

Violence on the mines



The horrifying violence that has become part of our daily lives is now spilling over into the mines.

This month twelve miners were killed by vigilantes at the Hlobane and Durban Navigation Collieries in Northern Natal.

And it appears that mine management is playing the same role as the government - protecting the vigilantes at the expense of thousands of workers.

At Hlobane, a kombi-load of weapons was delivered by strangers to one of the hostels. Following the delivery, a group of "traditional dancers" arrived at the mine. As Inkatha members had begun to hold meetings at the hostel, mineworkers were suspicious.

However management assured workers that the group were genuine traditional dancers who were there to take part in a competition. To our knowledge, no competition ever took place.

Barely two days later residents of the Zulu-speaking hostel were forced to arm themselves with pangas, axes, guns, spears and knobkerries.

They were told to attack the other hostels. Some of the Zulu-speaking miners who refused to take part in the attack were hacked to death.

A random mass slaughter followed. Workers were attacked and killed in their sleep. Eleven miners died. More than sixty were injured.

About 800 workers were forced to return to their homes in the Transkei and Ciskei.

Throughout the slaughter, the heavily armed mine security officials took no

action against the killers.

WHY IS MANAGEMENT PROTECTING THE VIGILANTES?

Because it suits management to do so. As NUM we have won many victories. We have forced management to raise wages and improve working conditions.

With the falling price of gold, management is trying to protect its profits as much as possible.

By creating chaos and confusion on the mines, it can reinforce the perceptions of the press and the white community that "everywhere the Xhosas are fighting the Zulus" and that the problem is a "tribal" one.

WHAT IS THE REAL TRUTH?

The real truth is that violence on the mines is a quick way for management to retrench workers.

By creating confusion, management is trying to roll back the gains we have made. Workers become scattered. Fear and mistrust develops. Union meetings no longer take place.

The hardwon unity we have built up over many years is being systematically destroyed.

Just as the government is trying to destabilise communities, so management is trying to DESTABILISE WORKER UNITY.

WHAT IS OUR ROLE?

Our first role is to understand and make known THE REAL TRUTH.

We cannot allow management or the government or the press to get away with misleading our people.

We know that the violence is not simply "black on black".

Our years of struggle as COSATU have shown that we build worker unity, we do not divide workers.

Organisers and Shaft Stewards need to make the truth known in every union meeting and in the communities in which they live.

Secondly, we need to organise ourselves. We need to:

- Form self-defence committees;
- Be careful of rumour-mongers & trouble-makers;
- Observe carefully the movements and activities of security forces;
- Observe any strangers on mine premises;
- Observe any unauthorised weapons in hostels & compounds;
- Communicate information to our union structures;
- Spread the message of unity to all mineworkers, irrespective of differences of ethnic origin or language.

Now is the time to build unity as never before.

Now is the time to stand up and say we will not be used in these killing sprees.

We will not give up the fight for a democratic and non-racial South Africa!

Mine Apartheid



A major breakthrough in racial discrimination negotiations is expected soon after NUM and the Chamber of Mines agreed on the drafting of an ANTI-RACIAL DISCRIMINATION CHARTER (ARDC).

The ARDC will be a document outlining non-racial principles that will govern race relations in the mining industry. The Charter will be followed by a concrete programme of action to eliminate racial discrimination.

These developments come after seven years of struggle by NUM to abolish racial discrimination in the mining industry.

NUM's struggle against mine apartheid received a major boost when the Mass Democratic Movement launched its Defiance Campaign last year.

Mineworkers took the lead in defying racially-segregated facilities. Partial victories were won in certain mines.

However up until now the Chamber has been reluctant to eliminate mine apartheid by hiding behind empty words like "differentiation based on seniority".

It was not until NUM declared a dispute this month that the Chamber showed a commitment to address the problem.

For black mineworkers the time for the protection of white privileges is long overdue. We have waited for more than 300 years for the equality of rights and opportunities in all spheres of life.

There can be no turning back. NUM is committed to a mining industry without ANY form of discrimination.