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The legal abolition of racial discrimination and its aftermath : The case of Swaziland, 1945-1973

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Chapter Seven

An Egg on Government's Face: Racial Discrimination and the 1962 / 3 Industrial Strikes.[1]

7. 0 Introduction.

This chapter analyzes the impact of the anti - discriminatory legislation of 1962 on Swaziland's society. This legislation, as has been shown in the previous chapter was aimed at outlawing discrimination in Swaziland. Specifically, the chapter will explore the reaction of workers in the country following the promulgation of the legislation.

One key development which followed the passage of the 1962 legislation clearly embodied dissatisfaction with its shortcomings. This dissatisfaction manifested itself through the outbreak of industrial and urban strikes across the country. These strikes commenced towards the end of 1962 and were virtually suppressed by mid - 1963 with the aid external military intervention. The extent to which anti-colonial politics fed into this unrest is also explored in an attempt to understand the relationship between labour and politics around this time and the way this interfaced with the issue of racial discrimination.

In the post - World War II period the character of the workforce in Swaziland underwent various changes.[2] These changes included an increase in the number of persons engaged in wage employment, a growing worker consciousness and the development of trade unionism. In 1963 the labour force from different sectors in the country was estimated at 21 000. This was a marked difference compared to the pre - war years. Instead of being an exclusive male domain wage employment after the war had begun to include women as well as children. The post - war developmentalist policy in Swaziland had now led to

[1]Although other scholars have discussed these strikes, they have not sharply focussed on the theme of discrimination and race relations, as I attempt.

[2]For a discussion on the character of labour around this time, see, for example, G. S. Kunene, "British Colonial Policy in Swaziland, 1920-1960", PhD Thesis, York University, 1992, pp. 360 - 408.

a bigger wage labour force. This factor played a pivotable role in the reconfiguration of labour relations during this period.

A new worker consciousness emerged pace with these developments. In this respect, Hamilton Simelane has noted that, "the growth and expansion of employment opportunities in Swaziland after the war gave rise to worker consciousness that in turn led to new forms of labour organisation".[3] In addition to the sizeable labour force, Simelane has cited the compound system, the recruitment of educated Swazi and job specialization as some factors that led to new forms of labour organization.

The strikes that plagued Swaziland in 1962 and 1963 owed their birth to the new forms of labour organisation that had developed in the post - war period. Strike action is one area of labour history that has received serious attention from some scholars. These scholars have among other things argued that workers undertook strike action because they were conscious of themselves as an exploited labouring class. For instance, in his analysis of strike action among Ghanaian workers Jeff Crisp has argued that, "workers were, therefore, beginning to identify themselves as an occupational community with common interests and enemies. Moreover, they were beginning to express their collective identity in the language of class and conflict".[4] This was the case, it is argued, because worker consciousness emerges early in the interaction between the two. Charles van Onselen argued that, "from the earliest years of capital intensive industry Africans had a well-developed and demonstrable self-awareness of their position as exploited workers".[5] He uses impressive data to demonstrate the development of worker consciousness through strike action. His case studies reveal that low wages and unsatisfactory working conditions were prominent reasons which prompted workers to engage in strike action.

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[3]H. S. Simelane, *Colonialism and Economic Change in Swaziland, 1940 - 1960*(Manzini : Jan Publishing Centre, 2003), p. 175.

[4]J. Crisp, *The Story of an African Working Class : Ghanaian Miners' Struggles, 1870 - 1980*(London : Zed Press, 1984), p. 65.

[5]C. van Onselen, "Worker Consciousness in Black Miners : Southern Rhodesia, 1900 - 1920", in I. R. Phimister and C. van Onselen, *Studies in the History of Mine Labour in Colonial Zimbabwe* (Gwelo : Mambo Press, 1978), p. 2.

van Onselen's observation is echoed by Ian R. Phimister whose view of "worker consciousness" is broad enough to include worker awareness of trading opportunities. The views postulated by these scholars have certainly contributed immensely in the analysis of African labour history. Through data accumulated by these scholars and their emphasis on African agency we are able to learn more about African responses in the context of the colonial industry.

In the case of South Africa, Iris Berger has explored labour history to show how gender and race interacted to shape class formation in the context of the South African politics of racialism.[6] Focussing on different industries from the early years of the twentieth century to the 1980 she reveals how the conditions under which black men and women entered the industrial arena were shaped by gender ideology and racialism. She demonstrates the complexity through which the industrialisation of the country passed. Though Berger's argument has its shortcomings she has however, succeeded in identifying some of the sites through which the solidarity of workers was weaved. Above, all she is able to identify the broader processes that united the South African working class over time.

The main objective of this chapter is to argue that worker consciousness does not simply take place within the labour - capital dialectic but also operates within a broad and complex politico-socio-economic structure. The chapter moves beyond the labour-capital dialectic to project the view that worker consciousness and indeed labour history can be more fully analysed as a broader process of transformation. It argues that African workers in Swaziland went on strike largely because they were reacting to discriminatory policies and practices with which they were confronted at the workplace. When they undertook strike action it was not only because they were fighting exploitation by capital but they were also resisting the unequal race relations imposed by the industrial and colonial regimes. By engaging in strike action they were expressing their refusal to conform to the subordinate position to which they were being subjected by these regimes.

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[6]I. Berger, *Threads of Solidarity: Women in South African Industry, 1900 - 1980*(Bloomington : Indiana University Press, 1992).

This is a dimension that needs to be explored further in the labour relations of Southern Africa.

7. 1 Trade Unionism

Even though worker consciousness had grown considerably by the beginning of the 1960s, trade union activity lagged behind. Since 1942 the Trade Unions and Trade Disputes Proclamation provided for the registration of Trade Unions in Swaziland. Kunene observed that, "Rather than as a genuine measure for the promotion of trade unions, this legislation was introduced as a condition for receiving aid from the Colonial Development and Welfare Fund and therefore did not safeguard the interests of workers".[7] The proclamation was amended in 1963. Under the 1963 proclamation "Strikes and lockouts are not permitted until three weeks have lapsed after the dispute in question has been reported to the Labour Commissioner".[8] In essence, the promulgation of the legislation in 1942 reflected changes taking place in British colonial policy. Paul Kelemen has recently revealed that

> Under Pressure from some Labour MPs, the British government included a clause, in the 1940 Colonial Development and Welfare Act, stipulating that no territory might receive aid under its provisions unless it had in force legislation protecting the rights of trade unions.[9]

Kelemen has also explained that

> Labour's engagement in trade union building ... was based on the view that economic and welfare improvements required moulding Africans into a disciplined and efficient workforce and that this, in turn required the institutions which could integrate the African population into the colonial order.[10]

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[7]G. S. Kunene, "British Colonial Policy...", p. 399.

[8]Great Britain*, Swaziland Annual Report*(London : Her Majesty's Stationery Services, 1960), p. 26.

[9]P. Kelemen, "Modernising colonialism: The British Labour Movement and Africa", *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* vol. 34, no. 2 June 2006, p. 228.

[10]*Ibid.* , p. 32.

The Labour Government assumed power in 1945 and provided a favourable environment for the implementation of its welfare policies in Africa. During the next five years trade union and political activities grew in the continent. It would, however, appear that while in other colonial territories in Africa trade unions flourished without any problem, in Swaziland they were only a feature of the legislative realm. As late as 1960 the Swaziland colonial report noted that, "there are no Trade Unions in Swaziland".[11] Cooper[12] has noted that elsewhere in Africa British colonial authorities tried to depoliticise labour by allowing registered trade unions. However, in Swaziland this was not the case; trade unions were demonised and dismissed as a foreign concept.

Contrary to the cases presented by Cooper, whereby, post - war colonial policy tended to encourage trade unions, the unionization of labour in colonial Swaziland was frustrated by the lack of support from colonial officials, employers and the indigenous Swazi leadership. The Labour Advisor to the Secretary of State, G. Foggon noted during a visit to the country in 1958 that, "employers more recently established in Swaziland are readier to attempt a more flexible and accommodating line towards trade unionism and worker representation than either the traditional African authorities or the long established European employer".[13] In this respect, Simelane has observed that

> Swazi workers took a long time to organise themselves into unions. This was because those who held political power were against the establishment of trade unions in the country. This was true of the employers whose views were expressed through the European Advisory Council, and the indigenous Swazi leadership that tended to see issues through the spectacles of the owners of capital.[14]

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[11]Great Britan, *Swaziland Annual Report*(London : Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1960), p. 14.

[12]F. Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society: The Labour Question in French and British Africa*, (Cambridge: CUP, 1996).

[13]Swaziland Government, Report of the Committee of Enquiry into Unrest in Swaziland, 25th June - 8th July 1963, Extract from Notes Made By G. Foggon, ESQ. , Labour Adviser to The Secretary of State on His Visit to Swaziland, p. 54.

[14]Simelane, *Colonialism,* pp. 182 - 183.

Among contemporary observers the Swazi traditional leadership, for example, was well known for its hostility towards trade unions. Accordingly, a document of the African Bureau, observed that

> Hostility to 'foreign' ideas reveals itself also in the National Council's attitude to the trade unions. Like the South African Government, it regards them as virtual centres of subversion. It frowns not too subtly on the activities of the ICFTU in the Protectorate and has worked out an elaborate arrangement with some of the largest employers of Swazi labour which enables it to recommend handpicked head men to liaise between the managements and the workers in the compounds.[15]

Up to the early 1960s African Consultative Committees (which were made up of appointees by the monarchy and employers) were the main bodies meant to deal with conflict between labour and employees in the country. About these committees Hamilton Simelane has observed that, "In reality they were arms of the company designed to put management in a better position to diffuse protests and to forestall worker organisation".[16] This point was put across more clearly at the time by the first Trade Union in Swaziland when it called upon the management of Usuthu Pulp to dissolve the committee, "as that body is unrepresentative of workers' point of view and aspirations".[17] The Union also accused it of, "thwarting the workers' legitimate aspirations to be represented by a free democratic trade union organisation".[18]

Employers and government officials who were aware of official colonial policy seemed to have adapted to local conditions and discouraged the Trade Union movement. At the end of 1960 the Labour Officer, for example, advised employers that, "the employment of an Nduna who will seek out complaints among the men and bring them to the attention

[15]African Bureau Special Correspondent, Apartheid Challenge to British Policy in Swaziland 1964, (Uniswa / Swaziana Section) and see also, TOS, "Trade Unions", 13 March, 1964.

