantu Labour Relations Amendment Act No. 70 of 1973 which permits legal strikes by blacks under certain limited circumstances. Until October 1974, miners who broke their contracts and deserted were liable to punitive measure under the South African Masters and Servants laws. Once a worker had started on a contract, he was legally required to work out his time. If there was death at home or if he was badly treated, he could still be refused permission to break his contract. Then, in 1974, there was a coal miners' strike in the United States. Some of the big power corporations started to import coal from foreign countries, among them South Africa. Acting in support of the coal miners, longshoremen in Alabama--many of whom were black Americans--refused to unload "scab" coal from South Africa. The United Mine Workers of America later brought suit in federal court to stop the importation of South African coal on the basis of a tariff law which forbade the importation of goods produced under condition of forced labor. The Masters and Servants laws binding workers to their contracts, it was argued, constituted a forced labor system. The suit brought by the American mineworkers led to the repeal of the Masters and Servants laws in South Africa. In most sectors of the economy, the laws were anachronistic, having been supplanted by more efficient bureaucratic approaches to labor control--most notably, Influx Control and Influx Control and the establishment of Labour Bureaux.³⁰ In the mining sector, however, the repeal has had a substantial impact.

One man who had deserted said in an interview with the author that he had first requested leave to go home to attend a funeral, but that the compound manager had responded by asking him if he thought his going home would bring the body back to life, finally telling him to *voetsek* (an Afrikaans word properly used only for driving dogs away) and get back to work. This man simply broke his contract and left the mine. Although he had to pay his own fare home, a deserter's uncollected wages will be sent to him through the recruiting station and he may be allowed to return to work.

The notoriously dangerous mines have been the hardest hit by desertion. Usually these are "deep level" mines where there is a constant danger of rock bursts. Digging tunnels two to three kilometers underground naturally creates tremendous stress

and the result is that from time to time tunnels just fold up as the surrounding rock fractures. Rock bursts are the number one killer in the mines--accounting for 262 of the total of 796 deaths in the mines in 1976.³¹ Western Deep Levels and East Rand Proprietary Mines (ERPM) are both prone to rock bursts. One miner who had been working at Western Deep said in an interview: "Someone is carried out on a stretcher every day there." Understandably, both of these mines have relatively high desertion rates. East Rand Proprietary Mines announced in 1976 that it would have to cut back production, temporarily, by 25% because of labor supply problems.³² Western Deep has built new showcase hostels with electric heat, carpeting and greater privacy in an attempt to stabilize the work force there.

Figures from the Chamber of Mines reveal that since 1974 men have increasingly exercised their right simply to walk off the job.

Table 1. Desertion Rates on the South African Mines*

Year	% of Work Force Who Deserted	Number of Deserters
1972	2.7%	10,968
1973	2.1%	9,279
1974	2.6%	10,851
1975	7.4%	28,456
1976	10.8%	44,150
1977	11.2%	49,286

*Source: Witwatersrand Native Labour Supply Association, *Annual Reports, 1972-1977*.

The simple ability to leave a mine has given workers some minimal leverage in their struggle for decent living and working conditions. In periods of serious labor shortages such as exist in the mines from 1974 through 1976, desertion was an effective indirect means of forcing improved conditions--especially in the worst mines. This shortage has been successfully overcome, however. Rhodesia has been opened up to recruitment and Malawi has once again started to send miners to South Africa. More importantly, the Chamber of Mines' "internalization" policy, aided by growing unemployment within South Africa, has been successful. The bogus homelands of the Transkei and Bophuthatswana have come on stream nicely for the mines, acting as their fastest growing supply areas in 1976-77.³³ Today, with replenished reserves of labor to draw on, the mines can better afford to victimize deserters, either by refusing to rehire them or delaying payment of their wages.

Management Response: Preventive Measures

On June 2, 1977, at Cornelia Collieries 3,000 miners refused to go underground. A wage review which had been scheduled by the mine owners, Anglo American Corporation, had been delayed

"because of the economic situation," and the workers were merely told that they would be informed "in due course" when a decision could be made. In the riot that followed, the beer hall at one hostel was raided and burned down and offices and other buildings were stoned. Armed riot police were called. Eventually the contracts of 800 miners who refused to return to work were cancelled and the miners repatriated.³⁴ Within the context of South African industrial relations, it was unthinkable for Anglo American to give in to the workers' demand for an immediate decision on their wage increases. Nevertheless, the mining companies are increasingly aware that some of the mining disturbances have resulted from their own inability to recognize and defuse relatively petty grievances before they blew up into costly work stoppages and riots.

