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UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND

A F R I C A N  S T U D I E S  I N S T I T U T E

African Studies Seminar Paper
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Title: Batons and Bare Heads: The Strike at Amato Textile, February 1958.

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# BATONS AND BARE HEADS: THE STRIKE AT AMATO TEXTILE, FEBRUARY 1958

*by Philip Bonner and Rob Lambert*

> Liverpool Street, Benoni. On any Friday, passing by, you can hear the buzz of work inside the Amato Textile factory. Outside, women gabble, catching passers-by to buy steaming mealies from the seives on the braziers. But mostly they wait for the workers to come out of the factory with their pay packets. About 3,700 men work in this factory.
>
> But this is Friday, February 14th. Not a sound from the factory. The doors are locked ... pay negotiations between the works committee of Amato representing the workers, and the managers have broken down. On the previous Wednesday afternoon the workers had stopped work. Urged back on Thursday morning by their union bosses, they found the doors locked, and policemen standing by to keep them out. They had been told: "Come back on Friday morning to get your pay. You're fired."
>
> Now it's 1 o'clock, Friday. Standing outside the factory one can hear the songs of many people. From Daveyton, the Benoni location, and Wattville people were coming singing "Sifuna 'imali" (we want money) ... Also "we want pound a day".
>
> White and black policemen were standing all round the factory. Altogether maybe 150.
>
> DRUM April 1958 (44-5)

The cadets from the police training school at Benoni[1] were not standing by simply to acquire first hand experience of crowd control. They had been assigned an actively repressive role in a carefully orchestrated plot aimed at crushing Amato's workers and the organisation of the Sactu affiliated African Textile Workers Union in the plant. According to a confidential memorandum drawn up by the Amato management later in 1958, the company had already decided "with the approval of the Department of Native Affairs, the Department of Labour and Mr Kushke, the General Manager of the Industrial Development Corporation of South Africa Ltd ... to make a firm stand".[2] First intimations of how firm that stand

would be came when Saracen armoured cars had marshalled a 2,000 strong column of workers along the seventeen kilometres between Daveyton and the plant that Friday morning, making what was perhaps their first appearance against domestic opposition.[3] It soon transpired that the police were also ready to unleash the full force at their command at the first sign of unruliness or unrest. Less visible, in the background stood the representatives of the local and central state who were preparing to bring the newly assembled armory of repressive legislation to bear on the striking Amato workers, once they had been softened up by batons and boots.

For most of that Friday, worker discipline held firm, and it was only after two factory sections were called simultaneously to collect their pay, and were milling around in front of the gates that the police were given the opportunity to act. A solid wall of khaki charged the waiting strikers, and the workers scattered in confusion. Fleeing, they heard behind them "the rattle of batons on bare heads". A scattering of possessions littered the factory square in their wake - dumb testimony to the panic of their flight. "Hats, coats, bundles and bicycles lay where they had fallen" wrote the Drum's reporter on the scene.[4]

> "We all ran right across a fence - we flattened it" recalls one veteran today. "The police were hitting us with batons and the workers were throwing stones at the police. If you lose a shoe, you can't go back and fetch it. That was the day I lost my wedding hat. It was a new hat I bought from Jay's outfitters."[5]

The calculated ferocity of the attack can be gauged from the number of casualties sustained. According to union sources[6] 73 people were hurt, a number of them seriously. Organisational damage was equally severe, as the company and the state concentrated their energies on crushing organised worker opposition. By its own account the company "eliminated about 1,000 trouble-makers and re-organised their production and European management".[7] 340 workers were black-listed, and excluded from employment through influx control regulations. Richard Luthi who had been at the centre of the strike was endorsed out to Nyqamakwe in the Transkei and given twenty four hours in which to leave. He later obtained a permit from the Native Commissioner of his home district enabling him to return to Benoni where his family had remained. Upon arrival he was given 30 days by the Benoni Registering officer to arrange for his family to depart since he was listed as an agitator.[8] A neighbour of one of our informants, Magnedi, was left unemployed for 20 years as a result of these measures. Still others fled to escape arrest. One of the key shop stewards was spirited away by the A.T.W.I.U. and spent the next two months in other union centres.[9]

As a repressive response this clearly ranks as exceptional even by standards of its time. Its effect was calamitous. "The labour trouble has not recurred" Amato's report smugly concluded.[10] Union organisation at Amato Textiles, the heart of the African Textile Workers Industrial union had been comprehensively crushed. Organisation would not again begin to take root until 1979.[11]

The Amato strike has yet to receive serious scholarly attention, an oversight which reflects wider areas of neglect in the history of the workers' struggle in the 1940s and 1950s. Not only has there been an almost total absence of studies of factory based struggles, but there still exists no really comprehensive analysis of a black or non-racial industrial union. Partly because of this, one of the key questions of worker and popular politics in the 1950s, remains unresolved and indeed largely unposed - and that is, why did the struggles of the new industrial proletariat, which came into existence during and after the Second World War, assume largely popular or community based forms? And, conversely, why was factory based organisation so fragmented, so ineffectual and small?

Edward Feit begins to address himself to these questions. Criticising Sactu's pre-occupation with political struggle, he attributes their relative weakness as an organised industrial presence to their diffusion of energies into these populist channels. At the same time he makes virtually no effort to examine the activities of Sactu's industrially based affiliates on the ground, preferring to concentrate on the co-ordinating bodies' political role. Even more startling perhaps, he makes no single reference to the strike at Amato, which pointed unequivocally to the organised strength of the African Textile Workers Industrial Union on the factory floor and alludes only to the Amato workers' role in the Benoni £1 a day campaign.[12] Other writers have plugged in some of these gaps. Luckhardt and Wall in their recent history of Sactu provide a wealth of detail on individual union activities, but present it in an unsystematic and episodic fashion, so that strikes at Amato and elsewhere are not grounded in any firm understanding of organisational imperatives, organisational constraints and organisational development.[13] In the end it is left to Betty du Toit, herself an organiser for the T.W.I.U., to give some idea of the depth and durability of the union presence in Amato and of the power the workers were able to exert within cramped confines of factory floor.[14] Yet even here, as with the only other systematic study of a Sactu affiliated union in the period - that by Goode on the FCWU - organisational gains are described but not adequately explained and are often subsidiary to wider political concerns.[15] What is still missing from all of these studies is an understanding of the trajectories of capital accumulation and proletarianisation, less so on a national level than on an industry and regionally specific basis, and of the kinds of consciousness and organisational possibilities that this evoked and made available. In this study of the Amato strike we reconnoitre that route. We would like to stress that much research - in particular interviewing - remains to be done. Here we present an interim report.

## "A REAL STRIKE"[16]

The Amato strike really was an exceptional event. Although strikes by African workers had reached their highest level since the mid 1940s between the years 1955 and 1957 they were as a rule relatively small and insignificant. Thus although 113 officially recorded strikes took place in 1957, only 6,158 workers were involved, while in the following year Amato workers accounted for the

bulk of the 7,128 workers who took part in sixty four strikes.[17] Numerically alone, the Amato strike was unusual, but its uniqueness extends well beyond that. What marks it out as a truly significant event is the depth and durability of organisation from which the strike sprang. To anticipate our argument somewhat, it was the factory floor strength and grass roots militancy nurtured in a decade long struggle at Amato, that evoked the exceptionally repressive response of the state - not simply the outbreak of the strike or the fact that 3,700 workers were involved.