[16]Simelane, *Colonialism*, p. 179.

[17]SNA, File 3402 / 4 II, Labour - Industrial Relations, Letter from the General Secretary of Swaziland Pulp and Timber's Union to the Management of Usuthu Pulp Company, 1 June, 1963(Resolution number 11).

[18]*Ibid.*

of management, is regarded as essential".[19]

Briefing contractors on labour conditions in 1960 the Labour Officer also expressed the notion that, "a Swazi worker seldom complains if he has a grievance: he simply packs and goes home".[20] However, such an attitude was soon to give way to formal labour organisation as the post-War employment opportunities had created a sizeable population which depended largely on wage labour. This was soon to lead to a kind of labour organisation and socialisation unseen in the pre-War era. The type of worker produced by this environment was totally different from the stereotype presented by the Labour Officer in his briefing to contractors in Swaziland.

The absence of trade unions in the country hugely undermined the collective bargaining capacity of workers. The *ndvuna* system which had taken the place of workers' organisation was in reality ineffective as a mechanism for worker representation. In his 1960 report on labour legislation Catchpole observed that, "There are no organisations of workers and the task of representing complaints and grievances to employers which is normally the function of trade unions, is undertaken by *ndvunas* appointed by the Swazi National Council and allocated to particular employers".[21] Nomthetho Simelane observed "that although *Tindvuna* assumed the role of trade unions or workers' organisations they fell short of representing the interests of the working class".[22] The *Tindvuna* not only proved ineffective in improving working conditions but were viewed by most workers as collaborators with the various capitalist concerns. As Potholm put it:

[19]SNA, File 3402 II , Labour Industrial– General, Brief For Swazi Contractors– Swazi Labour by Labour Officer, 22 December, 1960.

[20]*Ibid.*

[21]F. C. Catchpole, *Report on Labour Legislation in Swaziland*, p. 3.

[22]N. Simelane, Evolving Role and Status of Trade Unions in Swaziland (A Paper Read at the International Conference on Trade Unions and National Development in Southern Africa, 27th -31st January, 1981), p. 2.

> The *Tindvuna* (headmen), as representatives of the Ngwenyama (king) were supposed to act as liaison personnel between the industrial concerns an their workers, but they as a group, were easily co-opted by the management and opposed the formation of *bona fide* trade unions which would have reduced their power.[23]

The absence of workers' unions in Swaziland did not mean that the articulation of workers' aspirations was permanently blocked. The frustration faced by workers in the articulation of their interests, aspirations and demands was to finally give way when workers ventilated their long harboured concerns through the strikes in 1962 / 3. As Kunene has pointed out in this regard, "the frustration of the workers and lack of proper channels for redressing their grievances led to various strikes and 'disturbances' in the 1960s, as Swazi employees sought to articulate the discontent with the general working conditions".[24] He further observed that, "On the whole, the strikes were a culmination of the continuous conflict between labour and capital which had intensified with the establishment of the major industrial enterprises in the post-war period and the increasing demand of cheap labour from the Native Areas".[25] In the absence of formal channels, under this environment, workers now sought to use every available means to convey their dissatisfaction about the conditions under which they lived and worked.

Despite legislation that permitted the formation of trade unions that had existed in Swaziland since 1942 it was not until the arrival of officials in the late 1950s and early 1960s, who had worked in other British colonies that the formation of trade unions began to be encouraged. Michael Farlie, the Secretary for Social and Political Affairs was particularly noted for his role in encouraging the formation of trade unions. In 1962 the first trade unions in Swaziland were formed. These included the Building Workers Union in Manzini and the Timber Workers Union at Usuthu Pulp in Bhunya. In his subsequent report on the strikes, the Government Labour Officer, John Wilson

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[23]C. P. Potholm, *Swaziland : The Dynamics of Political Modernisation* (Berkeley : University of California Press, 1972), p. 92.

[24]G. S. Kunene, "British Colonial Policy ..." p. 403.

[25]*Ibid.* , p. 406.

maintained that, "The future of industrial relations depends on the growth of strong and independent workers' organisations".[26] The progressive attitude that government had now adopted about trade unions did not mean that the notion that agents of the monarchy had an important role to play in labour relations had completely vanished. During a 1965 Legislative Council session, Prince Masitsela, for example, asked, "To what extent does Government regard the National Council as the representative of the labour force in Swaziland?".[27] The Chief Secretary Arthur Long replied saying,

> The Government recognises the Swazi National Council as the body representing the Swazi nation. The Government is not aware that the Swazi National Council purports to be a specialised agency for dealing with the affairs of the labour force in Swaziland which includes a considerable number of expatriates and alien employees.[28]

Masitsela queried the Chief Secretary on his answer arguing that there had been references to the SNC by Government when labour issues were deliberated. To this the Chief Secretary maintained his stance, pointing out that

> I am quite sure that on certain labour matters having a large effect on the Swazi people it would not seem unreasonable for the Government to consult the Swazi nation in order to seek their advice and guidance. This does not imply, in my view, the recognition of the Swazi National Council as representative of the whole labour force in Swaziland.[29]

In his capacity as the Secretary for External Affairs and Labour, Michael Fairlie succeeded after an extended debate to persuade the Legislative Council to pass the Trade Unions and Employers' Organisations Bill in 1967. During the session Farlie put across a very strong case for the recognition of trade unions, their right to collective bargaining and to strike. Concerning the right to strike he submitted the case that

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[26]Times of Swaziland (hereafter, TOS), "Labour Report: Last Years Strike, Mood of Self-Assertion", 17 July, 1964.

[27]UWL / William Cullen Africana Library, Government Publications, Swaziland Legislative Council: Official Report of the Debates 22 October, 1965, p. 93.

[28]*Ibid*.

[29]*Ibid.* , p. 94.

> If negotiations fail, trade unions sometimes request their members to stop work. This is called a strike and ought only to be used when all argument and negotiation have proved fruitless. It is sometimes said in this country that strikes are wrong and everything can be solved by discussion alone. I do not think it is true because in the course of negotiation between workers and employers deadlocks sometimes arise and then talk is no avail. It is at this point that a strike is sometimes called by a union with the object of compelling the employers to make concessions.[30]

Some Council members such as Prince Masitsela and Frank Mbelu expressed reservations on the right to strike arguing that it was contrary to Swazi custom and often led to violence. In this regard Masitsela maintained that, "if all efforts failed it is advisable for whosoever is not happy to leave, if he finds that he cannot keep up with the conditions of employment".[31] Masitsela's opinion was probably echoing Sobhuza's position and that of the SNC.[32] The passage of the bill appears to have given the registration of trade unions very little impetus. In 1967 Farlie mentioned that, "nine trade unions are registered in Swaziland".[33] Equally Trade union activity also does not appear to have made any major strides during this period. Lack of experience and training tended to largely undermine the ability of trade union leaders to organise workers effectively.

Perhaps what might have also contributed to Swaziland's being precluded from this mainline colonial position was the change that occurred in the way Swaziland was administered after the South Africa Act of 1909. This Act by which the Union of South

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[30]UWL / William Cullen Africana Library, Government Publications, Swaziland Legislative Council: Official Report of the Debates, 3 March, 1967, p. 94.

[31]*Ibid.* , p. 154.

[32]See, TOS, "Ngwenyama on Strikes: Discussion with Employees", 29 March, 1963.

[33]UWL / William Cullen Africana Library, Government Publications, Swaziland Legislative Council: Official Report of the Debates, 3 March, 1967, p. 94. For the number of registered trade unions, also, see, TOS, "Trade Unions", 13 March, 1964.

Africa was brought into existence provided for the eventual incorporation of Bechuanaland, Basutoland and Swaziland subject to the consent of the inhabitants of those territories and debate in the British Parliament. The officers who conducted the Inquiry into the unrest in Swaziland noted that, "The South African Act of 1909 made provision for the eventual transfer of Swaziland to South Africa and the Territory was subsequently placed under the control of the Commonwealth Relations Office. This isolated it from the main current of colonial policy".[34] This claim may be a clue behind Swaziland's successful avoidance of the main trend in colonial policy with regard to the Trade Union movement. Apart from these developments, the successful resilience to trade unions in Swaziland was largely a product of the strong position held by the Swazi indigenous rulers within the colonial machinery. Since the 1940s the monarchy had achieved remarkable progress in exercising its influence over the large bulk of the Swazi population in the rural countryside. This influence also translated into the labour relations of the country. The strength of the traditional leaders was seen among other things when their collaboration was needed in the implementation of colonial policy.[35] Since the monarchy desired to exercise its influence in the industrial relations of the country, it perceived the establishment of trade unions as a threat to its interests; hence, the unabated opposition to their establishment.

7. 2 Racial Discrimination at the Workplace

When the Swaziland government promulgated the Race Relations Act of 1962 it claimed that the question of racial discrimination had been decisively dealt with in the country. It appears that the government believed that through mere legislation discriminatory policies and practices would cease in the country. This view may have been influenced by the colonial administration's long held attitude that the country enjoyed harmonious race relations. The passage of the anti - discriminatory legislation might have therefore been viewed by the administration as simply a symbolical act. While it may have served

[34]Swaziland Government, Report of the Committee of Enquiry into Unrest in Swaziland, 25th June-8th July 1963, p. 28. However, when the talks for independence began Swaziland together Basutoland and Bechuanaland was transferred back to the Colonial Office.

[35]For the importance of the monarchy with regard to implementing land and agricultural policies, see, Simelane, *Colonialism*, pp. 44-99.

to portray a good image about the country in certain quarters, the idea that harmony existed between the main races was a distortion of reality in certain respects. At its best the thesis of "racial harmony" might have carried some weight in relation to Swazi people who were living in the rural countryside.