The 65 outbreaks of conflict in the mines between 1972 and 1976 were ample sign that the old "induna" system of social control no longer worked. The induna was a permanent employee appointed as senior representative of each tribe to deal with worker problems. The theory was that the induna fulfilled a role on the mine similar to that of the traditional chief. The men of his particular tribe were supposed to treat him as their tribal leader. Each induna has several assistants called tribal representatives. These men act as policemen in the compounds; it is the duty of the induna to maintain order and discipline, as well as to act as an intermediary in communications between workers and management. It is clear to the workers that the authority of the induna devolves solely from management, and that he is, in the last resort, a company man. The fact that many indunas are corrupt, often choosing to communicate to management only those requests for which they have been paid, and heavily involved in homosexual pimping, further alienates them from the workers.³⁵ A theological student from Lesotho who entered the mines as a recruit, as part of a research project, reported:

Most men had little faith in the indunas. They refer to them as the useless men of the compound who need doing away with. The induna's work is to eat and to bring false news to the hostel manager. It appears that indunas are chosen from the people who are regulated by the principle of "the Master Says".³⁶

In the event of unrest the induna is more likely to run away from the workers than to try and control the situation.³⁷ In the disturbances at Cornelia Collieries mentioned above, an induna was attacked by workers and ended up in the hospital with a broken arm.³⁸

In light of the increasing number of disturbances, the mining companies were faced with the problem of reforming or

replacing the induna system. Management fears that experiments with the worker organizations will get "out of hand." It was well noted that the increase in violence in the mines had coincided with the institution of wage increases, and had hit the most "liberal" mining house, Anglo American, the hardest. The problem, then, was how to allow workers to communicate their petty grievances without granting the workers, or even appearing to grant them, any decision-making power. Basically, there have been three responses to the problem of worker-management communication: 1. The formation of liaison-type committees; 2. the institution of regularized in-house research and monitoring of workers' complaints; and 3. the establishment of a cadre of riot control experts constantly on call to deal with workers if a riot or strike should seem imminent.

There has been considerable experimentation with what can be termed liaison-type committees. They have different forms and sizes, but their general feature is that the workers either represent themselves in mass meetings, or are represented by an elected or appointed fellow worker from their own ranks. Some committees are organized on a hostel basis and therefore ethnically based, while others are work-based; that is, they are meant to represent all the men working in one particular shaft or all the men of one occupational group. The emphasis is on the upward communication of workers' problems and complaints and the downward communication of management decisions. The purpose of the committees is not to give the workers powers of negotiation, or even to consult with them about changes. In most mines where these committees exist, it seems it is generally understood by the miners that complaints about wages are futile and therefore they are not raised.³⁹ Although considerable fanfare has been given to the introduction of these committees, over half of experienced Tswana miners in a sample of 120 did not know if such a committee existed in the mines where they worked. Most workers said that if they had a complaint they would go to their induna, or directly to the white compound manager. One man volunteered that such a committee did exist, but that the workers did not trust it, and were scared to use it.

It always has been a danger in the mines that if someone complained he would be considered an agitator and victimized by management. Every recruiting office has a file of men who have been blacklisted from the mines. It is no secret that there are men in the mines who act as informers for management, and for the Department of National Security. Both are concerned about "communist" agitators infiltrating the mines and it is logical to assume that since the disturbances have increased, covert intelligence activities have been stepped up. A perusal of the records of 116 Tswana miners who were blacklisted from various mines over a six month period in 1974 revealed that 32% were sacked for what could be classified as political reasons. (See

table 2.)

Table 2. Blacklisted Tswana Miners

<u>Offense</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>% of Total</u>
Causing disturbance		
Troublesome		
Troublemaker		
Aggressive		
Suspected agitator		
Aggressive behavior		
Refuses to be trained	37	32%
Incompatible		
Unidisciplined		
Inciting miners to strike		
Not amenable to discipline		
Absenteeism	27	23%
Loafing	27	23%
Drunkenness	7	8%
Assault	13	11%
Sodomy	3	3%
<hr/>		
Total	116	100%

A report done by the Research Organization of the Chamber of Mines itself concluded that the liaison committees were largely ineffective in representing workers' complaints:

They deal largely with problems and complaints of an everyday nature and not with the wider and more important issues affecting workers. There is seldom a sharing of views between management and workers' representatives, little discussion and consultation, and no negotiation. . .