The significance of sustaining an organised presence in a factory of 3,700 for over a decade can best be gauged by setting it against the record of other black worker organisations at the time. A persistent feature of black worker organisation over the decades has been organisational weakness allied to apparent numerical strength. At the apogee of African trade union organisation in 1945 the Council of Non-European Trade Unions could boast a membership of 158,000. How much organisational muscle this represented is nonetheless open to question since this formidable total was then sub-divided into 119 separate affiliated unions.[18] Even from this summary survey a picture emerges of fragmented and unstable organisation, which except under the boom conditions of a wartime economy was unlikely to maintain a position of strength. As South Africa's over-heated economy cooled down under the blast of competition after the war this vulnerability was confirmed. Union membership fell off sharply, and most affiliates collapsed, so that by 1949 a full sixty six CNETU unions had foundered. By 1955 when the rump of the organisation joined SACTU only 12,000 members remained.[19] SACTU reproduced a number of these flaws. Starting from a membership of 20,000 workers in 1956 it grew to 53,000 strong in 1961 but once again this was spread over 19 affiliates to begin with and fifty one affiliated unions at the end. Particularly striking in this instance is the regional distribution of SACTU support. While the bulk of CNETU membership was concentrated in the Transvaal (80,000 in 1945). SACTU's membership in the economic hub of the Rand stagnated at very low levels between 1956 and 1961.[20] Thus in the fastest industrialising area of the South African economy membership stayed static at around the 15,000 mark, representing a proportional decline from fifty per cent to thirty per cent of SACTU's membership as a whole.[21]

The crushing of the Amato workers contributed significantly to this trend, but his only serves to underline that for almost a decade Amato workers represented a substantial proportion of SACTU organised workers on the Rand, and an even greater proportion of unionised African labour. Here again the organisation in Amato displays some exceptional features, and was, as will be suggested later, a harbinger of the future.

Linda Ensor has argued that the dilemma of African trade unions in the fifties was that they

> "could only be economically effective if subordinate to the registered trade unions and that if this economic subordination (was) rejected, the only alternative (was) involvement in the political struggle".

She continues "Given the legal non-recognition of

> African trade unions, the intransigence of employers against co-operating with them, and the intervention of the State when strikes are employed to demand recognition, the only way of influencing employers to win concessions is by means of the influence of registered trade unions ... By acting as a pressure on the registered trade union the African union can win real though limited economic gains for its members, for example, wage increases, deductions for benefit schemes, union access to factories, employers co-operation in dealing with complaints, etc."[22]

SACTU's experience bears out much of her claim. The major organised blocks in the Congress were, those of Textile (TWIU : ATWIU) Food and Canning (FCWU : AFCWU) and the Laundry, Dyers and Cleaning Workers Union (LDCWU : ALDCWU). Much of the explanation for the success, perhaps even for the survival of the African parallel branches of these unions, was the industrial leverage afforded by their registered "parent".[23] The AFCWU for example used the registered branch to extend agreements reached at Conciliation Boards to its African Members, and the TWIU and LDCWU did the same.[24]

Yet here again Amato workers were in a league of their own. Practically the entire labour force in Amato was African, and it was their collective strength rather than any prior agreement negotiated by a registered union and extended to its unregistered African counterpart which was responsible for the remarkable organisational gains Amato workers made.[25] To sum up then, in the wider setting of South African labour, Amato workers were exceptional; on the Rand they were unique.

## RUSSIANS, RIOTS AND SPIVS

How is the peculiar character of Amato to be explained? Both community and factory contexts have to be taken into account. Let us begin with the community. 'Community' is one of the most overworked and underdefined terms in South Africa's political vocabulary. What is almost always connoted is some notion of 'community of interests', of a more or less cohesive 'people', sharing a common place of domicile and common conditions of life in a wider racially repressive system. Not only has the term gained enormous currency in recent political debate, but it has also been read back uncritically into the past. Reasonably cohesive popular communities are assumed to have existed in the townships from the time the urban population began to expand. Failure to mobilise or more particularly to sustain mobilisation among this urban throng, is attributed either to a failure of leadership, or to state repression. Either way, 'the community's' own characteristics are not held responsible; it has been either trampled under or let down.

The same flaw is reproduced in more materialist accounts. Here, classes defined at the level of relations of production somehow naturally and inevitably engage in appropriate forms of class action. Studies of the post World War II African working class have yet to break free of this structuralist mould. Working

class action is reflexive, unmediated by culture, ideology or sometimes organisation. CNETU rises like a phoenix from the ashes of the I.C.U., a natural outgrowth of the new industrial working class. Its collapse elicits a deafening academic silence, only broken by faint invocations of fragile organisation or state repression. Attention immediately switches to the formation of a much reduced but still insurgent SACTU.[26] The historical account is peppered with inexplicable gaps.

Such silences can often be traced to a common source. Certain kinds of actions are read off or deduced from given relations of production. When unearthed in particular historical situations, they are then inflated out of all proportion and deemed archetypical of class action of the time. Yet as O'Meara observes "in any conjuncture the unity of this or that class cannot simply be read off from relations of production, but needs to be consructed via the ensemble of concrete organisational and ideological forms in and through which that class exists".[27] What is implied here is the possiblity of disunity and division, more especially in moments when the working class is still in the process of being formed. At such times it is the bearer of a multiplicity of discourses, of traditions, of organisational practices and forms, some of which feed into a more cohesive working class culture, others of which fade away. In South African history it has been the 'forerunner' of more 'authentic' class action that have generally attracted most attention. The 'blind alleys', the 'lost causes' have been ignored, or worse still, have not been noticed, even where they were the most common or the most representative forms of popular response.[28] Our understanding of the trajectory of popular or working class action has, as a result, been radically impoverished. Organisational practices and forms are transposed unproblematically from the 1970s and 1980s to the 1940s and 1950s, or vice versa, as if in both periods we are dealing with basically the same thing.

Common sense, and a modicum of research tells us we are not. Benoni in 1938 was appreciably different from Benoni at the end of the war, and radically different from Benoni twenty years after. In 1938 Benoni's black population numbered 12,000 - the second largest on the Reef.[29] By 1945 this had doubled. Numbers continued to rise at roughly the same rate reaching 34,000 in 1949, and then jumping by 6,000 more at the end of 1950. By 1957 it had climbed to 77,391.[30] The town's new industrial proletariat was exceptionally diverse both in terms of origin and experience. When the Daveyton location was laid out only in 1955, housing was allocated on an ethnically zoned basis. It broke down roughly as follows:

| | Over 18 | | Under 18 | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Male | Female | Male | Female | |
| Xhosa | 1129 | 1181 | 1113 | 1199 | 4622 |
| Zulu | 1699 | 1858 | 1753 | 1878 | 7193 |
| Swazi/Ndebele | 1977 | 2159 | 2286 | 2393 | 8815 |
| Northern Sotho | 2238 | 2214 | 2352 | 2427 | 9231 |
| Southern Sotho | 965 | 1096 | 953 | 1009 | 4023 |
| Shangane/Tonga | 551 | 546 | 562 | 562 | 2221 |
| Venda | 151 | 147 | 129 | 146 | 573 |
| | 8710 | 9201 | 9153 | 9614 | 36678 |

31

Such categories mask as much as they reveal. At best they are linguistic groupings (e.g. Northern Sotho): at worst they group together peoples who have no common cultural or political heritage at all (e.g. the Swazi and the Ndebele). Nevertheless for the present purposes they serve to indicate, however imperfectly, the ethnic diversity of Benoni's newly urbanised population. Experiences of proletarianisation also varied widely. Numerically preponderant among the most recent arrivals were labour tenants from white farms. Streaming in from the Transvaal, the Free State and Natal, they smuggled themselves into the urban centre by first taking work on the small holdings round Benoni. Once familiarised with the urban job market they then vanished into the lawless anonymity of the 'Indian Bazaar', only to reappear, ethnically wrapped, in one of the new 'ethnic' units of Daveyton location.[32]

This was the path of Paulos Nkhosi, who was ultimately employed in Amato.[33] Almost as common a route was to accept a mine contract at one of neighbouring mines, and use this as a staging post into the town. Daniel Duze first began work underground at Modder East mine, then graduated to surface work, and then employed the skills gained in this fashion to secure employment at Burmco - a rubber factory in Benoni which was then expanding its work force to make tyres for the war. Duze finally ended up in the highest paying department in Amato.