For most the colonial period a majority of the Swazi who lived in the countryside rarely came into contact with whites. It was probably against this background that Lomcebo Dlamini, a guest writer for the *Times of Swaziland* testified that, "When I was growing up I had no concept of race and colour and I am saddened today when I see it exaggerated to proportions resembling that of slavery or apartheid".[36] Similarly, Reverend Paulos Manzini Simelane who grew up as a boy on the outskirts of Mankayane also revealed that, "When we were growing up in the 1950s we rarely came across white people. If by any chance we saw a white person we would run to hide in the nearby bush".[37] This behaviour may have been influenced by prevalent stereotypes about whites. Hilda Kuper explains that

> A few stories characterise the Europeans as greedy for cheap workers irrespective of the cost of life and happiness. I heard many legends of Europeans kidnapping little boys and taking them far to work for them. As a result, when travellers stop their cars in isolated areas to ask herd boys the way, these often, scurry off in terror and hide in the grass.[38]

The above illustration emphasises the limited nature of interaction between whites and Swazi people living in the countryside during the colonial era. When I asked Anderson Nxumalo who grew up in northern Swaziland whether he had personally felt discriminated in his past life, he maintained that, "Not in Swaziland but in South Africa".[39] The reality as suggested by the above testimonies was that interactions

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[36]Lomcebo Dlamini (Guest Writer),TOS Sunday, "Swotting in Swaziland : The Country is Changing", 30 January, 2005.

[37]Interview, Reverend Paulos Manzini Simelane, Mankayane- Kadeda, 20 September, 2005.

[38]H. Kuper, *The Uniform of Colour : A Study of White-Black Relationships in Swaziland*(Johannesburg : Witwatersrand University Press, 1947), p. 35.

between whites and a large bulk of Swazi people in the country were rare. The notion of "racial harmony" partly emanates from this background. However, to simply claim that just because the rural Swazi experienced limited interaction with whites they were, therefore, exempt from racial discrimination may be a misplaced argument. This is especially so in particular when we put into consideration the nature of institutionalised discrimination. Institutionalised discrimination tends to cut across all the structures and fibres of a society. Being unaware of this type of discriminatory mechanism may have meant the missing of the bigger picture on the part of the rural Swazi population.

Evidence suggests that the Swazi who interacted with whites at the workplace were the ones who were most exposed to racial discrimination on a day to day basis. The idea of "racial harmony" failed to stand the test of time when workers challenged discriminatory policies and practices at the workplace during the 1962 / 3 country wide strikes. The notion that relations between blacks and whites were overwhelmingly harmonious was soon to prove a fallacy largely because the anti - discriminatory legislation was nowhere near adequate to addressing the concerns of the ordinary Swazi who were exposed to discrimination most directly, collectively and continuously in the workplace. As Kunene has maintained that, "Labour exploitation was thus manifest in its most blatant forms such as the payment of bachelor wages, the use of the task system, the provision of poor food rations and deplorable housing conditions".[40] At the centre of this exploitation were racial injustices of all sorts.

Similarly, relations between blacks and whites in early colonial Zambia (Northern Rhodesia) are usually portrayed, as having been benevolent.[41] In the earlier period of interaction between the two races blacks occasionally met whites as colonial administrators and missionaries. However, the discovery of copper in the 1920s attracted whites, mainly from South Africa to the central part of the country. For a variety of

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[39]Interview, Anderson Nxumalo, Manzini, Coates Valley, 14 November, 2005.
[40]Kunene, "British Colonial Policy ...", p. 406.

[41]See, for example, Zambia's Central Race Relations Advisory Committee, Annual Report, 1957-1962, (Wits University Library, Government Publications), R. Hall, *Zambia, 1890 - 1964: The Colonial Period* (London: Longman, 1976), especially the postscript, pp. 190 - 194, and K. K. Virmani, *Zambia: The Dawn of Freedom* (Delhi: Kalinga Publications, 1989).

reasons, the British had never developed Zambia as much as Zimbabwe, thus, only a few white colonials had come to settle in that colony. The relations that developed between blacks and whites along the copper belt were characterised by intense discrimination and segregation compared to the rest of the country. This situation led to serious industrial disturbances in the 1930s and 1940s.[42]

Summing up the prevalent pattern in the 1950s and 1960s in Swaziland's industrial centres, Arthur Khoza noted that

> Racialism in the work place; You would find that there were jobs specifically reserved for whites. Blacks would not feature in such jobs. It was the same thing with regard to wages; there was a white wage and a black wage. It was not a matter of equal pay for equal work. Also, residential areas were divided along racial lines. The Havelock Mine was a typical area. In such places dogs owned by whites were trained to bite blacks. Usuthu Pulp: As you drove up to Mhlambanyatsi which was a white area with its own club. There was another area known to the Swazi as Sigaba which was reserved for whites. As you proceeded with the road, on the left there were black locations, one known as Bhunya and another as Manyaleni. The division of living areas according to one's race was prevalent in Swaziland. In places such as Ubombo similar divisions were found. What you must note is that there was no legislation promoting racialism in many spheres, it was practice, part of the policy.[43]

Colisile Nhleko,[44] similarly concluded that the housing policy of Peak Timbers company in the northern part of Swaziland, was discriminatory towards its black workers. The failure by the legislation to curb the discriminatory practices experienced by African workers at their respective workplaces meant they had to employ other tactics to deal

[42]For a discussion of the situation at the Copper belt, See, C. Perrings, "Consciousness ...".

[43]Interview, Arthur Khoza, Mbabane–Selection Park, 18 January, 2005. In fact Khoza made this observation immediately after the main interview as he felt I could have missed a very crucial aspect of Swaziland's race relations.

[44]C. Nhleko, "Labour Relations at Peak Timbers, 1949 - 1990", B. A. Thesis, University of Swaziland, 1995.

with the problem. As it turned out, workers in most parts of the country staged a series of strikes in an attempt to draw the stakeholders' attention to their plight.

7. 3 The 1962 / 1963 Strikes

Frederick Cooper[45] has explored the labour question in British and French colonial Africa from the 1930s when the labour question began being posed by colonial officials to the late 1950s when decolonization was underway. The theme that Cooper explores can be broadly applied to Swaziland's context though three fundamental differences are discernable in the issues involved.

First, while the strikes and anti - colonial movements Cooper discusses in Kenya, the Gold Coast and the Ivory Coast took place in the 1940s and 1950s, in Swaziland's case, they occurred in the 1960s. However, there is a sense in which Swaziland derived inspiration from these developments. Some of Swaziland's nationalist leaders for example, attended the All African people's Conference in Ghana in 1958 and other anti-colonial conferences, and upon return expressed confidence in the tactics used to execute the struggle for decolonization in other African counties such as Ghana. A commentary around the time observed of the SPP's most influential leaders that, "Mr. Nquku and Dr. Zwane are in the habit of running in and out of Accra".[46] It also concluded that, "Ghana has a fixed ideal toward which she is moving Swaziland: the Pan - Africanist State".[47] Second, while in the contexts that Cooper discusses trade unions were encouraged in Swaziland they were not. Third, while the strikes that Cooper discusses received overwhelming support from local African politicians, in Swaziland they did not. This chapter will not only explore the manner in which these strikes occurred but will also

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[45]F. Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society : The Labour Question in French and British Africa* (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1996).

[46]UWL / William Cullen Africana Library, Historical Papers / AD 1947 / 47. 4 . 6. 6, Swaziland Miscellaneous, "Significant Currents in Swaziland's Political Life", (by Ernest Shongwe, undated, but the contents suggest it was written in 1963), p. ix.

[47]*Ibid.*

pay particular attention to the nature of labour / politics collaboration during the 1962 / 3 strikes. Over the course of this period Swaziland was plagued by a series of industrial strikes as well urban demonstrations. These occurrences reduced the country to disorder in a number of major industrial and urban places including Big Bend, Piggs Peak, Mbabane and Havelock Mine. The major strikes in 1962 and1963 occurred as follows;

Table 3: Places and Dates of the 1962 / 3 Strikes

Name of Company / Area	**Duration of Strike**
1.Usuthu Pulp Company Strike	6 April 1962
2.African Railway Construction Workers' Strike	28 February 1963
3.Big Bend, Ubombo Ranch Workers' Strike	10 March 1963 – 20 March 1963
4.Peak Timbers Company Workers' Strike	29 March 1963 – 7 April 1963
5.Havelock Asbestos Mine Workers' Strike	20 May 1963 – 17 June 19663
6.Mbabane Urban and Workers' Strike	10 June 1963 – 14 June 1963
7.Big Bend, Ubombo Ranch Workers' Strike	12 June 1963 – 20 June 1963

Sources: Swaziland Annual Report, 1963, P. 4 and TOS, "Last Year's Strikes: Mood of Self-Assertion", 17 July, 1964.

7. 4 Usuthu Pulp Company Strike

Hardly a month after the promulgation of the Race Relations Act of 1962 the first worker's strike action by unionised labour was witnessed in Swaziland. This strike was organised by the Usuthu Pulp and Timber's Union. This was the first registered trade union in the country. One of the significant things about this strike was that the workers' grievances indicated a concern about discriminatory practices and policies in the operations of the Usuthu Pulp Company. On 6 April 1962 about 800 African industrial workers at the company went on strike. Simelane has observed that, "The grievances put forward included wage discrepancies between European and African workers, un negotiated dismissals, and paternalistic company attitudes".[48] This strike was a precursor to a series of worker's strikes that would rumble through the country for the first half of 1963.

In the midst of the 1963 industrial strikes in the country, the workers' Union at Usuthu Pulp submitted a list of long standing grievances to the management at Usuthu Pulp reiterating its protest to discriminatory practices and policies experienced by African workers.[49] The Union sought redress with respect to the African workers' living and working conditions, which it claimed were a product of discrimination in the company's operations. It is not clear why the Union decided to restate the workers' grievances around this time. However, it may be worth pointing out that industrial unrest was at its height in the country and discrimination was being challenged and exposed. Apart from identifying with the ongoing protests the Union might have felt the need to articulate its case more clearly. This became particularly important, in its view, not only because it entailed grievances which had been a thorn in the flesh for a long time but also because there seemed to be no desire on the part of management to attend to them since the April strike.