The wider aspirations of the workers are not made known. Pay demands and other major issues have led to strikes and violence rather than to peaceful settlement through consultation or negotiation, probably because workers are aware that existing systems do not allow for such processes. Demands are too easily rejected or ignored. The control of committee or meetings is entirely in the hands of management.⁴⁰

In addition to the palliative of liaison-type committees, the Chamber of Mines through its Human Resources Laboratory carries out monitoring and research in the area of worker-management communication. A major purpose of such research is to identify and suggest means of dealing with workers' complaints before they become major problems. The story of the Malawian hockey sticks--although probably an exaggeration--is indicative of how the system is supposed to operate. In one mine which employed a considerable number of Malawians, a study showed that their participation rate in organized recreational and sports activities was very low. An expert anthropologist was called in to suggest a solution. After a short investigation he had the answer. Malawians, he said, were not interested in football like other nationalities. They were more interested in field hockey. If management would provide them with field hockey equipment, their participation rate would undoubtedly pick up. Management followed his advice and hockey was added to the list of recreational activities. In less than two weeks, there was a small riot involving mineworkers wielding field hockey sticks as clubs. The next day, field hockey was eliminated from the list of recreational activities.

As a last resort, before calling in the troops, a mine manager can call on the newly founded Liaison Department of the Chamber of Mines to negotiate directly with the workers. The head of the department has his office in Johannesburg and has associates located within easy reach of each major mining complex. All of these men are experienced personnel officers, and are fluent in at least one African language. In the event of a disturbance in a mine, it is their job to get there and try to control the conflict before it gets out of hand--presumably through direct negotiations with the workers. According to the twisted logic of the head officer, the liaison officers can act as totally impartial arbitrators in disputes between management and workers, since they work for the Chamber of Mines and not for any one mining company. (The Chamber is owned by and run for the benefit of its member) mining companies). All of these personnel officers go around with "bleepers" attached to their belts so that they are instantly able to respond to any call for help. A glimpse into how they really operate was provided in response to a question about their role in the riot at Impala Platinum Mine in 1976: "Oh, there was nothing we could do there; they had dug a trench to do some repairs outside the hostel and we couldn't even get an armored vehicle in."⁴¹

Another tactic to defuse worker discontent is to encourage "constructive" after-work activities. An Anglo American report on conditions in one of their gold mines found that after-work "release" activities took three main forms: drugs (alcohol and marijuana), affairs with town women and homosexuality.⁴² All three of these, but especially drinking, are

sources of conflict. It is no accident that most mining disturbances begin on weekends. Drunkenness among off-duty workers is a double-edged sword to management: it provides an escape for the worker which makes it easier for him to face the extremely harsh working and living conditions in the mines, but it also can lead to debilitation, fighting and riots. The government Committee of Inquiry stressed the importance of keeping the miners busy in their spare time:

*More profitable use should be made of entertainment facilities, such as more film shows, sports gatherings and cultural activities, e.g., singing which is an inborn gift of the Bantu should be encouraged as a group activity. . . Established churches should be encouraged to conduct more church services over the weekends and in general to devote more time to religion.*⁴³

In fact, a study carried out by a group of theological students from Lesotho suggests that the churches have been fulfilling the role desired of them by management:

*A mine in the W. Transvaal employs 9 black and 2 white ministers. . . All their sermons run as follows: "You should not strike because striking is an evil act. Everything is good here at this mine compared to other mines. Food is good, life as a whole is good, you get a lot of money, you get spiritual as well as material food. This you cannot find anywhere but here."*⁴⁴

Improved sports facilities, films and even television have all been experimented with--so far with only moderate results. A showing of the film *Jaws* at one compound drew only 10 out of 5,000 and one mining official estimated that less than 25% of the miners participate in recreational activities.⁴⁵