In the scramble for accommodation he was equally successful. From his initial base in Modder East compound, he moved to a shack in a yard in the old location, and finally, by a ruse, secured a house in the new location at Daveyton.[34] Jackson Nomsobo took an identical path. From his home in Tsolo, Transkei, he took a contract at New Modder Mines in 1944. Two years later he moved on to Dunswart Iron and Steel, substituting the Dunswart hostel for the compound at Modder East. 1948 saw Jackson employed at J & C Tools, during which time he took up residence in Benoni's old location. From there he moved job and place of residence several times, ending up ultimately working in Amato and living in Daveyton.[35] Duze and Nomsobo were perhaps unusually successful. Both were clearly unusually enterprising and Nomsobo had a standard 5 education. Even so, their route to the towns was followed by thousands of others, most notably mine workers from Basutoland who came to constitute the scourge of the Reef when combined into the ubiquitous gangs of 'Russians'.[36]

Still other elements of the urban population were recruited directly from the Reserves. In 1950 the influx control officer of Benoni was complaining irritably about the large numbers of unemployed in the locations and attributing this directly to the action of employers.

> "Firms continued to employe natives from the reserves in preference to local labour. They can pay them a lower salary and because of the difficulty of again being employed after discharge ...they work harder and longer."

(The words "they can pay them a lower salary" were later deleted by resolution of the Native Affairs Committee and substituted by "they find such foreign natives adaptable").[37] Finally there was the resettled core of Benoni's established black urban population in whose yards many of the newer arrivals lived. Among them a Marabi style urban culture had developed which greeted the new arrivals with certain distance and disdain.[38]

Benoni's black population was thus both layered and fragmented. While common privations, shared conditions of life in Benoni's unhealthy, congested locations gradually distilled a common working class culture, in the early 1950s, for the majority of its population, this was still in the process of being formed.

Life in the township was also extremely unstable and insecure. Although the sex and age ratio show a slight preponderance of women and children (see table I) which might be read as suggesting settled family life and permanent urbanisation, many of these unions seem to have been contracted in the town. As a result for much of the 1940s and 1950s there was a significant section of the population which was rootless, unstable and had yet to settle down. Temporary unions, desertions of wives, "unattached Basuto women", multiplied causing great concern on Benoni's town council, who feared the social problems that this would spawn.[39]

Such instability and insecurity was compounded by intense pressure on virtually every kind of urban service and resource. While population doubled during the war, virtually no new houses were constructed due to shortages of materials and the diversion of funds to other channels.[40] Only towards the end of the 1950's was this backlog wiped out. With new arrivals streaming in daily, intense competition was bred over what meagre resources existed. In a manner reminiscent of urban life all over Africa, new forms of combination were created, with the object of ensuring some measure of collective security,[41] many of which were ethnically tinged. Among the most conspicuous of these were gangs, notably the dreaded "Russians" who were distinguished by the Sotho blanket in which their adherents were clad. As these groups began to carve up the location into separate fiefdoms so-called "faction fights" flared up. Beginning in 1947, these had become so violent and uncontrolled that Benoni gained the reputation of being the crime centre of the Rand.[42] Much to the indignation of the Benoni City Times the town was described by the British newspaper the Daily Mirror as 'a location thirty miles from Johannesburg' where violence was endemic.[43] To begin with conflict was located among

rival factions of 'Basotho', e.g. the Motsieng and the Molapo.[44]

By August 1949 it had widened to embrace conflicts between 'Xhosa' and 'Basuto', in the course of which many serious injuries were sustained.[45] Ethnic conflict flared intermittently for the rest of the next decade. In 1954 Piet Pheko recalls 'Zulus' and 'Basutos' flocking in from all over the reef to fight it out after a 'Russian' had been killed in Benoni's hostel and the 'Russians' had killed a 'Zulu' in revenge. "The 'Russians' were clever" recalls Pheko, who stood on the roof of a neighbouring Indian shop to get a grand-stand view of the fight. A small band of 'Russians' lured the 'Zulus' on to waste land near the Zinchem factory, where they were surrounded by a mass of hitherto concealed 'Basutos', and then were hacked down.[46] Somewhat later, in March 1957, this more generalised 'ethnic' conflict erupted once again when a gang of Xhosa children attacked a Swazi school, killing one pupil. Children poured out on the streets and soon parents became embroiled. Because of a number of Zulu casualties Zulu parents joined the fray on the side of the Swazi, while it was rumoured that 'the Sotho' would join the 'Xhosa' camp. Schools closed and 2,000 workers stayed away from work for several days until the conflict had simmered down.[47]

Observers described these disturbances as 'faction fights' or 'tribal wars' as if by so defining them their genesis had been explained. In fact, these conflicts reflected an urgent quest to secure the barest necessities of life, like a job, or a roof over one's head, in a situation in which such resources were in desperately short supply. Jobs were, all too often, people's gift. Jackson Nomsobo speaks of payments of up to £25 to secure a particularly prized job in Amato.[48] Piet Pheko remembers how African Malleable Factories was taken over by Basotho 'boss boys' and clerks, so that it became a 'Russian' preserve.[49] Daniel Duze recalls queueing outside of Amato's gates for several weeks in 1950 waiting hopelessly for work.[50] After another riot in 1950, in which a white policeman was killed, the Location Advisory Board, representing the longer settled black population, complained bitterly that "the unemployed of almost the whole Reef are accommodated in the Indian section."[51] For some it was a luxury to work.

Such patterns were not immutable. In October 1954, for example, a shortage of labour had grown up on the East Rand, which was so serious that influx control regulations had to be loosened to allow workers on mine contracts and from the farms to enter heavy industry. The regulations were not re-instated until 1957, and the easing of the employment situation which was thus reflected no doubt influenced the form and phasing of popular struggles.[52]

What remained more intractable for most of the 1950s were shortages of housing. It was the need to control such resources - whether they be jobs, houses or women - that underlay much of the so -called faction fighting of the time. Following one particularly violent incident in 1949, the Township Superintendent commented:

> "It is known but not proved that for some time these (gangsters) have extorted considerable sums

> of money from the unfortunate and gullible native people by every conceivable pretext such as the offer of physical and legal protection, housing material, representation to Council, employment, etc.
>
> The outbreak of fighting is usually an indication that a rival racketeer is trying to gain control. The prevailing conditions set out below make such lucrative business."

He went on to list the following factors

> "1) Lack of proper houseing
> 2) Conditions in the Asiatic area
> 3) Surplus of unattached Basutho women in the area
> 4 Difficulty of control of entry in to the location area
> 5) Lack of effective police force."[53]

While Sotho miners or ex-miners grouped themselves into ethnic factions for collective security, other layers of the town's black population escaped their common misery by resorting to other means. Citing an unnamed Council official, in May 1950, the Benoni City Times reported:

> "There are also the urbanised natives who despoil the better-class natives and who are largely responsible for domestic servants and native males leaving domestic services. These natives ... have largely emigrated to the Reef towns from the farms. Once here they take any job until they settle down - then, their imaginations are fed by other natives, they refuse to work as domestics or farm hands because the pay isn't big enough
>
> These natives develop into Spivs and are the curse of the location. Other natives working for low wages, but quite content, have their minds poisoned by the spiv and won't work. The result is that many natives join the ranks of the dissatisfied."[54]