[48]Simelane, *Colonialism*, p. 179.

[49]SNA, File 3402 / 4 II, Labour– Industrial Relations, Letter from the General Secretary of Swaziland Pulp and Timber's Union to the Management of Usuthu Pulp Company, 1 June, 1963.

7. 5 Big Bend, Ubombo Ranches Part One

The first strike in 1963 took place in January at Big Bend. 105 cane cutters stopped work at this sugar producing company in the Lubombo region. The cutters refused to report for duty. Management threatened a mass dismissal and the strike fizzled out by the end of the week, when 18 strikers had been fired and, the remainder had been re-employed on reduced wages, at rates paid to new employees. On 20 January Dumisa Clement Dlamini of the NNLC together with Frank Groening, the NNLC's Big Bend agent addressed a gathering of workers at the Ubombo Trading Store.

A number of grievances were discussed at length and a resolution was carried that workers would march on the main offices on the following day to acquaint management of their demands. Dr. G. van der Pol, General Manager of Ubombo Ranches addressed the workers and listened to their seventeen demands. Their principal demands were a minimum wage for R 30 per month (up from R 7); the dismissal of the new fields manager Pierre Andries and the reinstatement of those dismissed and expelled from the cane cutters' compound. The company was conciliatory in its reply to the workers which was delivered a week later but was unable to meet their demands. Feelings ran high and rumours flew everywhere of the impending strike and a possible insurrection. The company obtained High Court interdicts against Dumisa Dlamini and Frank Groening preventing them from holding meetings on company property.

Negotiations with the Workers Committee continued into March. The company assured workers that issues such as the supply of purified water were being dealt with, and that new villages with adequate housing and facilities would be built as soon as the company's financial position improved. The assurances were not accepted by the Workers Committee, which was acting under instructions from Zwane's SPP. Ubombo Ranches now became the centre of attention of the radical political movement in Swaziland. Dr. Ambrose Zwane, Macdonald Maseko and other SPP activists descended on the little town to strengthen the union team. Mass meetings were held on the south

bank of the Usuthu River at Princess Bethusile's residence[50] near the Old High Level Bridge on successive Sundays in March. Richard Levin has noted that, "What was interesting about this strike was the level of organisation which facilitated it as well as the fact that most of the organisation was conducted by the Zwane faction of the SPP which was soon to become the Ngwane National Liberatory Congress".[51] The NNLC was formed in April 1963 from the main faction of the SPP led by Zwane.

Following a further presentation of workers' demands to management the strike began on Monday 18 March. The entire force of 1 700 came out, partly supported by workers at Crookes and Big Bend Sugar. Intimidation was widespread with opponents of the strike being assaulted, threatened and beaten in the compounds. The main village was not fenced in those days and gangs of strikers roamed the village at will hauling domestic workers out of the houses of the expatriates. This caused considerable alarm amongst the white community. Management issued a circular recommending that each household should have a suitcase ready packed, a car full of petrol and money at hand in case an emergency evacuation of the village arose. A census of cars was taken, enquiries were made as to which of the wives could drive, and whether the men would be prepared to stay on if the families were moved out. In the event of an emergency, fleeing expatriates were told to assemble at Gollel. van der Pol made it plain that anyone who wished to leave immediately was free to do so, and some families with children did. However, most of them stayed out the crisis.

The strikers marched daily from the Compounds to the old bridge, on the main road past the entrance to the village and through the town. Gosnell has commented that, "The size

[50]Bethusile was Sobhuza's eldest child. There is a need to study Bethusile's political activities and that of other women in depth. Bethusile Street in the capital town of Mbabane may be speaking of her undying memory in Swaziland's public space. For some texts that deal with women's participation in Southern African politics, see, for example, Gisela Giesler, *Women and the Remaking of politics in Southern Africa: Negotiating Autonomy, Incorporation and Representation* (Uppsala : Afrikainstituted, 2004) and Foster Mubanga, "Freedom and Labour", in Harries - Jones, Peter, *Freedom and Labour Mobilisation and Political Control on the Zambian Copper belt* (London : Oxford University Press, 1975) and Hilda Bernestein, *For their Triumphs and For their Tears : Women in Apartheid South Africa* (London : International Defence and Aid Fund, 1975).

[51]R. Levin, *When the Sleeping Grass Awakens: Land and Power in Swaziland* (Johannesburg : Witwatersrand University Press, 1997), p. 66.

of the crowd and their mood each day became one of the main barometers of the strike's progress".[52] Security police and a detachment of riot police arrived from Mbabane, the country's administrative capital, together with the Government Labour Officer, Mr. John Wilson, who attempted to mediate between the workers and management. As the strike dragged on through the week and the various meetings to try to resolve the situation failed, the Government became alarmed. By the end of the first week Brian Marwick, the Resident Commissioner arrived at Big Bend accompanied by the District Commissioner from Steki. Their attempt to intervene and bring about a solution proved futile. Meanwhile cane lay rotting in the fields. However, in a bold move van der Pol, made the decision to re-open the mill using only European staff. At that time, when significant numbers of white artisans were employed, this was possible. Out growers were invited to deliver cane, Ubombo again insisting that only Europeans would be allowed to enter the mill area. With regard to this strategy, Gosnell observed that

> The operation of the mill under such conditions was not a success in terms of sugar production, but the psychological effect on the strikers was immediate. The hungry and wavering strikers were confronted with the impression that the company could see out a long strike while they themselves had been refused food rations. On Tuesday the 26th, with the weekly rations due on Wednesday, the Workers Committee accepted a compromise proposed by Wilson.[53]

According to the terms of agreement a Commission of Enquiry would be held, the arrested workers would be released and those fired after the Compound disturbances in January would be reinstated. General grievances would be investigated by the Commission. In an attempt to explain the reasons behind the strike, Gosnell has noted that, "Like other subsequent strikes its roots lay in a combination of local dissatisfaction and a nationwide desire for political change".[54] I concur with Gosnell's assessment, except that I would emphasize that such dissatisfaction and a desire for political change

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[52]Gosnell, *Big Bend*, p. 227.

[53]*Ibid.* , p. 28.

[54]*Ibid.* , p. 29.

was rooted in the manner which relations between blacks and whites and to some extent coloureds were structured in the operations of the company and in the country. Despite the outlawing of discriminatory legislation and practices in the previous year no immediate fundamental changes had taken place in the company's operations and in the race relations of the country. According to Levin the most, "important consequence of the strike was the issuing of a proclamation which forbade strikes or lock - outs without three weeks' notice. In addition, a number of measures were legislated to increase the power of the police. These measures failed, however, to stem the tide of worker millitancy".[55]

7.6 Peak Timbers, Piggs Peak

No sooner was the Big Bend strike settled than another broke out Peak Timbers in Piggs Peak. 150 workers went on strike for eight days demanding to be paid R 2 per day. On 29 March 1963 one hundred and fifty workers of Peak Timbers patulite factory. These were joined part of the time by sawmill and clerical staff. They returned to work after promises of negotiations.

At the height of the ongoing industrial unrest, a Jamaican national, MacDonald Moses who was the representative of the International Confederation of Trade Unions (ICFTU) urged employees of this company to form a trade union. During the ongoing strikes in the country he was busy on the ground meeting workers in different parts of the country. Moses came to the country with prior experience from Nigeria, Kenya and Ghana. He was on loan to Swaziland for a year to assist in the development and strengthening of the nascent Trade Union movement. While carrying out his business in the country he came face to face with resistance towards Trade Unionism from some employers. At Peak Timbers in Piggs Peak, for example, his request to meet with workers on 27 April 1963 was refused on the ground that, "negotiations had reached a stage with our labour when any intervention such as this could be disastrous".[56] The ICTFU agent, however, went

[55]R. Levin, *When the Sleeping Grass Awakens*, p. 67.

[56]Swazi National Archives (hereafter, SNA), File 3402 / 4, Labour Industrial – General, Letter from R. P. Stephens, Managing Director of Peak Timbers to Government Secretary, 6 May, 1963. The negotiations

ahead and held a meeting with workers from this company on the scheduled date.

According to the Managing Director at the company, when the ICTFU representative was refused admittance, "He became most indignant, used all sorts of threats about Government intervention– even up to the House of Commons stage– and then gathered unto himself a number of the labour from the factory and held a meeting in the road".[57] During the meeting Moses is recorded to have declared that, "You are slaves and by the time I am finished I will free you from slavery".[58] The workers responded by shouting "Africa' and raising their thumbs".[59] The workers at this meeting resolved to form a Branch of the Swaziland Pulp and Timber Workers' Union (SP& TWU) at Peak Timbers. A total of nine members were elected to the Management Committee. The Chairman and Secretary were Mr. Andreas Mango and Mr. Nathaniel Mkhwanazi, respectively. A letter written to the Managing Director at Peak Timbers communicated this resolution and copies were sent to the Resident Commissioner, Labour Officer, the General Scretary of SP & TWU and Provisional Secretary of TUC.[60]

In response, R. P. Stephens, the Managing Director wrote to the Government Secretary complaining that the alleged establishment of a branch of the SP & TWU had occurred under questionable circumstances. Stephens maintained that the meeting held by the ICTFU representative appeared semi - political and further argued that around sixty workers who attended were not representative of the employees of the company who numbered 1 200. Stephens also indicated that his company had no intention of recognizing the Union as representative of the company's employees. Stephens' stance was a clear indication that though Trade Unionism was taking root in some industries

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were being carried out with the Strike Committee since the company had refused to recognise the Swaziland Pulp and Timber Workers' Union.

[57]*Ibid.*

[58]*Ibid.*

[59]*Ibid*.