Management Response: Riot Control

While the official mining publications have been stressing the companies' search for a better understanding of workers' life styles, needs and grievances,⁴⁶ an entirely different form of response has been going on behind the scenes. A source who has worked for one of the mining companies reported the following innovations after a riot at his mine in 1975: all paving stones were removed to avoid their being used as missiles; for the same reason, the supplies of coal for the workers' stoves (each room of 20 men was equipped with a stove for cooking and heat) were fenced in and made secure; the grade of coal itself was changed so that the chunks would be smaller and therefore less dangerous; a strong room was built in each compound

so that hostel managers and threatened black staff could safely retreat in case of attack; a back-up water supply system was built and a twice daily check of water pressure introduced so that high pressure hoses could be used on rioting workers; the staff was provided with and trained in the use of rifles, dogs, batons and tear gas; a back-up communications system was installed; the liquor supply to the compound bar was replenished daily instead of weekly so that looters would only find limited supplies in the stores; regular riot control drills were instituted and contingency plans for coordinating actions with the local South African Police drawn up; obstacles to the free movement of armored vehicles were removed from the grounds; high intensity lighting, controllable only from outside the compound, was installed and lights were kept on all night in the hostel rooms as a matter of course already; trees which could possibly supply material for clubs were removed; and finally, search parties for dangerous weapons were introduced on a regular basis. A proposal to install remote controlled tear gas nozzles on the bar itself was rejected as a bit too outlandish.⁴⁷ A visit to a new showcase compound housing 4,000 workers revealed that the hostel blocks were arranged to form a polygon so that the entire compound could be easily sealed off, with entrance and exit only possible through one gate. The serving area of the dining hall--strategically located in the center of the compound--had parapets built up high along the inside walls. Ostensibly these were for washing the high windows. It was obvious, however, that a few armed men could survey and control the entire compound from these parapets in case of trouble.

Conclusion

"Faction-fights," strikes, and desertion have all increased in the South African mines since 1972. All these can and should be seen as forms of workers' struggles arising out of the basic conflict between miners and management over control of the production process--including wage levels and living conditions. The core response of the mining industry to these struggles has been a honing of repressive techniques. Workers' petty complaints are to be communicated better, so that they can be dealt with by management. With the aid of highly trained social scientists, the workers' desires and culture are studied so that new techniques can be adopted to keep the men occupied by trivia such as sports, films, or watered-down religion.⁴⁸ When these palliatives fail to contain and defuse workers' discontent, then ample preparations have been made for armed force to come into play.

Footnotes

1. South African Chamber Mines, *Annual Report, 1977*, (Johannesburg), p. 2.
2. Republic of South Africa, Department of Mines, *Mining Statistics, 1977*, (Pretoria: The Government Printer, 1978), Table 5.
3. Francis Wilson, *Labour in the South African Gold Mines, 1911-1969*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), pp. 20-21.
4. Republic of South Africa, *Mining Statistics, 1977*, Table 5; and South African Chamber of Mines, p. 25. The death rate for black miners was 1.46 per 1,000 as compared to 177 per 1,000 for whites.
5. South African Chamber of Mines, *Annual Reports, 1971 and 1977*, (Johannesburg).
6. *The Financial Mail*, November 6, 1977.
7. Anglo American Corporation, Industrial Relations Department, *The Perceptions and Behaviour Patterns of Black Miners on a Group Gold Mine*, (Johannesburg: Anglo American Corp., 1976), p. 21.
8. (Dunbar Moodie, ed.), *Another Blanket*, (Horison: Agency for Industrial Mission, 1976); Anglo American Corporation, Industrial Relations Dept., *The Perceptions and Behaviour Patterns of Black Mine-Workers on a Group Gold Mine*, (Johannesburg: Anglo American Corp., 1976); Patrick Pearson, "Authority and Control in a South African Goldmine Compound", (Johannesburg: University of Witwatersrand African Studies Institute, 1976), mimeograph; Robert J. Gordon, *Mines, Masters, and Migrants*, (Johannesburg, Ravan Press, 1977); and an as yet unpublished study carried out by the University College of Swaziland, "Migrant Labour on the South African Gold Mines: Investigation into Black Worker Conditions and Attitudes", (Kwaluseni: University College of Swaziland, 1977, mimeograph).
9. Government of South Africa, *Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee of Inquiry into Riots on Mines in the Republic of South Africa, 1976*, unpublished.
10. *The South African Labour Bulletin* has had numerous articles on "rediscovered" workers' struggles in South Africa. See, for example, Sean Moroney, "Mine Workers' Protest on the

Witwatersrand, 1901-1912", *South African Labour Bulletin*, 3. 5, April, 1976.