Despite the crude stereotyping and internal inconsistencies contained in this official's argument, at least two insights emerge; firstly the differentiation and layering of the urban population whereby one sector was relatively more advantaged in terms of houses and jobs; secondly, an introversion of competition and conflict along internal lines of fracture. What remains missing from this official characterisation is the extent to which ethnicity and layering interpenetrated or overlapped. At the present stage of research such issues remain opaque. What is apparent nonetheless is that some connections can be made. In the 1949 riot between 'Xhosas' and 'Basutos' "the Xhosas approached the emergency camp from the direction Wattsville" squatter camp being the emergency home of the more recently Basotho[55] A similar, though not entirely analogous, context framed the fight of 1954, where the 'Zulus' dominated the hostels at Benoni, while the 'Russians' controlled the Indian section.[56]

The basic thrust of the argument so far is that the scale and rapidity of urbanisation, the lack of basic services and resources, and the multiple lines of fracture in Benoni's urban population ensured that popular energies would be absorbed in communal struggles aimed at minimally meeting basic wants. These same factors likewise inhibited, sustained large scale political mobilisation, although from the May Day march of 1950 through to the stay-at-home of 1957, Benoni witnessed some of the ANC's most militant struggles on the Rand.[57] Benoni's proletariat was in the process of being formed - no coherent popular, let alone working class consciousness had been forged. If anything, a diffuse Africanism was the most likely and available rallying cry, not just against whites, but, in the case of Benoni, against Indians as well.[58] This was the appeal fo squatter leaders like Mpanza and Mabuya, and it must be counted one of the ANC's main achievements of the period that a multi-racial position was preserved. Failing larger than life revivalist/Africanist leaders, workers looked to smaller-scale patrons and factions in an attempt to improve their lot.[59] Only gradually and spasmodically did political and trade union organisation take on those roles.

Nowhere is this more clear than in the squatter movement which began in 1945. Benoni's squatter movement closely resembles that led by James Mpanza in Orlando the previous year. Like Mpanza, its leader Harry Mabuya, was diminutive in stature, flamboyant in character, Africanist in appeal and well read in law. He also managed the same happy marriage of self-seeking opportunism and wider public concern.[60] In 1945 when congestion in the so-called Asiatic section of the location was reaching crisis point, Mabuya formed his "African Housing and Rates Board". Sub-tenants in the area were encouraged to subscribe to the Board, and to refuse to pay the inflated rentals being demanded by their landlords. Mabuya meanwhile bought tents from war disposal stores and when the sub-tenants were predictably evicted, he housed them on vacant council land just west of present Wattville. 'Tent Town' grew rapidly and the council's hand was forced. An officially sanctioned Emergency Camp was established and Mabuya gained the credit. Until his death his slate of candidates regularly topped the vote in the camp's Advisory Board elections.[61]

Numerous squatter communities sprang up in similar fashion mostly on small-holdings round Benoni, the most spectacular being that which in June 1950 occupied land set aside for an industrial township at Apex.[62] Again the council's hand was forced, and the new township at Daveyton was the ultimate result.[63] Ironically, it was only with the Nationalist government's 'site and service' scheme and the sub-economic housing programme that a settled urban community began to take shape and that a more coherent working class culture began to emerge.

## "TWENTY YEARS AHEAD OF ITS TIME"[64]

If the community context of Benoni's workers inhibited working class and even popular organisation, so too did the uneven and incomplete character of Benoni's industrialisation. Kaplan, Bloch and Webster among others have emphasised that while there was

a massive proliferation of industrial establishments during the Second World War, and while the average size of establishment measured in terms of workers employed registered an appreciable expansion, the capital intensity of manufacturing actually dropped during the war. The immediate post-war period witnessed a reversal of this trend as excess profits accumulated during the war were funnelled into machinery and plant.[65] Even so, no thoroughgoing transformation of the process of production was accomplished for another decade. The implications of this pattern of arrested transformation were that the existing labour process and division of labour had yet to be fundamentally disturbed. Most factories remained small; most African workers were still consigned to relatively unskilled work. The conditions for strong factory-based organisation and for a strong workers' movement had yet to be set in place.

Tables 2 and 3 illustrate the point.

TABLE 2

Number of africans employed in Industry in the Benoni area 1949[66]

| | |
|---|---|
| African Malleable Foundries | 289 |
| Anglo-American Corporation | 85 |
| Amato Textile | 1724 |
| Alexander and Company | 6 |
| Modder Bee Gold Mine (casual) | 11 |
| Modder Bee Gold Mine (casual) | 9 |
| Bader and Company | 138 |
| Burm Company | 202 |
| Benoni Engineering Works | 358 |
| Cape Asbestos and Insulation | 113 |
| Colonial Timbers | 73 |
| Cornthwaite and Jane | 52 |
| Delfos Ltd | 91 |
| Dunswart Iron and Steel Foundries | 961 |
| Eclipse Tube Mill Lines | 76 |
| Wright Boag and Head Wrightson | 537 |
| H. Incledon & Company | 53 |
| Industrial Iron & Steel Foundries | 56 |
| Prima Iron & Steel Foundries | 136 |
| Parrack and Till | 94 |
| Reef Timbers | 120 |
| Robert Hudson and Sons | 115 |
| Rand Milling Timbers | 43 |
| Standard Brass Iron & Steel Foundry | 230 |
| Van Ryn Estate Sand Plant | 132 |
| Aitken Engineering Works | 43 |
| Benoni Welding and Cutting Works | 11 |
| Benoni Steel Products | 12 |
| Benoni Lumber Mills | 25 |
| Benoni Stone Crushers | 31 |
| F.M. Brewis | 23 |
| J.J. Botha | 23 |

| | |
|---|---|
| Coronant Foundaries | 21 |
| Express Fire Supply | 14 |
| Far East Crushers | 31 |
| Hume Pipes | 36 |
| Modder Bee Plantations | 33 |
| Precision Equipment | 9 |
| Pyramid Sand & Stone Supply | 22 |
| Scoop Industries | 20 |
| Stewart Raeburn | 32 |
| W.S. Thomas & Taylor | 32 |
| Thermal Welding Works | 35 |
| Vulcan Engineering Works | 22 |
| African Tile Company | 23 |
| | 6218 |

| | |
|---|---|
| 828 | municipal employees |
| 600 | government service |
| 2675 | domestic servants |
| 4783 | trade and others |
| 697 | farm labourers |
| 9538 | |

TABLE 3

Workers employed by sector - November 1957[67]

| | |
|---|---|
| Agriculture | 815 |
| Brickworks | 56 |
| Industry | 11030 |
| Building | 1251 |
| Government Depts | 149 |
| S.A. Rand | 335 |
| Municipality | 1168 |
| Prov. Admin. | 100 |
| Commerce | 3672 |
| Hotels | 177 |
| Domestics | 1684 |
| | 20437 |

What emerges very clearly from these figures is that industrial workers still only represented about half of the urban employed; that Amato workers accounted for more than a quarter of this figure, and that Amato is quite exceptional in terms of the size of work force employed. This very disparity thus provides an early intimation of why working class organisation at the point of production was so limited in Benoni, and why Amato was such a notable exception to this pattern. To explore the issue further a more detailed analysis of the textile industry needs to be made.