[60]See, SNA, File 3402 / 4, Labour Industrial – General, Letter from Nathaniel Mkhwanazi, Secretary of The Swaziland Pulp and Timbers' Union to R. P. Stephens, Manager of Peak Timbers, 4 May, 1963.

some employers still preferred the previous bodies in dealing with labour dispute. This stance was clearly articulated by the Managing Director of Peak Timbers when he claimed that

> Those of our employees who know about trade unions tend to prefer the traditional system of asking the Swazi National Council to handle their problems, and I think it criminal for anyone to either ram trade unions down their throats or to decry the Swazi National Council system[61]

The ICFTU intervention at Peak Timbers sought to assist workers in the promotion of Trade Unionism– an idea which was frustrated by the major stakeholders in the country. The ICFTU obviously felt Swaziland was lagging behind the rest of the world in embracing the Trade Union movement. While in the country the ICFTU representative tried to work closely with workers, while making his mission known to employers and government officials. His working strategy tended to create conflict between him and the two latter stakeholders. The frustration faced by Trade Unionism in the country was contrary to British colonial Policy elsewhere. Hence, Moses' threats about Government intervention

[61]SNA, File 3402 / 4, Labour Industrial– General, Letter from R. P. Stephens, Managing Director of Peak Timbers to the Government Secretary16 May, 1963.

7. 7 Havelock Asbestos Mine, Bulembu

In May Dumisa Dlamini visited Havelock Asbestos Mine, near Bulembu preparing what Levin and Gosnell have termed, "the most dramatic strike of the year".[62] On Sunday 19 May, 1963 Dumisa held a meeting of workers at the mine's football ground which lasted from 10: 30 a. m. to 12: 30 p. m. Before the meeting began Dumisa led a procession of men, women and children along the road to the football ground.[63] Several hundreds of people present during the procession were singing and shouting. Another meeting was held early in the morning (around 4. a.m.) on Monday 20 May, 1963. During the trial of Dumisa Dlamini and others, Justice Elyan observed that

> There was evidence that, small parties of men armed with sticks moved about the areas where workers lived at the mine banging noisily with sticks at the doors of the employees' homes and shouting to the occupants to come out as none of them would sleep that night, there being a meeting at the football ground at 4 o'clock in the morning.[64]

The "small parties of men armed with sticks" belonged to the Malindane regiment. They played a pivotal role in mobilising employees of the company for a strike action. About one thousand people were present at this meeting. On 20 May workers at the mine who were led by Dlamini downed tools. The official report on the unrest in the country noted that, "virtually the entire labour force of 1400 of Havelock Mine together with 400 employees of the drilling contractor came out on strike".[65] Expressing the complex manner in which workers' grievances were caught up in the white-black relations at the mine, a major demand just before the strike read: "that all discriminatory practices in shops, public bars, etc., should come to an end immediately and without delay from now on".[66]

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[62]Levin, *When the Sleeping Grass Awakens*, p. 67 and Gosnell, *Big Bend*, p. 230. It would appear that the phrase is originally Levin's.

[63]Interview, Abbey Msibi, Dvudvusini, 6 September, 1999.

[64]TOS, "Last of The Strike Trial Ends", 21 February, 1964.

[65]Swaziland Government, Report of the Committee of Enquiry into Unrest in Swaziland, 25th June-8th July, 1963, p. 3.

[66]TOS, "The Strike Day to Day", 14 June, 1963.

Although workers at the mine went on strike for a number of reasons, the demand for wage increment was at the forefront. They wanted a wage minimum of one pound a day. Robert Malindzisa who was an employee of the mine and a member of the NNLC explained that, "the demand for a wage minimum of one pound a day helped to set the tone for the strike, after a deadlock between a council that had just by that time been elected to represent workers and the management".[67] The document that contained workers' grievances amplified that demand insisting that

> The minimum wage of every employee herein engaged must be fifteen pounds (R 30) start, from now on and that the discriminatory wage and living conditions amongst workers of the same company must end immediately and without delay if this company has to continue smoothly, harmoniously and productively.[68]

It is interesting to note that the demand of a wage increment which set the tone for the strike directly addressed the question of paying employees of the company on the basis of racial categorisation. On April 21, a month before the strike, a document that contained the workers' resolutions and demands had been signed by their representatives and handed to the mine management. A copy of this document was said to have been sent to the Labour Officer in Mbabane but it later turned out that the document had not reached him. One major resolution read, "that from henceforth and forthwith all the complaints and demands of the people in this compound about food, lavatories, washing houses, housing conditions, ill - treatment at work, etc., must be immediately met by the company".[69] These complaints were juxtaposed against the conditions under which the whites worked and lived at the mine. The testimonies of some of the mine employees who were involved in the strike highlight this reality. Robert Malindzisa pointed out that

[67]Interview, Robert Malindzisa, Havelock, 15-16 September, 1999.

[68]TOS, "Last of the strike Trial Ends: Sentences Postponed for 18 months", 21 February, 1964.

[69]TOS, "Last of Strike Trials Ends" , 21 February, 1964.

> The way of life at the mine was organised around segregation and racial discrimination. Under this arrangement the black man was despised by whites who considered themselves superior. There was as a result, a school for blacks and a different one for whites. This was the same thing with residential areas, shops and other facilities. At work as well as in the residential places blacks did not mix with whites; it was considered a taboo. This created and perpetuated uncalled for prejudices and conflicts based on skin colour.[70]

Abbey Mngadi Msibi who was head clerk at the mine and was arrested and tried in connection with the strike also explained that

> We were striking because for a long time Africans including those with experience from South African mines, had been paid low wages. Also Africans were unjustifiably being beaten up violently by white supervisors in the process of production especially underground. Further, living conditions were bad as we were overcrowded and congested in the compounds. The houses built in the 1950s brought a small difference. These were meant for married men but even then many married men continued to stay in the singles' quarters. The food rations supplied to workers were also inadequate.[71]

Most of the demands revolved around discriminatory practices. The involvement of NNLC politicians in the strike not only gave momentum but also pointed to general dissatisfaction with the white colonial administration. Msibi pointed out that, "The coming in of the NNLC brought in the dimension of decolonisation".[72] He further stressed that, "the strikers were fed up with white rule and considered that independence would only be experienced once they had left the country".[73]

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[70] *Ibid.*

[71] Interview, Abbey Mngadi Msibi, Dvudvusini, 6 September 1999. Msibi also featured as an NNLC candidate during the Legislative Council elections in 1964 at the Piggs Peak constituency.

[72] *Ibid*.

[73] *Ibid.*

At the height of the strike the workers sang their protest song, "Unzima Lomthwalo, usinda amadoda angikhathali noma besibopha sizimisele inkululeko"[74] meaning "The load is heavy, heavy even for men, I do not mind whether they arrest us, we are determined to attain our freedom". While the African workers were on strike, the 150 white employees of the mine, none of whom joined the strike, were able to maintain limited production.[75] The position taken by these whites emphasized the racial nature of the grievances of the African workers who went on strike. The African workers' grievances were essentially complaints against the preferential treatment accorded the whites on the basis of race. The decision by the whites to go to work indicated their identification with the white management and company owners. They clearly stood in opposition to their African counterparts. Given the favourable conditions they worked and lived under since they had nothing much to complain about.

This decision however, faced white miners more directly with the dangers of working underground normally confronted by black miners. Soon, the country's main newspaper at the time regretfully reported that, "Two Europeans were killed in an underground explosion at Havelock Mine on Tuesday. They are Mr. J. M. H. Tobben and Mr. R. C. Sander, married. One man also European was slightly injured. His name is being withheld until the management has been able to get in touch with relatives".[76] The problems that confronted the white employees as they carried out mine work at this time have been attributed to inexperience on their part with production work.[77] On 21, 23 and 24 May discussions were held between the workers' representatives and the management. These produced no positive results. The *Ingwenyama* Sobhuza sent a telegram message

[74]This song which I heard from Msibi is also contained in songbook of the South African workers located at UWL / William Cullen Africana Library, Historical Papers, AD 1137 / FC People's Choir, Johannesburg, undated.

[75]TOS, "Strikers Still Out: Havelock Mine Trouble", 24 May, 1963.

[76]TOS, "Two Killed in Mine Explosion", 24 May, 1963.

[77]Interview, Haddington Nkata, Havelock Mine, 15 September, 1999. Nkata is among the longest serving ex - employees of Havelock Mine. He came from Nyasaland to work at the mine in the early 1940s.

to the miners, saying, "No true Swazi would talk to me through the strike".[78] Sobhuza expected that if there were irresolvable conflicts, arrangements had to be made to send delegates to the royal headquarters through Prince Masitsela who had been appointed by him and the SNC as the chief traditional labour representative. However, the strikers ignored the *Ingwenyama*'s telegram and carried on with the strike. On 8 June police at Havelock arrested twelve of the strikers and organisers who were at the vanguard of the strike action including Abbey Msibi and Dumisa Dlamini prompting a crowd of about 2, 000 strikers to demonstrate against the police, and teargas was used to disperse them.[79]

The arrested men were briefly detained at Havelock Mine Police Station and later taken to various police stations around the country. Haddington Nkata, a Nyasaland worker, who participated in the strike action, recalled that, "When the strike had been going on for some days our leaders were rounded up and arrested by the police. They were first locked up at Havelock Mine Police Station and later taken to the Piggs Peak one. When we demanded for their release we were dispersed through the use of teargas".[80] Abbey Mngadi Msibi, one of the arrested, explained that

> After some days of the strike we got arrested and locked up at Havelock Police Station for about one hour. From there we were taken to Piggs Peak where we spent a day. From Piggs Peak we were taken to Mbabane, and later to Hlathikulu where we stayed for three weeks. After that we were taken to Mankayane Remand Prison to await trial. We were being moved from place to place so that the strikers would not know exactly where we were.[81]

The strike was, however, not terminated by the arrest of the organizers. It continued for a few more days. In the face of the continuing strike, the administration announced that it would institute a general inquiry into the wages and conditions of work and employment, declared a state of emergency and flew in police reinforcements from Bechuanaland. The

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[78]Cited in M. J. Fransman, "The State and Development in Swaziland, 1960 – 1977", PhD Thesis, University of Sussex, 1978, p. 218.

[79]TOS, "The Strike Day to Day", 14 June 1963.

[80]Interview, Abbey Mngadi Msibi, Dvudvusini, 6 September 1999.