11. Eddie Webster, "Background to the Supply and Control of Labour on South African Gold Mines", United Nations Unit on Apartheid, New York, 1975, p. 6.
12. Government of South Africa, *Ibid.*, p. 7. The Committee of Inquiry relied heavily on the explanations offered by conservative South African ethnologists whose work has come to be known in South Africa as "popular anthropology". For a critique of this school see David Webster, "A Review of Some Popular Anthropological Approaches to Understanding Black Workers", *South African Labour Bulletin*, 3, 1, 1977.
13. D. Horner and A. Kooy, "Conflict on the South African Mines, 1972-1976", Southern African Labour and Development Research Unit, Working Paper, Cape Town, 1976.
14. The author interviewed over 135 mineworkers at a recruiting depot in southeastern Botswana in November and December, 1977. Each interview took approximately 1 hour and covered a wide range of topics.
15. Botswana first learned that 2 citizens had been killed from radio reports. The government was officially informed by the mine company 3 company days after the shootings.
16. Government of South Africa, *Ibid.*, p. 43.
17. Anglo American Corp., *Ibid.*, p. 26.
18. That this is a longstanding inclination is demonstrated by the case of the Jagersfontein riots of 1914 which were falsely attributed to inter-tribal fighting. See T. Ranger, "Faction Fighting, Race Consciousness, and Worker Consciousness: A Note on the Jagersfontein Riots of 1914", *South African Labour Bulletin*, 4, 5, September 1978.
19. See Webster, *Ibid.*, p. 8 for a discussion of industrial sabotage in the mines.
20. Horner and Kooy, *Ibid.*, p. 8.
21. A good summary of various explanations is found in Horner and Kooy, *Ibid.*, pp. 19-28.
22. Government of South Africa, *Ibid.*, p. 32.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 33.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 33.
25. *Rand Daily Mail*, February 2, 1977.
26. Anglo American Corp., *Ibid.*, p. 29.
27. The number of men recruited at Kemberley jumped from 88 in 1974 to 1,716 in 1976. The Pretoria area offices, which were only established in 1975-1976, recruited 3,140 men in 1976. (source: Mine Labour Organizations' records, Mafeking).
28. Government of South Africa, *Ibid.*, pp. 11-12, 39.
29. Andrew Prior, "Managerial Ideology: A Case Study of an Incident on a South African Gold Mine, 13th August 1975", *South African Labour Bulletin*, 3, 8, October 1977.
30. Colin Bundy, "The Abolishion (sic) of the Masters and Servants Act", *South African Labour Bulletin*, 2, 1, May-June 1975, argues this nicely, although he overlooks the effect of the repeal on black miners.
31. *Rand Daily Mail*, June 14, 1977.
32. *Rand Daily Mail*, Sept. 11, 1977.
33. By April 1977, 52% of the black labor force in the mines was from South Africa (including the Transkei) as compared to 20% in 1973.
34. *The World*, June 2, 1977, ran a front page story describing the strike with a follow-up story on June 3, 1977. A 6% wage "increase" was later announced for black mineworkers. This amounted to a net decrease in real wages from the year before.
35. Anglo American Corp., *Ibid.*, p. 34.
36. *Another Blanket*, *Ibid.*, p. 34.
37. This was the conclusion drawn in the Anglo American study. See Anglo American Corp., *Ibid.*, p. 34.
38. *The World*, June 2, 1977.
39. P. A. McAllister, "Liaison-Type Committees in the Gold Mining Industry", Chamber of Mines Research Organization, Working Paper, Johannesburg, 1975, p. 113.

40. *Ibid.*, pp. 23, i.
41. Author's interview with South African Chamber of Mines Liaison Officer, August 9, 1977.
42. Anglo American Corp., *Ibid.*, p. 21.
43. Government of South Africa, *Ibid.*, pp. 45-6.
44. *Another Blanket*, *Ibid.*, p. 21.
45. University College of Swaziland, *Ibid.*, p. 58.
46. See, for example, A. C. Fleischer, "New Image of Mining", *Mining Survey*, No. 77, 1975. Fleischer is the General Manager of the Mine Labour Organizations -- the recruiting arm of the Chamber of Mines. *Mining Survey* is the glossy promotional magazine of the Chamber of Mines.
47. Most of these innovations were suggested in the government Committee of Inquiry's report. See Government of South Africa, *Ibid.*, pp. 41-44.
48. It is to the credit of the established churches that the ecumenical research project -- of which *Another Blanket*, *Ibid.*, is the interim report -- amounts to a strong condemnation of the whole migrant labor system in South Africa, and of any religious collaboration in its maintenance.