The textile industry can in many ways be regarded as the pacemaker of industrialisation in South Africa. In much the same way

as the struggle of the Amato workers was a harbinger of the workers' struggle of the future, so the textile industry as a whole in some senses prefigured the path of South African secondary industrialisation. In the immediate aftermath of war the textile industry provided the blueprint for the import-substitution model of secondary industrialisation. In 1948 textile imports comprised between one quarter and one fifth of total imports into the Union. With a view to reducing South Africa's import bill and to promoting South African industrialisation the South African government embarked in 1947 on a programme of actively fostering the expansion of textile production. The Industrial Development Corporation primed the pump by putting up several million pounds worth of capital, and found ready collaborators in a number of foreign industrialists.[68] Rising wage costs among the more advanced industrialised countries were eating in to the profit margins of many expatriate textile concerns. Compared with most manufacturing industries cotton production was characterised by exceptionally high wage costs as a proportion of total costs of production. The strategy that ultimately evolved was by the textile industry world-wide was therefore that of decentralising production to low wage areas of the world.[69] Facilitating the shift was the relatively high degree of mechanisation which the industry had attained, since this allowed it to move to areas where labour, to quote the Board of Trade and Industry's report of 1951, was on the whole of an "unskilled agricultural type".[70] On this basis an alliance was struck between foreign capital and the state. The state guaranteed favourable conditions of production including contributions towards the capital costs. Foreign capital contributed capital, but above all technology and expertise.[71] As a result the first cotton textile mill in South Africa was established in 1947 (Amato). Two more were constructed by 1948 and by 1950 yet a further five had been built. Reflecting broader shifts in the character and composition of the industry, factories were large, they employed substantial complements of labour and the machinery was technologically advanced.[72]

The new textile plants that dotted the country provided a more favourable, if not more congenial, environment in which worker organisation could take root than existed elsewhere or had been present before. As a result of the mechanised nature of production the majority of workers fell into semi-skilled operative categories.

U.S. FIGURES

| | Cotton spinning | Cotton weaving | whole industry |
|---|---|---|---|
| Unskilled | 15,3% | 25% | 20,6% |
| Semi-skilled | 26,3% | 28,5% | 56,2% |
| Skilled | 8,4% | 46,5% | 23,2% |

(73)

For African labour this meant elevation out of the ranks of the unskilled to a position which by virture of the amount of time

and money expended on training commanded a far greater measure of bargaining power. For white workers, conversely, it meant displacement, or devaluation of skills - usually the former, which re-inforced the predominance of black workers in these grades.

The implications of such a radical reshaping of the customary division of labour are brought into sharper focus if one considers the attributes generally accorded to this category of mill worker.

> "Semi-skilled workers" the U.S. Bureau of Labour statistics observed "are engaged in occupations requiring the exercise of manipulative ability of a high order, but limited to a well defined work routine, or work in which lapses of performance would cause extensive damage to product or equipment."[74]

The last phrase hints at the achilles heel of the new generation of factory - the need to prevent breakdowns in production when expensive machinery was at work. It also pin-points a new site of worker power. Because of

> "The high capitalisation of the new textile industry 'the *B.T.I. report noted*' (*and*) an account of the modern high-prductive machinery that has been installed in a period when prices were twice those in the immediate pre-war period, it is essential to reduce overheads by working the machinery for two or three shifts."[75]

To maintain profitability, in short, machinery had to be kept in more or less continuous production. Production stoppages were costly; dislocations of production were, by implication, a vastly more significant lever of worker power.

Such characteristics were common to the textile industry as a whole. To cite the B.T.I. report once more "the products are ... to a large extent competitive ... the basic manufacturing processes are to a very large extent similar and the type of labour required is very much the same."[76] Accordingly, the T.W.I.U and the A.T.W.I.U. were able to organise increasingly effectively over the industry nation-wide.[77] Even so, the Amato factory did present more than usually favourable conditions. To begin with it drew its labour from the permanently urbanised population of Benoni's locations. The reason is uncertain, but most likely explanation is that it served drastically to reduce labour turn-over and absenteeism which stood up to 400% in the low wage rural areas such as Kingwilliamstown.[78] Such were the imperatives towards uninterrupted production that the personnel officer at Amato thoughtfully printed his own special pass complete with photograph and finger-print. In a letter to an outraged Native Commissioner he explained:

> "as you know we employ 3000 natives from all over the Reef and this firm being a government subsidised operation we must depend on our labour and cover employees as far as possible as far as absenteeism is concerned ...

> These boys are residing all over the Reef and thus travel 'to and fro' daily, some on night shift ... (Some) must leave Springs and Johannesburg at 3,00 am. you can imagine the loss in £.s.d. if you have a few hundred machines stopped owing to the fact that the boys may be arrested for a special pass."
>
> The special accordingly 'entitled' its bearer "to travel to Pretoria, Heidelberg, Nigel, Randfontein, Springs and Reef locations daily until midnight."[79]

If low labour turn-over and absenteeism was an important factor in siting the factory at Benoni, the decision did entail an offsetting cost. Basic wages were set at higher levels than elsewhere, while labour stability also permitted more stable worker organisation.[80]

One further weapon was also denied the Amato management, as well as the industry nation-wide, though its significance was probably much greater for Amato. According to the Factories Act 1941, and in conformity with International Conventions, women workers, who might have worked for lower wages and so weakened the bargaining power of men, were debarred from working night shifts. The 1951 B.T.I. report approvingly quoted international moves to "revise and render more flexible the term night" in order to overcome this problem,[81] but by the late 1950s that had not been accomplished in the Republic. The TWIU had in fact bargained away this restriction in a number of worsted factories in the Cape, although on exactly what legal basis no-one was quite sure.[82] In Amato such a move was much more problematical since workers there toiled for a full twelve hours six to six shift.[83] This once again hints at peculiar characteristics of Amato not reproduced elsewhere, which helped inject such intense militancy into the work force it employed. It is to these that we now turn.

## TYCOON CAPITALISM

The special features of Amato Textiles owed much to the character of its progenitor, Reuben Amato. The eldest of a Spanish Jewish family of six, he had been forced to shoulder responsibility for his siblings, after his father died while he was still only fourteen. Seven years later he decided to emigrate to Australia to prepare 'a new life' for his family. After gambling his money away on the boat, he was dumped penniless in the Congo. Here he started business as a petty trader before eventually moving into ground nut plantations. Small scale trading with Lever Brothers soon gave way to the actual production of oil once he purchased his own oil press and entered into competition with his erstwhile trading partners. From these small beginnings Reuben clawed his way up the business ladder, gradually accumulating sufficient capital to enable him to expand his operations into South Africa. In 1941 he founded his first South African Company, National Feeds; in 1943 Amato Textiles was launched.[84]

Two features were stamped on Reuben Amato's character by these early experiences in the Congo. Firstly, a relentless drive to accumulate. Secondly, an authoritarian and highly personalised manag-

erial style. Even when his enterprises had expanded massively, he remained involved directly in every aspect of their operation, in the manner reminiscent of the late nineteenth century business tycoons. To co-directors he

> "lacked human understanding, thus riding rough-shod over people's feelings - a slave-driver in a way ... a very very tough taskmaster. He was impatient of any interference and could not deal with board meetings. The smaller private company was better suited to his style because he was a loner, an individualist - a brilliant man but pretty unpredictable. But he had to go public to secure more capital for his expansion plans."[85]

Aggresive and impatient, Amato was in constant danger of allowing his ambitions to outstrip his financial resources. A massive loan from the Industrial Development Corporation provided the basis for what soon became the largest textile factory in South Africa.[86] But still Amato could not rest. Ploughing back every cent of profits into further expansion, he more than doubled his company's assets between 1949 and 1956, lifting them from £4 to £10½ million.[87] With virtually no reserve cover the company was always financially exposed. A substantial proportion of available cash resources were permanently tied up in raw material purchases. The company employed a "rollover" system of financing which meant that jute bought in Pakistan had to be paid in full in 60 days, the cash coming from the sale of orange pockets and grain bags made from the same jute. In addition the majority of their lines were sold under contract, requiring extremely tight production schedules. Failure to complete orders within the contract deadlines meant the imposition of penalties. Company secretary de Beer reflects

> "I was in charge of finance at the time - it was hair-raising. We were on a tight rope the whole time. There was an absolute tight-ness of money because of over-expansion. ... It was a colossal affair with a turn-over of about a million rand a month."[88]