[81]*Ibid*.

police from Bechuanaland were immediately followed, on 13 June by the arrival by air into Swaziland by a battalion of Gordon Highlanders from British forces in Kenya.[82] Upon arrival, the British soldiers immediately went into action, guided by the Swaziland police to break up the Havelock strike. *The Times of Swaziland* explained that, "About three on Monday morning the whole battalion went to Havelock. They set up a road block and before dawn, threw a cordon around the labour lines".[83] About 1000 were questioned and more than 500 said they were willing to go back to their jobs. They reported at the mine and began work. Describing how the Havelock Mine strikers were rounded up, Haddington Nkata related that

> When we were at Piggs Peak we were tricked by an announcement to the effect that the issue of our wage increment had been fixed. We then started walking back to Havelock but when we were at Mkhomazane river the Gordon Highlanders blocked us and took us into their trucks. In these trucks we were transported straight to the Havelock sports field. At the sports field we were asked whether we wanted to continue working. If you said yes you were given your clock card and sent to the office. Most of us went back to work like that. The wage increment issue was not spoken of anymore.[84]

Similar strategies were used to deal with strike action in other industrial centres such as Ubombo Ranches. Soon after the intervention of the troops, a spokesman for Havelock Mine announced that, "We are pretty well back to normal".[85] It was also reported that the strikers, about 1 200 in total had returned to work.[86] The discriminatory culture and the mine did not change. African workers continued living and working under difficult and often hazardours conditions. Recently, Jock MucCullock has pointed out that despite the

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[82]For a brief history of the Gordon Highlanders, see, UWL / William Cullen Library, Historical Papers, A 1931 / FB 3 (File 2), "The Gordon Highlanders Greet Swaziland" by High Commission Printing and Publishing Company, LTD., 1 July, 1963 and TOS, "The Gordon Highlanders Greet the Swazis", 5 July, 1963.

[83]TOS, "Back to Normal in Swaziland", 22 June, 1963.

[84]Interview, Haddington Nkata, Havelock Mine, 15 September, 1999.

[85]TOS, "Back to Normal in Swaziland", 22 June, 1963.

[86]*Ibid.*

mine's closure, ex-employees continue to suffer from the effects of the company's policy with regard to terminal benefits and health conditions.[87]

7. 8 Mbabane

The mood in the country was tense. In the beginning of April the Government health inspectors closed the stalls of unlicensed market women in Mbabane who were selling sour milk and porridge. About 60 women led by Dumisa Dlamini marched in protest against the move taken by Government.[88] Teargas was used by police to break up this march. On 9 June 1963 the NNLC held a meeting at Msunduza in Mbabane. During this meeting news arrived that twelve of the strike leaders at Havelock had been arrested. The meeting resolved that there would be a stoppage of work in Mbabane until the arrested leaders were released. Furthermore the meeting rejected the White Paper on the Constitution that had been issued the previous month on the grounds that it was "racialist" and "undemocratic".[89] At this meeting it was also decided that the members of the Malindane age-regiment should organise the Swazi population of Mbabane and prevent people from going to work.[90]

On 10 June Dumisa Dlamini and Macdonald Maseko led a strike of domestic workers in Mbabane bringing the struggle to the doorsteps of the Europeans in the capital. The 1961 Swaziland annual report noted that "domestic servants are usually paid from £ 2 to £ 7 per month with rations, quarters and clothing provided".[91] This barely covered the basic necessities of these employees. The domestic workers joined in the demand of a minimum wage of R 2 per day. Chief Justice Sir Peter Watkins - Williams observed that, "Although the question of wages was not on the agenda of the proposed meeting it is clear that it was in the minds of the people and even though it may have been raised from

[87]J. McCullock, "Dust, Disease and Labour at Havelock Asbestos Mine, Swaziland", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, vol. 31 no. 2, (2006), pp. 251 - 266.

[88]Fransman, "The State and Development ...", p. 217.

[89]*Ibid.* , p. 219.

[90]See, Interview, Alex Mfan'zile Dlamini, Manzini, Nandos, 3 December, 2004.

[91]SNA, File 3003A / 14, Swaziland Annual Report– 1961.

the floor of the hall it was immediately taken up by the leaders of the party".[92] The NNLC also called for a general strike and Mbabane was paralysed as domestic, commercial, industrial and civil service workers heeded the call. A crowd of 3, 000 marched on the Resident Commissioner's office demanding a minimum wage of R 2 per day, the release of the "Havelock 12" and the withdrawal of the latest British constitutional proposals. That night, a rowdy demonstration occurred at Msunduza township in Mbabane, and a riot broke out inside Mbabane prison.

On this very same day Dumisa Dlamini made an inflammatory speech to the angry vendors. He told his audience that, "The Portuguese territories would be freed by warfare and promised freedom in Swaziland by peaceful means".[93] The presiding Judge during his trial observed that, "It was an inflammatory speech made at a time of crisis and might have exacerbated the situation by adding racial antagonism to the conflict".[94] Police arrived at the scene and ordered the crowd that had gathered to disperse. Dumisa led them in singing protest songs, an act that led to his arrest and that of several others. Around 400 demonstrators including domestic and urban workers marched on the Residency the following day to demand the release of those who had been arrested but they were met by police who used tear gas to disperse them. Commenting on the strike the editor of the *Times of Swaziland* claimed that, "The avowed goal of most of those who were behind the trouble was a general strike, at any rate in Mbabane".[95] He further went on to assert that

[92]TOS, "Seven Guilty of Public Violence: Suspended Sentences For Six of them", 24 January, 1964.

[93]TOS, "Mbabane Strike Trial Ends", 24 January, 1964.

[94]*Ibid*.

[95]TOS, "Lessons of the Strike and its Cost", 22 June, 1963.

> The cost of the strike is not to be measured only in terms of loss by employers and workers, or the harm done to the economy. It will take a long time for confidence in this country to be restored. And perhaps the most serious result is the setback to the ideal of partnership between Black and White which thinking people of Swaziland had set before them and which began to show great prospects of success.[96]

The strike in Mbabane served to highlight the demands made by workers from the different companies in the country. The organisers of the strikes also attempted to reinforce solidarity among the strikers when they simultaneously demanded for the release of the "Havelock 12" and called a general strike. It was here that the unrest which was engulfing the country carried explicit political overtones. That this focus was displayed at the capital city which was the base of the colonial government was both practical and symbolical; this was the base of the colonial administration. If there were any doubts that the organisers of the strikes got involved in the strikes for political reasons, Mbabane served to remove them. At some point the grievances of students at Trades School in Mbabane fed into the strikes. When the strike hit Mbabane students at the school had boycotted classes some weeks before. During their boycott they had been supported by NNLC members. Stephen Dlamini who was a student leader at the institution recalled that, "We had previously had a campus strike at Trades School.

During the strike the Congress gave students morale support and supplied food".[97] When government threatened to close the institution indefinitely the president of Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah threw his weight behind the students. Dlamini revealed that

[96]*Ibid*.

[97]Interview, Stephen Dlamini, Matsapha, Logoba, 26 November, 2004.

> Kwame Nkrumah who had received my details and contacts from the Congress spoke to me over the phone promising to provide educational opportunities to students in case the institution got closed. The students would be offered scholarships and taken to Ghana for the furtherance of their studies. You must remember that many educated Swazis went to Ghana to learn about politics around this time. It is that link which got Nkrumah involved in Swazi politics.[98]

When the strike broke out in Mbabane the situation had returned to normal at the institution. However, students at the Trades School joined the strike both as a means of surviving the unrest in the town and to reciprocate the solidarity they had received from the NNLC during their own strike. A combination of force and organisation gave the Mbabane strike its success. Sir Peter Watkins - Wiiliams, the Judge who presided over the trial of the Mbabane strike intimated that, "I am satisfied that this strike, could not have succeeded as it did if the malindane regiment had not assumed power and authority they did not possess".[99] Dumisa Dlamini, MacDonald Maseko and Philip Katamzi of the NNLC were said to have been intimately connected with the activities of the regiment. Mexico Nene and other NNLC members were also engaged radical activities that ensured the strike was a success. A reporter of the *Times of Swaziland* noted that, "The strikers in Mbabane had food. This showed some organising".[100] Women also appear to have been very active in Mbabane. About the role of women during the strike Alex Mfan'zile Dlamini explained that, "The reality of the issue was that women were very active in these struggles. They marched, cooked food and played other supportive roles".[101] The strike which had begun on Monday ended on Friday, "when many domestic servants went back to their jobs".[102] The week - long activities in the capital town served to inspire workers at Ubombo once more.

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[98]*Ibid*.

[99]TOS, "Mbabane Strike Trial Ends", 24 January, 1964.

[100]TOS, "Back to Normal in Swaziland", 22 June, 1963.

[101]Interview, Alex Mfan'zile Dlamini, Manzini , Nandos, 3 December, 2004. The role played by women in industrial and political activity in Swaziland is still crying out to be studied.

[102]TOS, "Back to Normal in Swaziland", 22 June, 1963.

7. 9 Big Bend, Ubombo Ranches Part Two

Another crippling strike had also broken out at Ubombo Ranches on June 12 as workers made a last ditch attempt to support the call for a general strike which had been called by the NNLC. They (like the Mbabane strikers) called for the release of the arrested Havelock strikers and the withdrawal of the British constitutional proposals. The strike lasted throughout the week. A number of arrests were made. Ten Ubombo employees were convicted of public violence, five receiving 3 year prison sentences with hard labour.[103] While the strike action at Havelock had subsided at Big Bend it toughened. In the early morning of 19 June 1963 about 150 African workers were carrying cane knives and knob sticks marching from one compound to another. The Swaziland Police and the Gordon Highlanders disarmed and arrested 27 of them while the rest fled in the darkness. Clerks, garage workers and a few cane field workers returned to work on the same day. However, none of the workers in the mill returned. Later that day a spotter aircraft tried to locate a large group of strikers who, armed with cane knives had left their compound at midnight and crossed the Nyetane river toward the Ubombo mountains. The search was unsuccessful.