Given these constraints, continuous pressure was exerted on workers to raise profitability and to keep production on schedule. When Amato Textiles was established in 1943, the shift system - that 'boundless and ruthless extension of the working day' - comprised two shifts of 9 hours 20 minutes, the first from 5 a.m. until 2.20 p.m., and the second from 2.20 until 11.40 p.m. The machines then shut down until 5.00 the following morning. The working day was dramatically extended in 1950, with the introduction of three, twelve hour shifts. Two shifts, working six to six, would be operative in any given week,

> Monday to Saturday. This not only increased the amount of surplus extracted, but also reduced unit costs of production.[89] To maximise the gains this extended working day was combined with an intensification of

> labour and to this end the company had established a differential piece rate system, founded on low basic wage rate of £2. 2s. 6d. per week. The differential rates were ranked, starting with the highest rates, as follows: Sack sewing; Weaving and circular looms; Spinning, blowroom, winding; and the Jute section.[90]

Pressure to meet deadlines was likewise extreme, and supervisors were ruthless in disciplining workers to the 60 day roll-over rythem of production. It was this set of conditions - an extended working day, greater intensity of labour and necessarily despotic supervision - that underlay the volatile and refractory character of the workforce. Throughout the 1950s the company was wracked by work stoppages. The most vivid recollection of ex-workers from Amato are invariably the endless strikes that took place "every two weeks".[91] Daniel Duze recalls one such episode which occurred in 1952 when management tried to replace African workers with coloureds in the sack-sewing department. Workers refused to speak to anyone except Reuben Amato. Amato duly put in an appearance and settled the matter in characteristic style.

> Mr Amato hit Mr Neville, he clubs him. He want to know why he did this thing, and he calls us inside the factory.

To restore production as quickly as possible the workers' demands for no victimisation and no replacement were fully met.[92]

Duze's account conveys some sense of the tensions that were generated by the need to meet the company's extraordinarily tight production deadlines. Amato would blame Steinhardt, the production manager, for any failure to meet deadlines and Steinhardt in turn, would pressure the supervisors.

De Beer remembers:

> "Amato would come in and scream at him. Steinhardt would say, 'labour doesn't produce, there's a go slow'. There was a great deal of tension. Amato moved around the factory constantly, involving himself directly in the issues.'
>
> 'He moved around the factory, and he always used to be in a state of massive tension and anxiety.'[93]

On these conflicts, Magnedi commented:

> 'I still remember when we once made a strike - it was on a Monday - the director of the company came, Mr. Amato, he came here and he was fighting with each and every manager and foreman because production was lost, thousands of pounds of production. He was fighting with the foremen because when his car comes in from Johannesburg, each and everybody was shouting."[94]

It was these particular conditions at Amato which provided both the incentive and the space for a strong union presence. All that

was required to translate this into reality was disciplined and tactically astute worker organisation. This was supplied from both inside the factory and without. In 1951 full union recognition was conceded after a sit-in had been engineered by coloured supervisor, Don Mateman. Mateman had first encountered the tactic when working on the coal mines at Witbank, where Shangane labourers had developed "Tsamahantsi" to a fine art. A lunch hour sit-in was organized on a lawned area in front of the factory offices, normally out of bounds for the African workers. It was "a beautiful park reserved for only white girls". Workers were told to sit on the lawn together, to do nothing, and to return to work when the hooter went. The work force of over 3,000 gathered, and it had impact.

> "Workers enjoyed it. Never had they experienced such unity before. They used to look at this lush green place, but it was forbidden them. Now they broke it and sat there."

When the hooter blast signalled the end of lunch break Mateman, Cindi and the other shop stewards led the factory back to work. Disciplined unity had been asserted. The management was impressed. Mateman was immediately called to Steinhards office and the union secretary Mike Muller was summoned. Full recognition was granted - shop steward facilities, as well as stop orders, an unprecedented move for the fifties. "We know the union is responsible" Mateman was told - responsible enough, the company hoped, to prevent the endless minor stoppages.[95]

Other, more conventional strikes followed, and often served to consolidate union organisation. Factories are rarely fully organised, and constant effort is required to sustain a strong union presence. In Amato, some departments were weak - the high bonus sections in particular[96] - and there was always a steady turn-over of personnel. In these circumstances strikes could sometimes help to consolidate union organisation. Daniel Duze recalls the transformation in his own attitudes which one such confrontation wrought. Duze had no sooner secured a job at Amato in 1951 than a strike broke out. At this point Duze's awareness was at rudimentary level, but it grew through the event. "I didn't understand what they were doing inside," he says. He was given friendly advice by a junior foreman - leave the factory quickly, or else the people will beat you. "I just took up my things and go outside. I didn't know if it was a strike or what. I just see the people marching." The event led to discussion, explanation, and a request that he join the union. "There are many who were recruited after the strike. Almost all of us joined the union." With a growing commitment over time because the union gave "security", Duze soon found himself pushed to the forefront. He was elected a shop steward and in 1952 led the stoppage referred to above,

> "I was one of the organizers. I just switched off my machine. We got a symbol when we are doing that thing. We shout, Hewowee, then all the workers rush to the door."[97]

Various means were used to co-ordinate worker action. Mateman recollects:

> "There were metal containers in the factory that were used to store jute material. Workers used to beat the containers like drums. It made such a noise. Everyoneknew there was a stoppage or something happening. When a woman came into the factory, workers used to joke by beating the drums. But the union taught a big lesson - the union is discipline. This helped unity. Also, textile factories are very noisy. When the machine stops, everybody wants to know what's happening."

"Middle East" Cinde, so named by workers because he was the "trouble spot of Africa", recalled the "whispering campaigns" that were central to the planning and preparation of strike action. He said that another form of communication was "blowing in bobbins". This gave off a particular kind of whistle, and workers knew a strike was planned. At lunchtime they would all assemble on the green grass outside the administration office, the site of the historic recognition struggle - now spoken of as "freedom square" by the workers - in a show of collective strength. Workers also gathered underneath tall gum trees outside the factory where information spread between departments. The company had organized workers into football teams "Amato Roses" being one with the intention, many believed of dissipating discontent. Shop-stewards hold that this rather worked to their advantage as it provided ideal cover for strategy discussions. Workers entering one shift would also meet with the new shift outside the factory, giving brief run downs on the situation inside the plant.

Strikes were by no means uniformly successful. In May 1955 a stike over the dismissal of workers led to 163 being sentenced under the Riotous Assembles Act.[99] Later, in December of the same year over 300 workers in the spinning department stopped work after a supervisor dismissed two workers.

> "A white guy fired them and we didn't like it. We stopped our machines and called another supervisor. We say, this white guy we don't need him here. Then they called management, and management fired him."[100]

Once more, legal action was instituted against the workers. The offenders appeared in court during 1956, charged by the labour department for participating in an "illegal" strike. 202 Were found guilty.[101]

Tension was clearly rising, fed by the workers' need for higher wages on the one side and by the company's strapped financial position on the other. By 1957 the company was in deep financialy crisis. The group had expanded rapidly on the basis of extensive loan finance from the Industrial Development Corporation and Barclays bank. Both began to foreclose as they became increasingly unhappy with Reuben Amato's individualistc managerial style. He ignored the well established practice of consultations over major invest-

ment decisions, and his liberal perspective on trade unions and industrial relations issues did not square with the dominant managerial practice: non recognition and repression. It seems that Barclays and IDC with their quite considerable financial investment in the company, decided to put an end to this approach, which in their view had not succeeded in reducing the level of industrial conflict in the factory and in restoring loss to production. They therefore exerted pressure on Amato more effectively to discipline his workers. "A strong line was what they felt to be required."[102]

In six months of negotiations with the company, the union leadership came to realize that the company was incapable of offering a new wage deal.

> "Amato had financial problems and I happened to be on the spot. I had to call the workers and say: a strike is not the way to do things, you must be disciplined. Don't demand it now. The union asked the workers to give the employers a chance to raise the money."[103]

At a crucial meeting, immediately prior to the strike, Ruben Amato pleaded for time.

> "He wasn't in a position to give. He had borrowed money from many people and they were squeezing him to pay. He stood up at the negotiations and said, "Look, fellows, I have no more money." He stood up and emptied his pockets and said "I'm finished." And the workers said, "No, how can you be finished?" He replied, "Look I am finished, but if you give me a chance, give me just two weeks of production, while I'm trying to negotiate for money". We understood his position."[104]

The union leadership may have understood it, but the workers in Amato were in no mood to listen, and from here the conflict began to unfold with all the inevitability of a Greek tragedy. Basic wage rates at Amato had remained stationary for the whole decade, while the cost of living had continued to climb. With the move from Apex squatter camp to Daveyton, where over half of Amato's workers now lived, rent and transport costs had soared. House rentals increased from 15/- to £3 a month, so that many tenants began to fall into arrears and evictions began.[105] Between 900 and 1000 tenants were being interviewed by Daveyton's Location Superintendent each month of 1957 for being in arrears of rent, and ejectment orders jumped from eighty five in August to 412 in September of the same year.[106]

> "If you are in arrears, they wake you up early in the morning - about 2 o'clock, 3 o'clock or 4 o'clock, take you to the administration board and ask lots of questions. Where you are employed, how much do you get? Why don't you pay your rent?[107]

Stop-orders on pay packets were introduced at about the same time, with the intention of recovering arrears, seventy three being secured in August and 157 in September 1957. The practice further fed discontent.

> "Workers were angry - some, the labourers, were only getting £1 19s. 3d. per week and 15 bob was deducted for rent. They've got £1 4. at home for transport and food."[108]

Bus fares also jumped from 1s. 6d. to 2. 6d. in the course of the year. Tension was screwing up. The Benoni branch of the ANC memorialised the Council that the mounting charges "make it explicitly impossible for people to manage their way out to a better life".[109] "There was a demand by the people all over for an increase in wages" Advisory Board member Sinaba advised.[110]

But Amato was in no position to pay. The post 1956 recession had hit the textile industry particularly hard. Amato's difficulties were deepened by the Suez crisis of 1956/7. With that shipping was directed away from the South African routes and the firm's jute shipments were delayed. Production was reduced to one shift, and the company forced to seek renegotiation of credit. De Beer negotiated extentions with the shipping company Anglo-Africa, and endeavoured to persuade Barclays Bank to hold off. In addition, a good friend of the company in the IDC, Mr Carson Smit, rushed to England to raise new finance. He was the only person at the IDC who was favourably disposed towards Amato, and when he died suddenly in London, the option of additional help foreclosed.[111]

Meanwhile the workers, well organized and confident after the successes of the '57 stay away, were now more impatient than ever with the protracted and unsatisfactory nature of the negotiations.

> "We wanted the union to have the power to get the company to pay us £1 a day, to help us cope with the families, because we were really helping the company with our hands. They (the company) have to understand us. They (the union) advised us you must not bend the company, you must not fight."[112]

There were debates within the work force over tactics when a minority argued for an alternative to strike action to win their demands - factory sabotage.

> "Workers used to look at the dry hessian and say, it will take only one match."[113]

In fact, a large raging fire broke out in the jute mill, two weeks prior to the strike, destroying machinery and jute causing "considerable damage" to a section of the building.[114] Increasingly, the majority opinion swung in favour of the strike action. The shop stewards tried to hold the membership back, but by Friday they too were swept along. On February 12, the workers finally downed tools. The strike had begun.[115]

## CONCLUSION

The defeat in the strike was a shattering disaster. Organisation in the factory was never to recover. Some shop-stewards to this day are so bruised by the experience that they refuse to talk on the matter. For many a sense of bitterness will never be erased. Even this does not convey the full implications of the defeat. In 1957-8 three major confrontations were seemingly engineered by employers with the union. Each was lost by the workers and the union began a slow slide towards collapse.[116] Today it remains a faint shadow of its former self as it accepts invitations to sweet-heart status from the management of Frame.

The T.W.I.U.'s were not the only casualties of this period. The Food and Canning Workers Unions were simultaneously experiencing a similar attack, as the industry slimmed down and monopolised under the impact of the late 1950s recession.[117] Amato was a foretaste of the gathering assault that was being mounted on popular and working-class organisations. The foundations for the boom of the sixties were being gradually set in place. A more disciplined, a more regimented, a more stable working class was being constructed, through repression on the one hand, and the provision of certain basic amenities on the other. Nevertheless, while such developments paved the way for the boom of the sixties, the economic and social re-alignments that followed likewise heralded the workers' struggle of the subsequent two decades.

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NOTES

1. Interview, A. Magnedi, 7 December 1980.

2. Amato Papers: document entitled 'Confidential Memorandum', 2 January 1959, 9.

3. Conversation, ex-shop steward, Amato, July 1983.

4. Drum, April 1958, 45-6.

5. Interview, A. Magnedi, 7 December 1980.

6. Drum, April 1958, 45-6: Bettie du Toit, UkuBamba Amadolo (London, 1978), 89.

7. Amato Papers, 'Confidential Memorandum', 9.

8. New Age 26 February, 1958: carried out in terms of the 1956 amendment to the Native (Urban Areas) Act.

9. Conversation, ex shop steward, Amato, July 1983.

10. Amato Papers, 'Confidential Report', 9.

11. Conversations, P. Pheko, J.C. Bonner, September 1983.

12. E. Feit, Workers Without Weapons, (Hamden, Connecticut, 1975), 107.

13. K. Luckhardt and B. Wall, Oraganise or Starve, (London, 1980) especially 286-8

14. du Toit, Ukubamba, 63-4, 88-90.

15 R. Goode, 'For a Better Life. The food and Canning Workers Union 1941 to 1975', Honours dissertation, University of Cape Town, 1983.

16. Interview, A. Magnedi, 7 December 1980.

17. Luckhardt and Wall, Organise or Starve, 276.

18. ibid., 60; D. O'Meara 'The 1946 African Mine Workers' in the Political Economy of South Africa', Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics, 12, 2, July, 1975, 153.

19. Luckhardt and Wall, Organise or Starve, 70.

20. ibid., 99, T. Lodge, Black Politics in South Africa since 1945, (Longmans, 1983), Chap. 8.

21. Luckhardt and Wall, Organise or Starve, 217-7.

24. L. Ensor, 'The Trade Union Council of South Africa and its Relationship with African Trade Unions', Honours dissertation, University of the Witwatersrand, 1976, 43.

23. Luckhardt and Walls, Organise or Starve, 99 (note 4), du Toit, Ukubamba, 67, 70-1.

24. See note (23); Goode 'Food and Canning Workers Union', 57-8.

25. Interview, Piet Beyleveld, 11 September 1983.

26. For example, Luckhardt and Walls, Organise or Starve, 70; O'Meara 'The 1946 African Mine Workers Strike" 146-154, 166-7. Feit, Workers Without Weapons, also cites the Makabeni breakaway, 38-9.

27. D. O'Meara, '"Muldergate" and the Politics of Afrikaner Nationalism' Work in Progress, 22, April 1982, Supplement, 2.

28. E.P. Thompson, The Making of the English working Class, (Harmondsworth, 1968), 12-13.

29. D. Humphriss and D. G. Thomas, Benoni - Son of my Sorrow, (Cape Town, 1968) 107.

30. Central Archives Depto, Benoni Municipal Records (hereafter CAD : BMR) MInutes of the Non-European Affairs Committee, 17 January 1951, 62; ibid. August 1957.
31. ibid. December 1956.
31. ibid., December 1956.