7. 10 The Presence of British Soldiers

It ought to be noted that bringing in the soldiers to repress the strikes was in line with the policy of the Conservative Government which had bounced back to power in 1951. This government believed in using the military to suppress "disobedience". At the end of July the Gordon Highlanders left the country and were replaced by the 1st Battalion the Loyal Regiment (Lancashire). During their presence in the country the white soldiers mixed freely with the Swazi in social activities. Oral testimony suggests that many coloured children born of Swazi women around this time were fathered by the soldiers. It was probably in this context that in 1967 Senator Mbalizandla Nhlabatsi raised a concern in Parliament when he submitted in the House of Senate that

[103]Gosnell, *Big Bend*, p. 231.

> I remember that not very long ago British soldiers from the Commonwealth impregnated our children and we do not know where to find these soldiers now. Nothing was done, these soldiers returned overseas leaving a great number of children here.[104]

Jackie Nobela also confirmed that, "The arrival of the soldiers of the Gordon Highlanders in the 1960s also led to more coloured children being born".[105] Foregoing this social dimension the military of the British soldiers was decisive in the breaking up of the strikes across the country. Within a forth night the strikers from Big Bend to Havelock were back at work. A total of 244 men were arrested for intimidation and public violence, including 15 NNLC members. The report on the strikes noted that the architects of these strikes were planning to stage a country-wide strike about the middle of June but the arrest of the ringleaders of the Havelock strikes upset their plans.[106]

7. 11 The Strikes and Racial Discrimination

One major conclusion that can be made with regard to the strikes that occurred in Swaziland during this period is that they were a reaction intimately tied to the discriminatory mechanisms and regulations on which the industrial and urban centres were operated. The strike clearly reflected the divide of Swaziland's labour force along racial lines which lead the employees' interests to diverge. This was illustrated vividly in some instances by the actions of white employees who went to work when black workers were on strike. The point is further reinforced if we consider that the whites did not simply go to work in their own capacities but attempted to serve in the roles and functions which were a preserve of black workers under normal circumstances.

Despite the desire of both the British administration in Swaziland and the British Government in London to depict Swaziland as a model of harmonious race relations, the strikes had put Swaziland on the map of colonial unrest. The commissioners who were

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[104]UWL / Government Publications, Swaziland Parliament Senate: Report of the Debate, 30 October to10 November, 1967, p. 12.

[105]Interview, Jackie Nobela, Manzini, Sicelwini, 31 October, 2004.

[106]Swaziland: Report of Committee of Enquiry into Unrest In Swaziland, 25 June - 8 July, 1963, p. 6.

appointed to look into the causes of, and remedies to these industrial disturbances went into the inquiry with the intention of upholding this image which was being undermined by industrial and urban disturbances in the country. In their preamble letter to the report on these disturbances the commissioners unequivocally declared that

> It therefore seems essential to us if public confidence is to be restored, and a firm and effective Government maintained, that there should be a public statement of Her Majesty's Government policy and intention for the future of Swaziland. We would not have been so bold to make this proposal had we not believed that this Territory could be made into a shop window of British colonial achievement in Africa. It has the natural and human resources, and well placed in Africa to radiate a message of co - operative endeavour between black and white that would confound the advocates of stark black and white nationalism.[107]

Considering that the disturbances had the potential to undermine British colonialism and its associated virtues, the commissioners asserted that, "Swaziland is the last chance Britain has in Africa of showing the world that she has the strength of purpose to make a go of setting up a society in which black and white can live and work together harmoniously".[108] Soon after the strikes, protests against the British Government's intervention in the strikes were received from African nationalists such as Tom Mboya of Kenya demanding that British troops quit Kenya, which the British were using to "oppose our brothers".[109] Within Swaziland J. J. Nquku strongly also protested the presence of the Gordon Highlanders in Swaziland. Responding to a newspaper report that claimed that the British troops arrived in Swaziland because of a request from the country, he wrote that

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[107]*Ibid.* , preamble letter.

[108]*Ibid.*

[109]Cited in Potholm, *Swaziland*, p. 372.

> Lest this statement misleads the public and the outside world at large, I take this opportunity of making a correction by pointing out that the Africans of this Territory are not part and parcel of such a request. Of course it has been published that the troops are here to protect their brothers and vested interests.[110]

Essentially, what both Mboya and Nquku were protesting about was the enforcement of certain security measures along racial lines.

Commenting on these industrial disturbances, the visiting British journalist, Dudley Barker noted that "they were strikes for higher pay and over certain alleged practices of colour discrimination. On purely industrial grounds justification could certainly be put forward for industrial action".[111] The racial divide in the country's industrial centres mirrored the general racial divide in the country's constitution, organisation and general way of life. A close scrutiny of developments during the strikes suggests that discriminatory policies and practices in the industrial arena underlay workers grievances. The demand for wage increment though tied to these concerns was not the ultimate objective. Similarly, in his assessment of the 1935 mine workers' strike on the Northern Rhodesian Copper belt, Charles Perrings noted that the grievances leading to the strike were fundamentally inspired by black workers' desire to deal with racial injustice.[112] Paul Kelemen has also noted that, at the bottom of the 1947 general strike in Mombasa which lasted for ten days and involved about 15 000 workers was, racial discrimination.[113]

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[110]TOS, "Nquku and Troops", 26 July, 1963

[111]D. Barker, *Swaziland* (London : Her Majesty's Sationery Office, 1965), p. 132.

[112]C. Perrings, "Consciousness, Conflict and Proletarianization : An Assessment of the 1935 Mine Workers' Strikes on the Northern Rhodesian Copper belt", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, vol. 4, no.1 (October, 1977), pp. 31 – 51.

[113]Kelemen, "Modernising colonialism ...", p. 228.

7. 12 The Strikes and Political Influence

It is also interesting to note that the strikes exercised a profound influence on Swaziland's political organizations. Commenting on the labour unrest Kunene observed that, "the situation was accentuated by the emergence of political parties and nationalist figures who combined workers' grievances with political demands thus adding a new dimension to Swaziland's industrial scenario".[114] The widespread labour unrest which reached a climax in 1963, together with the ongoing constitutional and political debates in the country made both labour and nationalist politicians see the need for each other[115] in bringing meaningful change to the British dominated political structure.

Accounting for these disturbances, the Labour officer reasoned that, "The other point about these strikes was that the slow development of new workers' organisations, and the ineffectiveness of the old, left a vacuum which one political party unnaturally sought to fill".[116] The Labour Officer in this instance was referring to the trade unions which had emerged in 1962 as "new workers' organisations" and the "old" ones which were the African Consultative Committees. The official government report on the strikes noted that, "There were indications of political inspiration in all these strikes, with increasing evidence in each successive outbreak".[117] Because trade unions were not available to negotiate labour grievances, and because of the South African influence (as in the case with workers who had acquired industrial experience in that country) on industrial relations, this left a space in which politicians could enter and highlight nationwide problems shared by these workers– above all, racial discrimination.

It may further be pointed out that the political struggles in the country were not limited to the local context but were rather a reflection of a continental and global movement

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[114]G. S. Kunene, "British Colonial Policy ...", pp. 403 - 404.

[115]For some discussion on the alliance between labour and nationalists politicians, see for example, Hugh. Macmillan, "Swaziland, Decolonisation and 'Tradition'", *Journal of Modern African Studies*, vol. 23, no. 4 (1985), pp. 658-664 and John Daniel et. al (eds.) *Politics and Society in Swaziland* (Kwaluseni, U. B. L. S. , 1975), pp. 82 - 128.

[116]TOS, "Last Year's Strike : Mood of Self Assertion", 17 July, 1964.

[117]Swaziland– Report of Committee of Enquiry into Unrest in Swaziland, 25th June– 8th July, 1963, p. 5.

against foreign rule. A comment carried by the *Times of Swaziland* early in 1963 noted of the political parties that they, "are fully aware of themselves as part of the continent-wide movement against 'colonialism and imperialism'".[118] The comment further observed that, "Their leaders journey to Ghana and Tanganyika to complain of 'oppression', to the United Nations Anti - Colonial Committee, and receive aid and money to organise".[119] This was with reference to anti-colonial conferences and other political visits. About such developments in British and French Africa, Frederick Cooper generally noted that

> African politicians, eager to seize the opportunities of the decline of colonial authority, most often wanted to re-channel the autonomous labour movement into something that could be managed by political parties and in their language of nationalism and solidarity.[120]

Similarly, of the NNLC members the official report on the strikes observed that, "They were well established at Havelock Mine and Big Bend, and it is believed that they were planning to stage a country-wide strike about the middle of June".[121] Explaining the inevitability of political influence in the strikes to the Chamber of Commerce and Industries in July, the ICFTU representative pointed out that since trade unions were weak

> employers are hesitant to do business with them. The 'trouble groups' have been quick to take advantage of this weakness and have made capital out of grievances that exist. Their remedy has been to precipitate industrial unrest resulting in the recent strikes all over the country which in turn has affected the confidence of investors in the country. As a result of government action after the unrest (that is the arrest of the NNLC executive members and strikers) there now exists a vacuum which must be filled without delay: employers get together now with the trade unions and do something on grand scale to prevent the recurrence of such a situation.[122]

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[118]TOS, "Britain and Southern Africa: The Dilemma", 4 March, 1963.

[119]*Ibid.*

[120]Frederick Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society*, p. 20.

[121]Swaziland– Report of Committee of Enquiry into Unrest in Swaziland, 25th June-8th July, 1963, p .7.

[122]Cited in Fransman, "State and Development ..." , p. 233.

The ICFTU representative clearly expressed the need of trade unions in Swaziland's labour relations and also suggested that rather than being a threat to capital they could be used as an instrument for raising productivity.

In regard to the ICFTU representative the Labour Adviser to the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations observed that:

> The presence in Swaziland of a permanent representative of the ICFTU should be helpful in the present situation, but it is possible that his presence, constructive in a general sense, may prove divisive in another. The supporters of Pan - Africanism prefer the All African Trade Union Federation to the ICFTU; and the anti-Communist platform of the latter does not endear it with extreme left – wing tendencies. As experience elsewhere has shown, there may therefore develop a split in the local movement based on fundamental differences.[123]

Cooper's discussion of strikes in British and French Africa depicts them as having received overwhelming support from politicians. In the case of Swaziland the urban and industrial strikes of the 1960s were received with a mixed reaction from African politicians. While some of the political leaders were in support of, and involved in, the strikes others remained opposed. While, for example, the NNLC leadership and general membership was fully in support of the strikes and intimately involved in their organisation, the same cannot be claimed of the other important political formations such as the SPP, and SDP. The official enquiry on the strikes noted about the SPP and SDP that they, "do not appear to have taken an active part in the strikes".[124] The report further observed that, "there are indications that the Democratic Party was instrumental for its own reasons in preventing the Mbabane strike from spreading to Manzini, Mhlume and Bhunya".[125] According to the same report, "The role of the small Mbandzeni National

[123]Swaziland– Report of Committee of Enquiry into Unrest in Swaziland, 25th June - 8th July, 1963, Extract From Notes Made by G. Foggon, ESQ. , Labour Adviser To The Secretary of State On His Visit to Swaziland, p. 56 (Appendix).

[124]*Ibid.*

[125]*Ibid.*

Convention is less clear".[126] These differences in the manner in which politicians and other stakeholders in the country responded to the workers' strikes reflect an overlap in class and racial interests.[127] According to Robert Davies, Dan O'Meara and Sipho Dlamini, "These strikes imprinted themselves on the decolonization process. Each of the contending political forces was compelled to respond and define its position on industrial relations".[128]

7. 13 A Misdirected Post-Mortem

These strikes which involved more than 3 000 workers resulted in the loss of 67 000 shifts.[129] Following the strikes a Commission of Inquiry was appointed by the Resident Commissioner on 24 June, 1963 and began its work on the following day. The members of the committee were P. St C. Ballenden, Esq. O.B. E. (Chairman), H. Fraser, Esq. (Member), Major M.C.M. d' Arcy, Royal Artillery (member) and J. R. Masson Esq., M.B.E. (Secretary). The terms of reference of the Committee were spelt out as follows;

> (1) To consider how the recent unrest in Swaziland arose. (2) To consider why the Swaziland Government was not able to maintain law and order without calling for outside assistance. (3) To make recommendations as to what steps should be taken to counter the threat to security and to maintain firm and effective government. (4) To consider the role of the military forces in Swaziland and to recommend how long and in what strength their presence will be required.[130]

The desire by the labour force to get rid of racist principles and practices in the country's industrial arena was disguised by certain factors. Although the terms of reference had the capacity to expose the core problem (racial discrimination) which had led to the strikes,

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[126]*Ibid.*

[127]For an indication of this overlap, see, Martin Fransman, "State and Development in Swaziland, 1960-1977", PhD Thesis, University of Sussex, 1978, pp. 203-238.

[128]R. Davies, D. O'Meara and S. Dlamini, *Kingdom of Swaziland* (London : Zed Books, 1985), p. 6.

[129]See, Great Britain, *Swaziland Annual Report* (London : Her Majesty's Stationery's Office, 1963), p. 4. and TOS, "Labour Report : Last Year's Strikes, Mood of Self-Assertion", 17 July, 1964.

[130]*Ibid.* , p. 1. See, also, TOS, "Inquiry into the Strike", 29 March 1963.

the Inquiry thereafter, downplayed the significance of racial discrimination in the country from the onset. Bent on depicting Swaziland as an emerging model of harmonious race relations, it glossed over the glaring reality that the country was organised around discriminatory principles and practices in its operations in the industrial arena. Instead of pinpointing this reality the Inquiry presented a cosmetic picture and laboured as much as possible to belittle the problem of racial discrimination. The larger focus of the Inquiry was on security concerns at the expense other issues such as the prevalence of racial discrimination in the industrial arena.[131] In the final analysis, the countrywide unrest can be said to have served to send a message to employers and political leaders to the effect that the organisation and operation of industrial centres along racist principles was unacceptable to the labour force and influential political elements in the country. However, the denialist attitude of the Commissioners and the majority of their interviewees (comprising largely of employers and government officials) coupled with successful use of force to suppress the strikes effectively displaced the question of racial discrimination in official thinking. This undermined the possibility of identifying the core problem.

The Inquiry considered that it was dealing with an ongoing problem– the threat to the country's security. Hence, the Commissioners' statement that, "We have in no sense regarded our inquiry as a post - mortem since the patient is still alive, but we diagnose an intractable disease requiring major surgery and immediate transfusions of new blood".[132] The Commissioners' further claimed that though the unrest had been curbed it had not completely died out. They believed that the country faced further unrest and warned that, "Even though the known leaders have been neutralised for the moment, other leaders, who are at present unknown, will readily and promptly take their place".[133] They also warned that, "It is also apparent that subversive elements have gone underground and it is

[131]Swaziland– Report of Committee of Enquiry into Unrest in Swaziland, 25th June- 8th July, 1963, pp. 21 - 46 and 59 -70.

[132]Swaziland– Report of Committee of Enquiry into Unrest in Swaziland, 25th June - 8th July, 1963, preamble letter.
[133]*Ibid.* , p. 21.

probable that planning is taking place in secret for a more violent outburst".[134] The suspected unrest, according to the warnings, would not take place until the military troops had been withdrawn from the country.

Essentially, the discriminatory patterns in the industrial arena continued in more or les the same fashion as before the strikes. As Kunene observed that, "a series of measures, including consent to the formation of trade unions were adopted by the Administration and by some of the private companies, to defuse the situation".[135] He maintained that these measures made little impact on the broader structures of exploitation. On 26 April, 1963 the Industrial Conciliation and Settlement legislation was promulgated. This legislation was an attempt to create a new approach to industrial negotiation. However, most workers were not aware of the legislation as it came into force during the course of the unrest which had occupied their attention. The Commissioners who sat at the Inquiry acknowledged that, "Since the conciliation legislation appeared only mid - way through the disturbances it is probably still a closed book to a majority of those who participated in them".[136] Minimal concessions were also made by individual companies with regard wage increments at the height of the strikes and a Board to fix a minimum wage for workers in the country was established in 1964.

In addition, the Commission, however, still felt that there was an obvious need, "for the early establishment of a vigorous and democratic trade union movement"[137]. Proposals were also made for the establishment of a statutory Housing Board. However, such developments were far from satisfying workers' concerns about racial inequalities in their working and living conditions. Above all, most of the focus tended to be on the current constitutional and political developments as well as the movement towards political independence. The Commission was neither helpful in as far as dealing with the question racial discrimination as it confronted Swazi society around this time. In the light of these

[134]*Ibid.*

[135]Kunene, "British Colonial Policy...", pp. 407 - 408.

[136] Swaziland– Report of Committee of Enquiry into Unrest in Swaziland, 25th June- 8th July, 1963, p. 11.

[137]*Ibid.*

developments there is little wonder that the Inquiry vigorously stated that, "We consider therefore, that the Constitution should be implemented without further delay, and elections held in time for the first sitting of the new Legislative Council to take place in early 1964".[138] The Inquiry however, predicted the imminent elections would be accompanied by certain disturbances. In its prediction it asserted that

> The struggle for political power is bound to grow in intensity as the time for elections draws near. Poqo and Trotskyite elements who are known to be in the country and who are accustomed to the use of violence, may well resort to sabotage of installations if they are permitted to remain in the country. The youth wing of the NNLC under new and more ruthless leaders may well renew its intimidation and cause widespread damage and alarm by, for example, setting fire to forests, and attacking isolated farms, e.t.c.[139]

That the Commission largely focussed on security at the expense of the causes of industrial discontent implied that the recommendations it would make would be far from addressing workers aspirations. The 1963 annual report, for example, noted that, "There was an upward trend in wages and some progress was made in the improvement of conditions of employment".[140] However, it was not simply that trend which African workers sought; they were demanding equal treatment with their European counterparts in the industrial arena. Though there was some attempt by the Commission to recommend certain improvements in living and working conditions at the workplace such improvements were far from satisfying African workers who essentially concerned with racial injustices at the workplace.

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[138]*Ibid*., pp. 31 - 32.

[139]*Ibid*., p. 22.

[140]Great Britain, *Swaziland Annual Report*(London : Her Majesty' Stationery Service, 1963), p. 5.

7. 14 Conclusion

First and foremost, it has been argued in this chapter that the industrial unrest which crippled productivity in major industrial sites in the country was largely a result of discriminatory policies against black employees. Such policies as has been shown were part and parcel of the management culture in the industrial arena. In this way industrial areas served as unequalled sites for breeding racist practises and policies against blacks. The countrywide unrest was, therefore, a reaction to these industrial cultures.

It has also been pointed out that when workers embarked on strike action they were protesting against the racial division of labour which was characterised by a hierarchy in which blacks occupied a subordinate position in relation to whites. Under this arrangement blacks lived and worked under very poor conditions compared to their white counterparts. Contrary to the view promoted by government that, relations between the races were harmonious, the Inquiry's warning and prediction indicated the broader conflict in the race relations of the country and that the recent unrest had not led to any decisive resolution of the matter. These strikes occurred at a time not only when the British sought to use Swaziland as a model for harmonious race relations but also as a case for defending what they considered to have been the virtues of colonialism.

Owing to the wave of anti-colonial struggles and nationalist politics that had surged across most African countries, when the industrial strikes hit a country where labour was barely unionised, nationalist politicians took a leading role in the organisation and representation of labour grievances thus, bringing in the dimension of decolonisation into these unrests. Similarly, Cooper has shown that although elsewhere in Africa colonial officials tried to control the African working class, African Trade Union and political leaders used the language of social change to claim equality and power. During the 1962 / 3 strikes in Swaziland there was a close collaboration between labour and politics. In this sense the trade union struggles for economic rights, as Cooper has pointed out were subordinated to those of African Liberation; nationalism being the dominant ideology of the latter.

While in these other contexts this development and the failure of the post - World War II development strategies made colonial officials understand that their time in Africa was up, in Swaziland the tide was repressed and the process of abdicating colonial responsibility was only gradually considered. Cooper has argued that the kind of content colonial society that the Labour Government had envisaged in Africa was superseded by workers' strikes and independence movements. However, when the strikes hit Swaziland in the 1960s the Conservative Government was back in power and characteristic of its operations, repressive methods such as the use of military power in dealing with labour issues, were being used to enforce "law and order".

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