32. ibid., 10 March 1950, Letter from Combined Native Advisory Boards, 127-8.

33. Conversation, Paulos Nkhosi, 20 September 1983.

34. Interview, Daniel Duze, 16 August 1983.

35. Interview, Jackson Colbert Nomsobo, 13 September 1983.

36. See, e.g. Drum, April 1955, 29-31.

37. CAD: MBR, Minutes of Native Affairs Committee, 13 June 1950, Report of Influx Control Officer for May, 327; Native Affairs Committee resolutions, 404.

38. J. Cohen '"A Pledge for Better Times": The Local State and the Ghetto, Benoni, 1930-1938'. Honours dissertation, University of the Witwatersrand, 1982, Chap. 5.

39. CAD : BMR, Minutes of Native Affairs Committee, 13 September 1949, 456.

40. Humphriss and Thomas, Benoni, 100.

41. Among a host of examples, see M. Tamarkin 'Tribal Associations, Tribal Solidarity and Tribal Chauvinism in a Kenya Town' Journal of African History, 14, 2, 1973.

42. CAD : BMR, Minutes of Native Affairs Committee, 10 March 1950, letter of combined Native Advisory Boards, 127; Humphriss and Thomas, Benoni, 115.

43. Benoni City Times, 14 April 1950.

44. ibid., 24 March 1950; CAD : BMR, Minutes of Native Affairs Committee, 13 September 1949, 455, 462.

45. ibid., 454-6.

46. Conversation, Piet Pheko, 13 September 1983.

47. M. Horrell, A Survey of Race Relations in South Africa 1956-57, (Johannesburg 1957) 88.

48. Interview, Jackson Nomsobo, 13 September 1983.

49. Conversation, Piet Pheko, 13 September 1983.

50. Interview, Daniel Duze, 16 August 1983.

51. CAD : BMR, Minutes of Native Affairs Committee, 10 March 1950, letter of Combined Native Advisory Boards, 127.

52. ibid, 18 March 1957, letter Chief Native Commissioner to Local Native Commissioner, Benoni, 148-51.

53. ibid., Minutes Native Affairs Committee, 13 September 1949, 456.

54. Benoni City Times, 12 May 1950.

55. CAD : BMR, Minutes Native Affairs Committee, 13 September 1949, 462.

56. Conversation, Piet Pheko, 13 September 1981.

57. T. Lodge, Black Politics, Chaps 2 and 5.

58. ibid., Chap. 2.

59. K.J. French 'James Mpanza and the Sofazonke Party in the Development of Local Politics in Soweto." M.A. Univesity of the Witwatersrand, 1983: A.W. Stadler 'Birds in the Cornfields: Squatter Movements in Johannesburg 1944-47' Journal of African Studies. At the present stage of research Mabuya remains a shadowy figure. The argument suggested here is

therefore based on Mpanza's character and career. Mpanza's achievement, I would argue, rested at least partly on his ability to mobilise a pan-ethnic movement - see, e.g. his adherents' chant on one occasion "We Xhosas, Zulus, Sesutos want a place to live". (French 'Mpanza', 143) At the same time he seems to have had more specifically Zulu appeal (Stadler 'Birds in a Cornfield'). What enabled Mpanza to strike a more popular chord seems to have been his appropriation of the attributes of both Ethiopian and Zionist church leaders. His typical regalia "was partly suggestive of a chief" (cited in French 'Mpanza' 78) something charteristic or Ethiopian leaders. His vocabulary was replete with bibliographical imagery. (The 'Israelites' being led otu of Egypt, e.g. - ibid ., 78, 117, 162). Yet he linked this to notions of cleansing and pictured himself as a messiah figure (ibid. 108, 117) - all of which seems to have struck common chords among his disparate following.

60. Standler, 'Birds in the Cornfields', 31-33. Humphriss and Thomas, Benoni, 114-5.

61. ibid., 114-5.

62. ibid., 120-2.

63. ibid., 122-134.

64. Conversation, George Bizos, September 1983.

65. D.E. Kaplan 'Class Conflict, Cpaital Accumulation and the State: An Historical Analysis of the State in Twentieth Century South Africa' D.Phil. University of Sussex, 1977, Chap. 8, especially pp. 283-95; A Bloch 'The Development of Manufacturing Industry in South Africa', M.A. University of Cape Town, 1980 Chap. 4, especially pp. 80-1, 90-99; E.C. Webster 'The Labour Process and Forms of Workplace Organisation in South African Foundries', Ph.D. University of the Witwatersrand, 1983, Chap. III. In the foundry sector a slight variation is encountered with rising capital intensity to 1943 and a decline thereafter - see p. 102. Webster also notes a rapid acceleration of mechanisation between 1956 and 1960, 155.

66. CAD : BMR, Minutes of Native Affairs Committee Meeting, 10 January 1949.

67. ibid., November 1957.

68. Union of South Africa, Board of Trade and Industries Report No. 323. The Textile Manufacturing Industry, December 1950, 18, 24, 46.

69. ibid., 22-3.

70. ibid.

71. ibid., 25, 46.

72. ibid., 24.

73. ibid., 45, 56.

74. ibid., 24.

75. ibid., 70-1.

76. ibid., 2.

77. Interview, Piet Beyleveld, 11 September 1983; du Toit, Ukubamba, 61-81.

78. Union of South Africa, B.T.I. Report No. 323, 61-2.

79. CAD : BMR, Minutes of Non-European Affairs Committee Meeting, 9 October 1951, encl. copy letter Personnel Officer, Amato Textiles, to Native Commissioner, Benoni, N.d., 759-60. He emphasised that 70% of teh work force would not need such a document, being employed in Benoni.

80. Union of South Africa, B.T.I. Report No. 323, 68.

81. ibid., 64-5.

82. ibid., 78.

83. Interview A. Magnedi, 7 December 1982: interview D. Duze, 16 August 1983.

84. Interviews, Charles de Beer, 5 June 1982, Rob Amato, 15 March 1982.

85. Interview Charles de Beer, 5 June 1982.

86. Amato Papers 'Confidential Memorandum', 2 January 1959.

87.

88. Interview, Charles de Beer, 5 June 1982.

89. Interview, A Magnedi, 7 December 1982. Interview, D. Duze, 16 August 1983.

90. ibid., interview Jackson Nomsobo, 13 September 1983.

91. See note (90).

92. Interview, D. Duzi, 16 August 1983.

93. Interview, Charles de Beer, 5 June 1982.

94. Interview, A. Magnedi, 7 December 1982.

95. Interview, Don Mateman, 4 June 1982: du Toit Amadolo, 85-6.

96. Interview, Jackson Nomsobo, 13 September 1983.

97. Interview, Daniel Duze, 16 August 1983.

98. Interview, Don Mateman, 4 June 1982: Conversation, ex-shop steward, Amato, July 1983.

99. du Toit, Amadolo, 87.

100. Interview with shop floor leader, 24 April 1983.

101. du Toit, Amadolo, 87.

102.

103. Interview, Don Mateman, 4 June 1982.

104. ibid.

105. Interview, A. Magnedi, 17 December 1958.

106. CAD : BMR, Minutes Special Non-European Affairs, 24 October 1956, 274-5.

107. Interview A. Magnedi, 7 December 1958.

108. CAD : BMR, Minutes Special Non-European Affairs Committee, 24 October 1956, 274-5.

109. ibid., 15 April 1957, memorandum dated 29 March 1957.

110. ibid., 15 July 1957, extracts Joint Advisory Board's Minutes 23 April 1957, 467.

111.

112. Interview, A. Magnedi, 7 December 1982.

113. Ibid.

114. Benoni City Times, 31 January 1958.

115. Interview, Jackson Nombsobo, 13 September 1983.

116. du Toit, Amadolo.

117. Goode, "The Food and Canning Workers Union."